Introduction
I was in England, on exchange, a female officer in the British army was commanding a troop of 120 men when the Falklands Island war was declared. Her squadron deployed and she was on the aircraft ready to go and someone came and said ‘ma’am government has said no women are going’. She had led these men for two years, she knew every single one of them, she had been the one planning all the exercises, and she had been their leader. And she was removed from the aircraft and a cadet that had just graduated was put in her place. He didn’t know anything about them, he hadn’t even done his basic signals course, nothing, and it was just based on gender that she didn’t go on operational service (Cath).

Exclusions on women’s military service undermine women’s authority and put them in a position where they are viewed as incapable of doing their jobs (Chapman, 1999; Hancock, 1993; Nemitschenko, 2001; Peach, 1996). Removing an experienced commander and replacing her with an inexperienced man puts the lives of men at risk and ultimately reduces military effectiveness. Outdated policy drives such decisions and does not serve the individuals involved, the military, or the nation. Deeply entrenched cultural beliefs about gender drove the policy decision to exclude the woman mentioned above from what was her duty as an officer in the British military. A similar incident could easily occur here in Australia. Women in the military in Australia and internationally, regardless of their skills and competencies are denied the right to prove themselves based on outdated assumptions and bias toward the female gender.

‘The Gendered Battlefield’ explores women’s involvement in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). It examines the changes that have occurred in the past, the present realities women live and work with, and it also considers the potential changes that may occur in the future.

During the last century, the ADF has faced many significant changes. Several of these changes directly relate to the increasing participation of women and the

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1 Cath is an Officer in the Army – she told this story during an interview
2 Women make up approximately 13 percent of the total Permanent ADF (Defence Annual Report 2003-04).
necessary changes in policy and practical day-to-day realities that have come with the full integration of women into the services. Restructuring first began with the inclusion of women in war time activities beginning with nursing in the Boer War (Adam-Smith, 1996), the introduction of women’s services in the ADF in the 1950s, the integration of women into the Permanent ADF in the 1970s and 80s, and the 1990 governmental recommendation, on the advice of the Chief of Staff’s Committee, that women be integrated into combat related roles (Shephard, 1999). Such change has created a cultural shift in the ADF with gender and gender related issues being highlighted in the Defence organisation and in military affairs.

Australian women in the military have come a long way, perhaps further than could ever have been realised. Female service personnel who were once only permitted to work in the health professions, and then in traditionally ‘feminine’ work (health and administrative roles), now work in approximately eighty eight percent of employments within defence, including in combat support (Bomford, 2001; Chapman, 1999; Hancock, 2000).

The first roles Australian women performed for their nation in a time of war was as nurses during the Boer War when in 1899 a small number served in Africa caring for wounded Australian soldiers. During the World War One (WW1) Australian nurses again served in numerous theatres of war. However, it was the advent of World War Two (WW2) that saw Australian women serve their country in a myriad of roles, both in civilian and military contexts. From this time on women have had a significant role in the Australian military, and have served in war and in peacekeeping alongside their male colleagues.

Changes in the role of women in the military have not occurred in isolation to societal trends and events. As women’s military participation has increased so to have their roles and participation in the public arena, in politics, and in the work sphere. This thesis places women’s military participation in historical, political and societal contexts. The purpose of doing so is to highlight the military’s role in society, to emphasize that it is an institution that exists within society to serve society, and that it is made up of members of society. In this sense the military is not a sacred masculine institution where women’s integration is anomalous, nor is it
unique to the military that women are integrating into spheres where they have previously been denied a place.

On a political and societal level, women in Australia have made enormous strides in the last century. ‘White Western Australian women won the vote in 1899, when legislators deemed the word ‘person’ to include women. Yet in 1904, when Edith Haynes applied to sit her intermediate law examination, learned judges of the Western Australian Full Court of the Supreme Court ruled that though the relevant statute gave ‘every person’ (with the necessary training) the right to sit for the bar examination the term referred only to males’ (Crawford & Maddern, 2001: 146). Full entry into the legal profession was finally granted to women in 1923 (Crawford & Maddern, 2001: 146). When women were finally permitted to study in Australian universities, it is interesting to observe that originally quotas were set to prevent any substantial number going into particular fields, especially medicine and law (Scutt, 1994). Being permitted to study differed somewhat from being free to qualify in a profession. These are examples of the legacy that proponents to women’s expanding role in the ADF are endeavouring to defeat. And although it would be unheard of today to deem a woman a ‘non-person’ in the eyes of the law it is still permitted to paternalise in relation to what a woman may or may not do in a military context and to place lawful exclusions upon women’s service.

The overriding emphasis regarding decisions made for women by those in power rests on the presumption that women’s safety is being taken into account by those whose responsibility it is to take care of them. In such analysis women are rendered childlike, unable to make correct decisions about their own wellbeing, and are not responsible for themselves, with the implication being that they are equally incapable of being responsible for others (Stiehm, 1982).

I began this research with the question ‘why would women want to join the military?’ From this simple question emerged an investigation that focuses on the historical, sociological, political and contemporary roles of women in the ADF. There has been significant change to women’s roles over the past fifty years yet women continue to face significant barriers to full participation in the ADF (Burton, 1996; Chapman, 1999; Nemitschenko, 2001).
In my investigations into women’s expanding role in the ADF I have explored the issues of women integrating into a previously all male realm. From here I developed an interest in the process of integration and in the fortitude of women who pursue military roles despite the opposition they face in doing so.

The masculinist culture of the ADF as it resists women’s integration left me with a sense of indignation that women were facing barriers in their careers. These barriers are organisational as much as they are infused with gendered stereotypes of female inferiority in regards to military employments (Walbank, 1992; Burton, 1996; Peach, 1996). Within a masculinist culture women are stereotyped as inferior to men, assumed to be lesser individuals physically and emotionally, are unfit for military service, and mythologised into being nurturers and not war fighters (Agostino, 1998b). Yet the ADF recruits women into service, into a culture that resists their presence. The military’s need for personnel is perhaps the most significant driving force behind gender integration. Cultural and societal influences play a part but recruitment of women does reflect demographic trends more so than any other influence. The need for personnel and the cultural values that limit women’s roles are directly at odds (Segal, 1995). However, from an equal rights perspective it is unjust of the military and of a society that condones it, to recruit women into an organisation that ultimately discriminates against them. This study focuses on gender stereotypes of men and women, the inferior/superior binary that exists in the military traditionally. It explores the myths that surround gender assumptions, and gender bias and how constructions of gender perpetuate women’s exclusion from full service. ‘The Gendered Battlefield’ is concerned with the injustices women face when their service is restricted, the lack of equal access to military employments and the discrimination women face in employment and as individuals. Women in the ADF are not equal members of the military they serve. The bias operates at a cultural level as well as a political level, where legislation and policy are in place

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3 The term ‘integration’ refers to the process of women’s increasing participation into what was previously an all male realm. ‘Full’ integration refers to women’s integration into all military positions, including combat employments.

4 The term ‘myth’ as it is used in this thesis describes a situation that is unproven, imaginary, or fictitious. In this context then, I describe, assumption, prejudice, stereotypes, and bias as myth.
ensuring that women do not rise to positions of leadership, authority, and prestige. Women’s roles in the military are restricted in peacetime operations, war, and in peacekeeping.

**Aims Of The Thesis and Significance of the Study**

Gender integration in the ADF, especially women integrating into combat employments, is clearly portrayed in current literature as posing a problem for the ADF and for personnel. The purpose of this study is to determine how gender is constructed within the ADF to ascertain whether it is this that hinders women’s integration into the ADF.

The literature proposes that the culture of the ADF is masculine valuing the attributes assigned to the male gender over traits that are considered feminine (Agostino, 1998b; Burton, 1996; Chapman, 1999; Hancock, 1993; Nemitschenko, 2001). Government legislation and policy exclusions on women’s roles may serve to legitimise restrictions on women’s service on the grounds of gender (Agostino, 1998b; Burton, 1996; Chapman, 1999; Hancock, 1993; Nemitschenko, 2001). ‘The Gendered Battlefield’ seeks to understand and critically discuss the barriers to full integration in the ADF from the view of current literature, policy and legislation, and from the point of view of women in the ADF. The thesis seeks to make a contribution to monitoring the integration of women into a previously all male institution.

