

Siblings in Arms?

Gender Perspectives in the Norwegian and US Armed Forces

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Abstract

I present here a comparative study of male soldiers' attitudes toward female service members in Norway and the US, based on interviews with 34 enlisted men in the Norwegian Air Force and the US Air National Guard. In the analysis, the soldiers' views and explanations are related to broader national cultures, where Ann Swidler's tool-kit theory and Michelle Lamont's framework of national cultural repertoires informs the work. The study finds that the male soldiers did not approach the issue of gender integration in the military in a unified manner and their views on their own military involvement also revealed significant national variation. Four cultural repertoires are identified used by the men to argue for the role of women in the Armed Forces, as well as their own motivation for serving. A commitment repertoire was used by the American participants to express why they signed up for service; the Norwegian men, however, utilized a life-chance opportunity repertoire to convey an individualistic motivation for joining the military. An equality repertoire was drawn upon in both countries to articulate general support for women in the ranks and, although there was substantial agreement among the men in regards to the benefits of serving alongside women, the Norwegians relied more on an equal treatment repertoire, arguing that all members of the force should be subject to the same treatment. The American respondents, on the other hand, were more inclined to use an equal opportunity repertoire, focusing on securing equality of opportunity for female service members. A meritocratic repertoire was employed to argue for inclusion on individual grounds and while participants in both countries argued for the importance of looking at skills rather than gender background, the repertoire was more forcefully employed in the American context. Through a gender conservative repertoire the men expressed perceptions reflecting a more traditional gender pattern, which included notions of appropriate soldier-roles women should fill. There were, overall, notable national differences in the manner and degree to which the repertoires were used and the meaning participants attached to them. This I trace back to broader differences between the Norwegian and American national cultures and how the two contexts make different cultural resources available to the men.

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1 Introduction

A Shot Heard Around the World

December 20th 1989, twenty-nine year old US Captain Linda Bray is on guard during the first day of the Panama invasion. With more than a hundred people under her command, Captain Bray has a central role in the ongoing mission. Early that morning, Captain Bray has trouble establishing radio contact with two of her platoons that have been assigned to secure a nearby dog kennel, seized by Panama Defense soldiers. When she rushes to the site to see what is going on she finds that her people are receiving incoming fire. As she arrives, an enemy sniper shoots towards one of her men and in response she pulls up her 9 mm gun and shoots what Charles Moskos later termed “a shot heard around the world...” (Francke 1997:49).

After a three-hour confrontation the compound is secured, resulting in three enemy casualties and a captured POW. Having experienced hostile fire, and also fired back, Captain Bray, along with the women partaking in the assignment, were engaged in what is commonly understood as a “combat encounter”. However, as a female serving in the US military, Captain Bray is not allowed to be in combat. In the Armed Forces, positions that involve combat exposure come with a gender requirement; to occupy these roles one must be male.

Two reporters manage to get hold of the story. After clearing with her supervisors Captain Bray is allowed to give an interview, as long as she sticks to the basic facts and omits all classified details. The journalists are fascinated by what Captain Bray tells, in particular regarding the roles taken on by herself and the other women in the group. The Panama invasion has prompted women to take on new military roles and this appears to be the first time a female service member has officially lead a combat mission. Just after New Year 1990, *Washington Times* runs the story under the headline “Army Women Went Into Panama With Weapons – and Used Them”, explaining that “American women participated fully in the invasion of Panama, firing machine guns, taking prisoners and even leading troops in battle”. Other newspapers follow up and Captain Bray is soon a known figure to newsreaders back home. The confrontation is presented as a victorious happening and Pentagon’s immediate reaction is to respond with a wholehearted appraisal of Captain Bray.

It does not take long before a larger political debate ignites. People opposed to the combat ban for female soldiers do not let story go by and quickly call for a termination of the exclusion policy. Captain Bray's story not only proves that females in the force cannot be shielded from hostile encounters, it also demonstrates that women's gender does not impede them from skillfully handling situations of this kind. Politicians on both sides engage in the discussion and as the debate over women's roles rapidly gathers steam, the Pentagon recognizes its dilemma. However, it is soon clear they will not let Captain Bray's story disrupt the present policy.

Having first applauded Captain Bray's effort, Pentagon appears to make a strategic shift. Misinformation about the event starts to leak out, causing suspicion to be raised about what actually took place. Was this really a hostile confrontation? Did Captain Bray open fire at all? In fact, was she even on the site? The smallest details of what happened are being questioned and what at first seemed like a hazardous undertaking is gradually reconstrued into a minor encounter. The slanderous campaign is effective and Captain Bray ends up facing several months of legal investigation for unlawfully killing the kennel's dogs – earning her the new label “puppy-killer”. Captain Bray was never officially charged but the occurrences took its toll and in August 1990 Linda Bray resigns from her job (Francke 1997:46-72).

Research Topic

Women's entry into the military realm has been a complicated affair and the story of Captain Bray's gives us a glimpse of the controversy and contention surrounding women's presence in the Armed Forces. Even as late as 1989, when women made up nearly 50 percent of the US civilian workforce and participated in most societal arenas (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011), a female Captain doing her job became so problematic as to trigger a blackmailing campaign that in the end compelled her to quit her job altogether. Today women comprise 14 percent of all US service members and represent a vital part of the personnel structure. Their roles have gradually been expanded, at the same time, the Armed Forces is one of the few institutions to enforce a gender requirement on certain jobs and direct combat positions are still reserved for men.

Norway, on the other hand, was a pioneer when they in 1984 eliminated gender bans on military positions and allowed women to serve in all military jobs. Still, women remain a small minority and make up less than nine percent of the military workforce (Schjølset 2010:8). Since the late 1990s it has been an expressed political goal to recruit more females and affirmative measures have been imposed in the hope of adjusting the unequal gender balance. Yet, results have proved slow to arrive. The situation in the Armed Forces stands in stark contrast to the rest of Norwegian society, which is characterized by high female participation. Last year Norway was ranked second in The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, signaling this as one of the most progressive countries worldwide in terms of women's situation (World Economic Forum 2010). Over the past decades, women's position has remarkably improved in Norway, as well as in the US, which makes the fact that the Armed Forces lags so far behind the general development a puzzling and intriguing matter.

The gendered nature of the military therefore makes it a unique and fascinating arena for gender research. This master thesis explores the topic of women and the military through a male perspective. I offer a comparative study between Norway and the US, based on interviews with 17 men in each country – 34 all-together – about their attitudes and experiences working with women in this predominant masculine environment. The interviewees served in the Norwegian Air Force and US Air National Guard, respectively. Analysing the interview material I have been interested in both the content of their viewpoints, as well as how these relate to the broader Norwegian and US national culture. The overarching research question is of an exploring and thematic character:

- What are the participants' attitudes towards women in the military and how do they feel about serving alongside female service members?

Two interrelated questions have further guided the research:

- How do the participants frame their viewpoints?
- How do their viewpoints relate to the wider Norwegian and US culture?

As the title of the thesis reveals, I have been incited by a general curiosity as to what are the relations between men and women in this unique social arena. Are they "siblings in arms"?

The Gendered Nature of the Armed Forces

From a gender perspective the military realm is peculiar not only in terms of the skewed gender composition, but also with regard to its powerful and longstanding masculine tradition and its symbolic bearing on what it means to be 'a man'. "The military establishment, more than any other institution, is based on and derives its identity from the idea of masculinity" (Titunik 2000:240). Throughout most of recorded history warfare have been an all-male activity and even viewed as the very quintessence of masculine behavior (Dunivin 1994:533; Elshtain 1987; Miller 1997:32; Mitchell 1997). A strong, prevailing relationship exists between the warrior role and engagement in armed conflict on the one side, and traditional perceptions of manhood on the other; a relation by many argued to persist to the present day (Dunivin 1994:534; Kennedy-Pipe 2000:33). The strong alliance between warfare and masculinity is in various manners reflected by the practices of the Armed Forces. Qualities of physical strength, discipline, courage and honor are highly treasured by the military establishment and they constitute fundamental values persistently enforced in all stages of military training (Elshtain 1987; Mitchell 1997). The military has functioned as a social arena that allows men to demonstrate their abilities as strong, disciplined, courageous and honorable fighters and, as such, the military has served as a prime agent in awarding men the essential qualities deemed necessary in order to be recognized a 'real man'.¹ Through its code of behavior and core values, the military has proved a central institution that offers men the opportunity to exercise their manhood and manifest their position as males (Kennedy-Pipe 2000; Mitchell 1997).

The military has, historically, been a strong preacher of 'male duty', encouraging men to take on their obligation as true males and protect those deemed unable to do so themselves. This role has construed men as the strong guardian, a notion that, by implication, relegates women to a position of dependency, reliant on males for safekeeping. Through the male protector role, women have also been transformed into an emblematic trophy and a reminder to the men of what they fight for (Howard and Prividera 2004:89; Kennedy-Pipe 2000:37).² Whereas men

¹ For instance, in Greek, the word *andreia* – to be a real male – is the same word that is used for 'courage' (Elshtain 1987:50).

² It is interesting to notice how national representations consequently have taken the form of a female, e.g. *Marianne* as the symbol of France, *Britannia* as the symbol of the UK and *Columbia* as representing the US.

have been awarded the role of defender and protector, the social roles traditionally assigned to women have been roles connected to caretaking and nurturing responsibilities (Kaplan 1994). Since pregnancy and childbirth are capacities exclusive to the female body, women have been targeted as the natural candidates for childcare and household functions. The role of caregiver and nurturer represents an antithesis to the military warrior and for most of military history, it was not only unheard of for women to enter the masculine realm of organized warfare, but for women as nurturers and child-bearers to be engaged in any act of violence was seen as a symbolic paradox and even unnatural (Howard and Prividera 2004:90).

Despite the chasm existing between these male and female archetypes, it is interesting to note that military masculinity has always been accompanied by a symbolical, female omnipresence. In addition to embodying the image of what men fight for, women have served as a symbolic *Other* and measure of what military men are *not* (Kimmel 2000:503; Silva 2009:947). Stereotypical 'feminine' qualities', like emotional and physical delicacy, have been preached as antithetical to military virtues; it have even been claimed that for men in the military to succeed they need to "kill the woman in them" (Francke 1997:155), or in the words of critic Brian Mitchell, "success depends upon becoming male as much as possible" (Mitchell 1997:170). Given this masculine nature of the Armed Forces and the fundamental impact the military has had on constructions of masculinity – and by impact also femininity – it is no surprise that the acceptance of women into the Armed Forces has been identified as "the most profound break with tradition in two thousand years" (Coker 2001:93).

Even though the institution of the military has undergone significant changes over the past century, the gendered character of the establishment is far from eradicated and in many ways, the Norwegian and US Armed Forces remain male strongholds amid far more gender equal social surroundings. The issue of women's position has, nonetheless, received much attention and can in both countries be considered a political *hot arena* "generating intense passion or disagreement" (Lamont and Threvenot 2000:1). Still, the approach to the subject has proved quite different across the two contexts.

Political Climate and Military Organizations

Since the late 1980's, following the termination of all restrictions on women's military roles, Norway has actively worked to increase the number of women in the military. This has been an expressed goal of the Norwegian government and various affirmative initiatives have been established. In 2006-07 the government issued a Government White Paper, which expressed the continued commitment to strategies to reduce the gender gap in the Armed Forces. This important document maintains that greater diversity in the organization will improve its capacity and add operational value and as a modern society Norway shall strive to secure women's participation in all areas of society (Stortingsmelding nr. 36 2006-2007). Despite Norway's commitment to create a more gender balanced military, numbers reveal political objectives have far from succeeded. While ranking as one of top four NATO countries in terms of strategies for recruiting and retaining women, Norway still remains one of the least successful in attaining this goal (Schjølset 2010).

Even though women remain a minority in the US Armed Forces, as well, they do have a stronger presence than in Norway and recent Census Data show that 14% of all active duty personnel are female (U.S. Census Bureau News 2011). This is not an astounding number; still, no other country depends so heavily on women or has a better gender representation than the US military (Mitchell 1997:xiv). Different from the Norwegian debate, American discussions on female military service have focused less on numerical integration and more on the conditions for women who serve. The Armed Forces are one of few areas where women still face formal restrictions and the issue dominating the debate have been "whether women should be further integrated into the military services – that is, whether they should serve in even more 'non-traditional' roles than they currently do" (Fenner and deYoung 2001:3). Table I presents an overview over the numerical presence and focus of the debates within the two countries.

Table I. Representation and Debates over Women's Participation in the Armed Forces

	Percentage of women in the Armed Forces	Debate on gender integration in the Armed Forces
Norway	9 % of the total force	<i>Numerical focus.</i> Political pressure to increase the number of female service members. Affirmative measures taken to close the gender gap.
The US	14 % of the total force	<i>Focus on conditions.</i> Debate centred around women's military roles and the restrictions on positions they can occupy.

The Norwegian and US Armed Forces are both modern, western militaries. As NATO members they are close military allies, involved in joint exercises, as well as personnel exchange programs (Forsvaret 2010a). The two countries also share strong ties when it comes to defence material cooperation, most recently confirmed through Norway's acquisition of F-35 combat aircraft from American Lockheed Martin (Forsvarsdepartementet 2010; 2011).

At the same time, there are also major differences separating the two military establishments, most notably in terms of magnitude and global involvement. Following the decline of the Soviet Union, the US has become the premiere military power in the world. Norway, on the other hand, is characterized by having a small, but efficient force (Strategy Page 2008). Close to one and a half million people serve in active duty roles in the US Armed Forces, with an additional 1,2 million in the Reserves and about 460.000 in the National Guard. Even though the Norwegian Armed Forces are the number one employer in public administration, only 23.000 people work for the Norwegian Defence, apart from the around eight thousand conscripted men and women enrolled yearly (Encyclopedia of the Nations 2002; Forsvaret 2011a; Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2009; Waterhouse and O'Bryant 2008). Despite cuts throughout the 1990s, US Armed Forces still maintain the highest military budget worldwide, amounting to about one third of the world's total military spending. Their military budget represents 5.2

percent of the American GDP, while Norway comparatively spends 1.5 percent of their GDP which, again, is much lower (Global Security 2011).

America's vast military presence and active involvement in conflicts worldwide have caused the US to be perceived as a 'world police'. American forces are currently assigned to a mix of geographical commands, with large military bases in Germany, Japan and Korea. They are engaged in numerous operations around the world, most predominantly in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Norwegian Armed Forces are also engaged in several peace-keeping missions and contributes with troops to Afghanistan and in the recent air strike mission in Libya, but their involvement is on an entirely different scale (Encyclopedia of the Nations 2002; Forsvaret 2011b)

Both militaries contain the traditional branches Air Force, Army and Navy. Besides these three divisions, the US Armed Forces also count the Marine Corps as a separate branch. Norway, on the other hand, maintains a Home Defence, which serves as a connection between the Armed Forces and civil society, with a special responsibility towards the safety of the citizens (Forsvaret 2011c). The US also has a National Guard and a Reserve Corps, with the National Guard being much like an equivalent to the Norwegian Home Defence. The National Guard has local bases in all US states and as a result of operations abroad they currently work very close with the active duty forces. The Reserve unit have a complementary role to the active component and is to power the capacities of the armed forces where needed (Army Reserve 2011; Encyclopedia of the Nations 2002; National Guard 2011).

The Norwegian Armed Forces are founded on a model of male conscription. All men are, in theory, required to do 12 months of military service, or serve for the equivalent time as a community worker (Forsvaret 2010b). While women are still exempt from any service requirement, since 2009 women are obliged to actively respond to whether or not they would like to enter the Armed Forces³; intended as a measure to increase knowledge of the military and interest among females (Aftenposten 2009; Forsvaret 2010c). The US military is founded in a voluntary service model, where you freely sign up for service and work on a contract basis

³ Sesjonsplikt for jenter

(Stevens 2008). The table below summarizes the main differences between the Norwegian and US Armed Forces.

Table II. Military Organization in Norway and the US

	Norway	The US
Numerical size	23.000 working for the Armed Forces. About 8.000 enrolled for conscripted service yearly	1.5 million in Active Duty service. 1.2 in the Reserves and about 460.000 in the National Guard
Military Expenditure	1.5 percent of the GDP	5.2 percent of the GDP, one third of the world's total military budget
Global Involvement	Involved in certain peace keeping missions, participate with troops in Afghanistan and in NATO operations in Libya	Large military bases in Germany, Japan and Korea. Involved in numerous missions worldwide, most heavily in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan
Internal Organization	Air Force, Army, Navy and Home Defence	Air Force, Army, Navy and Marine Corps. Reserve Corps and National Guard
Recruitment System	One year mandatory service requirement for male citizens. Women obliged to state their preference in terms of military service	Voluntary enlistment

Even though differences in organization, as well as diverging military realities undoubtedly influence the experiences and perspectives of the interviewees, for this study I have chosen not to focus too much on this organizational component. The focus of the analysis is rather on the cultural understandings that inform the men's outlook; however, one chapter is dedicated to the separate manner in which the men in the two countries viewed their own military participation.

Although cultural determinants are given priority, it is nevertheless important to be well aware of the organizational structure of the two militaries and in the concluding chapter I do discuss some limitations of this study in relation to organizational factors.

Research on Women and the Military

Also when it comes to research conducted on women and the military there is a significant difference between the two countries. Military sociology is a well-defined research area within US sociological tradition and a substantial body of literature exists on the issue of gender and women's roles (Berggren 2002:57). In Norway, on the other hand, the military has received little sociological attention and even less has been written on gender relations and the Armed Forces. Of the research that has been done, a considerable part exists as master theses submitted at Norwegian universities. Exploring women's work conditions in the Armed Forces Turid Hjelmseth's (1994) survey of military commanders found that both genders are generally satisfied with their job, yet, the men perceived women to be less qualified for leading roles as well as practical tasks, such as combat assignments. Through interviews with female service members, Anne Werner (1996) discovered that the women made a conscious effort to distance themselves from female colleagues who they viewed as 'unserious' and not dedicated to the job. In a pioneering study of the integration of women into the military, Lene Orsten (1999) concludes that the inclusion of women is best explained by both the need for more personnel, as well as the emerging focus on gender equality taking place in society in general.

Presenting a document analysis of how gender and masculinity were expressed within the Norwegian Armed Forces in the 1990s, in particular in relation to peacekeeping forces, Torunn Haaland (2008) found that masculine values were not emphasized as significant and most notably, aggressiveness was rarely mentioned as an important quality for a good soldier. In a recent anthropological study, however, Ole Magnus Totland (2009) expounds how the community of the highly operative Telemark battalion largely centres on the physical and symbolical male. The male body, along with masculine values, were central to understand both the men's roles as soldiers and the relations maintained among each other. The strong emphasis on masculinity caused women and femininity to be treated as both foreign and

threatening and the only way for women to adapt was for them to downplay their gender. This conclusion is corroborated by fellow anthropologist Marte Harsvik (2010), who through her field work in the Royal Guard discovered that even though this military unit strives to preserve an ideal of equality for all recruits, the guiding norms are mostly built on masculine values, which forces women to conform to a male standard. By interviewing male leaders in the Armed Forces about their views on the political goal to raise the number of women in the military, Johan Hovde (2010) finds that although most participants were positive about the initiative, their ideas about why this is important were for the most part limited to notions about the local work environment.

Investigating the experiences of first-time recruits in a sub-study of the larger project *Research on Cohorts*⁴, Tonje Lauritzen, Birgit Leirvik, Tuva Schanke and Anne Ellingsen discovers that the enhanced effort to recruit and retain female service personnel has had a reversed effect in that it “reproduces and maintain women as a minority on a structural level” (Lauritzen et al. 2009:50). Rather than securing women’s position in the organization, recruitment measures directed towards women seem to estrange them from their male peers. In another sub-study, anthropologist Nina Hellum observes that male military personnel were very sceptical of what they perceived to be a veiled recruitment of female members, which manifested itself in a greater level of initial mistrust towards women, before they had a chance to prove their abilities. At the same time, if the work was executed well people seemed to care little about a person’s gender (Hellum 2010).

While this comprises some of the main Norwegian research on the topic, American contributions are, as stated, far more extensive. Women and the military, as an overarching issue, have been approached in numerous ways (see e.g. Elshtain 1987; Goldstein 2003; Howard and Prividera 2004; Kennedy-Pipe 2000; Segal 1995; Woodward and Winter 2004). Joshua Goldstein’s *War and Gender* (2003) represents a prime source and the book offers a thorough investigation of central aspects pertaining to gender relations, the military and armed

⁴ *Research on Cohorts* (Forskinging på årskull) is a large, four year research project funded through the Norwegian Defence Department. The mandate is to investigate factors that prompt personnel to join, as well as resign from the Armed Forces, with a special focus on gender relations (Steder, Hellum, and Skutlaberg 2009). The research is conducted by internal and external researchers.

warfare. *Women and War* (1987) is another classic in the literature and through a historical lens Jean Elsthain explores the myths and stereotypes surrounding women's involvement in war. Lorry Fenner and Marie deYoung's book *Women in Combat. Civic Duty or Military Liability* (2001) provides an elucidative analysis of the debate over women's military participation. Written by two female service members with conflicting viewpoints, the book offers a comprehensive account of the arguments raised on both sides of the debate.

Several studies have been conducted that specifically explores the attitudes of military personnel's towards women in the service. Judith Stiehm's (1998) large-scale survey of army personnel suggest that acceptance of women is limited. This conclusion is supported by Jennifer Boldry and Wendy Wood (2001), whose survey study of cadets finds that stereotypical gender beliefs negatively impacted their evaluations of female classmates. Social stereotypes of women do not correspond well with attributes associated with successful military performance. Results from another survey indicate that male soldiers are more likely to rank women as less competent than themselves (Rosen et al. 1996). In a comprehensive, qualitative study Carol Cohn (2000) discovered that opposition towards separate physical training standards functioned as a legitimate way for participants to express a variety of negative sentiments about women in the service. The fundamental issue, however, argues Cohn is not the training standards itself, but underlying notions of the military as a masculine organization. Interviewing a group of male and female ROTC⁵ students about how women negotiate their gender status within a masculine military environment, Jennifer Silva (2009) found that most of the women perceived the ROTC as an empowering arena where they could be judged according to their performance and not their sex. At the same time, respondents of both genders maintained conventional ideas of femininity and masculinity, closely associating the latter with military practices. It was important to both male and female participants that women preserve their femininity also while in the military.