This research investigation is qualitative, multidisciplinary and feminist. The significance of the study is that it has:

- Provided a group of female members of the ADF a platform to give voice to their opinions and beliefs. The benefits of this platform are multi-layered. Firstly women who participated in the research did so as volunteers, which is an important distinction in the military context where much research is randomly sampled.
- This research seeks to make explicit the vast pool of knowledge and experience held by these women. Research such as this centralizes their roles – past, present – and their potential in a manner that highlights their needs.
and wants, their disappointments and challenges, as well as the rewards and opportunities that have come from their time spent with the ADF. Given the positive response from ADF women to this research (over two hundred responses to the invitation to participate) it is indicated that these women want an opportunity to talk about their experience. Many of these women have had considerable years’ service and impressive careers. This research provides in-depth feedback on that experience and the changes these women have participated in

- The research has been conducted from outside of the ADF. Researchers are influenced by the context that we research within. My perspective is therefore different from and complements in-house research. Research conducted from outside of the ADF can add a new dimension and a new perspective to that conducted from within

- This research provides historical, societal, and political perspectives. Doing so provides added dimensions to the military setting and places the ADF and female personnel into contexts from which experience may be elucidated in light of past and current trends. Military debates often exclude societal and political trends and by doing so enshrine the military as an institution that is separate from society

- Feminist debates also often exclude the experience of military women from discussions about society and politics thereby separating military women from feminist discussion. Spurling and Greenhalgh in their book ‘Women in Uniform: Pathways and Perceptions’ (2000) point out that in Australian literature and academia the subject of women in the military is a neglected area. Literature concerning women in the ADF tends to focus upon historical narrative accounts and does not lend itself to interpretation and analysis of women’s experience or to the cultural, societal, and political environments that shape and influence this experience (Bomford, 2001; Spurling & Greenhalgh, 2000: xiii). The same can be said for women’s historical scholarship in this area; a gap in the literature is apparent and what literature there is – is mostly narrative (Bomford; 2001; De Pauw, 1998; Spurling & Greenhalgh, 2000). This thesis makes a contribution to feminist theorising in Australia by taking into account the experience of military women and their
contribution to the cultural, societal and political environment of the Australian nation

- This research builds upon the research of others (see Agostino, 1998a, 1998b, 2000a; Bomford 2001; Burton 1996; Ferguson, 1998; Hodson & Salter, 1995; Little, 1991; Quinn, 1989, 1991; Walbank [Agostino], 1992) by drawing on the experience of women in all three branches of the ADF (Navy, Army & Air Force), and by highlighting what changes have occurred since these works have been completed as well as being explicit about what has not changed.

- I believe that my work differs from others in the Australian context. The closest is perhaps the landmark study by the late Dr Clare Burton (1996) ‘Women in the Australian Defence Force. Two Studies: The Cultural, Social and Institutional Barriers Impeding the Merit-Based Progression of Women and the Reasons Why More Women are not Making the Australian Defence Force a Long-Term Career’. The Burton Report bears a likeness to my own work but only to a point and it has been of significance to see where barriers have changed for women and where they have not. Like Burton I have explored integration and barriers to integration, however, this study takes up issues that the Burton report did not. ‘The Gendered Battlefield’ also explores what I have identified as ‘myths’ inherent in ADF culture that serve to perpetuate barriers to integration and exclusions on women’s service. This thesis gives a great deal of attention to the issue of combat exclusions, and explores whether exclusions shape and perpetuate a culture of resistance, and whether women’s careers in all areas of Defence operations are restricted by exclusions. This thesis also provides a contemporary view of women’s current and potential roles in peacekeeping. Given the range of issues explored in this thesis there has been no other study in Australia that could be said to resemble it.

In reading and analysing textual material that relates to women in the military I have attempted to break down the source material into opponents to women’s expanding role in the military and proponents for women’s expanding role. This is because published material tends toward oppositional argument. Opponents have tended to embrace biological deterministic arguments to assert their positions whilst
proponents tend more so to explore the notion of gender in their analysis. In the latter work there is a great deal of common ground and little contention on recommendations. In Australia there has been very little written from the perspective of opponents to women in the military. I have therefore chosen to use the work of overseas people who oppose women’s expanding military roles. I have particularly focused on the work of Martin van Creveld an academic and Professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem who is well known for his publications about the State and warfare. Since the 1990s van Creveld has written about women’s roles in war and in military (1993, 2000, 2001) and in 2001 published the book ‘Men, Women and War’.

The central methods for this research involved literature reviews, examination of relevant legislative and policy documents, reviews of military research, examination of media portrayals, and in-depth interviewing of thirty women who have or who do serve with the ADF.

**Interviewing Women in the ADF**

I have been fortunate in receiving support from the ADF during the process of this research. After completing the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (UWSHREC) application I contacted the Chief of the Defence Force to advise that interviewing for this research was to take place. Soon after this the Directorate of Strategic Planning Personnel and Research (DSPPR) requested that I submit a proposal to the ADF to have the research endorsed. The resulting outcome of this proposal was that DSPPR agreed to support me in contacting women from the ADF so that I could invite them to participate in the research. DSPPR have provided me with relevant reports and documentation that without their help I may not be privy to. After completing an ethics process with Australian Defence Human Research Ethics Committee (ADHREC) I was able to issue the invitation to participate to all female members of the ADF.

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5 For more detail on this process see Chapter Two, Section Two ‘Methods’
I interviewed thirty women who had served or who do serve with the ADF as a way of hearing from the central players in debates about women in the military. The research questions for this study were:

- How do female members of the ADF experience their roles in the ADF?
- How do female members of the ADF experience issues in the arguments about their increasing participation in military roles?
- Are gender constructions a barrier to women’s full integration into the ADF?
- If gender constructions do present a barrier to women’s full integration how does this happen?

When I first began this research my only question was ‘why would women want to pursue a military career?’ By the time I submitted an ethics application with the UWSHREC my research questions concerned a broad spectrum of issues, a spectrum too broad in fact to contain within a thesis. My research aims were to:

- Provide a platform for women who served or who had served in the ADF to relate their experiences
- To explore the roles of combat and peacekeeping as contrasting employments for women
- To explore the constructions of the female gender as ‘nurturer’ and the male gender as ‘aggressive’
- To explore integration, women as parents, harassment, discrimination, and the culture of the ADF and Australian society

By the time I submitted an ethics application to ADHREC my research questions and aims had been refined. I still wanted to explore peacekeeping and combat as contrasting employments and retained the desire to enrich the research by interviewing women who had served in the military. However by this time I had decided to interview women in the ADF who were pursuing long-term careers with only a minority of women who had separated from the ADF being interviewed. The research aims at this time were only to explore women’s integration into combat
employments and their continuing representation in peacekeeping and did not include women’s roles in the ADF more generally.

After interviewing women my research aims and questions again changed. It was the outcome of interviewing of women in the ADF that directed what this thesis now is. I analysed themes as they emerged from the interviews and felt compelled to follow the directions the women were emphasising. The issues of combat and peacekeeping employments have remained a feature of the research, however, the way they have been presented is not a comparison study. Rather this study focuses upon how female members of the ADF experience the debates that revolve around their service; the thesis highlights their opinions, attitudes, and beliefs about women’s increasing military roles from their personal experience. The research has sought to focus on those issues presented by women who were interviewed. Therefore, issues such as promotion to higher ranks are covered in chapter four whereas prior to interviews I had not sought to make promotion a thesis issue. The research questions that have guided the writing of this thesis emerged from literature and from interviews. They are questions that perhaps sound simple but are in actual fact a web of complexity.

Desirably this research will benefit women who serve with the ADF currently, have served in the past, or who will serve in the future; and women who serve in militaries in other parts of the world, especially those who are confronting similar institutional and personal issues. It will also contribute to theories and debates in academia especially those concerning feminism, gender, and masculinities; policy makers in the ADF and in Government.

**Boundaries of the Thesis**

‘The Gendered Battlefield’ is about women in the ADF. The research did not seek to explore where race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, or age intersect with gender. This is not to say that the interaction between these factors is not significant in the lives of individuals, that they do not impact upon the culture of the ADF, or that the culture of the ADF does not problematise these issues for members. It was necessary to assert a boundary that this thesis is primarily about gender and centrally about the experiences of women.
‘The Gendered Battlefield’ is not about the harassment women in the ADF encounter. Again this is not to say that harassment of women in the ADF is not a significant problem. Indeed, it is a thesis in itself. Whilst some information is provided throughout the thesis on the issue of harassment, the focus of the research has not concerned specific incidences of the mistreatment of women in the ADF. Therefore, controversies such as the ‘Swan incident’ where a female officer serving on HMAS Swan reported a rape in 1992 and brought charges against her attacker is not discussed in this thesis (Horner, 2001). The Swan incident sparked a Senate Inquiry into sexual harassment in the ADF and the ensuing reports and submissions to some extent have informed the content of the thesis.

The boundaries of the thesis also prevent discussion and analysis of the experiences of men in the ADF. Male members of the ADF also face barriers to their careers and are sometimes discriminated against and harassed by other members of the ADF. For instance, submissions to the ‘Senate Inquiry into the Effectiveness of Military Justice’ (February 2004) have been submitted by male members of the ADF. A number of men are allegedly on the receiving end of harassment (Senate Inquiry into the Effectiveness of Military Justice, 2004). An earlier investigation into the military justice system, was conducted by Burchett (2001) the resulting report ‘The Report into Military Justice in the Australian Defence Force’, received 488 submissions and identified 18 categories of complaint. Numbering a total of 148 submissions ‘abuse of authority’ was the highest complaint among submissions. ‘Harassment’ was the second highest category with 132 complaints, ‘intimidation’ rated 89 submissions, and ‘victimisation’ rated 85 submissions. The submissions also accounted 69 allegations of assault. Most of these submissions 71% come from male service personnel (Burchett, 2001: Annex 1 – 3-7).

Issues that homosexual and lesbian members of Defence might encounter are also not canvassed in this thesis. Agostino deals with these issues somewhat in her work (2000a) where interviews with RAN personnel revealed that a homosexual man had been raped. Although the ban on homosexuality was lifted in the ADF in 1992 (Horner, 2001) lesbian women and gay men continue to face barriers in their careers such as harassment and the lack of acknowledgement of homosexual partners (Horner, 2001).
Aboriginality, ethnicity, race, and cultural difference are issues too broad to explore in this thesis. Equity for people in Defence who differ from the norm of the white Anglo-Saxon is proving difficult to achieve. Incidences of cultural and racial intolerance by some members of the ADF have been brought to public attention by the media. In 1990 during the Gulf War members of HMAS Success were videotaped dressing up with towels wrapped around their heads and wearing fake moustaches and pretending to ‘pray’ to Mecca. This videotape was later played on Australian television (Horner, 2001). In 1999 Damien Palmer a 19 year old Aboriginal army recruit hanged himself at Townsville's Lavarack Barracks after months of alleged abuse. A Senate committee inquiry was told that he had allegedly been ridiculed by instructors about the level of government hand-outs to Aboriginal people (Das, 2004). Issues such as racism, homophobia, and the issue of harassment against men are important and deserve further research.

**Thesis Overview**

I now turn to a brief overview of the contents of the thesis chapters.

**Chapter one:** This chapter sets out the theoretical frameworks that underpin this research. Liberal feminist strategies for legislative and policy reform in a military context are argued to be appropriate strategies for change. Gender theory, as it complements liberal feminism is discussed. Cultural change in the ADF will only occur along with legislative and policy change.

**Chapter two:** The methodology that has guided the inquiry is discussed. The chosen methodological design is feminist. The method section of this chapter is an in-depth analysis of the research process.

**Chapter three:** An overview of women’s Australia war history provides context to this inquiry. Women’s involvement in WW2 in Australia and in the Allied forces is outlined. The purpose of the chapter is not only to re-record women’s war and military history but to also evaluate the use of the historical record in contemporary debates about women’s involvement.
Chapter four: This chapter places women’s integration into the ADF into societal and political contexts by examining the trend of women’s increased participation in the labour force generally and into the Australian military. The barriers to women’s integration in the ADF are discussed in light of career advancement and the gap that exists between policy initiatives and women’s career advancements. How women manage their gender in a masculinist culture and where they find support is explored. Reasons why women join the ADF and reasons why they leave the ADF are discussed. In all of the above categories women in the interview group discuss issues as they relate to them personally. The restrictions on women’s service is highlighted as a barrier to career progression and advancement to higher ranks and positions of prestige and leadership. Women with children describe the career barriers they face due to the perception of mothers in a masculinist culture. The frustrations women experience due to their ‘inferior’ status as women imbues this chapter.

Chapter five: This chapter deconstructs three central arguments that are advanced in debates that see the female gender as inappropriate for military participation. The first centres around biological determinism and argues that women are not physically capable of military employments that are traditionally male realms. The counter argument in this debate revolves around the need for the military to design competencies for tasks within combat employments and set standards that can be competed for by males and females. The second debate focuses upon male bonding and the need for all male units to have a strong sense of cohesion. Countering this is the argument that traditional military cohesion is based on ‘social’ cohesion. This side of the debate proposes that ‘task’ cohesion where a troop bonds around the task they are performing is more akin to military effectiveness. The third debate sees women again as undermining military effectiveness, this time by distracting male personnel from missions at times of operations. In the ‘protectionism’ debates it is thought that men will fail military missions in preference to protecting female colleagues. This argument views women as needing to be protected from injury, capture, or being taken prisoner in a time of war. Countering this argument is the view that military women’s non-combatant status does not protect them from injury, capture, or death. It is also put forward that men do not have a monopoly on the protective instinct, that women too embody the desire to protect and defend.
Chapter six: The controversial issue of women’s integration into combat employments is discussed in this chapter. The issues as presented by both sides of the debates are explored. Women are said to be passive in temperament and men to be aggressive therefore opponents to women in combat propose that women cannot and should not integrate into combat roles. Cross cultural examples of cultures where women do have combat roles and two case studies from overseas research are provided as a means to access lessons learnt from abroad. The issue of women in combat is a complex debate to resolve. Interview material is used in this chapter to view the debates from the perspectives of women in the military.

Chapter seven: This chapter focuses on women’s roles in peacekeeping and the possibility that women could be serving Australia in greater numbers in this area of military operations. The United Nations (UN) is encouraging nation states to send more women with military contingents, however, the percentage of women sent on Australian missions does not represent the percentage of women in the ADF. This chapter contends that the same gender bias that prevents women from serving in combat roles exists within peacekeeping as well.

Chapter eight: The conclusion to the thesis examines ways forward for women’s full integration in the ADF. The issues as presented in each chapter are reviewed and brought together and recommendations for change are presented.
Chapter One

Threads into the Labyrinth
Introduction

Women in the ADF hold a limited number of positions of power, leadership and prestige. Women in the ADF are also currently excluded from serving in direct combat employments. Although most employment categories are now open to women there is a gap between policy and practice in the ADF and women are under represented in positions that are considered to be traditionally male (Chapman, 1999; Nemitschenko, 2001).

Positioning Feminisms

The theoretical framework of this thesis is feminist. ‘The question, “what is feminist theory?” is one that could not be answered without great controversy’ (Gatens, 1991: 1). This is because feminist theory is diverse, there is not one feminist theory but many feminist theories (Beasley, 1999; Gatens, 1991; Steans, 1998). Feminist theory may be diverse but it does have some common threads. ‘A fundamental premise of feminist theory is that socio-political life – and traditional accounts of socio-political life – are prejudicial to women’ (Gatens, 1991: 1). A central feature of definitions of feminism is equal rights ‘[f]eminism is frequently defined as a belief that women are entitled to enjoy the same rights and privileges as men (Steans, 1998: 15). Definitions such as these can nonetheless be limiting to feminist theory and pose more questions than they answer. The question of ‘equality with whom?’ has concerned feminists, particularly postmodern feminists whose definitions of feminism concern the multiple realities of women’s and men’s lives (Steans, 1998: 25).

Feminism is multiple theories, it is political, and it is, and has been, one of the most successful social movements of more than a century. Feminism has faced pressure and resistance from dominant culture. But this is only one of the challenges encountered by the feminist movement. In the 1960’s and 70’s feminism engaged with the concept of a united sisterhood and a shared oppression. Such universalising of women’s experience led to a reappraisal of feminist theory in the 1980’s when women who were underrepresented by feminism, such as black women, working
class women and lesbians, protested the assumption of an affiliated and homogeneous women’s movement. The conflicts that emerged from debates about the universalising of women’s lives led feminism into new and uncharted waters. Here feminism found a fortuitous opportunity to reassess, and feminist theory transformed into more complex and rich philosophical frameworks (Gunew & Yeatman, 1993; hooks, 1984; Ramazanoglu, 1989; Segal, 1987).

Consequently feminist theory began to diversify and various schools of feminist thought were identified and began to develop. The earlier feminisms – liberal (Greer, 1970) – radical (Morgan, 1978) – Marxist and socialist (Burton, 1985) feminisms, were challenged by ‘new’ feminisms’ such as – ecological feminism (Warren & Caddy, 1996) – postmodern feminism (Agostino, 2000b; Sawicki, 1991) – and feminist critical theory (Spivak, 1989).


The influence of the feminist project has motivated a change in women and this has led some feminist thinkers to critique and protest the military institution, whilst a smaller number have chosen to pursue military careers and to advocate for the rights of women who serve with the military.

The advent of feminist theorising about women’s military roles, the politicising of those roles, and the change in societal expectations for women due to feminism are in part why women’s military roles have increased (Bomford, 2001; Hancock, 1993, 2000; Smith, 2000a). It is the pressure of what women want that has led them, not to accept the roles the military wants them to have, but to ask for, demand, create and take, a new place in the military.
There are two feminist schools of thought that stand out in military debates about women’s expanding roles in the military (Agostino, 2000b). The radical and the liberal feminist perspectives oppose one another in their standpoints.