A Swedish study of military men's attitudes towards women in uniform finds that even though the men displayed a positive attitude, they were not particular liberal or egalitarian (Ivarsson,

⁵ Reserve Officer Training Corps, a program at American universities that offers students a military education concurrent with their regular studies.

Estrada, and Berggren 2005). This finding prompts the researchers to question why participants were not more supportive, given that Swedish society is considered a front-runner in regard to women's work roles. This, they write "raises some interesting issues regarding the universality of the military experience across cultures" (Ivarsson et al. 2005:278). Many insights have been made with regards to personnel's attitudes, still, the subject matter has received little attention from a comparative point of view; investigations of military experiences across cultures, as stated in the quote, is left largely unexplored. There appears to be no qualitative studies that comparatively investigate men's attitudes towards women in the military. This thesis, therefore, explores new territory.

Outline of the Thesis

To further contextualize the research topic the next chapter offers an overview of the history of women's integration into the Norwegian and US Armed Forces. In chapter three I take a closer look at the debates surrounding women's military participation and examine the main arguments presented for why women should, or should not, be involved in military work. I then move on to my own research and in chapter four I present a methodological account of the study, before providing the theoretical platform for analysis in chapter five. The analysis, which comes next, is presented in four interconnected chapters. In chapter six I start by looking at the separate manner in which the men view their own service in the military. In chapter seven I explore how the men used a widespread gender egalitarian repertoire⁶ in their discussion of female service members. While there were notable overlaps in their gender egalitarian approach, there were also some distinct national differences at play. Men in both countries also used a meritocratic repertoire, which I discuss in the eighth chapter. Utilizing this repertoire they underlined that the important matter is how well you perform in your job, not your gender background. Even though the men I talked to generally expressed appreciation for serving alongside female service members, certain attitudes of a more gender conservative

⁶ In the thesis, the terms cultural 'repertoire' and cultural 'tool' are used interchangeably. Other terms, such as cultural 'materials', 'elements' 'resources' etc are often also used in a similar manner.

nature was conveyed, which I investigate in the final analysis chapter. I conclude the thesis with a discussion of the findings, as well as some theoretical implications.

2 Gender Integration in the Norwegian and US Armed Forces

Norway and the US share a historical tradition of resistance towards incorporating women into the military realm and as women have been granted rights and opportunities in increasingly more areas, the Armed Forces have always remained behind the integration of women elsewhere in society (Vernø and Sveri 1990:XVI, XVIII). It's interesting to note that in spite of the strongly felt hostility and historical belief that women are to be excluded from all things war related, women have in different manners always been involved in the war enterprise: As companions of fighting family members, to care for the sick, or performing various kinds of non-operative work. Although uncommon, females can also be found fighting alongside men as far back as the Viking Age (Goldstein 2003:87-88).

In the following chapter I take a close look at the *formal* integration of women into the Norwegian and US Armed Forces. The topic is wide enough to fill multiple volumes and the following discussion is merely a brief overview of the trajectory of women's incorporation into the military realm. I mainly look at which events prompted steps of integration, with a larger focus on the most recent developments. In both countries, WWI represents a historical benchmark. The magnitude of the war produced an unprecedented need for manpower, which made women attractive to the war effort in a whole new manner. The war also coincided with an increased focus on women's rights, as well as changing perceptions towards female gender roles, which caused women to be perceived as a resource different from before. In this manner, the period from WWI and onwards represents a break away from the previous sporadic and disorganized nature of women's military contribution (Vernø and Sveri 1990:11,16)

Women in the Norwegian Armed Forces

Women's history in the Norwegian Defense is an interesting case. As a pioneer in the military world, women were granted full equality and allowed to serve in all military positions as early as in 1984. At the same time, few women choose a military career and even today they remain but a small minority of nine percent of all force members (Orsten 1999:5; Schjølset 2010:8).

The first military related job in which women were officially accepted was as professional nurses. In 1855 a program was founded to educate women as competent medical personnel, and although an important first step it would take more than 60 years before women were allowed in any other position apart from nursing (Vernø and Sveri 1990:11-14). While Norway was never drawn into the First World War, in preparation for a potential war involvement certain non-operative positions opened up to women, prompting more than 3500 females to report for service. While the war never actualized, the decision to let women serve in positions outside the medical field signified an important change of attitude that made women visible as a military resource different than before (Vernø and Sveri 1990:17-19).

The Second World War

The Second World War caused a more drastic change to women's military roles. In 1942 the Norwegian government, operating from exile in London, decides that all Norwegian women abroad between the age of 18 and 40 shall report for duty, in first instance applicable to women in the UK (Orsten 1999:8). Women were to serve in the newly created female units, which had been established in all branches of the military. Estimates indicate that throughout the war 660 women served as official members of the Armed Forces (Vernø and Sveri 1990:55-59). The fact that women were allowed in uniform and given traditional military training represents a remarkable development. However, looking closer at these events one quickly discovers that the changes were far from immune to old prejudices or untainted by gender stereotypes. For instance, women's first uniform consisted of skirts, which remained part of the attire also during training session – if women wanted pants they had to pay for it out of their own pocket (Vernø and Sveri 1990:61). Moreover, their assignments remained, by and large, well within the realm of traditional female chores and women were typically commissioned to either office work or kitchen service.

What also did not change is what has been a longstanding discrepancy between what is accepted of female involvement in times of war and what is viewed as appropriate in times of peace, and conscription of women was quickly abandoned as the war came to an end. In retrospect, women's effort has received little recognition; their service abroad, as well as in occupied Norway, has been overshadowed by men's endeavors and only a scarce number of medals have been awarded females (Vernø and Sveri 1990:35; Jonassen 2010:17).

Two Decisive Debates

Women's war engagement did, however, engender an important political debate. In 1946, at the dawn of the post-war era, an advisory committee was appointed to review women's military involvement. Its concluding report recommended that in case war or other emergencies women should be expected to contribute with their service – just as they did during the last war – though only in non-operative positions (Orsten 1999:16-17). Yet, were women to be useful in times of crisis they need to be adequately trained in times of peace, a prerequisite that constituted a significant problem. To absorb all suitable women into the military system would have been an impossible task – at least for the time being. Female conscription would therefore have led to a discriminatory selection, which was not a popular outcome. After a heated debate, the Government voted against recommendations from the committee and decided to suspend conscription of women until a more feasible solution could be found (Vernø and Sveri 1990:91-96). This is the only time mandatory service has been seriously debated and later discussions have always been based on the assumption of voluntary engagement (Vernø and Sveri 1990:97). Even though practical difficulties appear to have been the impeding factor to put a halt on female conscription, scholars claim the outcome does, in fact, reflect the general sentiment in the population at large, namely an “intense rejection towards seeing women in uniform, bearing weapon under male, military command”⁷ (Vernø and Sveri 1990:97).

It would take a new generation and a new era to again review women's military roles. Times were changing and in 1970 a second committee was appointed, this time with a mandate to investigate how to incorporate women into non-combat related military service. Its concluding report from 1973 states that the best solution is to organize women into a separate corps – just like in WWII (Vernø and Sveri 1990:151-52). During this round of debate the political agenda was dominated by an escalating focus on women's rights and “the battle against dated gender roles was fought on all fronts” (Vernø and Sveri 1990:153). To institute what many perceived as a “gender apartheid” soon became impermissible (Vernø and Sveri 1990:154).

⁷ All translations are my own

When the Defense department presented its new policy in 1975 it was evident that gender equality had been a motivating factor. The committee's recommendations were completely ignored and it was instead proposed that women, who until then were denied the right to hold any military position, should be treated on par with male soldiers – with the exception of combat related functions and the first year of mandatory service (Vernø and Sveri 1990:155-58). In 1976, the Parliament almost unanimously verified the new directive, making Norway a leading country in terms of women's integration (Orsten 1999:54). An important advance had been made, still, the battle was not over.

The Last Stronghold to Fall

Physical force is not only a core element, but also the constitutive activity of the Armed Forces and, as such, the combat restriction rule put a serious strain on women's functioning (Orsten 1999:57). A lack of logical guidelines on how to implement the combat restriction rule did not make things easier and in effect women became second-tire members. Outside the military realm, politicians and the public alike kept wondering why the Armed Forces were allowed to uphold a discriminatory gender practice that elsewhere in society was deemed unacceptable (Vernø and Sveri 1990:171). After a last tense debate, the final bastion of the all-male military fell in November 1984 when the Parliament declared that as of the following year, all positions, as well as military training, should be open to women; from now women should be treated on the exact same terms as their male counterparts (Vernø and Sveri 1990:173-76).

This was a radical maneuver and accompanying this shift, integration of women was increasingly treated as a matter of gender equality. From being kept at an arms distance women begun to find themselves in demand – at least from a political stance (Orsten 1999:95). It soon became clear, however, that despite the new policy change the skewed gender balance showed few signs of improving. As a response to the slow development affirmative measures were gradually introduced. Over the past years, various initiatives have been taken with the hope of recruiting more women and making the military an attractive option for females. Attracting more women, as well as retaining those already working in the organization has, nonetheless, proved difficult and the ambition of attaining 15% female service members has not been attained (Steinland n d:2). At the leadership level representation is even worse and with only 1.5 % women possessing the level of colonel or higher the Armed Forces tops the list as the

most male dominated sector with regards to the ratio of male to female leaders (Haaland 2008:170; Steinland n d:2). This being said, compared to the number of females in the organization at large, women are overrepresented when it comes to deployment missions. What is more, since the first female Defense Minister was appointed in 1999 Norway has maintained a tradition of assigning a woman to this post (Haaland 2008:170-71).

Women in the US Armed Forces

World War I also marked women's first official entry into the US Armed Forces. Women were admitted into both the US Army and Navy and while they mostly served as clerks and nurses, they were allowed to operate in uniform and granted full military status. Preparations were in place for a female reserve unit, a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), but the proposal was shut down by the War Department. This did not halt ambitions for a female unit, however, and preparations continued throughout the interwar years. Authorities gradually warmed up to the concept, and while still not favoring the idea they believed – as stated in an official memo – it would “avert the pressure to admit women to actual membership in the Army” (Goldstein 2003:88).

The Second World War

With the Second World War reality rapidly changed, and so did the role of women; as the US found itself deeply mobilized for war women, as a human resource, could no longer be ignored. The previously unwelcome WAAC was founded shortly after Pearl Harbor, re-named Women's Army Corps in 1943, discarding the symbolically charged “auxiliary” (United States Army 2009). Besides the Army, women served in both the Air Force and Navy. Their work was not without risk and during the war 56 women died in line of duty (Goldstein 2003:88-91). All together, WWII prompted nearly 150.000 women to enlist, a remarkable number that would serve as a “valuable benchmark of women's potential as soldiers” (Goldstein 2003:92).

Yet, conservative gender perceptions persisted also here. Women were far from welcomed as true members of the forces and when the war concluded, countless women suddenly found themselves unwanted in the ranks. Upon hearing news that the war was over a Navy nurse

recalls her base commander ordering “all the women off my base by noon”; a cogent illustration of the prevailing attitude (Goldstein 2003:92). In terms of women’s integration, the outcome of WWII was twofold. On the one hand, women not only served in groundbreaking numbers, but were also put to do typical male jobs that not long before would have been hard to imagine. On the other hand, the social tolerance was short lived and as the war came to a close the majority of female workers returned to the domestic sphere (Goldin 1991:755).

Restrictedly Admitted

However, women’s military engagement was put on the political agenda more resolutely than ever before and after the war, women’s future in the Armed Forces became a hot political topic. The central question for debate was: Should women be permanently admitted into the services, and if so, were they to be accepted as reservists or as full members of the forces? And also, what should their roles be? Many concerns were voiced, one of them being the “potential humiliation women’s authority would inflict on men” (Francke 1997:25). Terminating two years of legislative discussion, Women’s Armed Service Integration Act was passed in 1948. The new law stated that women were to be accepted into the regular force, but should not exceed two percent of the total force in each branch. A promotional cap was imposed and no woman could achieve a rank higher than lieutenant colonel (Francke 1997:36; Titunik 2000:243).

Women’s Armed Service Integration Act signified an important step away from the military as an all-male force, yet, rigid restrictions reveals that suspicion towards women’s service was far from eliminated. Promotional and numerical restraints persisted until 1967, as did regulations preventing women from being put in command over men. As late as 1975 pregnancy and motherhood were regarded reason for involuntary discharge, a rule that not only applied to biological offspring but also included step-children; motherhood and military involvement was deemed incompatible (Francke 1997:108, 136; Fenner and deYoung 2001:12).

All-Voluntary Force

In 1973, the US military underwent a momentous transition with the creation of the new All Voluntary Force (AVF). From now on, military engagement should be a voluntary affair. The

termination of the draft led to an immediate shortage of personnel and women, who few years before were not to exceed two percent of the manpower, suddenly found themselves in demand. The creation of the AVF has been defined as a milestone for the integration of women and from 1972 to 1980, the number of female service members grew from a moderate three percent, to more than eight percent eight years later (Goldstein 2003:93).

Along with their increased presence, women's roles were also expanding; however restrictions did remain, the most prominent being the combat restriction rule that closed off all jobs involving a risk for hostile confrontation. The constraints represented a serious impediment to female service members, not only as an equal rights issue; combat positions comprise a notable number of jobs and as nucleus positions of the military structure they are closely associated with prestige and higher promotion (Titunik 2000:230).

The Panama operation in 1989 and Gulf War the subsequent year fueled a round of tense debate over the exclusion policy. Both operations had proved that the new type of fluid battlefield makes it hard – if not impossible – to shield women from hostile encounters (Francke 1997:73-103). Moreover, irrespective of what skeptics had claimed, the two campaigns demonstrated even more forcefully that women are capable soldiers, also in enemy confrontation. Experiences from Panama and the Gulf did not go by unrecognized and a policy change was made in 1993 that allowed female soldiers to serve in combat aircraft, as well as onboard most combat ships (Titunik 2000:243; United States Army 2009). Over the years, the areas defined as off-limits for women have gradually been subject to a narrower and narrower definition. From being banned from all jobs that might involve combat exposure, women are today excluded from what is termed 'direct combat assignments', which permits them to serve in combat support roles. At the present moment, 91 percent of all positions are open to female service members and the units to still retain a gender prerequisite are the Navy SEALs and direct combat ground forces (Navy Recruiting Command 2010).

From being admitted only insofar a shortage of men necessitated outside recruitment to representing a crucial component of the Armed Forces; gender integration in the US military has come a long way. Today women comprise 14 percent of both Army and Navy and close to 20 percent of the Air Force. In addition, 50,000 women serve in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan (Goldstein 2003:93). Still, women's participation has not ceased to be an issue of

debate. Women's exclusion from direct combat roles remains a cause of widespread disgruntlement, at the same times as there also exist opponents who question women's involvement altogether (Fenner and deYoung 2001; Mitchell 1997). On the next page, an overview is given of the main events in the history of women's integration into the military.

Table III. Gender Integration in the Norwegian and US Armed Forces

	WWI	WWII	Aftermath of WWII	Changes in the 1970s	Changes in the 1980s-1990s	Current situation
Norway	Voluntary women recruited to non-operative positions. Never utilized as Norway never entered the war	Women abroad subject to conscription. Receives military training and serve in uniform, yet, their tasks mostly resemble traditional female work	Extensive debate over whether women should receive mandatory military training. Advisory committee in favor, but government postpones the matter, in effect indefinitely. Women remain excluded from the Armed Forces	Political interest in integrating women into non-operative positions. Increased social focus on women's rights, an evident influence on the new gender policy passed by the Parliament in 1975, which allows women to serve in all military positions, except first year of mandatory service and combat positions	Increased discontent over gender excluding practices. The parliament amends gender doctrine and from 1984 women are allowed in all military positions	Political aim to increase women's presence in the Armed Forces. Affirmative measures taken to actively recruit females, but women still comprise less than ten percent of the forces. Women involved in operations aboard
The US	Women served in non-operative positions. Allowed in uniform and granted full military status	WAAC (WAC) founded right after the US enter the war. Women serve in all branches, also as active-duty members abroad. 56 die in line of duty	Heated debate over women's future in the Armed Forces. Women's Armed Service Integration Act passed in 1948. Women included in the Armed Forces, with numerical and promotional restrictions	Creation of the AVF in 1973 causes women to be targeted as desirable military candidates. Women enter the Armed Forces in increased numbers. Restrictions are reduced, but combat exclusion rule remains.	Operations in Panama and the Gulf engender new debate over combat exclusion policy. Policy altered in 1993, allowing women onboard combat aviation and ships. The Army gradually eases up its restrictions, admitting women in combat support roles	Comparatively high number of female service members, well represented in operations abroad. Debates about women's participation continues, especially pertaining to the remaining restrictions on women's roles

3 The Debate Over Women's Military Participation

In spite the proliferation of female soldiers and subsequent restructuring of the military workforce taking place over the past decades, the issue of gender integration remains a contended issue, with strong opponents and supporters on both sides of the debate. Numerous arguments have been made as to why, or why not, women should, or should not, be allowed to partake in military work. To contextualize the topic of this thesis and to better apprehend the viewpoints expressed by the participants in this study, it is important to be familiar with the main arguments proposed for and against gender integration in the Armed Forces. What is the logic behind people's skepticism towards integrating women into the military? And why do others, again, believe this to be a crucial task for the Armed Forces? Four core arguments recur as to why gender integration is undesired and harmful to the Armed Forces. These have all been reproached by integration advocates, who also advance separate arguments for why women's integration is of a wider, societal importance.

Physical Strength

It remains a fact that women, on average, possess less muscle mass than men. As a result, women are usually unable to reach the full level of physical vigor obtainable to most males. Physical strength is of utmost importance in military training and real-life operations and women's physique has, thus, been presented as a main argument for female's incompetence as military participants. Proponents of this view claim that in spite of technological inventions enjoyed by modern day militaries, a large number of jobs still demand a high level of physical strength; strength most women do not possess. Because of women's comparable lack of strength they will inevitably become the weakest link in the chain. This results in a lowered level of operation and reduces military readiness (Cohn 2000; Goldstein 2003; Fenner and deYoung 2001:117; Kennedy-Pipe 2000:46; Mitchell 1997:140-47).

While the difference between male and female physiques remains a fact, the argument that this makes women unqualified for military service has been subject to strong objections. Colonel Lorry Fenner (2001) argues that the physical requirements and ability-tests used in the military are futile, as they do not measure the actual strength needed in order to succeed in *specific*

military jobs. The Armed Forces is a diverse organization, and with such a wide variety of jobs and assignments, it is insufficient to rely on a general test for recruitment. What is more, the physical standards employed by the Armed Forces have been repeatedly changed over time, which indicates that military fitness tests are motivated by other factors than the mere physical reality faced by enlisted service members (Fenner and deYoung 2001:7). Rather than using presumptuous models and tests, Fenner recommends that we look at the broader picture and investigate historical evidence of women's achievements, by which we will find that "women have coped with every aspect of war" (Fenner and deYoung 2001:10). Integration advocates also repudiate the claim that physical strength is still the most decisive factor in modern day's militaries. In technologically advanced forces, a soldier's intellect and technical skills are far more salient in determining a person's success, qualities that unlike physical abilities are not gender specific (Goldstein 2003:164-65; Woodward and Winter 2004:281).

Unit Cohesiveness

The second argument raised as to why women should not be admitted into the Armed Forces, relies on the assumption that it will destroy unit cohesiveness – a crucial factor for military efficiency (Fenner and deYoung 2001:17). When braving the dangers of the battlefield and confronting enemy forces, the primary motivating factor that encourages combatants to fight is "the feeling of mutual attachment and camaraderie among soldiers" (Titunik 2000:236). The art of warfare consists of molding single individuals into an efficient unit, and obtaining a high sense of community among the soldiers is essential to create competent troops ready for battle (Titunik 2000:235). A common argument for female exclusion contends that unit cohesiveness is best achieved in homogeneous groups, something which is disrupted by including non-male soldiers (Dunivin 1994:535). Viewed as a cornerstone in the production of efficient soldiers, male bonding is believed to vitally suffer under the presence of female soldiers, with the ultimate effect of decreasing military efficiency (Dunivin 1994:541; Fenner and deYoung 2001:16; Rosen et al. 1996:538; Rosen, Knudson, and Fancher 2003:325; Woodward and Winter 2004:291-94).

This argument too has been strongly criticized by gender integration advocates. Fenner points out that the same allegations of disrupted unity were made when the military underwent racial integration; an issue that is clearly no longer viewed as problematic (Fenner and deYoung 2001:16). When it comes to gender integration, Fenner contends that no evidence exists that proves that male-female bonding is unattainable; quite the reverse, there are “millions of stories” that testifies that inter-gendered bonding is fully achievable (Fenner and deYoung 2001:15,18). Integration proponents also claim that mixed units make women push themselves harder to gain male approval, while the men enhance their effort not to be beaten by their female counterparts, with the ultimate effect of increased overall efficiency (Francke 1997:247). Lastly, in real-life operations when experiencing the same menacing challenges, a mutual attachment and feeling of camaraderie will naturally develop between *all* participating soldiers, and therefore “combat itself is the greatest formula for all cohesiveness” (Francke 1997:248). Integration advocates believes the allegedly adverse effect caused by female soldiers is solely based on theoretical conjectures and should be viewed as a nothing else but a bi-product of peace.

Emotional Value

The third argument fronted by integration skeptics asserts that women are endowed with a unique emotional value, which makes them unsuited for soldering. According to this view, women *qua* females possess a strong, affective value that makes the loss or harm done to a female soldier much harder to accept than injuries inflicted on a man. Since warfare entails numerous risks to the soldiers involved, it is seen as both hazardous and unwise to deploy women. This is not only out of concern for the male soldiers who stand in danger of being incapacitated when experiencing wounded or killed females; but also out of consideration to the morale of the civilian population that might take damage, as well. The male protector instinct is argued to make men extra sensitive towards the safety of female co-soldiers, which will make the men less focused and, thus, the unit more vulnerable (Fenner and deYoung 2001:20,22; Francke 1997:243; Kennedy-Pipe 2000:41).

In the pro-integration camp, this third argument has been vehemently attacked, with Fenner declaring that “the logic of this argument fails in every point” (Fenner and deYoung 2001:20). Opponents state that looking at historical evidence we learn that in times of war, women have rarely benefitted from the myth of the male protector and civilian women have often suffered great torment caused by male soldiers. There is, therefore, no reason to believe that men will sacrifice their duties just to keep women safe (Fenner and deYoung 2001:20). Moreover, evidence from the Gulf War – where the unprecedented number of 40,000 women were deployed – show that there was no outcry over the loss of female soldiers or over the two females taken as POWs; neither the male soldiers involved nor the American public had the emotional reaction military officials first feared. Although the female POW’s received increased media attention, Americans voiced no more discomfort or worry over women soldiers than over men (Francke 1997:72-103). Opponents have further claimed that arguments concerning women’s symbolic vulnerability rest on out-dated gender roles that relates back to the male warrior culture, a traditional construct that cannot be treated as a valid reason for keeping women out of the Armed Forces.

Pregnancy and Biological Factors

The final argument maintained for why women do not belong in the Armed Forces pertains to biological factors, and in particular the issue of pregnancy. Critics uphold pregnancy as one of the most serious problems caused by enlisted women, as this every year is the cause of medical non-availability of numerous female members. A pregnant woman is not only unable to perform a number of tasks while carrying her child; she also needs considerable time off duty after giving birth to care for the newborn. Pregnancies are a grave impediment to military readiness, as it reduces the number of active personnel ready to step in and do their job when needed. Also, given the importance of teamwork and companionship, pregnant women is argued to negatively influence group cohesion, as well as being a jeopardy to group moral (Fenner and deYoung 2001:13). Pregnancy can be avoided by correct use of birth control or through the practice of abstinence, therefore skeptics do not consider it an irreproachable medical condition. In fact, women have been accused of using pregnancy as an escape route

out of the military, and Brian Mitchell states that “pregnancy is perhaps the single greatest obstacle to the acceptance of women in the military among military men” (Mitchell 1997:156).

Another biological factor asserted as problematic is women’s monthly cycle. Critics claim that the monthly sick-rate for women is almost twice as high as that for military men, a result of problems associated with women’s period and the fact that women’s cycles tend to synchronize when living close together. Also, compared to men, women are in need of different hygienic standards to stay healthy and avoid infections, standards that are hard to maintain when out on missions (Mitchell 1997:148-49).

Claims that potential pregnancies and women’s health issues represent a problem to women’s military service are rebuked by integration proponents as resting on false assumptions. Looking at statistical evidence for non-deployability caused by pregnancies, one will find that “the evidence simply is not there” (Fenner and deYoung 2001:13). Fenner insist that when investigating military readiness, one cannot merely look at one factor causing non-deployability, such as pregnancies; one must consider all the various circumstances that might cause a soldier to become unavailable. When looking at all factors prompting a temporary leave or rest period, statistics show that men are proportionally more often non-deployable, compared to their female colleagues (Fenner and deYoung 2001:12-13). To single out pregnancy or ‘female problems’, such as menstrual cycle, as the sole problem harming military readiness, are allegations without root in reality, as pregnancy or menstrual problems represents only a few out of many reasons as to why enlisted members may be temporally unable to serve. Also, since pregnancy is a condition that pertains to women alone, if wanting to successfully integrate women, pregnancy must be tolerated as a possibility – just as it is in most civilian jobs (Francke 1997:105).

Equal Rights

Equal rights represent a widespread argument as to why women need to be integrated into the Armed Forces. Based on the premise that it is unacceptable for any institution or organization to exclude individuals based on their gender alone, equal rights advocates claim the military must be obliged to abide by the same standard. The military is not perceived as exceptional

compared to other social institutions and in modern societies where equal rights is an important political matter, as well as a treasured social value, the Armed Forces should not get away with any discriminatory practices (Kennedy-Pipe 2000:32; Woodward and Winter 2004:285).

The equal rights argument is further connected to the broader concept of citizenship. From the times of the ancient Greek city-states, military service has been closely connected with the idea of citizen-rights and military service has historically represented a right and a privilege bestowed upon full citizens only (Fenner and deYoung 2001:52; D. R. Segal, Kinzer, and Woelfel 1977). One of the basic principles of modern states is the inclusion and participation of citizens in all spheres of social life and, based on this tenet, it's argued that women's liberation is not fully achieved until they are allowed to serve their country in the same manner as men. Some gender integrationists go even one step further claiming that military service is an obligation and responsibility that should apply to all citizens alike. Women should therefore not only be allowed to serve, but also expected to defend their country in the same manner as men (Fenner and deYoung 2001:51-77).

Democratic Functionality and Competence

As a core societal institution it has been claimed that the military should be expected to "mirror society's social demographic makeup [...] as well as its core values" (Dunivin 1994:538). If becoming too distanced from the social context in which it exists, the military runs the risk of "divorcing itself from society" and may as a consequence lose public confidence and support (Dunivin 1994:542). In a democracy one should strive to avoid undemocratic sub-cultures, which makes it problematic for the military to so inaccurately reflect the general population. The inclusion of women into the military sphere is, according to this argument, a wider matter of democratic functionality. It has further been argued that by excluding women from the force you eliminate a large pool of potential candidates and thereby exclude valuable competence. Women comprise fifty percent of the population and to prohibit such a sizable group from serving results in the waste of valuable resources. Fenner states that we must "recruit and retain the highest-quality people we can from whatever demographic to create the best possible military for the future" (Fenner and deYoung 2001:30). Denying women the right to serve is

claimed to be not only an offense to women's rights, but also a hazard to the military establishment as it prevents the construction of the most powerful force.

There is an inherent dilemma existing between what is believed to be in the best interest of the military, itself, and considerations toward wider social interests. Defending their stance against arguments based on notions of equal rights and democratic functionality, critics maintain that as the foremost protector of national security, the Armed Forces can not be subject to any other demands than those relevant for honoring this mandate. The opposing approaches was early on addressed by Samuel Huntington in the now classic *The Soldier and the State* (1981), where he writes “the military institutions of any society are shaped by two forces: a functional imperative stemming from the threats to society's security and a social imperative arising from the social forces, ideologies and institutions dominant in that society” (Huntington 1981:2). This dilemma has, as we have seen, continued to inform the debate over women's military participation, which is summarized in the table on the next page.

Table IV. Main Arguments For and Against the Inclusion of Women into the Armed Forces

	Physical Strength	Unit Cohesiveness	Emotional Value	Pregnancy and Biological Factors	Equal Rights	Democratic Functionality and Competence
Opposers Of Gender Integration	Women lack the physical strength and will become the weakest link in the chain	Women disrupt the homogeneity needed to build strong groups	Women possess a strong, emotional value that makes men more protective towards them and, hence, the unit more vulnerable The public less tolerant of female casualties or POWs	Women may become pregnant, which jeopardizes the readiness of the group Women need enhanced facilities difficult to maintain	The Armed Forces can not be subject to any other demands that those relevant for building the best national defense.	The Armed Forces can not be subject to any other demands that those relevant for building the best national defense.
Proponents of Gender Integration	Women have proved themselves capable to handle every aspects of warfare Physical tests not relevant for the vast variety of military jobs. Intellect often more important than muscle mass	Evidence shows that male-female bonding is possible In real-life operations a bond will naturally develop between all participating soldiers	In war, women have rarely benefitted from the so-called male protector instinct. Evidence from the Gulf War testifies that there was no more outcry over female victims. The argument rests on outdated gender perceptions	Men are statistically more often non-deployable, compared to women Pregnancy must be tolerated as a possibility when including women	It's unacceptable for the military to uphold a discriminatory practice Women's liberation cannot be fully achieved until they are subject to the same citizen obligation of protecting their country	The military should reflect the social demographic, if not it runs the risk of divorcing itself from society By excluding women you loose out on important competence

4 Methodological Account

When I first decided to dedicate my master thesis to the investigation of gender perceptions in the military, I understood that I ventured into a project that would not only demand a lot of time and persistence, but also a firm tenaciousness on my part. I did not, however, forecast the large number of emails, calls, additional emails followed by long periods waiting for waits a reply, as well as the recurring stress over whether or not I would actually gain the necessary access to obtain the interview data needed for my research. Looking back I am happy I didn't know the extent of work that lay ahead of me, or else I might have lost faith even before starting. Even though it has been a challenging undertaking, it has also been a very rewarding process. I have learned a lot about what it takes to succeed with a qualitative research project and I now have a greater appreciation for the importance of challenging yourself to be more assertive and confident in order to get what you want. In this chapter I first present an overview of the research process, before discussing the methodological choices made with regard to the thesis.

The Research Process

My very first attempt to map out the possibilities of conducting interviews with military soldiers was in March 2008 – the last semester of my bachelor studies. While visiting Arizona I emailed the large Air Force base located in the area, requesting a meeting or scheduled phone conversation to present my study. After three unanswered emails, I nervously made my first phone call to a military base. From the public affairs office I received the direct email and phone number to a public affairs officer, who would be likely to accommodate me. However, this officer did not take my request seriously and after confirming on the phone that I would get an appointment to meet with her the following week I never heard from her again. The first refusal is definitely the hardest to accept, but I quickly learned that I needed to grow some thicker skin if this was going to work. Next, I decided to try my luck with the Norwegian Armed Defense. Shortly after returning from Arizona I sent an email to Major Ola Christensen, Chief of Communication at the Norwegian Air Force, who replied less than thirty minutes later expressing his interest in the project – even adding a smiley face to his response. The

approaching fall I was invited to the Headquarters of the Norwegian Defense Ministry and during the meeting, Major Christensen assured me that the Air Force would help me out in any way they could.

When I arrived back in Arizona for my exchange semester in the spring 2009, I immediately started investigating prospective facilities that might intermediate contact with American interviewees. I soon learned about the ROTC program at University of Arizona and I sent them an email asking them for a meeting to present my study further. When several emails were left unanswered, I decided to pay them a personal visit. At the ROTC building I was met by a friendly and helpful Captain, who agreed to plead my case to his superior. Unfortunately this did not work out, as the superior did not feel he could assist me with my project at that time. The Captain thought I might have better luck at another military base in the Arizona area, and offered to contact them for me. However, also this request was rejected, as they worried my interviews would detract too much from their valuable training time, also suspecting that my research was carried out on behalf of the Norwegian Defense Ministry, in which case it needed to be cleared at a much higher level of the US Defense Department.

I had now tried my luck with all three military facilities in the vicinity of where I was. Due to limited resources I was unsure about how I might afford conducting interviews in another part of the country; travel expenses was one thing, but I would also need to stay somewhere while interviewing, which would easily be more than I could pay for. During the semester I had made contact with a retired Brigadier General from the Air Force Reserves, General Denny Schulstad, a former neighbor of family friends in Minneapolis. It turned out that General Schulstad had a substantial military network in the Mid-West area and learning about my difficulties making contact with the Air Force, he offered to connect me with some of the military people he knew. Through General Schulstad I was referred to both the Air National Guard and the Air Reserves base in Minneapolis area.

Even though it was a notable difference to be referred to the right people by someone who had a name and knew the system from within, the Air Reserves base regrettably informed me that they could not help me out at this time. This meant I was left with one last option if I should be able to complete the first round of interviews while still in the US. As this turned out to be a busy time of year at the Air National Guard base, I did not receive an answer from them in

several weeks. My request needed to be cleared through the headquarters and every morning I would nervously check my email for any news from the base. When I did not hear anything, I eventually called my contact. To my great relief she could confirm there and then, that it would be no problem conducting interviews at their base, however, she was not sure how many men she could obtain who matched the specific background I asked for. She would try her best to find candidates and asked me to call her again the Saturday of my departure to confirm how many interviews she had been able to schedule.

A few weeks later I got on plane up to Minnesota Air National Guard. As I boarded the first plane, no interviews had been confirmed yet. First when I made my final transfer did I learn that enough male soldiers had, in fact, volunteered and interviews would take place the following day. My first visit to the base was very successful. However, I was not able get the required number of interviews during this one trip and the American interviews would therefore take place during two separate sessions, with another round of interviews being conducted the subsequent fall.

After having been deferred several times due to time constraints on the military base, the Norwegian interviews took place in the summer of 2009; between the first and second year of my master studies. Through my contact in the Norwegian Air Force, Rygge Air Force base was contacted in late May and asked to assist with recruiting interviewees. Due to my summer job, as well as the up-coming vacation for the involved soldiers, the interviews had to be conducted shortly after I got in touch with the base. However, the base was very accommodating and quick to respond, so merely a week after my initial phone call to the base commander interviews were scheduled and ready to commence. This reflects my general experience dealing with the military in both Norway and in the US; establishing contact with the right people was a tedious process, but, once I had a foot inside the system, the military bureaucracy worked to my advantage and interviews appointments were made quicker than I ever thought possible. By September 2009, a year and a half after my I first started, all interviews were completed.

Research Design

With this project I ventured into a cross-national study. I have strived to deploy as similar a design as possible in both countries; however, to construct a good research design was a challenging process, especially since I had to bridge two significantly different military organizations, while at the same time working within a limited range of practical alternatives. In drafting out the research design I have alternated between using the Norwegian and American system as point of reference, and using one case as the outset, I tried my best to find a comparable, as well as viable, alternative within the other country. As with much cross-national research, comparability was not a straightforward matter and a little wrestling was necessary to attain as similar sample groups as possible. Working qualitatively it is important to engage with a flexible design that allows for changes to be made along the way – an advise I find particularly applicable when working comparatively (Creswell 2006:39).

A qualitative project never starts with the first interview; elaborate preparations have often taken place before sitting down with the first participant, my own study being no exception (Fog 2004:17; Widerberg 2001:38). Aside from the practical arrangements, before starting up with the actual interviews I spent substantial time preparing for the conversations that lay ahead. In the preliminary phase of the study two main aspects occupied me; first of all, what topics would be relevant to discuss with the participating soldiers; and secondly, which military men would be most befitting to talk to for the purpose of this study. Designing the interview guide and finding participants was not a sequential process; rather, I worked on both tasks interchangeably and the process can be described more as abiding by a step-by-step approach than following a neatly organized master plan.

Why Interviews?

Starting up this project, I set out to explore a field that was all new to me. My initial and overarching goal was to get a better sense of how military men felt about serving alongside women, and to get an enhanced understanding of the underlying factors that shaped their perspectives. From the very beginning I felt confident that qualitative interviews was the right methodological choice. Through interviews the researcher is given direct access to the participants' personal viewpoints and attitudes and it serves as "an excellent window into peoples interior experiences" (Weiss 1994:1); we are allowed into worlds that would otherwise

be closed for us. Since interviews have become the predominant choice within qualitative sociological research, Widerberg warns against deciding on interviews merely out of convention (Widerberg 2001:57). In this case, keeping the intentions for this project in mind, interviews appeared as the most appropriate choice and the method that would best illuminate the issues that I wanted to explore (Silverman 2001:113-14).

Framing the Interview

Planning the interviews, I wanted them to be orchestrated in manner that enabled the candidates to talk freely and, in their own words, share their thoughts and viewpoints. At the same time, since the study was designed within a comparative framework, if the interview material turned out too dissimilar in terms of what was being discussed, a comparative analysis would prove difficult. The solution seemed to be a fixed-question-open-response approach. This approach lets the researchers present their own list of prepared questions, while concurrently allowing respondents to share their views in their own manner; interview questions may be carefully devised, without constraining the respondents in their answers (Weiss 1994:12). A potential disadvantage to this interview structure is that following a pre-arranged list of questions, the interview might be more prone to play out in a manner that closes off to lengthy, in-depth answers. The interview may more easily feel like a questioning session, which can cause participants to ignore significant details in their responses (Weiss 1994:13-14). Still, no approach is exempt from pitfalls and despite the risk of being faced with more constructed conversations, I felt assured that the fixed-question-open-response structure was well suited for this comparative research format.

The next step was to craft a good interview guide and by reading up on the literature on the field I gained a general idea about which questions to address (Weiss 1994:41). Still, creating a concrete guide that comprised the central issues I wanted to discuss, while at the same time ensuring a natural and coherent conversation was a challenge. After making an analytical sketch with the themes I wanted to include, I drafted out a preliminary guide. Based on feedback from my advisor the initial guide was revised, and next I wanted to put the second draft to the test. Through Major Christensen, two pilot interviews were scheduled with Air Force men who matched the desired participant profile. During these two interviews, I quickly discovered which questions worked and which did not, and as a general lesson I learned that I

needed to be more concrete and less academic in my phrasing. This pilot research turned out to be crucial for the final outcome and the guide, as based on the third revision, was the one I ended up using.

For the American interviews I simply translated the guide, making a few adaptations to the national context. However, I wanted to test it out on an English audience, as well, and through the University of Arizona campus veteran community I was able to practice the guide on three young veterans before commencing the official round of US interviews.

From the very beginning I felt convinced that the interviews needed to be tape recorded. Knowing myself, I did not trust that I had enough training to take the comprehensive notes required, and merely relying on my own account I feared that important detail, along with the full richness of the material might easily be lost. A recorder allows the researcher to be more attentive to the respondents and it secures an accurate reproduction of the full interview, which were important factors deciding on using a digital recorder (Weiss 1994:54).

Participants

The Armed Forces is a large-scale organization, neatly separated into distinct sub-fields. A decision therefore needed to be made regarding which part of the military, as well as level within the military hierarchy, would be most suitable for recruiting interviewees. Military branch and hierarchical position will undeniably influence and shape the experiences and outlooks of the people in question, so determining from where to recruit interviewees was a pertinent issue in terms of data outcome.

I thought it would be interesting to investigate the military subdivision that has proven most favorable to female participation. The Norwegian Defense has demonstrated a pioneering attitude towards female participation and today no position is officially closed off to women. In the US, on the other hand, there are still several jobs to which women are not assigned. Looking to the US, the most progressive branch in terms of gender integration is the Air Force. The Air Force does not only comprise the largest percentage of female service members, but women are also allowed to serve on almost equal terms as men. Since after the Gulf War, women can fly all types of aircraft, including fighter airplanes; a significant shift from the combat exclusion policy practiced by the Army (Burrelli 1996; Goldstein 2003:98-99).

Although it would undoubtedly be interesting to talk to men within other parts of the forces, the Air Force was chosen for its more progressive approach to female service members.

As a result of the compulsory service model, conscripted men comprise the foundational workforce of the Norwegian Defense and when entering the Armed Forces, these are the men women are most likely to first make contact with. Serving in this 'entry-level' position, learning more about their viewpoints seemed like a good place to start. Moreover, considering the cultural focus of the analysis, interviewing men who are not fully entrenched in the military organization also seemed like a good idea. By interviewing this group of men, the de-emphasized focus on organizational factors would also be more justifiable. As fresh recruits, the men were situated in a 'middle position' where they have not been fully molded by the military establishment, at the same time as they are part of the organization. The participants, therefore, appeared to be in a good position for exploring the connection between attitudes and the wider cultural context. As a first-time researcher in this field, I also felt more comfortable interviewing men from the lower ranks – a factor that should also be taken into account (Creswell 2006:96). By concentrating on this group I would have a larger pool of potential interview candidates, which was also a comforting idea, having chosen to work with an organization not known to be easily accessible. After reflecting about potential outcomes of talking to men in other parts of the military, I felt confident that interviewing conscripted men would be a solid outset for the study.

Having targeted conscripted men as the focus group for the Norwegian interviews, next I needed to find equivalent interviewees within the US. The American military is organized in a different manner than the Norwegian Defense, with three main distinguishing factors, as accounted for in the first chapter: it is a significantly larger organization; it is based on a voluntary model of four years minimum service time; and the active duty forces are supported by two additional divisions, the Reserve forces and the National Guard. Working with a different military organization, there was no clear-cut answer as to who would be the most appropriate interview candidates. Also, since making contact with the US Air Force turned out to be a taxing enterprise, to find compatible participants was not merely a methodological matter, but a practical challenge, as well.

Even though the National Guard is founded on a different set of principles than the regular forces, after 9/11 the demand for personnel and military support increased rapidly and today the National Guard is highly interwoven with the rest of the US military (National Guard 2010a). Operations overseas are largely dependent on aid from both Army and Air National Guard and enlisted members will likely experience at least one deployment cycle during their contract time. Due to the interconnectedness between the Air Guard and Air Force, it did not seem to make a radical difference for me to talk to men from the former, rather than the latter, branch.

Even though I managed to get access to two rather comparable military divisions in both countries, to interview men in the exact same military position was difficult – if not impossible – to achieve. I therefore decided to focus on obtaining interviewees who shared some central background traits and concentrated on recruiting men from a relatively similar age group and with a comparable exposure to military training. Using Norway as the baseline, my initial goal was to interview American airmen in their early twenties, with no more than a few years of experience.

The majority of American soldiers I interviewed did possess the desired background. However, it was necessary to show some leniency with the requirements to acquire enough participants. It might be a common assumption to expect a natural connection between age and military experience. In reality, however, I experienced that this was not always the case. Among the base personnel, some men joined the Air Guard already in their late teens and had therefore served for several years by their early twenties, while others in their thirties had just recently enlisted. Working with only one base, there was not an unlimited number of candidates and even among potential participants, many did not have either the time or desire to partake in the study. I also learned that the set experience requirement did not entail automatic comparability to the Norwegian men. Enlistment in the National Guard is a part-time occupation held alongside regular studies or work and besides a 9 week intensive course, the main training is given during a monthly drill exercise (National Guard 2010b). This means that added training time – or what constitutes their military experience – cannot be counted on a yearly basis in the same manner as in Norway. Given these differences it was necessary to make some national

adjustments, but, overall I believe I managed to interview two groups of comparable men in both Norway and the US.

My initial goal was to interview 20 men in each country, making it 40 interviews total. This was later adjusted and I ended up with 34 interviews, evenly divided between countries. This is an ambitious number for the master thesis format; however, granted the time and effort I put down getting access to the field and conducting interviews in two countries, I wanted to generate solid interview data. To set up the interviews, I asked for assistance by both the Norwegian and US Armed Forces. Apart from the numbers issue, to procure a coherent group of respondents would be extremely hard without help from the military establishments. In recruiting interviewees I presented my military contacts with the desired background requirements and asked if they could find men who fulfilled the given criteria. By requesting the assistance of the Armed Forces I had to give up some control over who I got to talk to. However, it paid off in that it secured me a far more homogenous group of respondent than I could ever have accumulated by my own effort.

The Norwegian participants were all between 19 and 25 years old, having served from 3 months and up to a year. All, except one, were of Caucasian ethnicity and they came from all over the country. In the US the age group ranged from 18 to early thirties, most of them being in their early to mid-twenties. Due to reasons discussed above there were greater variations in service time among the American men, diverging from a few months and up to four years. The majority had served between two to three years, part time. Most of the interviewees came from somewhere in the Mid-West, and also here all, except one person, were of Caucasian background.⁸ In both countries the men served in a variety of military jobs, from medical and technical work to more traditional office positions.

⁸ The fact that I ended up interviewing one Non-Caucasian man in each country was a coincidence and not something I intentionally planned or asked for.