Radical feminism begins with ‘gender distinctions’ and sees women and men as radically different in the ways they operate in the world. Men are violent, aggressive, and make war. Women are peaceful, conciliatory, and maternal (Tuttle, 1987). Radical feminists are concerned with establishing alternatives to existing institutions in society (Tuttle, 1987) and therefore seek a society that does not support or maintain the military institution. Women therefore should not support the ‘male’ institution of the military but rather involve themselves in the pursuit of peace through active engagement with peace movements and resistance to war (Caldecott, & Leland, 1983; Elshtain, 1983). Radical feminism opposes women having military roles (Enloe, 1983, 2000). Jean Bethke Elshtain’s (1983, 1987) work is prominent in radical feminist discussions on war. In Elshtain’s analysis it is the binary split between men and women that perpetuates war. Women as ‘beautiful souls’ and men as ‘just warriors’ in Elshtain’s thinking sees the split between the masculine and feminine as creating a situation that requires men to protect women – the just warrior protects the beautiful soul. Without such a separation between men and women, Elshtain believes, both would equally be responsible in the taking up of non-violent means to resolve disputes (Elshtain, 1987). The radical feminist perspective cannot offer military women an analysis that supports them in their roles or the Defence Force in fully integrating women into its ranks (Agostino, 2000b).

The liberal feminist standpoint is the feminist theory that this thesis most aligns itself with. Liberal feminist analysis views men and women as basically similar in their talents and attributes and argues that women have the right to participate on equal terms with men. However a common assumption is that liberal feminist theorists assume that ‘... if women had greater representation, then gender bias in the paid workplace would be progressively eradicated’ (Agostino, 2000b: 64). Liberal feminist strategies advance the position of women in society by focusing upon legal and legislative action (Tuttle, 1987), which are necessary approaches to achieving full integration for women in the military. And whilst the liberal feminist agenda is seen, by some, to ignore the need to challenge the values inherent in institutions that
construct men as superior and women as inferior, this thesis does not do so (Tuttle, 1987). Rather this thesis acknowledges that without a challenge to gender constructions and male privilege (Agostino, 2000b) policy change cannot be totally effective.

Agostino (2000b) sees poststructuralist feminism as offering a workable alternative to radical and liberal feminisms. In these terms poststructuralist feminism can theorise about women and men in the military more adequately than radical and liberal feminisms because its framework offers an acknowledgement that gender is not a fixed state (Agostino, 2000b). Indeed, poststructural/postmodern theorists are ‘deconstructive’, they hope to create ‘distance’ enough to ‘… make us sceptical about beliefs concerning truth, knowledge, power, the self, and language that are often taken for granted within and serve as legitimation for contemporary Western culture’ (Flax, 1990: 41). Poststructural theory leaves space in theorising for ‘radical doubt’ (Flax, 1990) about gender as fixed or binary.

Agostino demonstrates that poststructural feminism openly acknowledges more than a universal category of ‘woman’. It is a theory that can also encompass historical and cultural diversity therefore, offering ‘… a passage through the essentialist theoretical impasse which has long beset feminist discourses … [t]he world in which we live is by no means unitary. Rather, it is complex, ambiguous and multifaceted in terms of culture, gender, race, sexuality, and class’ (Agostino, 2000b: 80). Military women do, by their very embodiment of ‘military’ and ‘woman’ defy traditional stereotypes of gender and poststructural feminism offers a ‘subjective position’ enabling ‘… a critique of the arguments centred on the so-called ‘natural’ gender order’ (Agostino, 2000b: 82).

Poststructural feminism is useful in theorising about women in military roles; however, it does not offer a sense of ‘solidarity’ in the category ‘woman’. ‘[T]he emphasis on difference … runs the risk of overstating the difference (Steans, 1998: 29). Whilst women in the military are essentially unique individuals who differ from one another, I believe that the shared nature of their roles, as women in the ADF, needs a feminist theory that will elucidate the issues they face while respecting both solidarity and difference. Gender relations, in this regard are important ‘… a
The fundamental goal of feminist theory is (and ought to be) to analyze gender relations: how gender relations are constituted and experienced and how we think or, equally important, do not think about them’ (Flax, 1990: 40).

The necessity for legislative reform and policy change in Australia is highlighted in this thesis. The need for this reform specifically concerns the roles and rights of Australian women. At the same time the research has acknowledged the need for gender analysis, which is why the research has relied on both liberal feminist paradigms and gender theorising.

Liberal Feminism and Gender Analysis

This thesis seeks to both elucidate gender relations in the military and the need for further legislative reform. Locking into a single theory can be restrictive. A transdisciplinary approach is therefore critical. Liberal feminist theory with its emphasis upon concrete proposals for change that can occur at the level of Government legislative reform is a positive starting point. A change at policy and legislative levels have so far seen military women benefit from initiatives such as equal pay, the lifting of many exclusions to service, equal employment opportunity (EEO) and affirmative action strategies (AA). Theorising about how gender is constructed, how it defines women and men’s military employments, and how it determines women’s integration, can complement liberal feminist theory where it falls short on gender analysis.

This research has found that there are two inherent problems facing women in the ADF. One is the masculine culture of the ADF (Agostino, 1998a, Burton, 1996; Chapman, 1999; Nemitschenko, 2001). The other is that legislation is discriminatory toward women in their work roles and in their ability to reach positions of power and authority in the ADF (Burton, 1996; Chapman, 1999; Nemitschenko, 2001; Walbank, 1992). Discriminatory legislation and the masculinist culture of the ADF intersect to create an entity that is difficult to fathom and therefore to overcome. The acquisition of the entitlement to full military service, free of restrictions and exclusions will not overcome the masculinist culture of the ADF. Yet the masculinist culture of Government politics and the military culture currently prevents
the ability of women to achieve full integration (without restrictions on service). Restrictive policy on women’s service can only reinforce a gender biased culture. Legislation that excludes women from full citizenship rights sends a powerful message to women, both inside and outside of the military. It states clearly that women have still not earned the right to be considered equal.

‘The Gendered Battlefield’ does not downplay either the influence of culture on women’s place in the military or the influence of discriminatory legislation. Rather the two influences are seen as being imbued with the effects of the other. Therefore, the manner in which policy is designed, implemented, and monitored, influences the culture of the organisation. And the culture of the organisation influences how policy is accepted, implemented, and monitored. The theorists relied upon in analysis, throughout the text of the thesis, such as Katerina Agostino [Walbank] (1992, 1998a, 1998b, 2000a & 2000b) Clare Burton (1991, 1996) and Eleanor Hancock (1993, 2000) offer reflection upon both of these issues and the contradictions, shifting ground and complexities that the issues create.

**Gender Theory**

Gender is possibly the primary issue for theorising about the subject of women in the military. Nowhere in society is gender more apparent, more magnified, more managed, or enforced (Agostino, 1998b, 2000a; Connell, 1987, 1995; Enloe, 1983, 2000). No discussion about women in the military is free from gendered debates (Agostino, 1998b, 2000a; Connell, 1987, 1995; Enloe, 1983, 2000).

In this thesis the assumed natural order of gender is challenged by applying a gender analysis to the issues and seeing these issues through a feminist lens. Gender is a social construction, it is fluid, open to change and it is not a fixed state of being (Connell, 1987, 2002).

For commentators who oppose women’s expanding military roles it is commonly believed that human beings dress, speak, work, socialise and function, based on the natural (gendered) order of life (Mitchell, 1998; Tuten, 1982; van Creveld, 1993, 2000). That is, our sex category, whether we are male or female, determines our
behaviour, our wants and needs, our desires. The standpoint of this thesis is that the way we dress, speak, work, socialise, and function, is based on how we are gendered and is not predetermined by our sex (Connell, 1987; Lorber, 1994). For instance, in Western society men wear trousers, shorts, suits and ties, and other such ‘masculine’ attire. In many other cultures it is customary for men to wear flowing clothing much like a Western woman’s attire. This behaviour is not determined by sex but by gender. It is not the biology of sex that determines the social order of society but gendered social practice (Connell, 1995). The social institution of gender ‘... establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the process of everyday life, is built into the major social organizations of society ’ (Lorber, 1994: 1).

Therefore, the expectation of military women in the workplace is that they predominate in positions without power, prestige and decision-making. The expectation is that women work in clerical and nursing positions (Smith & McAllister, 1991), or in roles men no longer want (van Creveld, 2001). This pattern of gender differentiation perpetuates ‘differences’ between men and women that seek to ‘... justify the exploitation of an identifiable group – women’ (Lorber, 1994: 5).