Interview Experience

My interview experience was fairly similar in both Norway and the US with, of course, some national differences. The interviews proceeded in the same manner in both countries: when showing up for their appointment I greeted the interviewee and thanked him for taking the time to partake in this study. Since I had not recruited the men myself I would ask them if they had been told what this interview was for, which – to my surprise – few men knew. Most of them knew that this had something to do with women and the military, but very few were cognizant of the purpose of the interview or that they participated in a research project. Informed consent is a core ethical principle of qualitative research, so I offered a short introduction of both myself and the study to make sure the men knew exactly what their participation entailed, before commencing the ‘official’ part of the interview (H. Rubin and I. Rubin 1994:94). This introduction also contributed to create a more calm atmosphere, as it clarified the context for the conversation and gave the men an opportunity to voice any worries they might have (Widerberg 2001:83). Of all 34 interviewees, only one person expressed a concern. When learning that the conversation would be recorded, one American respondent was anxious that what he said might be taken out of context and used as pungent sound bites in the final report. I assured him that I had no intent of doing this. His worries did not seem to stick very deep and my assurance was enough for him to continue his participation without further questions.

To help the respondents get comfortable with their role as an interviewee, as well as with me as the interviewer, the recorded part of the interview commenced with some simple background questions; how old were they, could they share a little bit about their experience with the military and what sort of training had they gone through so far. After the introductory questions, I directed the conversation over to the main topic of discussion, namely gender integration, which remained the central discussion point for the rest of the interview.

A good interviewing partnership is key to a successful interview (H. Rubin and I. Rubin 1994:93; Weiss 1994:61). In the course of an interview, I stayed fairly close to the interview guide, while at the same time doing my best to avoid asking the questions right off the sheet. Even though an interview conversation will rarely be the same as a natural dialogue, obtaining the trust of the respondents is easier if the interviewer is not viewed merely as a distant researcher. My goal was for the interview to be executed as close as possible to a normal

conversation and I would often mix up the order of the questions depending on what the respondent talked about, to create a natural flow. Some times I succeeded; other times, especially with less talkative respondents, the conversation would feel more staccato than desired. However, interviewing 34 individual men, all with their different personalities and style of talking, I believe it is only to be expected that I encountered a variety of interview situations.

In both countries the interviews took place in either an office or a conference room. It is important to reflect about how the interview setting might influence the conversations (Widerberg 2001:82) and using an 'official' space like an office, a result might be that some conversations become more formal than what might have been if the interview took place in a more informal setting, like a living room or a coffee shop. For this purpose, however, conducting semi-structured interviews, I found that the context worked very well and none of the respondents seemed to mind the setting or be uncomfortable in their surroundings.

There were, naturally, some differences between doing interviews in Norway and doing interviews in the US. A main factor that differed between Norwegian and American interviews was the language situation. In Norway, interviews were conducted in my native tongue, whereas in the US I had to do the interviews in English. Despite having spent three semesters abroad, in addition to numerous visits to the US, I still found it somewhat challenging to carry out the conversation in English. For an interview to be successful, it is important that the researcher appears confident and reliable, which was more difficult to achieve with a conversation conducted in the interviewees' native, but to myself a secondary, language. Even though the language situation was more challenging in the US, the English interviews did for the most part run very smoothly.

Another detectable difference between Norwegian and American respondents was that the latter group was generally more verbose and elaborate in their responses. The American men would more often offer lengthy answers without first being asked to expound their views. The American interviews would therefore usually run a little longer than the Norwegian who, in return, were more concise in their responses. Having experienced both cultures close hand, I find that Americans tend to be more easy talkers and more verbally expressive than what is the case in Norway, a national difference that was reflected in the interviews, as well.

A Female Researcher Interviewing Military Men

The researcher is the key instrument in a qualitative study (Creswell 2006:38). Field relations should be treated as data and it is important to reflect on how your identity was accepted in the field and the how it may have influenced the generated data (Silverman 2001:58-60). As a young female student interviewing military men about their views on gender, a common reaction when I have talked about my project has been how can I, as a female, expect honest and truthful answers from the men? It is a valid question to ask, at the same time it rests on an assumption that the men I interview possess attitudes it is uncomfortable to share with a woman. Collecting the interview data, I constantly tried to create and maintain a confiding relationship with the respondents. I communicated an open and interested attitude and did my best to encourage them to speak their mind – especially if I sensed they were hesitant about saying something that might be perceived as “politically incorrect”. During the interviews I experienced that some of the men would add a qualifier before saying something they believed might put women in a bad light, e.g. commenting on women’s physical strength compared to men, and one respondent even openly stated that he did not know if he could say this to me as a woman – before saying what he intended regardless. By presenting myself as genuinely interested, and as someone who would not be offended or upset by anything they said, I tried my very best to produce a good conversational environment and my general impression was, that for the most part, the men were not uneasy or uncomfortable discussing their gender perceptions (Fog 2004:95-102).

Gender is definitely an influential factor in qualitative research. However, without ignoring the gender component, I also agree with Silverman when he writes that it is important not to over-emphasise the effect gender might have (Silverman 2001:60). In my experience, to be a female researcher did not represent an impedingly intrusive factor. While some men might have been more open to a male interviewer, I also believe that having a man conduct the interviews would entail other challenges, as well, for instance might some men feel the need to perform their masculinity in a more overtly manner if talking to another male. During the interviews, several of the men confessed that in the military they found it much easier to talk to female colleagues and that it felt more natural opening up to a woman – something which may also have been applicable to me as a female interviewer.

A Comparative Study

As accounted for in this chapter, working with two cases concurrently not only increases the workload; it can also be quite a challenge to craft a research design that can be deployed as correspondingly as possible in both countries. This being said, there have been some definite advantages working with more than one case. Working comparatively with a case you know well – in this case my home country Norway – enables you to get a fruitful analytical distance to a world that is closely familiar (Krogstad 2000:90). Your taken-for-granted perceptions are made more salient and you become more aware of the naturalization of your own cultural understandings (Lamont and Threvenot 2000:16-17). Durkheim famously wrote “comparative sociology is not a special branch of sociology; it is sociology itself” (Durkheim 1982:157), early on verifying the central importance of comparative research within the tradition of sociology.

A vital part of a comparative study is the selection of cases. It is important to identify research units that comprise a good combination of similarities and difference and achieving a good balance between these two allows one to generate interesting research questions (Engelstad 1995). Charles Ragin writes that “one of the concerns of comparative research is to establish familiarity with each case included in the study “, and as such “knowledge of cases is considered an important goal [...] (Ragin 1994:105). The cases in this study, Norway and the US, seem to fulfill both these criteria. Having lived in and experienced both countries first hand, they represent familiar contexts that I know well. As western countries with close ties between them, Norway and the US share many similarities, culturally as well as politically. At the same time, the countries are also notably different, in particular with regards to demographical makeup, national history, as well as their distinct cultural features. As discussed in the first chapter, the military establishments do exhibit certain similar features, at the same time as being substantially different. All in all, however, I believe the two countries possess a good mix of similarities and differences and that they therefore represent good cases for comparison.

5 Theoretical Platform

When I commenced this project I was motivated by a genuine curiosity as to what military men felt and thought about working with women in the masculine environment of the Armed Forces. Determining theoretical approach, it was important for me to elect a theory that would not obscure the richness of the interview material, but allow for my curiosity to play out. Writing a social science thesis it is easy to let the theory take front seat and have the data mainly serve as an assessment of the theory's validity. I wanted to avoid this for my study and have therefore been cautious to put the interview data in focus and resolved to go with a less theory driven analysis. Having chosen a less theory centered approach it is still decisive to ground the investigation in a theoretical foundation. Theory is what helps separate sociology from just everyday interpretations and without theoretical assistance an analysis will quickly become unsubstantiated and out of focus. For the purpose of this thesis I have selected the theory of cultural sociologist Ann Swidler. I will not put the entire theory to the test, rather, I utilize some core theoretical perspectives as distinct tools to help assess the material at hand. Applying conceptual tools in this manner I believe allows for more flexibility in the analytical process and gives leeway to extract more knowledge from the interviews themselves.

To attain a more elaborate comprehension of the men's viewpoints it is vital to understand the underlying factors that shape their outlooks. Even though the men come from different backgrounds, all with their unique personal story, what they do share is a common national culture that has undoubtedly contributed to form their perspectives. My analysis is focused upon discerning the possible influence of such cultural determinants and detect how they may have factored in to fashion the men's attitudes. For this task, Swidler's theoretical concepts represent a promising avenue. Despite making a more selective use of Swidler, in order to appreciate the parts I do use it is necessary to be acquainted with the basic structure of her theory and to know from where the concepts originate. In the following I start by positioning Swidler in the landscape of cultural analysis, before presenting the framework of the theory itself.

Culture as a System

Within the field of cultural sociology Ann Swidler and Clifford Geertz represent two leading, yet opposed views, as to how to understand culture. The dominant definition of culture was for a long time the one given by Geertz, which defines culture as:

“a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life” (Geertz 1973:89).

Or put another way: “man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs [...]” (Geertz 1973:5). Two facets characterize Geertz’s definitions: firstly, they represent a static outlook of culture as an all-encompassing structure of meaning transmitted from one generation to the next. Secondly, principal importance is attached to symbolic forms as the main vehicles through which people experience life; an emphasis that can be traced back to Geertz’s training as an anthropologist and his method of “thick description”. In his work, Geertz’s research recipe is to present a detailed account, or thick description, of a cultural phenomenon – a ritual, story, or performance – succeeded by an interpretation of its broader significance, achieved by connecting the piece of culture to other parts of social and cultural life.⁹ Geertz strongly favored this approach over generalized accounts, as he believed thick descriptions allow for cultural meaning structures to be understood on their own terms, without imposing other structures of significance (Geertz 1973:3-30). This is undeniably a valuable argument and Geertz’s analyses has, no doubt, brought important insights into cultural acts that would otherwise seem opaque; however, as Swidler points out, his approach is lacking in other regards:

⁹ An eminent example is found in his now famous analysis of the Balinese cock-fight (Geertz 1973:412-53).

“By making the cultural event central in his account, Geertz makes it hard to ask how central it is in the lives of its participants. All culture is vividly lived, because he examines it only at its peak and for those most centrally involved” (Swidler 2001:20).

By merely concentrating on cultural highlights the Geertzian tradition has, according to Swidler, contributed to construct a false perception of culture as a congruous entity (Swidler 2001:13). Aiming at documenting the deep-rooted significance of some selected cultural expressions Swidler argues, “the task cultural analysts set themselves is still most often describing the unifying principle of a cultural system” (Swidler 2001:12). This notion of culture as a unified system is what Swidler so strongly disputes. To her, it represents a limited and, in many ways, unrealistic way of looking at culture, as it rests on what she finds to be a false assumption of cultural consistency. If culture is understood as a coherent system people should be expected to act in a uniform manner, mirroring the webs of significance in which they are all entangled. What is more, if culture exists as a coherent system, not only should people act similarly as a group, one should also expect people to act congruously as individuals, as their actions too are influenced by a consistent culture. Swidler, in her own studies, finds no proof of this being the case and states “when we notice cultural differences, we recognize that people do not all go about their business in the same ways” (Swidler 1986:284). Swidler can not see that we live in a society characterized by consistent individual action or uniform group behavior and, to her, Geertz’s theory falls short in accounting for the many irregularities, inconsistencies and variations we observe within one society.

A second and interrelated criticism raised by Swidler pertains to the predominant focus in Geertzian analysis. Since the Geertzian tradition mainly dedicates its attention to cultural description, two important factors are left unaccounted for: firstly, how culture actually becomes meaningful to people on a personal basis; and secondly, how social actors, themselves, put culture to use in their everyday life. What Swidler misses is a lens through which we can understand people’s personal engagement with culture; an appreciation that goes beyond merely deciphering its content (Swidler 2001:12-14). She writes:

“...understanding how culture changes, or indeed, understanding what difference it makes for someone to participate in a particular culture will require that sociologists address the problems created by the diverse uses of common cultural materials” (Swidler 2001:14).

This brings us to Swidler’s theory – and also the kernel of her disagreement with the Geertzian framework. Swidler do not view culture as a system in which people are inconvertibly ingrained; rather, she believes it exists as a much more complex structure that allows for considerable individual variation with regards to how it is perceived and how it is employed. Even though the cultural materials are the same for people within a given society, how people individually uses it varies greatly. In order to advance our understanding of this diverse usage Swidler calls for a refocusing of cultural analysis: “What we clearly need are more differentiated ways of describing not the content of culture, but the varying – what? – confidence, seriousness, engagement with which people hold it” (Swidler 2001:14). Based on her critique Swidler proposes a new approach to cultural analysis, namely her own theory of culture as a “tool kit”.

Culture as a Toolkit

A realistic theory, argues Swidler, does not present individuals as “passive cultural dopes”, but as skilled users of cultural resources they have available (Swidler 1986:277). In life we are all faced with a myriad of situations and dilemmas. It can easily seem confusing and perplexing and we are all in need of strategies to make sense of the world we live in. An individual rarely remains unchanged throughout life and also on a personal level people need tools to cope with changing perceptions towards life (Swidler 1986:277; 2001:25). Swidler states:

“We must think of culture less as a great stream in which we are all immersed, and more as a bag of tricks or an oddly assorted toolkit containing implements of varying shapes that fit the hand more or less well, are not always easy to use, and only sometimes do the job” (Swidler 2001:24).

To Swidler, culture does not comprise static webs of meaning, but consists of a reservoir of different strategies – or tools – that can be used to help construct a meaningful life. The tools we chose sometimes works, while at other times not, only in parts or in ways unintended. Nonetheless, what culture provides is a variety of moves from which to chose from, depending on what we aim to achieve. In her book *Talk of Love* (2001) Swidler skillfully utilizes her own theory to analyze white, middle-class Americans’ perceptions about romance and love. In our society the notion of love seems to be infused with a rather fixed cultural meaning and the topic would, therefore, presumably be discussed in a uniform manner. What characterized Swidler’s interviews, however, was that the respondents, for the most part, could not present a coherent rationale as to why they loved the person they did, why they got married or what they valued about being in a romantic relationship. To convey their viewpoints they instead had to engage a variety of different discourses.

This was also the case with my interviewees, both in Norway and in the US, and during the course of an interview most of the men had to employ a range of different tools to express their viewpoints. One of the Norwegian participants gives an illustrating example.¹⁰ When I first asked him if he believes men and women manage the challenges of military service equally well he responded, “so far I have, kind of, not felt that there is a difference, not that I’ve seen at least [...] It becomes so that you count them [women] as guys, in a way. They have to do just the same”.¹¹ In regards to the next question on whether he believes men are more suited to be soldiers, especially for combat assignments, he then replied:

“Yes, guys like physical activities and to exhaust themselves and prove that they are men, kind of, but there are many girls who are like that [too], but, I think the guys are a

¹⁰ Participant N – 03. In my analysis, as well as in this thesis, I use a simple coding system, where the first letter indicates which country the participant is from (N for Norway and A for America) and the number states the order of the interview, ranging from 01 to 17 in each country. Since I have not focused on the impact of any background factors besides those they all share – gender, military branch and service time – I decided to go with plain, functional codes.

¹¹ All translations from the Norwegian interview material are my own. I have been careful to try to translate as accurately and directly as possible and therefore some phrasings may seem a bit awkward to english speakers. A few times when using slang or a distinct Norwegian term, it has been necessary to use an english word that only closely translates the word used by the participant. All in all, however, the translations are very precise in conveying what was being said in Norwegian.

little more fit to go to war, if that's it [...] I think that has to do with the physical and the psychological, it's a little more in place, [they are] more used to go through that".

I followed up by asking if he thought men possess more of the toughness needed in a combat situation, whereby he responded: "Yes, I think so, but that really depends on the girl. There are many girls who are fit for the military and there are many who are not". Within this sequence, the man starts by framing the military as an area where gender background is irrelevant; the women have to do the same things as the men and he claims he almost don't see them as a separate group. Moving on to the topic of soldiering the participant switched his stance and instead present men as more fit for traditional warfare activities. When I followed up with an additional question the man modified his view and stated that it really depends on the person in question – some women are fit for military service, others are not.

We see that the interviewee in no way approached the subject of gender relations in the military in a coherent fashion, but uses different reasonings to communicate various aspects of how he feels. Instead of scrutinizing a particular piece of culture, Swidler believes we should begin with its users, like this participant, "asking what they do with the different ways of framing meaning they have available" (Swidler 2001:22).

Cultural Universe and Personal Tool Kits

In our modern society we are constantly impelled to choose between competing cultural signifiers. The overall culture is much broader and contains far more elements than those we personally adopt, and our cultural universe is much wider than the culture we make our own. Determining which pieces of the existing culture to appropriate for our own use we all engage in a critical filtering of the culture we are in contact with, continuously deciding which elements to accept and which to reject. This sifting process ranges from substantial matters, like political conviction, religious belief or profound personal standpoints, to more trivial areas such as style preferences or forms of speech. The cultural components we choose to embrace – ideas, images, attitudes, convictions and demeanors – are what compose our personal tool kits (Swidler 2001:15-17,43). In the example given above, the interviewee's view men as more fit

for combat, but also that individual abilities do play in, both emerge from culturally embedded convictions. Materials available for adoption vary greatly from society to society, with each culture offering a characteristic overall repertoire from which to choose from. Still, people within a given society often share substantial parts of their tool kits, as certain defining elements are likely to be endorsed by most members (Swidler 1986:284).

When it comes to the concrete use of cultural resources there are great differences among people in terms of how much culture they apply in their own lives. Swidler writes that: “some people draw on a wide range of cultural precepts [...], while others move within narrow confines, using one or two formulas or phrases again and again” (Swidler 2001:46). People use their repertoires to varying degrees, but, opposite of what might seem logical to infer, Swidler emphasizes that the extent of tools a person utilize should not be taken as safe evidence of the scope of tools they actually possess; truth is, many people hold a much wider cultural repertoire than what they deploy on a day to day basis.

A key factor to people’s cultural usage is their habit for reflexivity, and Swidler makes a distinction between what she calls a “settled” versus an “unsettled” life (Swidler 2001:52). A settled life occurs “when people have, in some sense, frozen their sense of self in relation to the world...”, a condition that is often the result of a settled career, a set personal life and a lifestyle where evaluation and questioning is not part of the routine (Swidler 2001:69). People in a settled situation are less likely to exercise their reflective capacity, hence, employs fewer parts of their cultural repertoire. An unsettled life, on the other hand, is characterized by a higher level of instability and uncertainty; this is often connected to work situation and personal life, as well, but may also be due to search for new direction in life. Experiencing unstable times, writes Swidler, one is prone to employ a wider array of cultural resources and maybe even adopt new ones, this to help asses and make sense of the situation and to determine which course to take next (Swidler 2001:58,69).

People use culture to different extents depending on life circumstances; though, either you use a wide array of tools or just a selected few, Swidler is careful to accent that people rarely go around making well considered and thoughtful decisions as to which part of their repertoire to

employ. In everyday life use of our cultural repertoires generally occurs without much consideration, as the tools we fully accept fuse in with our experience in a manner so it no longer seems like culture: “when culture fully takes, it so merges with real life as to be nearly invisible” (Swidler 2001:19). Due to this naturalization process “the easiest way to see culture as a repertoire is to examine a situation in which people mobilizes several parts of their repertoires simultaneously” (Swidler 2001:25). A situation in which people instinctively resort to their tools for recourse is when they have something to defend and to ask for a persons outlook on a given matter is, therefore, an eminent way to unveil how people draw on their cultural resources. In the interviews conducted for this thesis, the men were asked to expound their viewpoints on various aspects pertaining to women and the military. Since the men were not only asked about *what* they felt, but also to flesh out *why*, they were in a natural manner impelled to defend their positions. In this manner, I believe the interviews represent a suitable body of data for Swidler’s theoretical framework.

National Cultural Repertoires

Apart from looking at the tools used by the men individually, I am also interested in investigating how elements of the Norwegian and US culture impact the participants’ viewpoints. For the comparative part of my analysis, Canadian sociologist Michele Lamont offers a valuable example of how to apply Swidler’s theory to a cross-national context. Working within a Swidlerian framework, Lamont introduces the term “national cultural repertoires”, defined as “relatively stable schemas of evaluations that are used in varying proportions across national contexts” (Lamont and Threvenot 2000:8). The notion behind this concept is the same as supporting Swidler’s tool-kit theory; the difference is merely a shift of focus from individual tool-kits to cultural tools specific to a given national setting (Lamont and Threvenot 2000:1). Lamont writes:

“each nation makes more readily available to its members specific sets of tools through historical and institutional channels, which means that members of different national communities are not equally likely to draw on the same cultural tools to construct and assess the world that surrounds them” (Lamont and Threvenot 2000:8-9).

Lamont's approach facilitates for investigation of cultural elements that are widely disseminated throughout society and largely endorsed by its members, thereby enabling us "to analyze national cultural differences while avoiding the traditional essentialist pitfalls of culturalism" (Lamont and Threvenot 2000:1). Through her shift of focus from individual tool kits to national repertoires, Lamont makes Swidler's theory highly suitable for comparative cultural research.

Theoretical Application

As stated in the introduction, I believe it is important to grasp the cultural influences that lie behind my respondents' viewpoints, and for this task I regard culture as a tool kit to be a promising concept. Looking to Swidler's theory, what I find to be core strengths for my analysis is her treatment of culture as diverse and manifold as opposed to a static entity, as well as her rigid emphasis on people as cultural users. My theoretical application will be an uncomplicated and straightforward matter. Reviewing the interviews I want to first establish which cultural resources the men in each country draw on in their discussions. I then want to explore how elements of the national Norwegian and American may have impacted the way my informants perceive female military participation and see how differences in cultural understandings may caused the participants to frame issues in separate manners.

The following analysis is presented in four interconnected chapters. The chapters are thematically organized rather than structured around the two national cases. The opening chapter addresses the interviewees' perception of the military and their participation therein, followed by three chapters presenting and discussing the three most prominent cultural repertoires used by the participants. Since the chapters represent sub-segments of the full analysis, if read isolated they might give a false perception of the cultural usage as more harmonious than what is truly the case; however, when regarded as a whole, the analysis is intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of how some repertoires enhance one another, while others, again, exist as more or less incongruous. The repertoires are examined as

they are presented; though, I offer a more extensive discussion of all four repertoires in the concluding chapter.