And this occurs within the military and within society generally despite the fact that there are more similarities between men and women than there are differences (Lorber, 1994). Robert Connell asks ‘[w]hy the reluctance to accept similarity? A large part of the explanation, I am sure, lies in cultural background. Dichotomous gender symbolism is very strong in Western culture ... [w]ithin our usual mindset and our usual research design, gender similarity is not a positive state; it is merely the absence of proven difference ’ (Connell, 2002).

In this thesis gender is defined as a verb, gender is what we do, not what we are. Our gender defines our place in society. Gender distinctions in Western society have placed men in positions of power and rule, and women in positions of secondary status and inferiority (Burton, 1985). This dominance-submission construction disadvantages women in interpersonal relations between men and women and operates at an institutional level in the division of labour (Burton, 1985). Women in the military are in an even more disadvantaged position because the military is an arena for defining hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995). In the military, masculinity is defined as ‘superior’ and femininity is defined as ‘inferior’ in relation to masculinity.
In the Western world, our main concern here, gender is constructed dualistically (Agostino, 2000; Connell, 1987, 2000; Lorber, 1994). Only two genders exist and one is afforded a value that the other is not. One holds more power, resources, rights and responsibilities than the other. And so gender, in the Western world, is constructed along the lines of inequality.

Inherent in gender is a binary split between male and female, the two are set against each other as having opposing natures, there is an imbalance of power, an issue of equity, of agency, and an issue of value. That men should hold power, have more rights and do challenging and important work whilst women do menial tasks is, by some (see Mitchell, 1998; Tuten, 1982; van Creveld, 1993, 2000), held to be within the natural order of life.

The way in which gender is constructed defies rationality; it denies the actual lived experience of most people’s lives. The way we live, what we do in the home, at work, and in the public arena often defies stereotypical notions of gender. ‘Psychological research suggests that the great majority of us combine masculine and feminine characteristics, in varying blends, rather than being all one or the other’ (Connell, 2002: 5). To be sure, the influx of women into the military defies gender stereotypes and so too does the entry of males into predominantly female work occupations. ‘…[G]ender ambiguities are not so rare … there are women who are soldiers and men who are nurses’ (Connell, 2002: 5). So notions of gender can be false and also blind. Most gender stereotypes are based within the mythology that women are inferior to men. It credits the male gender with an agency and an ability that comes naturally. Stereotypes within the military discredit the female gender by denying women the same agency and ability that men have, they create and maintain the sexual division of labour.

This assumption of a natural inferiority existing for the female sex is based on the notion that the sexes are physiologically and psychologically different. Biological determinism in this regard refers to physical and mental attributes and ability; female inferiority is therefore built into a woman’s genes. Gender assumptions go a step further by rendering women inferior based on cultural norms and knowledge, such as
religious beliefs and doctrines (Connell, 1987; Lorber, 1994). These assumptions are used to incorrectly analyse women’s lack of power, their subordinate roles and responsibilities, their relegation to the domestic sphere, and their lack of roles and power in the political and institutional arena as evidence of female incapacity, rather than the result of oppression and systematic inequality.

Equality And Equal Access Theory

Anne Summers says that ‘[t]he notion of equality is such a simple idea, it’s hard to see why some people have such a hard time grasping it – and accepting it’ (Summers, 2003: 263). The notion of women having the right to equal opportunity as it is presented in this thesis is not supported by all feminists or feminist theories. ‘The tension between political equality on the one hand and social and economic equality on the other is … a familiar one, and it is part of what has been at stake in assessments of liberal feminism’ (Philips, 1992: 209 & 210). That notions of generalised equality do not go far enough in securing the aims of the feminist project is true. However, the goals of equality are nonetheless important ones. As Philips goes on to say ‘… the equal right to vote has not guaranteed women equal access to power, but this is not to say we’d be better off without it’ (Philips, 1992: 210). In the same way, the lifting of all exclusions of women’s military service will not liberate military women, however, women will be better served by the lifting of exclusions. Legislative change is a key strategy used by liberal feminists to try and achieve equality and changes in policy have paved the way for women’s greater participation in all areas of work, including the ADF.

The ADF’s policy on ‘Equity and Diversity in the Australian Defence Force’ states that all ADF personnel are covered by provisions under Commonwealth human rights legislation that are relevant to equity and diversity. Specific regard to gender is in the Department of Defence Instruction on the ‘Sex Discrimination Act’ (1984) and the ‘Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission Act’ (1986) (Department of Defence, 2001).

Before discussing the ADF requirements under government law, the exemption the military has, under the Sex Discrimination Act must first be outlined.
The Sex Discrimination Act and the Shifting Ground of Legislation and Change

The Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act of 1984 had four objectives, these were:

(a) To give effect to certain provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(b) To eliminate so far as is possible, discrimination against persons on the ground of sex, marital status or pregnancy in the areas of work, accommodation, education, the provision of goods, facilities and services, the disposal of land, the activities of clubs and the administration of Commonwealth laws and programmes

(c) Eliminate, so far as is possible, discrimination involving sexual harassment in the workplace and in education

(d) To promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle of the equality of men and women (Department of Defence, 1986).

The United Nations convention was to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. However, the Sex Discrimination Act did not seek to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. Rather, it sought to end sex discrimination ‘… in the public sphere only “so far as possible”. This indicates the presence of intractable sex discrimination in the public sphere’ (Sullivan, 1990: 175).

The scope of the Sex Discrimination Act covers both direct and indirect discrimination. Under direct discrimination the Act states that it is not unlawful to discriminate against a person if the discrimination is ‘reasonable’ (Department of Defence, 1986). Therefore the Act could be seen to be protective of Australian culture where it is inflexible and biased in its views toward gender equality. The exemption on women serving in combat stands testament to gender bias in Australian culture.
‘A matter of particular relevance to the Defence Force is the exemption concerning employment of women in the Defence Force … it is not unlawful for a person to discriminate against a woman on the ground of her sex in connection with employment, engagement or appointment in the Defence Force in a position involving performance of combat or combat-related duties’ (Department of Defence, 1986: 2).

Ironically when the Sex Discrimination Act was passed the ADF became more discriminatory in its employment of women and not less so. Women who had once been employed in combat-related duties – in areas such as transport in the Royal Australian Corps of Transport and the Royal Australian Engineers in Army – were required to leave these positions (Bomford, 2001; Department of the Parliamentary Library, 2000).

The exemptions granted to the ADF under the Sex Discrimination Act still to some extent governs women’s employment possibilities in the ADF. However, in 1990 the Hawke Government announced that women would be permitted to serve in combat-related positions and in 1992 the Keating Government announced that women could serve in all areas of Defence other than direct combat roles. In 1995 the Sex Discrimination Act was amended to reflect the change. It now states that female personnel in the ADF can serve in combat-support roles (Department of the Parliamentary Library, 2000).

Australian Government legislation that permits discrimination against women defies the logic within the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Especially when the onus is placed upon the word ‘all’. This legislation also puts women in the vulnerable position where they may be discriminated against further. If women in the ADF are unable to serve their country – as the first line of defence in the event of a national emergency – they are put in a position where their overall use and purpose is questioned. It is possible then to question why the military would spend money and time training women when they are not available for combat service: ‘In 1998 Brigadier P.J. Greville argued on economic grounds that “if ultimately they [women] cannot fight then their inclusion
in the regular forces is potentially wasteful, and must be strictly controlled”’
(Bomford, 2001: 125).

Discrimination, Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action and Merit

The ADF is required to apply the principles of EEO, AA, and ‘equity’ in its employment of women (Burton, 1996). Under government policy concerning discrimination, whether direct or indirect, the ADF is supposed to comply with the principle that ‘… programs require … people are appointed and promoted on merit’ (Burton, 1996: 3). If an individual exhibits the necessary job related qualities, then the merit principle applies.

‘Equitable, not ‘same’ treatment is what the ADF is expected to aim for under anti-discrimination laws and government policies’ (Burton, 1996: 3). This means treating people equally in accordance with their specific circumstances and needs, it is a way of ensuring that employment principles can respond in terms of a person’s situation. In the ADF this translates, for example, into provisions for women and men who have needed to take time out to have and care for children without the gap in their careers disadvantaging them.

‘What are called “affirmative actions” do not include, in any Australian legislation, women receiving preferential treatment in the selection of people for positions or promotions’ (Burton, 1996: 3). Rather, AA is a strategy designed to facilitate women (and other groups) who have been disadvantaged in the past to receive opportunities to be more competitive in the future. Policies and practices that have been discriminatory in the past are counteracted and access to employment opportunities are increased.