Presenting an analysis of such a vast interview material is a challenging task; even more so with the raw material covering two independent cases. To make a reliable analysis it is important to not just cherry pick examples to get a coherent story and I have therefore been careful to comment on findings and present quotes that not always corroborate the general conclusions (H. Rubin and I. Rubin 1994:226). At the same, for a cross-national analysis to be viable within this format all variance and nuances cannot be accounted for. This analysis, therefore, focuses on the most well-defined viewpoints, as well as the most pronounced repertoires, and examines how participants in both countries relate to these (Lamont 1994:33-34). Since the repertoires were not always equally developed or utilized to the same extent within the two national contexts, in some instances one case receives a more lengthy treatment, yet, in the analysis as whole this will get balanced out.

6 Attitudes Toward Military Service

Women and the military was the main topic for the interviews; however, it did not take long to discern that the participants' view on the military and their own involvement was considerably different across the two cases. The American men generally viewed their military participation as a patriotic commitment they, as American citizens, were obliged to take on. As members of the Armed Forces they felt committed to abide by a higher moral standard and be a leading example to the rest of society. The Norwegians, on the other hand, predominantly viewed their stay in the military as a life-chance opportunity. Military service was something they did out of personal incentives; it was believed to benefit them individually and was, overall, framed as a personal adventure rather than a citizen obligation. This difference may seem somewhat surprising given the fact that recruitment is a voluntary commitment in the U.S. but mandatory in Norway. Given that the interviewees revealed such different approaches towards military service in general, I commence the analysis by exploring these differences and also review the separate standings of the institution of the Armed Forces within the two countries. I then examine how the diverging repertoires used by the men to discuss their service are embedded in the wider national cultures, before I relate my findings to two predominant perspectives within military sociology. To get a better understanding of how the men view their military service, as such, provides valuable background for comprehending their attitudes towards women in the military.

Military Service as a Moral Commitment

*“... the American people look
at us and look up to us”
(A – 01)*

The Armed Forces hold a high position in American society. Having lived in the US it is hard not to notice all the small markers that indicate the respect people have for the military and its service members: Active duty soldiers invited to skip the line at train stations; discounts awarded in a wide range of places to both current as well as veteran soldiers; bumper stickers and yard signs expressing support for the troops; veterans invited to identify themselves before

cultural events to receive ovation; Starbucks coffee and California wine sold with proceeds going to military personnel; people wearing a caps or t-shirt testifying their veteran status – and the list goes on. While this is merely anecdotal evidence, working on this project abroad it was interesting to witness firsthand the strong presence the US military have in American society.

To comprehend the revered position of the Armed Forces one must look at the manner in which the US was founded. Unlike most other countries, the US was not created on the basis of a common ethnic identity; rather the nation was “founded by self-interested men” (Berns 2001:133) on a shared ideological platform of what they believed to be fundamental political principles and inalienable human rights (Berns 2001:3). As the only country founded on a creed, a cornerstone of the American identity has been allegiance to the very principles on which the nation was created. What makes you an American is not your background, but your dedication to the American ideology. Seymour Martin Lipset explains: “Being an American [...] is an ideological commitment. It is not a matter of birth. Those who reject American values are un-American” (Lipset 1997:31).

The strong emphasis on ideological loyalty has promoted a great sense of patriotism and national pride. Such sentiments are both widespread and intense and, compared to other countries Americans “exhibit a greater sense of patriotism and belief that their system is superior to all others” (Lipset 1997:51). While there are numerous ways to demonstrate one’s patriotism, there are few deeds more patriotic than the act of soldiering and to be a military member represents, in many regards, the very quintessence of patriotic devotion: “Patriotism means love of country and implies a readiness to sacrifice for it, to fight for it, perhaps even to give one’s life for it” (Berns 2001:131-32). America’s military involvements are, no doubt, a much contended issue, however, the symbolic position of the Armed Forces – and even more so the troops – is one that transcends political disagreements. While one might object concrete military operations, it remains a shared national sentiment that no one is closer to demonstrate their national allegiance than the members of the Armed Forces (Berns 2001:133).

The men I talked to seemed to be well aware that their position in the National Guard represents more than an ordinary job. Many of the American participants expressed that as a military member they felt expected to embody the values the institution of the Armed Forces connotes and to act as a role model for the general public (see Ficarrota 1997). One respondent

reported: "A lot of people look at us and I guess, just the American people look at us and look up to us", adding that, as role models, "we need to maintain the professionalism and I guess the moral high ground"(A – 01). The participant extended this responsibility to also include the US as a nation, saying that "as the leader in the world, America has this responsibility that we should walk the moral high ground and set a good example" (A -01). Both nationally, as well as internationally, the US and its military members are expected to lead by example and demonstrate an exemplary sense of moral responsibility and commitment.

Another participant commended his fellow soldiers and asserted that "the people you're surrounded with are kind of a cut above. They're all committed for a better good hopefully" (A – 08). Not only are service members expected to outwardly set a good example, on a personal level they are also "a cut above" their fellow citizens. Asking the respondents which qualities they believed a good soldier should possess, they were quick to mention traits that testify to your personal character and the virtue most repeatedly brought up in response to this question was "integrity". To have integrity was viewed as a core quality for any good soldier. One man defined it this way: "I think number one, you know, like integrity. Always do the right thing, no matter who is watching. Being overseen or not, making sure you are always doing the right thing. I think that is huge" (A – 02). To be a soldier is about more than obeying orders and do what you are told. It is also about your inner disposition and to possess a solid character was perceived as an integral component of being a good US soldier.

Moral responsibility was central also when it came to their motivation for enlisting. Most of the participants had a clear sense of purpose as to why they joined the military and, while the benefits they receive was part of the motivation, a more predominant factor was the notion of "giving back" – either to community or to the country. One participant said: "I always wanted an opportunity to serve my country. I'm a firm believer that we can't enjoy these freedoms for free. I've always been looking for a way to do that" (A – 04). Another interviewee shared that ever since he was young his parents have instilled in him a sense of community, to "serve some purpose that's greater than yourself" and his involvement in the Armed Forces gave him this chance of "contributing to something that's larger than yourself" (A – 11).

What is more, several participants admitted that they, in fact, hoped to be deployed and to be able to "sacrifice" in that manner. One respondent said:

“I definitely feel that as a Guard member in the reserves, to be able to do that, to sacrifice some time on an active duty role, being deployed [...] I do have some reservations, but I feel that the sacrifice would be worth it ...” (A – 02).

For the vast majority of men, their service in the Armed Forces was more than just a part-time job; it was a vocation they believed they, as citizens of the US, were committed to take on.

The American respondents exhibited a strong sense of responsibility and a *commitment repertoire* was widely used to convey both their motivation for serving, as well as their sense of responsibility as service members. As military members they viewed themselves as bound by an elevated moral standard and expected to pave the moral high ground for fellow citizens. On a personal level they believed it to be important to possess a committed character and a strong sense of integrity. As citizens they felt obliged to give back and sacrifice some of their time, security, and effort for a greater good. They felt compelled to contribute to their country and pay for the freedoms they enjoy, as American citizens. Individual considerations were notably absent and their attitude towards the Armed Forces was dominated by a profound sense of moral and patriotic commitment.

Military Service as a Life-Chance Opportunity

“I thought this year would do me good, both socially, physically and experience-wise. I do not have a strong desire to go to Afghanistan or fight for my country, or things like that” (N – 10).

The Armed Forces do not hold the same position in Norwegian society as it does in the U.S. The Norwegian Armed Forces are not endowed with the same high, symbolic status and Norwegians are comparatively less concerned with defense politics and maintaining a strong military force (World Value Survey 2008). Military’s visibility in Norwegian society on a day-to-day basis is not considerable and Norway’s military participation abroad has not spurred the same wide societal interest as it has among Americans.

In terms of their attitude towards own service, the Norwegian participants showed a distinctively different approach than the American men. The most striking difference was revealed in regard to their motivation for serving and discussing why they were in the military not a single Norwegian participant invoked a sense of citizen obligation; in fact, the closest any of the men got to refer to the existence of a male service requirement was a few who admitted that they were there because they “had no reasons why not to”. One interviewee explained that “I saw that I had received the notice and thought ‘well, well’ [...] I am not the person to lay down and cry and scream to get out of something, so I decided to try and make the best out of it...” (N – 17).

The vast majority of interviewees presented highly individualistic rationales as to why they “decided” to enter the Armed Forces. Most of the men underlined personal benefits and pointed to the positive consequences this year would yield to them individually. One man explained:

“Well, I really just thought to get a better resume, it’s nice to have that on your resume and it’s a good thing with new people you know – or that you get to know new people. And it [military service] is just good to have under your belt” (N – 05).

To build their resume was frequently mentioned as a motivational factor, along with socializing and getting to know new people. Some attributed their stay to private circumstances, as for instance one man, who said he joined “...mostly because I flunked New Norwegian, so then I didn’t get into any schools, so it’s really a year off before school” (N – 06). Others, again presented more intertwined explanations as to why military service eventually ended up as a good option:

“ I guess it was because I lacked alternatives. I had just graduated high school last year, in 2008, then I had ... I could have started my studies, but I was too tired of school for that. I worked from June to the end of September at a grocery store, so I was pretty tired of that, so I was kind of ready for something new, so when I got the notice I could at least try, I don’t have anything to loose by that” (N – 16).

Military service was not something the participant intentionally aimed for; rather, it was a convenient alternative in the situation he was in. The patriotic and communal motives so dominant among the American interviewees were not present among the Norwegian participants who, in turn, mostly viewed their military service as an individual project. One of the men even said, unhesitatingly, that to fight for his country is not the reason why he is in the military. He joined “mainly because I thought this year would do me good, both socially and physically and experience-wise. I do not have a strong desire to go to Afghanistan or fight for my country, or things like that” (N – 10).

When the participants talked about their initial expectations of what it would be like to serve, a widespread anticipation was that it would be like “in the movies”. They believed it would be tougher and more in line with the hard-core routine depicted in Hollywood films and although they never mentioned exactly which movies they had in mind, the comparison of expectations with cinematic depiction was frequently made. One respondent replied that he thought it would be “a bit more strict, that it would be harder and a lot of discipline. It is a lot of discipline, still, but it’s not even close to the way I thought it was going to be. I thought it was going to be more like in the movies” (N – 03). Another participant alluded to the same notion, adding that in reality it is more like a normal job:

“I thought it was going to be more like the impression you get from movies and what you imagine it to be – what you hear from other people – that it is very push, push, push, with guys crying in the mud, kind of, but its not like that. It’s more like a work place, kind of” (N – 01).

Although some participants expressed disappointment that they didn’t see more action, most of the interviewees seemed quite content, regardless that their initial expectations were not quite met. They were, after all, exposed to situations and training they would never have encountered in civilian life and, while the military was less intense than they envisioned, they focused on the experiences they did get and the new people they got in contact with.

The common manner in which the Norwegian participants framed their military service was as a *life-chance opportunity*. The notion of opportunity was central both to why they decided to enter, as well as how they approached life while serving. To serve in the Armed Forces was viewed as a chance for them to better themselves socially, physically as well as professionally. It was also construed as a place to get experiences they could not get in the civilian world or represented an opportune alternative in the situation they were in.

National Differences and Cultural Conditions

Compared to the American commitment approach, the Norwegian life-chance opportunity repertoire appeared less pronounced. Their motives were, overall, vaguer and subject to more individual variation. Whereas the American explanations were infused with strong ideological conceptions, the Norwegian replies remained void of ideological connotations; their decision to serve was predominantly spurred by personal incentives.

Considering the different intensities of the two repertoires one should keep in mind that the situation surrounding the men's service is distinctly different across the two cases; to enter the Armed Forces is a far more profound decision for an American than what is the case for a Norwegian. The institution they join is involved in operations on an entirely different level than in Norway, their enlistment is much longer and, with a voluntary recruitment system, the decision to sign up is entirely their own. For the American interviewees deciding whether or not to enlist represents, in many regards, what Swidler refers to as an unsettled situation. This, seemingly, prompted them to make a more active use of culture materials (Swidler 2001:89). Entering the Armed Forces may in the worst case cost the participants their life and the American men, therefore, had to make sure that their decision is well anchored. Doing so they engaged powerful cultural conceptions that explicitly supported the choice they were making (Swidler 2001:93). The Norwegians, on the other hand, find themselves in a more settled situation. Their motivation, in turn, relied on more well-used cultural formulas, such as individual opportunity and self-enhancement. The Norwegian men are not forced to make the momentous decision of their American colleagues, which makes their need for cultural resources less severe (Swidler 2001:103-04). These diverging settings may help explain the

different intensities of the two repertoires, yet, the content of their evaluations may be better understood by exploring the national cultures in which the men are embedded.

American national culture places great emphasis on personal liberty and self-governance, at the same time as the notion of civil society is also a central cultural element. Americans generally possess a strong community attachment and exhibit what often seems like an almost innate urge to give back. What might seem like two polar opposites – a prevalent individualistic focus and a strong sense of communal responsibility – is, in reality, an interrelated matter; or in the words of Lipset, “somewhat of a double edged-sword” (Lipset 1997:268). The American creed promotes an elaborate sense of individual freedom and the Government is, to a large extent, construed as an intrusive entity that needs to be restricted to not interfere with people’s personal liberties. Yet, the creed also fosters a high sense of moral duty and voluntarism. People are expected, as individual moral agents, to feel a personal responsibility to contribute to the civil society in which they live; the crucial matter is that people do this freely and, thereby, maintain their personal autonomy (Lipset 1997:276, 289). This double-edged sword, some claim, is a pertinent aspect of American culture, as “the self-interest demanded by the individualistic pursuit of success needs to be balanced out by voluntary concern for others” (Bellah 1985:199). Several of the American participants believed it was important that military involvement took place on a voluntary basis, making it evident that they valued their sense of self-governance. Still, the notion of giving back was clearly ingrained in the interviewees and represented a forceful cultural resource used to justify their engagement in the forces.

The Norwegian national culture promotes a diverging outlook. As a western democracy, individual freedom is undoubtedly a central aspect of Norwegian culture, yet, the emphasis on individual autonomy is less prevalent than in the US. Norwegian society is characterized by a high level of government involvement and as a universal welfare state the scope of government responsibility is substantial. However, as opposed to many Americans, Norwegian citizens are widely accepting of government intervention into private life and the welfare state has considerable support in the general public (Hagen and Hippe 1993:103). Claims have been made that within the elaborate welfare system the Scandinavian model represents, solidarity becomes institutionalized to the extent of replacing the notion of voluntarism. While the scope

of this argument can be debated, there is little doubt that Norwegian culture emphasizes a less persistent attitude towards personal social responsibility (Selle 1993). Compared to the American men, the cultural material available to the Norwegian participants made them less prone to conceive their military involvement as a social obligation and the notion of personal social responsibility did not represent the readily accessible tool as it did for the Americans.

The life-chance opportunity approach of the Norwegian participants may, in turn, be better comprehended by looking at the generational shift taken place with regard to moral ideals. Compared to previous generations' emphasis on "being obedient" today's youths cultivate a much stronger individual focus. Today "the individual life-span is ideologically foregrounded" (Gullestad 1996:37) and the individual person, with their personal life projects, has taken center stage (Gullestad 1996). The life-chance opportunity repertoire used by the Norwegian men corresponds very well with this change in value system and, as demonstrated, the Norwegian interviewees were not hesitant to state personal incentives as the sole motivation for military service. American culture is also highly individualistic. However, the notion of community seems to have been a more forceful cultural tool in motivating the American participants. The notable difference between how the participants discussed their military involvement remains an intriguing aspect not only from a cultural point of view, but also observed from a theoretical citizen-soldier perspective.

The Citizen-Soldier Tradition Reversed

Moskos (1977) has made a noted distinction between the military as an *institution* and the military as an *occupation*, which represents an interesting parallel to the diverging attitudes of the American and Norwegian interviewees. If approached as an institution, service members exhibit a dedication to the Armed Forces that exceeds that of an ordinary job. If perceived merely as an occupation, it is not considered much different from any other job. Whereas the American men treated the Armed Forces as an institution, the Norwegians perceived it more in line with an occupation, and their attitude towards serving did not appear too different from what it would have been towards an ordinary civilian job. This national difference is especially

interesting from a citizen-soldier perspective, which draws a distinct link between citizen obligation and military service. The citizen-soldier tradition is conventionally associated with conscription and the idea that protecting one's country is an integral part of being a national citizen. It has even been claimed that a system of voluntary recruitment – as in the US – serves to weaken this link by letting individual incentives replace the feeling of national duty (Kestnbaum 2002). My findings, however, found this assertion to be quite reversed. The American interviewees, who all enlisted on a voluntary basis, displayed a strong sense of citizen obligation; the Norwegians, rather, were the ones to frame military involvement as an individual undertaking assumed for personal gains (for more on this see Krebs 2009; Soeters 1997). Table VI presents these national differences.

Table V. Attitudes to Own Military Involvement

	The US	Norway
Attitude Towards Service	<i>A commitment: a social responsibility, a patriotic effort and a way to give back to society</i>	<i>A life-chance opportunity: a undertaking for personal gains, motivated by highly individual incentives</i>
Cultural Foundation	An elaborate emphasis on personal freedom, yet balanced out by a strong sense of individual social responsibility	Less focus on the individual obligation to give back, more acceptance of public interference. The personal life-project fore grounded.
Relation to Citizen-Soldier Tradition	The military approached as an <i>institution</i> , corroborates the citizen-soldier tradition	The military approached as an <i>occupation</i> , subverts the citizen-soldier tradition

Having established the separate manner in which the men approached service in the Armed Forces, the diverging attitudes make up an interesting backdrop for exploring the main discussion topic for the interviewees, namely their perspectives on women in the military. In the next chapter I start by looking at the notion of equality and how it was used by the men in discussions of women' roles.

7 Two Understandings of Equality

In both countries, gender equality was a largely supported principle and a readily available resource frequently used by the respondents to frame their outlooks. The majority of participants did not depict the military as an exclusively male arena unsuitable for female participation; rather, the interviewees generally spoke favorably of women and expressed great appreciation for females in the ranks. There was common agreement across the cases regarding the positive value of gender integration and a similar rhetoric were used in assessing the advantage of a gender-mixed force.

While equality represents a prevalent social value in both Norwegian and American national culture, it is far from a straightforward concept. In the opening chapter of their book *Equality in America*, Sidney Verba and Gary R. Orren discuss the inherent ambiguity of the ideal: "... the blunt term equality can not convey all that is at stake. Equality has many meanings, often contradictory; it is not one issue, but a complex of issues" (Verba and Orren 1985:1). This ambiguity became manifest when getting into more specific discussions about women's position within the Armed Forces. The meaning attached to the concept of equality, as well as what aspects they found important were not just the same between the two countries and looking closer into the material, two diverging sets of reasoning became apparent. Whereas the Norwegian men used a repertoire embedded in an understanding of equality as meaning equal treatment of men and women, the repertoire employed by the American participants instead focused on the importance of men and women being granted the same initial opportunities and given an equal chance of serving and succeeding in the Armed Forces.

In this chapter I first discuss the overlaps in general attitude towards women in the military, before investigating the two different equality repertoires used by the participants. After substantiating the two repertoires I look at how the diverging notions are embedded in a wider cultural context.

Women as a Welcome Asset

*“Women have qualities that us guys don’t have at all at that make us learn from each other, and make us more competent for all kinds of things”
(N – 10).*

There was widespread consent among men of both nationalities that women represent a valuable asset to the military establishment. In both countries the men assertively complimented women, both on a personal basis as well as women as a group. Compared to themselves, females were believed to possess a different range of qualities, which makes them a beneficial resource to the forces. Female soldiers were not presented as inferior to men; instead they were portrayed as different, yet equally valuable members of the military. Contrary to what has been claimed by integration opponents (e.g. Mitchell 1997), women were not discussed as foreign or disruptive elements and their presence was much appreciated and valued by the men on both sides of the Atlantic.

When asked to elaborate on the specific qualities women possess that are beneficial for the military, most of the men, Norwegian as well as American, had no problem naming positive attributes. Numerous qualities were listed, for instance “better multi-taskers”, “good organizers”, “better thinkers”, “good social skills” and “tougher mentally”. In Norway, however, the men more typically emphasized communication, empathy and compassion as valuable traits. One man put it like this: “women can be smart in all kinds of strange ways, but first and foremost I guess they have an ability to think a little longer, to be more sympathetic and to show more solidarity ...” (N -10). Another participant believed women create a more intimate environment: “... its just kind of a feeling of closeness that makes us more comfortable, feel less trapped here – not just boys in every direction, kind of” (N – 13). Many of the Norwegian men also said they preferred to confide in women and that they felt they were “easier to talk to” or to “confess in”.

Also talking favorably of what they perceived as female characteristics, the American informants emphasized somewhat different virtues as valuable. Diversity was more often

underlined as an advantage; since women not necessarily think in the same manner as men they can provide “a different train of thought”, “other perspectives” or “new insights”. One man summarized it this way: “I think women think differently and bring other things to the table, as far as ideas, brainstorming and an ability to bring a different thought process than males – the way males think – in general” (A – 02). Just as in Norway, many of the American men talked favorably of women as more empathic, however, more so than their Norwegian counterparts a repertoire consisting of more traditional gender characteristics were invoked when discussing women’s sensitive side, e.g. depicting women as “more caring kind of people [...] better comforters, better nurturers” (A – 04). Another interviewee felt “that they have more so of a focus on everyone’s welfare instead of their own” (A – 15), while one commended them for their “phenomenal job of caring, compassion – caring for soldier troops, military members that are dealing with things that they are dealing with” (A –02).

Although none of the interviewees expressed an overtly hostile attitude towards female service members, in both countries there were also those more neutral in their attitudes. These participants were hesitant to attach specific gender labels to concrete qualities: “I guess it depends on the person either way” (N – 17) or to talk about men and women as two distinctively different groups:

“..I guess I think you would definitely lose if you don’t include women in the military, but I don’t know it’s necessarily because it’s different than what men have. I think it’s just more people, as always, that brings a larger pool of skills to the organization” (A – 07).

These interviewees were generally just as supportive of gender equality, but found individual differences to be more pertinent than general differences between men and women.