Combat Exclusions

Combat exclusions are discriminatory to women in the military (Bomford, 2001; Brower, 1996; Hancock, 1993; Smith & McAllister, 1991;Walbank, 1992). In short, exclusions perpetuate the following:
- Placing a ceiling on promotion and barring women from prestigious and elite positions by restricting leadership positions – especially where combat experience is a prerequisite
- Withholding opportunities from women to display their strengths in military affairs and causing dissatisfaction in work roles
- Denying women full citizenship rights and obligations; equality with men; and equal employment opportunity
- Putting women in a vulnerable position of inequality in the workplace
- Placing women in a subordinate role to males in the military as all males have a ‘right’ to serve in the military’s most prestigious roles and no woman has this right

By denying women roles in combat employments, the exclusion policy not only keeps women from performing combat roles but a ‘glass ceiling’ is put in place on women’s career progression (Bomford, 2001). Women’s promotional opportunity is lowered and women are consequently barred from prestigious and elite positions within the defence hierarchy. Positions of leadership and authority become restricted as women are not only regarded as not fully qualified for these roles but combat experience is often a prerequisite for these positions (Brower, 1996; Hancock, 1993; Smith & McAllister, 1991; Walbank, 1992). Women are disadvantaged in a multitude of other ways by being denied the right to serve in combat positions, as Brower (1996) makes evident in the statement below:

_Without the proper “credentials and experience” military women can never be full partners with their male counterparts. Essentially females are in a Catch-22 cycle that only a political decision can break—combat assignments are a stepping stone that women must traverse. It is nearly indispensable to have been in a position to have risked combat for those females aiming at the most important military positions like chiefs of staff of a service, head of the Joint Staff or a combatant command (Brower, 1996: 5)._
The Glass Ceiling

If women are not fully integrated then they are marginalised and their status is as ‘other’. In this marginal position, a woman will be less likely to receive a promotion precisely because she is not seen as an equal member of the Defence Force with equal skills and competence. Women are not taken seriously and are therefore more likely to be defined as inferior to the men they serve with (Enloe, 2000; Greer, 1999; Brower, 1996; Hancock, 1993).

By excluding women from prestigious positions, which define the primary purpose of the military, policy determines that women’s place in the military is one of inferiority.

‘Exclusion of women from combat restricts their promotion to higher ranks’ (Hancock, 1993: 91). Combat exclusions are centrally based on arguments that pertain to women’s ability in combat, and more importantly, exclusion policy is driven by myths about war being the reserve of men (Kennedy-Pipe, 2000; Stiehm, 1989; Walbank, 1992). War as a ‘sacred’ all male pursuit is constructed as something women cannot participate in without somehow subverting it and reducing its effectiveness. Myths are constructed through bias about women and assumptions about women’s inferiority.

Belief systems about gender govern combat exclusions and prevent women aspiring to positions that men can and do compete for. In her research about the Royal Australian Navy, Walbank (1992) identified that it was the views of men in relation to gender roles, on all levels of the Navy hierarchy that impacted negatively on women’s career progression. In assessing how women might achieve positions she concluded that ‘[u]nless the necessary changes occur, this factor will continue to limit the full integration of female officers … The Navy reflects the same gender belief systems found in western society generally. When one looks at the western world, comparatively few women hold positions of influence and authority. In most professions and institutions where both sexes are represented, women become proportionally fewer the higher up the hierarchy one looks’ (Walbank, 1992: 14).
Women were first granted a role in their nation’s military as a ‘reserve labour force’ (Segal, 1995). Integration became viable for women only when a shortfall of male recruits became evident (Segal, 1995). Based upon their expertise and competence in their work, not giving them these roles is no longer viable. Furthermore, the belief system in the military that men are superior and women inferior is perpetuated by combat exclusions and this belief system also disadvantages women in their service roles.

**Career Progression and Satisfaction**

Clare Burton’s (1996) research into barriers to integration and the factors preventing women from making defence a full time career found that women ‘... leave because of limited career prospects’ (Burton, 1996: 195). Women in Burton’s study also identified family issues as reasons for leaving and male attitudes toward female members (Burton, 1996: 185). However, women indicated that if career prospects were better they would ‘put up with’ these latter compounding factors (Burton, 1996: 195).

Chapman’s (1999) investigations into combat exclusions also found that, ‘[m]any women in the United States Defense Force report experiencing job dissatisfaction and considerable frustration as a result of the prevailing combat restrictions’ (Chapman, 1999: 28).

Without the option of serving in the most prestigious positions within the Defence Force women are in a double bind. Not only are they excluded and restricted from certain positions but also their status of inferiority denies them positions that may not necessarily include a combat requirement. This is because without full access they are deemed as inferior to their male colleagues. Walbank states categorically that, ‘[c]ombat exclusion is a way of reducing career competition between male and female service members (Walbank, 1992: 11). And without the right to compete women are marginalised in their military service. Combat exclusions have many consequences for women and, ‘[i]t is commonly held that the direst consequence of these restrictions is the debilitating effect this may have upon career progression’ (Chapman, 1999: 28).
Women in this study consistently reported concerns about their career progression. Seven of them discussed leaving if their career options did not improve, one had already left due to lack of acknowledgement in her career, and one was leaving in two months following a job offer in the civilian sector.

**Yvonne (Navy Officer):** My major aim in coming back to work full time is hopefully to get selected for promotion at the end of next year. If I don’t get selected I will seriously reconsider my options in terms of the future.

Cindy’s decision to leave the ADF came after she found out she was not going to be promoted:

**Cindy (Army Other Ranks):** After ______ I was supposed to pick up some training and they [Department of Defence] wouldn’t let me do the course nor would they promote me. I had just been on the biggest deployment since Vietnam and thought it unfair. I was 35 years old had been in for 16 years and wanted a promotion.

Some women saw combat exclusions as specifically putting a ceiling on their career prospects and on the prospects of other women:

**Anita (Defence Civilian):** Not allowing women into combat doesn’t allow them into further ranks so they are actually imposing an artificial place where women have to stop. They may want to [continue to progress] but they have to stop because they can’t do what ever it takes to move on.

Change at a policy level, and within the culture of the organisation, offer encouragement for women who are pursuing long-term careers in the ADF:

**Deb (Navy Officer):** In Navy when you look at who our seniors are – they are seaman officers and it’s because they have had command of a ship. And that’s how they get up there. And that’s just a historical thing, which in Navy
will start to change because so many females are coming through as seaman officers.

Some women who do not want career limitations due to combat exclusions, were asking for other ways to be considered. If women are denied certain roles that ultimately lead to higher positions, how can they as women progress around these hurdles?

**Veronica (Army Officer):** A disproportionate number of Lieutenant Colonels come from combat corps. Lots of units make up a Brigade, commanded by a Brigadier who is from a combat corps. So no way could a woman ever do a top job [be a Brigade leader]. If restrictions stay in place – then the question is ‘do you have to be a combat soldier to go on that path?’ ‘Is there another way?’

**Chris (Army Officer):** Discrimination occurs when women are not promoted because they have only served in non-combat roles. Only being allowed into support roles means that careers are limited.

Some women saw male attitudes and the masculinist culture of the ADF as driving the exclusions:

**Holly (Army Officer):** In the promotion stakes there might be 10 new places and they will all go to men and not one female will be promoted. Why? Why can’t a female do the job just as well?! There is a boys club out there that is a barrier. These men will always be promoted even though they don’t always work as hard as women do (this is a generalization – BUT!).

**Citizenship Rights and Obligations**

‘A fairer sexual division of labour would promote both equality and difference: it would enable women to enter the public sphere of citizenship on more equal terms with men while emphasising the importance of care responsibilities for citizenship’ (Lister, 1997: 201).
Hancock asks ‘...why should women as taxpayers support an institution that discriminates against them?’ (Hancock, 2000: 166). Further to this she adds that we should be asking how to make integration work and not focus on issues as to why we should avoid doing it (Hancock, 2000: 171). Policy must govern integration and specific policy implementation must be considered.

The military, as Stiehm points out, ‘does not belong to men. It belongs to the citizens of the country, over half of whom are women’ (Stiehm, 1989: 174). Denying women full citizenship rights and the responsibilities that come with the obligations of citizenship is to deny women equality in the public realm. It is impossible to have partial equality and equality cannot be conditionally based on opinion and assumption about the capacity of women to make decisions for themselves.

The citizenship debate has often been linked with women’s military service. ‘Historically, the rights and duties of citizenship have been closely linked with the ability to take up arms in defence of the polity. Indeed, this justification for the exclusion of women from the public realm and citizenship, has provided powerful justification for the subordination of women’ (Steans, 1998: 81). It stands to reason then, that a manner in which to rectify unequal citizenship is to abolish laws and policies that exclude women from the public realm. This is especially so in the military where discrimination against women is lawfully permitted. ‘If women’s citizenship is seen as in some sense imperfect, the answer must be to pursue a strategy which will lead to the realization of “first-class” citizenship’ (Steans, 1998: 83). Without citizenship rights women are denied a full and equal role in society (Kennedy-Pipe, 2000). ‘Until women are thought fit for military service, they continue to be excluded not just from the highest offices of the armed services, but from full equality within society’ (Kennedy-Pipe, 2000: 37). This leaves women in the position of being second-class citizens where they are forced to be dependent on men for protection (Kennedy-Pipe, 2000; Stiehm, 1989).