Asking about their group composition preferences, the majority of men said they favored gender mixed-units over working in exclusively male groups. Some believed that women “balances things out”, while others confessed they just “liked having women around”. In both countries, several interviewees admitted that with only guys around, men will often act more unruly; they tend to be “a little more rowdy, and be a little bit more crude and tell dirty jokes and all that” (A – 08). In a mixed unit, on the other hand, people “tend to work a lot better and

in a more positive way” (A – 12). Working with women “adds a different aspect that creates a different interaction; not that manly action-man, buddy type of bonding, but it becomes more professional” (N – 4). Women were, by and large, presented as having a positive influence on group dynamics and a Norwegian respondent, who during basic training was in an all-male company, even admitted he felt a void with no women present:

“I just really noticed that something was missing – and I noticed what it was when I came here [to the base] because then we had those ten percent – the unit I was in for the security course it was very, it became somewhat different. It became a much more diverse group. [...] The atmosphere and mood became something completely different, like, just by having them there” (N – 02).

Accompanying their gender egalitarian viewpoints, a notable number of men in both countries concurrently engaged a generational discourse, positioning themselves and their generation’s gender values as distinctly different from those of the “outgoing generation” of men. One American plainly stated “we’ve just gotten to this point where we are going to get rid of the oldsters, and then the people that are coming in nowadays don’t really care what color your skin you have or what gender you are” (A – 10). Another juxtaposed the “old military” with what he perceived as “the new military”, which in contrast “opens up a lot for women” (A – 03). A Norwegian participant referred to traditional gender perceptions as “an old dinosaur way of thinking” (N – 04) that is no longer valid in today’s society. Using a discourse underlining generational difference, the men positioned themselves as more liberal and inclusive in their gender outlooks – a “new force” compared to the past cohort. Although present in both countries, a generational discourse was more frequently used by American respondents.

An equality repertoire emphasizing equal worth were employed by men in both countries; no one discussed women as inferior members of the group or as lacking profound characteristics needed in a military environment. While respondents revealed interesting similarities in their adherence to a gender egalitarian agenda there was, however, significant national difference when it came down to the particular meaning interviewees attached to the concept of equality. These differences were especially accentuated in discussions of fitness standards and conditions of women’s service. Then, when participants discussed the issue of conscription in

Norway, or draft in America, their viewpoints tended to again converge and, once more, prompt the use of a similar equality repertoire.

Equal Treatment versus Equal Opportunity

*“It should be the same, really,
since there should be equality”
(N – 09).*

Physical Standards

Both the Norwegian and US Armed Forces operate with separate physical fitness standards for men and women during the initial military training. Women are subject to a lower standard, which means that they have to complete fewer sets and are allowed longer run-times during fitness tests. The practice is justified by gender differences in muscle mass and general body structure. When I asked the Norwegian men how they felt about men and women being subject to different fitness requirements, there was an interesting split in opinion. Certain participants had no problem accepting the practice, stating that “guys are stronger” or “we’re not built the same”, which makes a difference in standard only “fair”.

The majority of interviewees, however, were far less understanding of the differential treatment of male and female recruits; if a certain standard needs to be maintained, it is neither fair, nor make sense, for one group to be exempt. To these men, gender was simply not viewed as an accepted reason for dispensation and they did not believe it was right for women to be treated as a separate group entitled to their own rules: “If there are certain criteria for things you should be able to fulfill those criteria, if you are either male or female” (N – 08). Another respondent concurred, stating that “if women are to join the military, they kind of should do what they guys have to do, not dodge” (N – 03). The conditions under which you serve were not considered a negotiable matter, adaptable to service members’ gender.

Other participants contended that since women are not excused from any of the actual work they have to do in the military, different fitness standards simply do not make sense:

“I believe the physical tests are made so that you shall manage to get through this-and-that; a long run, carrying heavy equipment and things like that. And when you’re first out doing that run, you got – everyone got the same equipment and no one has – there are no differential treatment there. It’s just the physical standard, so that exactly – I just think it is a strange way to do things. But I think the Armed Forces have just started with it, so it’s not so intimidating for girls, so it’s not as hard, and things like that. Maybe they started with it [a lower standard] to adjust it up later, because the way it is now, I feel is kind of – strange. It becomes a type of gender discrimination, in a way” (N – 04).

The physical reality of military life does not adjust to one’s gender or, as pointed out by another participant “the things don’t weigh less just because she manage to carry less” (N – 15). Since men and women are otherwise subject to the same expectations and workload, leveling one group’s fitness standard was neither regarded as logical nor reasonable.

Some interviewees also pointed to the male barometer and claimed that it does not represent an unattainable standard, even for women. One man had experienced that “those girls who are good and actually try, they manage to meet the male standard, and there isn’t that high of a physical standard that they can’t make it” (N – 17). If the male requirements are manageable if women only commit themselves, than there are no reasons for why that standard is not made the universal norm.

Among the Norwegian men, gender differences in fitness standard were not perceived as a clear-cut matter of accommodating variations between the male and female physique. Many expressed dissatisfaction with today’s differential practice, either believing that requirements should be inviolable or questioning the logic behind maintaining two parallel standards. Instead of gender specific requirements they called for conditions to be the same across the board; if the norm of equality is to be honored, all recruits need to be treated the same.

The American interviewees viewed the matter differently. The perception of differential requirements being unfair or unethical was not echoed by the American respondents; to the contrary, in fact, several of the men believed having just one training standard is what would be unreasonable: “I don’t think it would be fair to do one standard, because they obviously are

not built the same, its not fair to give them harder work [...] making it fair is a very good idea” (A – 14). The notion of “fair” was in the American context not equated with “same”, but rather with adjusting the requirements so that people have the same outset according to their physical disposition. To level the criteria was not perceived as a violation of the creed of equality, quite the reverse, it was considered a manner of ensuring that people of both genders have an equal opportunity to succeed.

Other participants asserted that job achievement is the key factor when it comes to physical standards, not the requirements themselves. One man perceived today’s practice to be “perfectly fair”, stating: “The way I look at it is, are they [women] able to fulfill their job? If the PT standard [Physical Training standard] allows them to fulfill their job then go ahead and go for it” (A – 09). Maintaining a difference is in itself not judged as an offense; if running slower or doing fewer push-ups still allows you to do a satisfactory job that’s what is important – as concluded by the same respondent, “that’s about functionality”(A – 09).

Also according to this perspective, gender based fitness standard is a matter of creating equal opportunities. If easier requirements do not restrain women from doing their designated job, the concrete content of the fitness standard is not significant. Allowing women to serve under a different set of conditions is not considered a deal breaker for attaining equality, but a reasonable adjustment that facilitates for women’s opportunity to serve.

While the general sentiment among the American men was one supporting a dual fitness standard, some interviewees did not approve of the present practice. However, quite interestingly, the American skeptics framed the upholding of separate requirements as a manner of disenfranchising female service members, maintaining that women’s lower standard presents them as less capable than male soldiers. One man put it like this:

“ I believe not holding them to a higher standard is just like, oh well you can go ahead and be equal with guys, but it’s all right, you don’t really have to. You can go off and slack off in this and that. I don’t think it matters for the job, but I think it patronizes women” (A – 04).

It was not the different standards that is targeted as the main problem, but the consequences it bears in that it symbolically portrays women as a weak link in the military work structure.

Another man said: “I think it’s more sexist than anything [...] it’s probably an old fashion concept, I guess, women can’t do as much as guys...” (A– 03). While the actual attitudes may differ from the men referred to above, the argumentation relies on the same reasoning, namely how it affects women’s standing in the Armed Forces. Whether they argued that a differential standard is what best provides women with an equal outset, or believed that this practice patronizes women and detracts from their status in the military, the participants used a common repertoire that, in both cases, emphasizes the importance of creating equal opportunities for women in the forces.

Treatment Within the Military

The equal treatment repertoire used by Norwegian respondents became even clearer when getting into more details about women’s position within the military. As part of the recruitment strategy to increase the percentage of women in the Norwegian military, certain measures have been taken to accommodate women’s entry. For instance, women are not required to sign a binding contract – a declaration of consent – until after three months and they are also invited to exclusive “girl meetings” to get helpful advice on how to handle life in the Armed Forces (Jenter i Forsvaret fra A til Å 2010).

Even though women represent a significant minority in the forces, facilitating differently for female service members was not viewed as an acceptable manner of raising the numbers. While not all participants commented on these measures during their interviews, among those who did it was clear that this was an upsetting matter. When asked if there, in their mind, were any specific obstacles for a full integration of women, differential practices were quickly mentioned as a deterrent:

Participant: The declaration of consent at the end of basic training. And all those girl meetings, they are not really necessary, if you ask me [...].

Interviewer: is it unfair that they [women] are subject to special treatment?

Participant: Yes, most definitely. They have said yes, than they should be able to handle it in the same way as everybody else, even if it is voluntary. It is close to voluntary for the others in here, as well (N – 08).¹²

Another interviewee could not hide his feelings when talking about “the benefits” women receive in the forces. To him and others he had served with, this was viewed as distinctly “provoking”:

Participant: They fuss around and set their own rules, just because they are girls, which, of course, provokes a lot of people. Because the thing is, there has been such a fight over equal rights and all those kind of things. Then, when they enter the military, damn it, they receive special treatment – just because they are girls! Those are the things that really provoke.

Interviewer: what kind of benefits do they typically get?

Participant: Well, when they first enter they receive a “pantie-bonus”¹³; they get money because they are girls and because they shall have a “pantie-bonus”. Okay, they need to wear this-and-that kind of panty and –okay, but what about us? We need to shave, right, if not you have to apply in order to keep your beard. Why don’t we get a shaving-bonus, kind of, because razor blades cost, like, a lot more. It’s kind of – everything is catered towards the girls [...]. It just don’t make sense that the girls are integrated into the military because now there are equal rights, and then they receive special benefits because they’re here – since we used to be a male dominated branch. That, I think, is wrong. It’s just like getting even, right, then all we do is just turn the table (N – 13).

¹² Even though Norway practices mandatory military service for men, it is considered a relatively easy matter to escape duty. Due to financial constraints and budget cuts the military can not afford to take in all men who, in theory, are fit for service, which means that disabilities of a rather minor character has often been enough to be released from service. With the new selection system, commencing in 2010 the official policy is to admit only those best qualified (Evensen 2007).

¹³ Because female recruits do not receive military underwear, as do the men, they receive a 4 NOK *trusetillegg* (pantie-bonus) in addition to their daily allowance to cover the costs of undergarments.

The notion of equal conditions is, once more, evoked to justify their stance on the differential treatment women receive. Special arrangements for female members were seen as a clear violation of the equal treatment standard they believe should apply; even more so than the separate fitness standard, as these arrangements were perceived as an excessive way of privileging women because of their gender or, as the respondent said, “just because they are girls”.

The US Armed Forces have not deployed any similar strategies designed to attract and retain women. Females are, however, subject to different conditions than men, as they are banned from service in any direct combat or front-line position. Asking the interviewees about their view on these restrictions, the majority of men would once more utilize a repertoire emphasizing equal opportunities to convey their outlooks. One man stated: “I guess because I think they can do it just as well as men, if someone is so inclined, and they join and they want to do that, then they should be allowed to” (A – 15). Another participant adds: “we are slowly becoming a nation and even a world of equal opportunity and I don’t see any reason why they couldn’t fulfill any role they want to fulfill” (A – 01). The combat restriction policy was not considered unfair because women are spared from serving in the most hazardous positions, but because it deprive them of opportunities.

Some participants connected their rejection of the gender ban with the commitment repertoire discussed in the previous chapter. According to these men, the restrictions on women’s roles are not merely a matter of being excluded from certain positions, but also of being prohibited from serving your country in the most dedicated manner. One interviewee stated:

“If that person is willing to go ahead and sacrifice their life, my opinion is that – you know what – if they are capable and willing to do so, I definitely agree with that and I don’t think there should be any restrictions on females being able to perform in those roles” (A – 02).

The most committed way to serve ones nation is to risk your life while protecting it and by excluding women from direct combat positions you divest them the chance to demonstrate and act on their patriotic devotion. In this sense, combat restrictions entail that women are deprived

of a dual opportunity, as these roles are also directly tied to what is so important to many Americans, their sense patriotism.

Mandatory Service

What was most univocally targeted as an equal rights issue by the Norwegian interviewees was the existing practice of male conscription. The men did not favor being the only ones forced into the ranks and nearly all the men I talked to believed the system is ready for reform. Offering their viewpoints, many respondents questioned why the Armed Forces should be exempt from the norms of equality governing the rest of society, contending that it is time for the widespread demand for gender equality to also include military service. One interviewee stated: “well, I have always said that if they shall have equal rights they should take it all, not just equal rights in the areas where themselves want it. So I guess I think everyone should go in” (N – 08). Gender equality does not just imply getting the same benefits, but also the obligation to take on the same responsibilities – military service being one of them. Another interviewee concurred, saying “I think, in a way, if girls are so focused on equality all the time, I think that since we have to be in the military then girls should also have to do that. That would make it like fifty-fifty” (N – 12). Yet another believed since women “nag about equal right all the time [...] this is a good place to start, really” (N – 11). The military was largely construed as an arena where women could demonstrate their true commitment to the ideal of equality and show that they were serious about their demand to be treated the same as men.

Although there was substantial agreement that the present conscription system illicitly violates the principle of equality, not all of the men believed a change necessarily requires subjecting women to the same service as men: “Yes, they don’t necessary have to do military service, but it should kind of be the same for both, either community service for those who are not so fund of mandatory service, or something else” (N – 07). Another interviewee, sharing from personal experience, agreed that there is not just one way to be of service to your country:

Participant: I would rather... I have a cousin who is the same age as I am. Her father was in the military and for some reason she has spent a year working in a retirement home and in a kinder garden, so if you for instance had women do – it would kind of be

damn un-cool – but if they worked in a kinder garden or did other things than what guys do now, then maybe that would be better for society and maybe better for them, too. There are several ways to do mandatory service and we know from before that many positions [in the military] could be eliminated and that it costs a lot of money.

Interviewer: so they [women] could do more of a civil service?

Participant: Yes, there are many ways to serve your country, I think (N – 10).

While it was still considered important that the overall treatment of men and women is the same, these participants were more permissive in terms of the concrete job women could do. There were also some men who solved the issue by suggesting that neither should be forced into service: “I think it should be, like, both [genders] could if they want to, not that both are forced, but that they can if they want” (N – 09).

There was common agreement that the unequal balance currently existing between men and women needs to be corrected, however, there was not just one view on what this correction should entail. Still, whether it is to incorporate women into the mandatory service system; prescribing them a different kind of social service or eliminating forced service requirements altogether, their arguments all rest on a strong defense of equality of conditions. The interviewees did not oppose the present practice because they, themselves, wanted to be excused, but because it so clearly breaks with the cultural tenet of egalitarian treatment, which they believed should be honored, also in the Armed Forces.

While the US Armed Forces relies on voluntary recruitment, they do have in place a “Selective Service System”, the so-called draft, which means that all men between the age of 19 and 26 are liable for military service should a shortage of voluntary personnel occur in a situation where manpower is direly needed. The draft only applies to male citizen and has not been effective since the Vietnam War (US Military Justice 2010). Asking the American men if they believed also women should be subject to the draft, a notable number confessed they did not think it should be limited to men alone. One man rhetorically asked “If I have to go to war, why can’t they?”, adding “I think it should be men and women. I mean if we’re going to be fair about it, and that would be kind of – not [necessarily] sexist – but, just picking out the men” (A

– 16). Another stated, much resembling the argumentation of the Norwegian men: “Yes, I do think it should be, because that’s what equality is, equal danger, equal responsibility” (A – 10).

Discussing this issue, the previous repertoire promoting equality of opportunities were largely discarded and instead replaced by the equal treatment repertoire recurrently used by Norwegian respondents. Since the draft exists as an exigency measure that, if reinstated, signals that the nation is facing a serious crisis, this question seemed to evoke a different sense of collective responsibility, one that resembles the attitude of commitment with which the men approached military service, as such. Stepping up to the plate if your country needs you is not a matter of securing opportunities, but of fulfilling your obligation as a citizen and in this regard women, as equal citizens, should be expected to share the same social duties as men. With a few exemptions, which I discuss in the last analysis chapter, it was widely agreed that this citizen obligation should not be gender specific, prompting the American men to employ a different understanding of equality.

National Differences and Cultural Conditions

The two equality repertoires, as exposed in this chapter, seems to well embedded in the wider national Norwegian and US culture which, as I will argue, cultivates two diverging understanding of what equality means.

Egalitarianism is a fundamental ingredient of the Norwegian national culture. The ideal of equality is both widespread and well supported, and to contend that egalitarian values have a powerful presence in Norwegian society is “a rather uncontroversial assertion” (Skarpenes 2010:238). Norway is a country where “egalitarian considerations are pervasive, highly valued and legitimate” (Skarpenes 2010:222). Both at the macro level of society at large, as well as the micro level of everyday interactions, politicians and regular people alike conserve a developed notion of equality. The predominant cultural conception is one that goes beyond the mere protection of basic rights and is more broadly focused on the creation of substantive equality among the citizens (Aukrust and Snow 1998; Skarpenes 2010; Svallfors 1997). Political intervention – such as re-distribution of wealth – is generally regarded a legitimate means and to restrain people’s freedom – like their economic liberty – to create more equal

social conditions is not considered inadmissible (Svallfors 1997). Norway is a society where mechanisms of equalization are widespread and along with the prevalent support of mitigated collectivism and egalitarian principles, the Norwegian national culture is “a culture conventionally considered as a prime example of egalitarianism” (Skarpenes 2010:222).

Norway, it has been claimed, possess a passion for equality; however, the strong urge for egalitarianism has also given cause for concern. In a culture so entrenched with egalitarian values, there is little room for pluralism and everything extraordinary is easily targeted as suspicious (Graubard 1986:107-08). This pitfall is well captured by the “Law of Jante”, or *Janteloven*, a constructed village law that first appeared in a novel by author Aksel Sandemose (2005), but has become a lasting cultural reference. The basic tenet of this law is that you must not think you are special, or more importantly, believe you are better than others. Many perceive this conformist ideal to be the downside of Norwegian egalitarianism and it is also a feature that distinctly separates the Norwegian equality culture from that of the US (Kiel 1993:60-61).

Equality has always been a guiding principle of American society, stretching all the way back to its constitution, which when created embraced a notion of equality unparalleled by any other state (Lipset 1997:143). At the same time, the belief in equality has always existed in a fine balance with their other cultural tenets of individuality and liberty (Lipset 1997:19). As discussed previously, the American Creed promotes an elaborate sense of freedom and individual rights. People shall be able to live their life as they please without excessive government intervention, a hands-off approach that is not only a result of their intense commitment to individual autonomy, but a political principle believed to simulate individual development and personal achievement: In a society that allows people to live largely unrestricted by public interference, individuals have the maximum ability to develop their personal talents and skills (Lipset 1997:128).

This idea lies at the heart of the American notion of equality, namely that people should be enabled to make the most of themselves and their capacities in a manner that rewards individual endeavor (Verba and Orren 1985:24; Lipset 1997:75). Verba and Orren (1985) writes: “Equality of opportunity to make of one self what one can has been the dominant norm in America. People should have equal rights and opportunities to develop their talents; ability and

effort should be awarded” (Verba and Orren 1985:5). The national ethos of the American dream captures the very essence of this balance between individual autonomy and equality of opportunity: In the US, people shall all have an equal opportunity to freely pursue what they want and try to make of themselves what they wish. Whether you succeed, however, is up to personal skills and effort (Lipset 1997:287; Verba and Orren 1985:257). Equality, as fostered by the American culture, is less elaborate than the Norwegian conception. It is predominantly concerned with maintaining equality of *opportunity*, less so equality of *result*. To secure equality of result would demand too much constraint on people’s liberties, an interference that strongly violates the American passion for freedom (Verba and Orren 1985:127).

Equality of opportunity was a stance repeatedly proposed in defense for women in the Armed Forces and a notion also maintained for why women should be allowed certain dispensations. The different approaches to the concept of equality, along with the cultural embeddedness of their understandings, are presented in table VI.

Table VI. Two Understandings of Equality

	Norway	The US
Approach to Equality	Used an <i>equal treatment repertoire</i> . Emphasized that all force members should be subject to the same rules, in terms of fitness standards, conditions within the military and mandatory service requirement. Conditions perceived as unfair when women are subject to a different standard than the men.	Used an <i>equal opportunity repertoire</i> . The important matter is whether or not women receive equality of opportunity. Different fitness standards perceived as permissible if it secured women’s opportunities. Exclusion of females from direct combat positions seen as unfair as it deprives them of an opportunity. Equal treatment repertoire employed when discussing draft eligibility.
Cultural Foundation	Embedded in the elaborate understanding of equality promoted by Norwegian national culture. Focus on creating substantive equality among people	Embedded in the tenet of equal opportunity central to the American culture. Focus on securing equality of opportunity, enabling people to make the best of their abilities.

There was also considerable consent among the men in both countries that if a woman only proves herself, she should not face more barriers because of her gender, a viewpoint corroborated by the repertoire discussed next, namely a meritocratic repertoire.

8 Support of Meritocratic Principles

Alongside the two equality repertoires, the men also deployed a distinct meritocratic reasoning. Utilizing this cultural tool the men argued that the importance is not background characteristics, but how well you perform as a person. In other words, it does not matter whether a person is male or female, the determining factor is the merits they can present and how well they do their job. The meritocratic repertoire was in both contexts used directly as well as indirectly in support of females, as it de-emphasizes women's gender status and allowed them to be judged according to their performance.

A meritocratic argumentation was widespread among men of both nationalities; however, some distinct national differences were apparent. The meritocratic repertoire used by the Norwegian participants was often used in a vague manner, merely indicating that personal qualities are important. The repertoire was of a more principal character and even though the men conveyed the importance of looking at personal qualifications they rarely went into details of why this is decisive. Moreover, the meritocratic framework was used in two different manners: one that harmonized well with their notion of equal treatment, while another – as we shall see – underpinned a seemingly opposite reasoning.

The American respondents displayed a more elaborate conception of meritocracy and their understanding stretched beyond the principle approach of the Norwegians. Their meritocracy repertoire played well together with their perception of equality of opportunity and the two tools appeared to enhance the validity of one another. This, I argue, may result from the extensive emphasis on merits in the American culture, a focus that also in the larger cultural context is closely connected with the ideal of equal opportunity. The Norwegian national culture does not promote the same merit-based approach, a difference I discuss at the end of the chapter.

“It Depends on the Person”

“... you choose the person who is best qualified, not because they are male or female” (N – 04).

As we have seen, the Norwegian men predominantly adhered to a gender egalitarian agenda and even though their notion of equality prompted them to speak out on what they perceived as an unfair double standard, the baseline of their viewpoints was, nonetheless, that women should be treated the same as men. The meritocratic repertoire represents another mode in which the men revealed their support of gender equality and showed their acceptance of women in the Armed Forces.

A phrase repeatedly used throughout the interviews was “it depends on the person”, a statement implying that individual qualities is a more decisive factor than ascribed background traits. Some of the less talkative men used this exact phrase as their main answer to questions on female participation; others would use the phrase as a qualifier and then add a more detailed response. One interviewee responded when asked if he thinks flirting may cause a problem in a gender-mixed group:

“Well, it really depends on the people, if they manage to separate – how to put it – leisure time from when they are at work. So everything, all in all, depends on the person, but yes, it [flirting] may have a negative effect on concentration and things like that – to a certain degree” (N – 02).

Others made a more pronounced use of a meritocratic reasoning and expressed in a direct manner that if women pass the same tests and execute on the same level as their male peers, the fact that they are female is insignificant. One man replied when asked if he finds it problematic for women to be in a unit that might experience sharp encounters: “No, not really. As long as they have managed to accomplish the same as we have I wouldn’t object to that” (N – 05). He would later add that “... if they [women] manage to pass the same tests as the men than it’s no harder for you than for us” (N – 05). The notion was corroborated by another participant:

“... much depends on the person, anyway. The tasks we get in the military they don't rely so much on whether you are a boy or a girl. Now you are going out to shoot, now you are going out to do these things, now you are going out to march – it's not really – you don't get better just by being a boy or a girl, I feel” (N – 17).

Success, or failure, is not contingent on a person's gender but depends on their personal skills. The same view was reiterated when discussing job appointments. Questioned if he thought it's better for the Armed Forces to have more men in commanding positions one interviewee replied:

“If you chose a man just because he is a man and a woman is better qualified, I don't think there is any point in affirmative action¹⁴ or things like that, but you choose the person who is best qualified, not because they are male or female...” (N – 04).

Another man expressed that:

“if they [women] are just as good as the men – they are good at things they also – than they deserve that position also. [...] it should be so that who is most deserving of the position, have the qualifications to be there, gets the position” (N – 06).

This meritocratic rationale aligns well with the Norwegian equality repertoire. Fulfillment of the same standard was viewed as a precept of equality and the fact that women are allowed separate criteria is what primarily caused gender to be deemed an intrusive factor. The emphasis on personal skills and qualifications, as conveyed through the meritocratic repertoire, promote a similar outlook, being that if a person attains the objective criteria, gender becomes insignificant. In this manner, both tools work together and accentuate a corresponding perspective.

Then there were some interviewees who proclaimed they in no way viewed women as a separate group. Also utilizing a meritocratic repertoire these participants repudiated any impact of gender background, but in a manner less congruent with the Norwegian equality approach. One man stated: “at basic training there were a lot of girls and I got no impression that they

¹⁴ The participant used the Norwegian word *kjønnskvotering*

didn't belong there and they were accepted as a person, and not as a sex, kind of" (N – 16). Another interviewee didn't think there was any difference working with women than working with men:

"Well, in the military I don't think there is much difference, really. They [women] become gender equal and are not viewed as something else, not from me at least. You are one of a group and than you don't exclude the girls. Of course they are included" (N – 03).

The awareness of women's gender status as expressed through the equal treatment repertoire is, in this context, renounced. The depiction of women as a partly detached group due to their separate arrangements is contradicted and gender is instead maintained to be an insignificant factor. This illustrates how various cultural reasonings can coexist and be employed at different times, depending on the context and what is being discussed (Swidler 2001). What might seem like two inconsistent understandings of women's place in the Armed Forces may in reality be the result of the men discussing two different aspects of the service. The equality treatment repertoire was mainly used in referral to institutional arrangements that allow women to abide by separate rules. The men called for male and female service members to be treated according to one uniform standard, a perspective corroborated by a meritocratic logic. Then, when discussing personal encounters and individual experiences with women, the men more easily dismissed the impact of gender and instead professed that women are approached as individual people, not representatives of their sex – an attitude that also resonates with a meritocratic reasoning. Addressing different aspects of women's military participation the men engaged differing cultural tools, which allow for "multiple cultural framings of the same issue [to] coexist side by side" (Swidler 2001:111).

“Everyone Have Been Dealt With on an Equal Merit Base”

*“If they [women] can meet the standards for it and they can carry their weight, yes, I don’t see a problem”
(A – 16).*

The American respondents made a more elaborate use of a meritocratic repertoire. The vast majority of men expressed that if women prove their capabilities, they will get their due respect, regardless of their gender. One man explained:

“If those people have been doing what they are supposed to do, they get that respect and it [gender] doesn’t seem to matter. If they are a good performer they get a lot of respect and it doesn’t seem, at least in my experience, that it doesn’t seem to matter if they are male or female” (A – 01).

The participant was quick to establish that people are judged according to the merits they show and later concluded that “... I think everyone have been dealt with on an equal merit base” (A – 01). Discussing women’s suitability for different military positions, the American men largely consented that skills and effort are the pertinent matter. As one man simply noted, “it doesn’t matter what your gender is. If you know your stuff, you know your stuff” (A – 10). Another participant agreed, stating: “It depends on everybody’s skill level, not because that person is a girl. It’s just how hard she is willing to work” (A – 17). This attitude was echoed by several men and reflects the same notion underlying the American Dream which, as we have seen, propagates that success is achieved through personal effort, not who you are or where you come from (Lipset 1997:287).

Several participants believed that having worked with people in the military, gender has not been an apparent factor. One man explained that he does not operate with gender specific expectations, admitting “I would be very disappointed if I could not count on a woman to do the same thing a guy can. I have the same expectations” (A – 16). Another interviewee revealed:

“The biggest thing I noticed is there really isn’t that big of a difference between gender. It’s more so of certain individuals – I mean for as many girls there are that

can't, like, do their job right, there are just as many males. I never really look at the gender thing" (A – 15)

A meritocratic repertoire was also instrumental to convey their trust in the Armed Forces as an institution. Discussing the allocation of military personnel one man stated:

"... the military know what they are doing, I mean, where they put people, they don't want to send out people who are not qualified in a position, [I] kind of leave it up the people higher up and believe they know what they are doing" (A – 03).

The same line of thought was corroborated by another participant who claimed, "each person is a tool to get the job done. Knowing the capabilities and limitations of your tools or of your people is very important" (A – 10). The view that personal biography is extraneous is, once again, reinforced and what is identified as the crucial task is to forcefully employ the available resources based on their proficiencies. As these participants demonstrate, the American men were more inclined to take a bird's eye view on themselves and their fellow soldiers and, in doing so, display a meritocratic orientation towards the military as a whole.

Lastly, discussing the issue of combat positions, the American men continued to rely on a meritocratic repertoire. One participant replied, when I inquired about his position on the combat ban, "I think if they [women] make it through all the training [...] I think they are just as well able to" (A – 05). Asking whether he believed women are better fit for certain military positions another interviewee affirmed: "No, I don't think so. I think anyone can do anything as long as that's what they want to do and they're good at it" (A – 06). The men once again revealed their support for women in combat roles. What is more, their meritocratic argumentation corroborates the same logic underlying the equality of opportunity repertoire; as expressed by the last respondent, if this is what women want and they prove themselves able, there is no reason why they should be prematurely excluded.

National Differences and Cultural Conditions

This tie between meritocracy and equal opportunity is clearly reflected in the American national culture. The American Creed assumes that everyone should be granted the same initial

chance to give their best and pursue what they want (Lipset 1997:83). Competition among people is not viewed as harmful; rather, it is up to every individual to prove him or herself capable. In American society, evaluations are, to a large degree, made on the basis of performance and compared to other countries, Americans are much more likely to approve of merit-based difference in reward (Lipset 1997:25). American culture has, to a great extent, de-emphasized the importance of ascribed background traits, instead, “hard work, ambition, education and ability have been regarded as more important for succeeding in life than social background” (Lipset 1997:81). The American understanding of meritocracy does not require that people live in equality, but rests on the idea “that all should enjoy the same initial chances of employing their skills as they see fit, in pursuit of their own interests” (Martins Pinheiro Neves 2000:337). In a culture where individual performance represents the foremost legitimate mechanism to evaluate and reward, equality of opportunity is an imperative precondition and in this manner invariably connected with the cultural prominence of meritocratic principles (Lipset 1997:83; Martins Pinheiro Neves 2000:338).

In Norway, on the other hand, the greater national culture sustains a somewhat different focus. Norwegian society is in many regards less meritocratic than the US. The prevalence of egalitarian values has, to a certain extent, taken priority over a more merit based system, a cultural trait particularly visible in the educational sector, which has proved far less centered on personal performance compared to other countries (Skarpenes 2010). In the Norwegian culture, values of solidarity, egalitarianism and altruism are widely accentuated, both privately as well as in public political discourse; values that have been claimed to diminish the significance of personal merits (Skarpenes 2010:228, 232). In a culture more concerned with the realization of true sameness between people, the impact of individual performance will likely be restricted. While the American notion of equal opportunity corroborates a meritocratic approach, the Norwegian understanding of equality as *sameness* has, to a certain degree, had the reverse effect. It is important to note, however, this does not mean that Norwegian culture is not influenced by meritocratic principles, which it undoubtedly is. However, given the decreased emphasis on personal performance the Norwegian national culture makes a meritocratic repertoire less available to its citizen compared to the US where, in turn, a meritocratic approach represents a more accessible cultural resource (Lamont

1994:134-35). Having explored two cultural tools that promote an egalitarian attitude, in the last analysis chapter I take a closer look at viewpoints that were of a less supportive nature.

9 Traditional Gender Perceptions

*“...there’s of course always a few women that are way more advanced physically and mentally than males, but I would say in general males are probably more equipped for the military than females”
(A – 12).*

Despite the overall inclusive stance towards women, in regard to some topics participants did reveal a more traditional gender attitude. These attitudes were embedded in a conservative notion of male and female social roles and responsibilities and reflected traditional gender ideals. The most definite issue that prompted the use of what manifested itself as a *gender conservative repertoire* was protection of women. Across the cases the vast majority of men agreed that in a dangerous or threatening situation they would be more inclined to protect a female colleague than a male. A notable number of participants also believed men are more suited to take on conventional military work, such as combat assignments. Moreover, several Norwegian interviewees admitted to an initial skepticism towards female commanders, and in the US some participants confessed that they perceived men as natural leaders and identified domestic life as a female responsibility.

While there were some cross-national differences in the attitudes revealed, they did not appear to be rooted in the broader national cultures. Participants’ use of a gender conservative repertoire was often couched in discourses that emphasized socializing mechanism, some even approaching ‘biological essentialism’, as well as what appeared to signal pop-cultural representations of military work. So, even though the content of the conservative attitudes did reveal some national variation, the foundation of their outlooks did not seem to be confined to the specific national contexts. What is interesting is that participants who expressed these attitudes conveyed them in a manner that remained fully reconcilable with their general support for women in the ranks. In fact, none of the men utilizing this tool seemed to notice its inconsistency with their general endorsement of women, asserted in response to other questions. The gender conservative repertoire, therefore, was not utilized as a means to express their disapproval of women in the military and, in this manner, seems to attest that the

longstanding gendered nature of the Armed Forces still informs soldiers' perceptions of the institution.

Female Commanders and Traditional Military Work

Discussing the issue of female commanders, a notable number of the Norwegian participants admitted to have been somewhat suspicious about what this would actually be like. Although the men did not oppose women in leading positions, to them, a female commander represented an unfamiliar phenomenon. One interviewee explained:

“... I didn't know really what it was going to be like, to have a female above you telling you what to do, not that I have anything against that, I have had female bosses in other jobs, but you kind of have that impression of the military of men pushing you, kind of”
(N – 01).

Several other men echoed this view and agreed that having a female commander departed from their pre-existing expectations of the Armed Forces, according to which the role of a military commander was strongly associated with a sturdy, masculine man. In spite of their initial suspicion, most interviewees acknowledged that when they got to experience having a woman in charge their skepticism was quickly forgotten. The participant above recounted his first encounter with a female commander: “... she put herself in the position right away, [as] our commander, and it seemed naturally then, I think it was kind of, if you have the right qualifications you can fit into any position” (N – 01).

When the initial skepticism of high-ranking females was challenged, the men had few problems modifying their stance and accept that a woman could qualify as a good commander. Interestingly, and as demonstrated by the participant above, the change of attitude was often accompanied by a shift to a new cultural repertoire. As soon as gender was judged insignificant, the conservative reasoning was renounced and instead a meritocratic rationale was employed. The participant above announces that a person with the right qualifications can take on any position, regardless of being male or female, thereby re-framing the issue as a matter of competence. According to Swidler a “frequent shifting between multiple cultural

realities is not some anomalous sleight of hand but the normal way in which ordinary mortals operate” (Swidler 2001:40). People, continues Swidler, “slip frequently between one reality and another, switching the frames within which they understand experience” (Swidler 2001:40). To discard one repertoire in favor of another – or to switch between cultural realities – is just a basic strategy for making sense of the changing circumstances of one’s everyday life; a strategy employed by the men to bridge the discord between expectations and actual experience.

The topic that revealed the most rigorous understanding of gender roles among the Norwegian men was traditional military work. Compared to women, the interviewees found men to be more aggressive, even harboring more of a ‘killer instinct’; qualities stressed to portray men as more befitted for the physically challenging or risk filled jobs. Some participants linked these qualities to childhood socialization and how boys and girls already early on develop separate interests:

“If you look at kids, then, girls don’t run around very often with pistols and play cowboy and Indian. We instill [boys with] war and violence from we are very young. It’s just such things that stick with the guys. I think that instinct is extremely much greater with us” (N – 13).

Another interviewee concurred:

“Without a doubt, that starts already in the childhood, with boys who pretend to fight and girls who play with dolls. It will always be like that, no matter how much gender equality there will always be a difference between how boys grow up and how girls grow up” (N – 01)

Some participants took the argument even one step further and claimed that men are biologically determined to fight and kill. When asked if he thought men are more naturally qualified for warfare one man quickly responded: “I think so. Definitely. It’s just something in the body, with the evolution and things like that, kill to survive, kind of” (N – 09). Another interviewee confessed he would feel safer fighting alongside other men: “Yes, I actually think so, that men are maybe more instinctively prepared to kill others [...] So, if I was in a trench,

then, I think I would be safer, or more secure in a way, if there were men next to me, not women”(N – 16).

The traditional core activity of the military profession – to fight – was often identified as a male domain. Even though some of the men also drew on a meritocratic repertoire and emphasized that there definitely exists some women who are just as capable to fight and kill, the predominant understanding was that operative assignments is suited for male soldiers.

Still, the topic that prompted the most prevalent use of a conservative gender repertoire was the issue of female safekeeping. The overwhelming majority of the interviewees agreed that if facing a dangerous situation, they would feel more inclined to protect the women than the men. One man simply explained that “yes, it feels a little more natural that you protect the women a little more, the boys manage more on their own” (N – 03). Another admitted “... I have noticed that you easily are a little more attentive towards the girls. Really, I’ m sure they don’t need it, but it’s something that is just there, an automatic response” (N – 06).

While some described this as an instinctive response others were not shy to declare their protective propensity. One man blatantly stated, “that’s just how I am. My female friends are worth more than my buddies, not that there’s much difference, they are all high up there, but – it’s about priorities” (N – 08). A participant of a similar viewpoint confessed that the protective inclination is, in fact, the result of “an old-fashioned way of thinking”:

“That relates to an old-fashion way of thinking that you will rather sacrifice three men than one woman. That’s an old mentality that remains, what can I say, in the blood. [...] You would rather, what can I say, go down there yourself than send other women in the line of fire, to say it like that” (N – 02).

There was broad consensus among the Norwegian men that they either instinctively or deliberately act more protective toward females. The traditional ideal of men as the safe keeper was still very much alive; yet, the question of whether or not women need men to keep them safe was for the most part left noticeably unaddressed.

Men in Leadership Positions

The American participants, too, generally consented to feel more protective toward female service members. More so than for the Norwegians, interviewees attributed this as the result of something transcending cultural habits:

“I’m not saying that I wouldn’t want to protect my fellow men, but I would say that we are built to protect women. That was our first job, essentially. That mentality just comes down to pure instinct. It’s a good one if you really think about it, because if it comes down to it, the world could be re-populated by a planet full of women and three men. But if you have three women you’re screwed” (A – 09).

The conception of the male protector was a forceful ideal also in the American context. Some participants, however, remained more circumspect in their replies. It was not rare for an interviewee to first emphasize his general concern for everyone’s safety; at the same time as concluding that they do keep an extra eye out for the women. One man started off: “I guess the best way would be to make sure everyone’s okay” but would later add that “I’d actually more so care for the women [...] I think it’s almost something you’re born with, kind of [an] urge” (A – 15).

In the US, as in Norway, talk of female safekeeping engendered a widespread use of a gender conservative repertoire. The men largely proclaimed that they did feel a heightened sense of responsibility towards women, an urge many American participants ascribed biological or instinctive mechanisms. Whereas the Norwegians tended to slip into more vague or unexplained suggestions of this instinct as an “automatic” response, the Americans were more elaborate in both their use of words and explications.

The American participants also employed a gender conservative repertoire in discussions of general social roles. Several participants made clear distinctions in terms of what they perceived to be male and female work, a division that directly reflected a gender traditional role pattern. A few interviewees openly stated that, in their view, men are natural leaders. They believed men to be endowed with specific leadership abilities and that leadership roles should, therefore, primarily be occupied by men. Asking about his view on the draft one interviewee replied:

“I think it should be the men that are called rather than the women. This is their role historically in this country. The men have taken it upon themselves to be leaders in this country and protect it. I think that is the way it [the draft] should be reinstated if the government is going to force something upon you [...] I think it’s men’s responsibility” (A – 04).

Discussing gender composition in the Armed Forces another participant stated that:

“my perception is that men are typically leaders and that is, I don’t necessarily think to be let’s say fifty-fifty or seventy-thirty males more than females, it can definitely be fifty-fifty [...] but a lot of the leadership roles being males, I think the majority of them should be males” (A – 02).

When I asked why he thinks it should be this way he candidly replied “I think people will follow a male more so than they would a female in a leadership role” (A – 02). These standpoints align very well with a conventional gender view, according to which influential positions are perceived as a male expertise. Leader roles have traditionally been a male domain and, according to some of the American participants, this is also how it should remain.

More than just distinguish men as “typical leaders” the last respondent also identified the domestic sphere as women’s domain. Relying on the same gender conservative repertoire he explained his skepticism towards a gender-neutral draft system: “I think it is just natural to leave mums at home to better maintain stable homes here, than males being at home, you know [...] my view would be take the men out of the home, leave women where stable homes can be maintained ...” (A – 02) Another interviewee concurred: “I guess I’d feel bad if a woman was forced away from home and stuff and given a gun and told to shoot the enemy ...” (A – 12). This identification of the private sphere as a feminine arena is interesting both in that it perpetuates traditional gender norms, but also by situating military duty within a broader societal context. This being said, far from all maintained such conservative views.

Just like in Norway, some American’s pointed to the effects of early socialization and how that may cause boys and girls to perceive the military differently. One man explained the unequal balance between men and women:

“It’s not necessarily because of unwillingness to let them join, but because growing up, females don’t think about it as a female occupation. You don’t hear as much, I mean, they don’t play with GI Joes probably or they’re not given them by their parents. [...]They don’t think “I want to be in the military” so they don’t go out and enlist” (A – 07)

The participant frames the skewed gender composition as the result of a conservative notion of who military service is really for. While this perspective rests on a gender traditional reasoning as well, it departs from previous viewpoints by underscoring the force of social mechanisms, thereby avoiding an essentialist, or biological, rationale.

Even though the attitudes, as well as manner in which they were conveyed, somewhat differed between Norway and the US; participants in both countries affirmed the persistence of both traditional gender ideals and gendered perceptions of the Armed Forces. Still, none of the interviewees were opposed to women in the service. The men had no difficulty combining an inclusive stance with the attitudes summarized in table VII. In their responses, the men tended to switch between two cultural realities, relying on different cultural explanations depending on the topic at hand (Swidler 1986; 2001). Participants competently shifted from one cultural understanding to another and by deploying different repertoires, women were presented both as a welcome asset and as the subject of gendered norms and essentialist thinking.

Table VII. Gender Conservative Attitudes

	Norway	The US
Attitudes of a Gender Conservative Character	Initial skepticism towards female commanders.	Feels more protective toward female service members.
	Belief that men are more suited for traditional military work.	Men believed to be more suited for leadership positions or to have a greater responsibility to protect the country. Women associated with the domestic sphere.
	Feels more protective towards female service members.	

10 Conclusion

Reflections on the Four Cultural Repertoires

This master thesis has investigated various aspects of how participants from the Norwegian Air Force and US Air National Guard feel about serving alongside women. It has examined how they framed their viewpoints and how their attitudes relate to the broader cultural structures. It is clear from the interviews that the men did not approach the matter in a unified manner; however, they did share some distinct cultural tools that they used to convey their perspectives. Four main cultural repertoires have been identified within each national context: A commitment and life chance opportunity repertoire used to discuss their military involvement; two equality repertoires; a meritocratic reasoning and a gender conservative repertoire.

Although the men I talked to work within one of societies most gendered domains they all displayed a largely positive attitude towards women in the force. Both the American and Norwegian participants agreed that female service members are a resource to the military establishment who, with their own qualities, contribute with something different from the men. Most of the men preferred to work in mixed groups and emphasized that as men of the younger generation they are inclined to approach military women more favorably than previous generations. A shared equality repertoire was used by participants to convey their inclusive stance; at the same time, the manner in which they approached the concept of equality revealed significant national difference.

The Norwegian men relied heavily on the Norwegian “equality thinking” and were in agreement that an equal standard should apply to all regardless of gender. It was evident that to most participants, being equal meant that things should be the same. The men were not suspicious towards females, as such, but harbored a mistrustful attitude towards the separate treatment they believe women receive. While this appeared to be the underlying sentiment, at times it did occur as if participants ‘blamed’ the differential arrangements on women, themselves, talking as if this is something they were responsible for or had demanded. Even so, it was nonetheless the practices and not women’s presence that was targeted. The equal treatment repertoire so widely used by the Norwegian men suggests that measures initiated to

increase women's presence in the Armed Forces may have a reverse effect – at least by its impact on men's viewpoints – as gender-specific arrangements caused women to be perceived as a somewhat separate group, unrightfully entitled to their own rules. Even though the men expressed appreciation for serving with women, the special treatment did remain a source of suspicion and skepticism. This finding is corroborated by other research, as well (Hellum 2010; Lauritzen et al. 2009). It was evident that in framing their reservations, the cultural tenet of equality so entrenched in Norwegian culture represented a potent resource. While the men all expressed their individual viewpoints, it is hard to explain their outlooks merely as the result of their own, reflective processes; rather, they must be understood in relation to the wider cultural context and the Norwegian emphasis on egalitarian values.