When women are denied citizenship rights in one sector of society they are vulnerable to similar discriminations in other sectors of society. Because women are being excluded from military employments they cannot expect to be treated fairly in
other realms of public life (see Peach, 1996). The equality, justice, or citizenship arguments against combat restrictions advocate for equal rights and responsibilities for women, and an ethic of fairness (Peach, 1996: 174), for women in the military. Restrictions put women in an unequal position and treat the female gender as an ‘undifferentiated class’ (Peach, 1996: 175). Women have been vying for equality for centuries now and, ‘[e]xclusion from combat makes women vulnerable to the charge that they want equal rights without equal responsibilities’ (Hancock, 1993: 96). If women want to enjoy the rights of citizenship then they must also accept the ‘duties’.

Citizenship arguments in the military context do have some limitations. Agostino rightly asserts that full military service will not, on its own, bring about ‘… women’s emancipation and equality’ (Agostino, 2000b: 75). Gender relations in the military are complex and women are often on the receiving end of problems that are difficult to rectify.

**Conclusion**

For the purposes of this research it is necessary to understand how gender is constructed in military institutions. The inconsistencies and complexities within gender that are embodied by military women show that gender is a flexible category, it can therefore change, and can emerge as less oppressive for women.

The theoretical frameworks adopted for this thesis have been taken for the purposes of foregrounding women’s experience in the military and for their implications for women’s position in society more broadly. The main issues that women in the military face are the masculinist culture and restrictive policy and legislation that exclude women from full service. ‘The Gendered Battlefield’ does not prioritise one of these issues over the other. The need for a multidisciplinary approach is therefore necessary. Liberal feminism’s emphasis on reform, and gender theorising, complement each other in elucidating the deeply gendered scripts that underlie women’s contemporary experience in the ADF, and in highlighting the specific policy initiatives required to rewrite these scripts.
The focus of this research is on women’s experiences in the ADF. Therefore to adequately explicate the debates concerning women’s increasing participation the theoretical and methodological approaches are best served by feminist theory and a feminist methodological design.
Chapter Two

Methodology
Introduction

This thesis uses a qualitative, post-positivist, feminist research design. The emphasis of the research is upon in-depth investigation and ‘careful scrutiny’ of social processes (Bryman & Burgess, 1994: 1). The aim of the study is not to collect or compile statistics but to ‘understand how and why things are happening’ (Burton, 1996: xxiii). The purpose of this thesis is to understand how women in the ADF experience their roles and relate to debates that surround their increasing participation in the ADF, as well as to ascertain if and how constructions of gender present a barrier to women’s full integration in the ADF. A main feature of data collection in this research involved providing a platform for female members of the ADF to relate their experiences and opinions. Therefore, feminist methodology provides a framework for the research.

In choosing a methodology, I wanted a methodology that was flexible enough to incorporate more than one method, is highly ethical, and enables me to position gender issues centrally. I sought a methodology that would politically inform the research, challenge traditional masculinist structures, and provide insight into strategies for monitoring women’s integration into a previously all male institution.

My central purpose for choosing feminist methodology was because it stressed the need to keep gender at the heart of inquiry (Reinharz, 1992). ‘Feminist social research utilizes feminist theory in part because other theoretical traditions ignore or downplay the interaction of gender and power’ (Reinharz, 1992: 249).

In considering a methodology for the research, I took into account: who and what the research was essentially about; who and what it was for; who was designing and conducting the research; what the possibilities were for the research; and what the boundaries and limitations of the research were.

The first section of this chapter discusses my personal standpoint and background in relation to conducting this research. Feminist methodology stresses the importance of a researcher to acknowledge subjectivity and bias (of self and of research.
participants) (Reinharz, 1992), and to be transparent about the personal frame of reference (Higgs, 2001).

I then draw out definitions of feminist methodology and move on to explicate how and why ‘The Gendered Battlefield’ locates itself within a feminist methodological framework rather than a positivist methodological framework.

The method section of this chapter is an in-depth recollection of how this research took place, who was involved, and the steps taken in practice and analysis to arrive at the point where the thesis was formed.

**A Personal Standpoint**

Higgs (2001) highlights questions a researcher must ask of themselves during a research journey. These include: ‘Where am I coming from? What is my philosophical stance? What is my personal frame of reference?’ (Higgs, 2001: 45). Coupling these qualitative questions with feminist methodology’s ethical standpoint toward ‘transparency’ (Rienharz, 1992) requires a feminist researcher to divulge their personal perspective on the research as well as the usual theoretical position.

Within the framework of feminist methodology is an acknowledgement that subjectivity and bias are part of research. The researcher’s subjectivity and biases are admitted, as are the subjectivities and bias of the research participants (Cook & Fonow, 1990; Mies, 1991; Reinharz, 1992).

Making the researcher’s bias explicit can minimise harm to the research findings and conclusions. The acknowledgement of subjectivity states that each person (whether they be a participant or the researcher) brings with them to the research process their own historical self (past experience and perceptions); their age; their class; culture; gender and ethnicity. Therefore, a person’s individuality will influence their impressions, their response to the research, and/or what they might choose to contribute to the research (Mies, 1991; Reinharz, 1992).
My own standpoint on the research, as it has evolved, has been complex. Firstly I am approaching the research from the point of view of a white female, I am a first generation Australian who was born of Irish parents, I am currently middleclass, and am university educated (the first in my extended family to do postgraduate education). My own history is that I left school young and worked in a traditionally female area of work, childcare, for several years. I then studied and worked in the area of horticulture, a traditionally male area of work, until beginning university when I was in my 30’s. These experiences inform my understanding of the gendered nature of work and my experience of university.

When I first began this research, I did not think that women should fight in combat roles in the military and I did not understand the desire of women to be in the military. That some were considering or wanting roles in combat seemed remarkable to me. I came from a background of peace politics where my interests included conflict resolution. I shared with others the idealistic views that international and civil wars could be curtailed, even brought to an end, through peace processes. I still hold these ideals, however, my interest in international peacekeeping by militaries is new, something that has inspired me since I began exploring the roles the ADF and female personnel have in peacekeeping.

This project was initially conceived of as an analysis of questions that concerned why women pursue careers in the military. This question was quickly and easily answered (and is addressed in the ‘recruitment’ section of chapter three). It was in conducting literature reviews that I developed a broader interest in the issues that were affecting military women. The research then started developing and became a deeper response to the intricacies of issues facing female personnel in the ADF. At some point during my reviews of literature I became impatient to hear from women in Defence. I was being informed by commentators on both sides of the debate, by policy, and by reports written about women and I wanted, first hand, to hear women’s stories myself. I also became aware that the implications of women’s increasing involvement in the ADF could be seen to affect all women in Australia, and indeed this nation’s international affairs.
While the initial research for this thesis was taking place, I was aware that the attitudes and perceptions of the culture of masculinity in the military were impacting negatively on the integration of women into the military. However, it was not until after I had completed interviews with female personnel, and was coding the interview transcripts, that I realised how very powerful are the stereotypes, constructions and expectations of gender in a military setting. I found that women’s increasing roles in the military are at once taking place and at the same time being resisted. Why women are being resisted forms the basis upon which the ‘Gendered Battlefield’ is built. It is my thesis that masculine attributes have been defined by military culture as superior to female attributes. This thesis asserts that it is the myth that women are inferior to men that is the main barrier to women’s full integration in the ADF.

I have been motivated by the feminist agenda of equal rights for all women my entire adult life. I focused my undergraduate University studies in this area. My Honours Degree explored the issue of ‘post-feminism’, and examined the views of different generations of women on this issue. My commitment to feminist theory and action has remained an integral guide and stimulant as I have explored the issues inherent in this research. Combined with this approach I have intended the thesis to be embedded within the multiple realities of the lives, roles, and experiences of the women who have informed and contributed to the research. In doing so I have chosen a presentation and written style that I hope is accessible beyond the realms of academia. I have endeavoured to write in a style that clearly explains and illustrates theory and have resisted the urge to fall back upon academic jargon.

In embarking upon this project I hoped to make a contribution towards the debates that wind themselves around women’s increasing involvement in military roles. This has often been a personal struggle as I embody a desire for peaceful futures. However, this philosophy has not negated the wish to advocate for equal rights for women whether they be in social, Governmental, or military affairs.
What is Feminist Methodology?