The wider cultural context is also vital to understand the concept of equality central to the American men. Their understanding of equality was clearly embedded in the ethos of equality of opportunity predominant in American society. Equal opportunity is a fundamental value of the American culture and undoubtedly informed how the participant's framed women's engagement in the Armed Forces. With a few exceptions, the men were generally not concerned with the concrete circumstances of women's participation, instead their focus was largely on whether or not the principle of equal opportunity was being honored. For the American participants it was important that women were granted the same initial opportunities as men, which prompted them to perceive separate arrangement as permissible if it enhanced women's opportunities. We see that also among the American men there was a clear connection between their attitudes and the culture at large and while the men, also here, expressed their personal opinions, again, it is not sufficient to explain their outlooks as merely the product of individual reflections.

In both countries a meritocracy repertoire represented another mode in which participants communicated a gender-tolerant attitude. Drawing on this repertoire the men maintained that qualifications are the crucial factor, an approach that de-emphasizes women's gender status. In both contexts, the meritocracy repertoire corresponded well with the previously examined equality repertoire. However, the interconnection was more salient in the American case. Relying on a meritocratic logic, the American respondents emphasized the importance of looking to a person's skills, and individual merits were proposed as imperative when assessing

fellow service members. American culture is a profound nurturer of meritocratic principles; yet, to maintain a meritocratic system it is integral to concurrently uphold a system of equal opportunity. The interconnection between the two was apparent also in the way American participants discussed women's service. Women should be subject to the same opportunity to serve and, hence, granted the same chance as men to prove their abilities. In this way the two repertoires promoted a unified perspective. Even though Swidler's theory rests on the presumption that people do not use culture in a unified way, this does not mean cultural tools can not be used in a consistent manner, in fact, Swidler writes that while some "operate with much more fragmentary and incomplete systems of ideas [...] cultural coherence may also be developed by employing available cultural elements in a particular consistent way" (Swidler 2001:68). The clear consistency between the American's use of these two repertoires is an interesting finding, also in how they further relate to their commitment approach to military service.

Among the Norwegian participants the two repertoires were also used in an affiliated manner, while not as patently as in the American context. The Norwegian men believed people should be subject to the same rules and that whoever proves best qualified for a job should get it. Both perspectives emphasize a similar point of view, namely that if a person has been through the same training and proves him or herself able, gender is an irrelevant factor. The reply 'it depends on the person' was frequently used by the Norwegians; a response that indicates that individual differences are more pertinent than gender background. Several men also stated that in their experience, gender has not been an influential factor. They believed the women they had worked with had been received more as individual people than representatives of their sex. This assertion rests on a meritocratic conception, as well, even though it departs from the notion of women as a somewhat estranged group due to their special treatment, as expressed through the Norwegian equality repertoire. This demonstrates how two diverging reasonings can not only coexist, but also enable participants to address multiple aspects relating to the question at hand. While an equal treatment repertoire was used to convey their annoyance with the differential practices, the meritocratic repertoire was used to express their personal experiences working with females.

It was clear during the interviews that participants in the two countries exhibited a notable different approach to service in the Armed Forces. The American men largely framed their decision to sign up as the result of an internal commitment to give back, either to community or country. Military service did, to many, represent an opportunity to fulfill a social commitment they believed they, as American citizens, have. Some participants applied this commitment repertoire also in discussions of women's exclusion from direct combat positions and maintained it to be unfair to deprive women of the opportunity to serve their country in this dedicated manner. In regards to the same question, participants often intertwined a meritocratic logic, as well, contending that if women prove themselves capable there are no good reasons for why they should be excluded from any part of the military. The commitment approach and the two other repertoires continued to be used in a consistent manner and promoted a consolidated perspective.

The Norwegian men's approach to own service did not play together with the other repertoires in the same congruous way. The Norwegian participants discussed their service as a life-chance opportunity and an undertaking they believed would benefit them on a personal basis. None of the men related their military service to a larger community or national responsibility, instead they offered highly personal motives as to why they entered the Armed Forces. This life-chance opportunity approach and focus on individual reward represents an interesting departure from the demand for equal treatment, especially when it comes to the mandatory service requirement. Most participants believed it was unfair that conscription only applies to men and maintained that equal rights should include equal responsibility, as well. This outlook does not quite harmonize with their attitudes towards own service, in which any sense of responsibility was completely absent. Moreover, talking about why also women should serve, no one mentioned the individual gains that military service bring along, which was so decisive for their own motivation. There were a discord between the logics presented for why women should serve and why they, themselves, decided to enter the Armed Forces. This dissonance, once again, testify to people's varying use of culture. Addressing an issue, Swidler writes, "people run through the different parts of their cultural repertoires, selecting those parts that correspond to the situation or exemplary problem that currently holds their attention" (Swidler 2001:25). People seek to maintain a cultural tool kit wide enough so they can orient themselves and chose according to the situation at hand (Swidler 2001:31). Whereas the American

respondents tended to employ their cultural materials in a unified manner, the Norwegian participants approached the different issues in a more isolated manner, prompting them to make a more diversified use of their cultural capacities.

We've seen that even though an inclusive attitude was predominant among the interviewees, some of their viewpoints were of a more conservative character. Utilizing a gender conservative repertoire the participants expressed views that reflected traditional gender perceptions and conservative notions of male and female social roles. Several Norwegian participants admitted that they had been somewhat skeptical of what it would be to serve under a female commander; however, the initial skepticism was soon erased when they got to experience that women can do a good job, also in commanding positions. A more widespread notion was that traditional military work, and especially operative assignments, is more suited for male soldiers. The majority also believed they would be more inclined to protect female service members if facing a dangerous situation.

Also, to a large extent, the American men admitted to feel more protective towards female colleagues, which many perceived as an innate inclination. There were also some who believed that men are natural leaders and that it therefore should be more males in leadership positions or that men have a greater obligation to protect the country if needed. Along the same line, women were associated with domestic duties and the responsibility to maintain stable homes. While this was not a widespread viewpoint it, nonetheless, accredits a distinctly traditional gender pattern, which makes it interesting to observe.

Looking closer at the gender conservative repertoire, it departs from the previously discussed tools in its lack of distinct national variation. This repertoire seemed to, instead, be embedded in shared biological as well as pop-cultural notions. These ideas did not appear to be distinct features of the Norwegian or US national culture, but rather beliefs emerging from shared conceptions, or common cultural materials. Table VIII attempts to summarize the main findings of this thesis.

Table VIII. Main Findings

	Approach to Service	Understandings of Equality	Meritocratic Repertoire	Gender Conservative Repertoire
<u>Norway</u>	Service as a life-chance opportunity, focus on personal reward. Individual motivation.	Utilization of an equal treatment repertoire. Focus on substantive equality among service members, low acceptance for special treatment of women.	Expressed support for meritocratic principles and that qualifications are more decisive than gender background. Vaguer use compared to the US and employed in two different manners	Initial scepticism towards female commanders Belief that men are better for traditional military assignments More inclined to protect female service members
Relation to Other Repertoires		Corroborates a different logic than the life-chance opportunity repertoire	One use of the repertoire corroborates a similar logic as the equality repertoire, while the other supported a different reasoning.	Stands in stark contrast to the equal treatment and meritocracy repertoires
Cultural Foundation	High acceptance of government intervention, less focus on individual obligations. Individual life-project foregrounded. Patriotic sentiments downplayed	The cultural notion of equality is elaborate and Norway is characterized as a prime example of an egalitarian society. Understanding of equality as sameness	Meritocratic principles are influential, yet the increased emphasis on egalitarian values downplays its impact, compared to the US	Not embedded in a distinct feature of the Norwegian culture.

<u>The US</u>	Service as a commitment, to community and country. Focus on the importance of giving back. Collective motivation.	Utilization of an equal opportunity repertoire. Focus on ensuring equal opportunity for women in the force, special treatment perceived as permissible if it helps secure this goal	Widespread use of a meritocratic repertoire. Skills and merits viewed as more important than gender background.	More inclined to protect female service members Men viewed as natural leaders and with a greater responsibility to protect the country. Women associated with domestic sphere
Relation to Other Repertoires		Works well together with the commitment and meritocracy repertoires	Corresponds well with the equal opportunity repertoire. Corroborates a similar perspective	Stands in stark contrast to the equal treatment and meritocracy repertoires
Cultural Foundation	Enhanced focus on personal liberties, alongside a strong emphasis on individual responsibilities. Patriotic sentiments prevalent.	The notion of equal opportunity a central element of the American culture. People should be awarded the same initial chance to prove their abilities.	Meritocracy a central element in American culture. Merit based reward widely supported. Strong belief in the power of personal endeavour.	Not embedded in a distinct feature of the US culture.

Relation to the Debate over Women's Participation

A discussed earlier, women's entry into the military realm has given rise to an ardent debate and it is interesting to see how the attitudes conveyed by the participants relate to the general arguments proposed for and against gender integration. The wider debate on this issue has for the most part been conducted between politicians or higher ranking military members and it is therefore valuable to observe how the attitudes of the ground people of the organization relate to them.

The view that women's physique impedes them from doing a satisfactory job in the military was not sustained by the participants. Women's different body type was little commented on and for the American men this was something that could be accommodated through adjusted standards. The Norwegian's objection of such adjustments, on the other hand, implies that women's physical strength was not seen as the impediment asserted by integration skeptics. At the same time, participants in both countries expressed that they considered women less suited for traditional military assignments. These type of assignments are characterized by being physically strenuous and even though women's physique was not explicitly mentioned, it is hard to believe this did not factor in to why these jobs were identified as a male strong point. Other biological differences, such as women's ability to become pregnant or their enhanced need for facilities, were not viewed as problematic by the participants.

Women's disruption of unit cohesiveness was neither perceived as a problem by the men I interviewed. As we've seen, the vast majority preferred to work in gender-mixed units and there did not seem to be a lack of bonding between the male participants and their female co-workers. It is, of course, hard to tell if the men find it easier to bond with other men or if they tend to build stronger relations with people of the same gender, but the assertion that women deeply disturb the unity of a group did not hold true for these participants.

Women's emotional value, on the other hand, was an influential factor on the men's viewpoints. The men did, overall, feel more protective towards women and while some attributed this to biological instincts, the heightened sense of concern does testify that women hold a different status, causing the men to be more alert to their well-being. While the men openly admitted to this, no one maintained that this inclination makes them or their unit more

vulnerable for attack; however, the potential adverse effects of their heightened concern were not directly discussed during the interviews.

The notion of equal rights was also reflected in the attitudes of the interviewees. It was widely believed that women should share the same responsibility as themselves, either in terms of a mandatory service requirement or draft selection eligibility, a perspective also emphasized by integration advocates. The connection between women's participation and democratic functionality was not commented on by any respondents, but the idea that women represent a valuable resource one should not ignore was, however, echoed by a few of the men and presented as a reason for why it is important to also include women.

Only some of the main arguments that have circulated in the debates over women's participation were employed by the men in this study. This may indicate that for the younger generation men, other issues are more relevant for how they perceive female service members. For instance, meritocratic principles and the belief that skills is an imperative factor was widely supported by the interviewees, but a claim that has not often been maintained in academic or political discussions. The fact that participants' discussion only partly resonated with the arguments made in the larger debates also suggests that other factors are of more consequence for how women are received and integrated when entering the Armed Forces.

Theoretical Implications

Swidler's theoretical concepts have proved very fruitful in the analysis of the men's viewpoints. Approaching culture as a toolkit, and not a unified system, has illuminated how participants rely on varying cultural logics to convey different aspects of how they feel. To relate the actual attitudes to the wider cultural context in which the men exist has further served to elucidate the cultural understandings that lie behind their viewpoints. It has also contextualized their positions within a wider framework.

This study adds to the evidence that in everyday life, people discuss the same phenomena in diverging, and sometimes even contrasting, manners. For those who engage diverging cultural materials, however, their approach does not necessarily appear inconsistent. In fact, none of the

men in this study reacted to what appeared to be contrasting viewpoints on their part. To draw on varying cultural repertoires seemed like a natural strategy and while some interviewees used different tools to convey a coherent perspective, others used them in a less unified fashion to address various facets of their outlooks.

This study has shed light on how cultural repertoires varies according to national context and demonstrated how the cultural elements central to the Norwegian's responses where not always the same as those drawn on by the American participants. The attitudes expressed in both cases clearly reflected sentiments found in the national cultures at large and the overarching cultures seemed to present the interviewees with reservoirs of meaning to which they resorted to frame their positions.

While Swidler's concepts have proved very useful, certain findings can not be properly explained by her theory as it stands today. A factor that is not thoroughly addressed by Swidler is the notable difference in intensities with which the men utilized their cultural tools.

Throughout the interviews, the Norwegian men were often vaguer in their responses compared to their American counterparts who, in turn, made a more elaborate use of cultural materials. The American's were often more explicit in their cultural expressions, as opposed to the Norwegian's who used vaguer terms and were more allusive in their replies. There is admittedly a clear difference between the general manner that Norwegians and Americans speak. American's are known to be more verbose and outspoken, whereas Norwegians are typically more reserved and succinct in the way they talk. This being said, the different intensities with which they engaged the repertoires is, nonetheless, an interesting finding that should not be discounted merely as verbal mannerisms.

In *Talk of Love* (2001), Swidler states that people differ in terms of how *richly* they deploy cultural materials (Swidler 2001:71). People also vary with regards to the *intensity* of their cultural involvement. However, Swidler makes a distinct connection between an intensified cultural use and people living unsettled lives (Swidler 2001:90). Therefore, although Swidler touches on the notion of intensity, her focus remains on the users and not the materials itself. To Swidler, it is people's engagement with culture that might be rich or intense; what is not examined is the force of the tools themselves. Swidler does not explore how some repertoires represent powerful cultural resources, while others less so. In her review of Swidler's book,

Lamont is sceptical of this notion that people use different amounts of culture (Lamont 2004). Perhaps extending the scope of investigation to also include the content of the repertoires and the way different cultural elements are charged with different force will be a promising expansion of Swidler's tool-kit theory. The current study, at least, suggests that this may be worth further investigation.

Swidler has only applied her theory to her own national context. Reviewing the evidence from this comparative study, several questions arise related to the issue of cultural intensity and differences between cultures. Do some cultures, for instance, offer vaguer or less pronounced tools than others? Do others promote more ardent repertoires or nourish interconnected cultural understandings that intensify their meanings and how they are employed? Lamont's notion of national cultural repertoires have facilitated for a comparative use of Swidler's theory, but, neither she explores the concept of intensity and whether different cultures equip their users with more – or less – forceful cultural tools. Does the fact that the American respondents engaged the cultural repertoires in a more elaborate, as well as interconnected manner has anything to do with the national American culture? Do the Norwegian culture, in contrast, offer less compelling cultural formulas, which account for the Norwegian participants' vaguer cultural involvement? These are questions that would need to closer examination.

Critical Reflection and Further Research

This study has provided interesting insights into the attitudes of military men towards gender integration in the Armed Forces; yet, some critical reflections about the limitations of the findings remain. First of all, considering the source of data, the material is based on a limited number of interviews, which naturally limits the scope of claims that can be made. No generalizations can be made in regards to the findings; still, the data may serve as a valuable indicator as to what views military men may hold on a more general basis (Lemieux and Schmalzbauer 2000:149). It is also important to take into account that all participants serve in the Air Force. Substantial differences exist between the military branches and the Air Force is known to be the most benevolent in terms of acceptance of women (Orsten 1999:43,94). Research conducted in other divisions of the military structure paints a less tolerant picture

(Harsvik 2010; Totland 2009). Moreover, the participants mostly serviced in lower-rank positions, leaving the attitudes of higher ranking officials unexplored.

Certain reservations may also be made considering that the interviews were all conducted by a female researcher. I am, as stated, hesitant to attach too much significance to this gender component, none the less, the fact that a woman collected all the interviews should not be ignored either. If a male researcher was doing the interviews participants may have responded somewhat differently or discussed other aspects of their viewpoints. A normal expectation, I believe, is to think that if facing a male interviewer, attitudes of a more negative character would more easily be conveyed. It is hard to predict what might have been the case, however, as we have seen, the outlooks presented in this study were not exclusively positive and other studies do testify that military men are able to express negative sentiments towards women in the force, also to a female researcher (e.g. Cohn 2000). This suggests that the researcher's gender may be of less importance.

Positioning this study in the field of existing research, a notable finding is that the sentiments expressed by the interviewees were of a more inclusive character than what has previously been disclosed (Boldry et al. 2001; Cohn 2000; Rosen et al. 2003). The overall supportive attitude seems to represent a new element and it would be interesting to explore this more systematically. As stated above, the Air Force is known to be the most gender tolerant, which prompts the questions: How do the attitudes of participants in this study measure up to those of men in other parts of the Armed Force? It would also be interesting to examine if gender attitudes varies according to other traits, such as age and military experience.

This analysis has been focused on the cultural influence on the men's viewpoints and it would be interesting to see how the attitudes of men in other countries are informed by available cultural resources. What are the differences and do certain elements tend to be more global in character? We see that the gender conservative repertoire did not reveal distinct national difference and expanding the research to include more countries might give a better comprehension of whether some understandings of the military and women's role are more universally endorsed. This would be rewarding both from a theoretical point of view and a

potential enrichment of Swidler's theory, but also from a military-sociological stance, as it would further enhance our understanding of the gender perceptions possessed by men in the Armed Forces, as well as how they relate to the wider social context in which the military exists. Based on the evidence presented in this thesis, it is clear that participants greatly relied on national cultural tools to frame their positions. Considering the repertoires that were employed, and despite some conservative outlooks being conveyed, I believe it is safe to conclude that women were – to a large extent – perceived as their sisters in arms.

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Alle kilder som er brukt i denne oppgaven er oppgitt

APPENDIX I.

Interview Guide

Age

Military occupation/highest achieved rank:

Military experience (how long have you served, what was your job in the military etc)

1. Why did you decide to join the military?
2. Can you a little bit about your military experience – positive, negative, important etc.?
3. Historically, the military has only admitted men; would you describe the military as a masculine institution?
 - In which ways?
4. Have you worked with any women in the military?
 - How was that compared to working with men?
5. Did you behave differently towards women then towards men?
 - Did the men act differently when only men are present?

Physical differences

6. Did you feel that the women physically measured up to the various tasks in the military?
 - Where there times you felt that women's physical abilities caused problems?
7. How do you feel about the different physical standards for men and women?

Unit cohesion

8. Did you feel that the women were well integrated and functioned as a natural part of the group?
9. Do you believe that mixing males and females in a group can have a negative influence on group cohesion/ cooperation?
10. Do you feel that women create a different sexual environment to some of the men?
 - There has been a lot of controversy over the issue of sexual harassment in the armed forces; do you believe sexual harassment is a problem in the armed forces?

- Do you believe women are too sensitive as to what they see as sexual harassment?
11. Do you see any positive effects of having women in a unit?
 12. Do you believe it is hard for men to take orders from the opposite sex?
 - Do you think it serves the military better to have men in commanding positions?

Emotional value

13. In a dangerous situation, would you feel an extra need to protect female colleagues?
14. Would you be more uncomfortable with a female casualty or female POW than if the person was male?

General questions

15. How would you describe a good soldier?
 - In general, do you think men are better fit to be soldiers than women?
16. For a well-functioning military, do you believe it is important that men are in majority?
17. Can you think of any particular obstacles for the full integration of women into the armed forces?
 - Pregnancy?
18. Do you think men, in general, handle the challenges in the military – physically and mentally – better than women?
19. Do you believe men, in general, are more aggressive or have more of a ‘killer instinct’ that makes them better soldiers?
 - Do you think women have the mental and emotional toughness needed to serve in the military/serve in combat?
20. Are there any qualities you perceive as typical female that you see as valuable to be a good soldier?
21. Are there specific positions in the military you think women are better fit to serve in?
 - In the new kind of warfare we see in Afghanistan and Iraq, where the military takes part in rebuilding a country and not just combat operations, do you see female as particularly valuable?
22. Do you believe it is problematic that women with children serve in the military?

- Do you think women with children should be deployed?

23. If reinstated, do you believe both men and women should be subject to the draft?

24. Do you believe women should be allowed to serve in combat?

Vignettes

A.

Joe and Jane are both officers of the same rank, but Jane has held the position for longer. Joe is known to be physically strong, but also has a reputation for being somewhat obstinate and stubborn. Jane is well liked, but some of her superiors worry that she pays too much attention to the opinions of her soldiers. Jane wants to have a long military carrier, whereas for Joe the military is only a temporary occupation. Both appear to be candidates for a commanding position in Afghanistan, in a zone where many dangerous incidences have occurred

- a. Who would you recommend for the position?
- b. Why do you see that person as better fit for the job?

B.

A married couple, Sarah and Sam, is both enlisted in the armed forces. Sarah discovers that she is pregnant and even though they are both happy about the news they disagree about her future in the military. Sarah wants to continue her military carrier, but Sam feels that is irresponsible, especially with regards to the likelihood of her being deployed. Sam, on the other hand, thinks he should stay.

- a. Who do you think is right?
- b. Can you think of any solution to the problem?

APPENDIX II.

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in the study "*Siblings in arms? Perceptions of Gender in the Armed Forces*"; a sociological research project conducted by graduate student Elin Gustavsen. The study is a comparative study between Norway and the US that aims at exploring men's experiences and perspectives on gender integration in the armed forces.

Participation in this project is completely voluntary and you can at any time during the interview end the conversation without explanation. If you wish to terminate your participation all information about you will be immediately deleted.

For an accurate reproduction of the interview, the conversation will be recorded. I want to emphasize that all data storage complies with standards of complete anonymity and only myself, as the interviewer, knows the identity of the interviewees. Names of participants are *not* included in interview transcripts, interview notes or recordings and with completion of the study in 2010 all recordings will be erased.

Interview transcripts, notes from the conversation, and interview recordings are treated confidentially and stored safely from all others than myself. In any publication of the study, participants are presented fully anonymously and no individuals will be identifiable.

This study has been approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Service and complies with their human subject requirements. Responsible research institution is University of Oslo and advisor for the project is senior professor Anne Krogstad.

If you have any question relating to the study or your participation, do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

Elin Gustavsen

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