There is no fixed or imposed definition of feminist methodology. Rienharz (1992) advises that research may be feminist when it is identified as being so and when it is being conducted by feminist women.

Martin Hammersley (1992) affirms that there is no distinct feminist methodology but identifies themes that mark a definition. For example, one theme common in feminist methodology is that it is concerned with the significance of gender. Also of importance is that feminist methodology rejects hierarchical relationships in research that can occur between the researcher and research participants. Emancipation is often one of the aims of research embedded in feminist methodology (1992: 187).

Reinharz identifies several features of research process and method that mark feminist methodology as distinct. Those incorporated into this thesis include: the use of a multiplicity of research methods; that the research is informed and guided by feminist theory; the research is transdisciplinary; one of the aims of the research is to influence change; and the research aims to represent diverse views of the women interviewed (Reinharz, 1992: 240).

‘The international feminist community remains concerned that social research both contribute to the welfare of women and contribute to knowledge. This is the dual vision – or dual responsibility – that many feminist researchers see as part of their multiple responsibilities’ (Reinharz, 1992: 251).

The Strengths of Feminist Methodology

Feminist research, in my view, is informed by a political vision of change and ultimately of equity. Feminist methodology was born from the realisation that positivist research and researchers have not always nor adequately, represented women. Historically women have often been omitted from research, the assumption often being that a male perspective would be inclusive of women (Boulding, 1992; Miles, 1989; Scott, 1998). Just as often women’s lives and experience have been distorted and misconstrued within much of positivist research (Cook & Fonow,
The emergence of feminist methodology ‘... arose out of [women’s] frustration at the realization that women’s lives, their history, their struggles, their ideas constitute no part of dominant science’ (Mies, 1991: 66).

Positivist research has its roots in traditional scientific research where quantitative methods are employed in a systematic and ordered manner. These methods are intentionally designed to occur in isolation to influences that may impact upon or alter that which is under study. It is when these approaches/methods depart from the ‘laboratory’ and extend themselves into the personal and social worlds of individuals and groups of people that they become problematic (McCarl Nielson, 1990).

Positivist research advocates the need for research to be ‘pure’, a desire that requires quite a degree of abstraction and so-called objectivity (Cook & Fonow; 1990; Reinharz, 1992; Westcott, 1990). At ‘... the core of feminist ideas is the crucial insight that there is no one truth, no one authority, no one objective method, which leads to the production of pure knowledge...’ (Spender as cited in Reinharz, 1992: 7). Demanding research attributes such as ‘purity’ of truth, and ‘objectivity’ in process, means that positivist research creates a dualism between the research participants and the researchers. This creates a ‘subject/object dichotomy’ (Westcott, 1990: 60), which is accepted as a method that supports researchers in their desire to arrive at ‘pure’ truth in the research conclusions. Feminist researchers discredit the possibility that such detachment is possible (Cook & Fonow; 1990; Reinharz, 1992; Westcott, 1990). Pure truth, and pure reality, are contestable concepts.

This particular aspect of positivist research creates an ethical dilemma especially when the research involves research participants. Through the subject/object dichotomy women (and men) who are involved as participants in positivist research become "objects" of knowledge in the research process. Such a dichotomy depersonalises the research participant and ‘breaks the living connection’ (Mies, 1991: 67) between the person and the research conclusions.

My reliance upon scripts from the interview material is a way of re-presenting women’s thoughts, ideas and experience. In doing this I keep confidentiality
carefully in mind and deliberately omit information from the scripts that might identify women. At the same time I endeavour to represent the women’s beliefs and ideas on specific issues as clearly as possible. I provide enough information to ‘admit’ the subjectivity of the women’s experience.

Within the body of the thesis I include women’s words to describe, relate, and represent arguments, debates and issues from the perspectives of individual women. In the tradition of feminist research I am presenting data in a way that ‘speaks out for’ as opposed to ‘speaking for’ (Reinharz, 1992) women who have contributed to this research. I do not assume knowledge for women but quote their words directly to illuminate their diverse and complex views and the diversity that exists among the group of participants interviewed.

Feminist researchers must be careful not to disregard effective positivist research where its measures may be effective. Quantitative, structured, objective and measurable research can be of great benefit to women and ‘... if research is to be used as a basis for social change, some generalisations need to be made’ (Smith & Noble-Spruell, 1986: 141). In this thesis, statistics relating to women in the ADF, namely their employment opportunities, information about ranks held by women, and the incidence of discrimination and harassment, are highlighted to provide information and clarity, to invite gender analysis, and to provide insight into part of women’s experience.

It is also important for feminist researchers to remain aware of the potential for embodying the negative characteristics inherent in positivism. It is possible for feminist methodology and method to become as dogmatic and as ‘sexist’ as positivist methodology and method can be. Feminist theory and feminist women can also advocate for a paradigm that has strict guidelines and set formulas. Stanley and Wise reflect upon this, pointing out that ‘...feminism can be seen as a direct parallel to ‘sexism’, because it similarly constitutes the presence of a distinct set of values within the research situation’ (Stanley & Wise, 1993: 59). Poiner warns against this possibility and cautions against feminist researchers taking an ‘...iconoclastic approach to dominant and conventional methodology only to replace it with self-
consciously feminist directives which themselves become reified as the new orthodoxy’ (Poiner as cited in Chambers, 1992:6).

Feminist research methodology as applied within this thesis aims to keep gender at the heart of all inquiry. This research methodology seeks to be informed by subjectivities and aims to be transparent in its nature. The research method is also informed by a feminist political agenda that recognises that women’s place in the military is not equal to the place that men occupy, therefore, the inquiry recognises that change within the military must take place.

Method

Multiple Methods

Use of multiple methods in research is a way of applying two or more techniques when collecting, interpreting and analysing data, and in presenting data (Cook & Fonow, 1990; Reinharz, 1992). Multiple methods can be applied at one or all of these stages of the research (Reinharz, 1992). Often the incorporation of both qualitative and quantitative techniques characterises triangulation, with the findings from each complementing the other (Cook & Fonow, 1990).

Multiple methods ensure that unanticipated questions, themes, and issues are taken into consideration, preventing the researcher from closing off the perimeters of the research prematurely (Reinharz, 1992).

Using multiple methods then is a way in which the researcher may make an attempt at holism that is essential to the integrity of the research process and conclusions (Reinharz, 1992). They can also allow for the acknowledgement of contradictions and allow the process to encompass those contradictions (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Multiple methods mean that the researcher can discover the realities of people’s lived experience from many different angles, and from different sources. This allows the research to become richer as well as more reliable. In this way the research can evolve and emerge through interaction with different mediums and ensures the
overall research design can answer questions central to the process (Ristock & Pennell, 1996).

**Beginnings**

The original research aims were to:

1. Explore factors contributing to women’s military participation, including what has and has not changed
2. Explore the contradictions between peacekeeping and combat roles and the construction of women as peaceful and men as violent within this
3. Highlight the contemporary experiences of women in the ADF

My preliminary literature review for this research was of a wide and general nature. This was because texts pertaining to women in the ADF are scarce (Bomford, 2001; Spurling & Greenhalgh, 2000). This contrasts with the voluminous material that is available on war and the military and the critiques of war and the military, including radical feminist material. Initial library searches revealed that there is a body of American publications concerning women and the military, which alerted me to the potentially international character of issues concerning women in the military. It was also at this stage that I became aware that women are integrated into combat employments in the Canadian Defence Force and monitoring of integration into the combat arms is well underway.

Books such as ‘Gender and War’ (Damousi & Lake, 1995), ‘Australian Women at War’ (Adam-Smith, 1996) and ‘Minefields and Miniskirts: Australian Women and the Vietnam War’ (McHugh, 1993) were readily available, and have been somewhat useful in the development stage and in parts of the thesis itself, but do not focus on the contemporary era, nor upon women as service personnel in the ADF. Spurling and Greenhalghs’ edited volume ‘Women in Uniform: Perceptions and Pathways’ (2000) concerns women in the military, women in the police force, and women ambulance drivers in Australian and abroad. The book is a collection of papers given at a conference of the same name. It is comprehensive and deals with a wide range of issues for women in the ADF, and was a book that led me to discover other authors who write about women in the military. Janette Bomford later published ‘Soldiers of the Queen: Women in the Australian Army’ (2001) and – whilst largely
historical – it is a book dedicated to an analysis of women’s participation in the Army whereas most texts in this genre are descriptive only. These works led me to locating the small body of published Australian work on women in the ADF.

At the preliminary stages of the research, I also located (via the Defence Equity website) the Burton Report (1996), ‘Women in the Australian Defence Force. Two Studies: The Cultural, Social and Institutional Barriers Impeding the Merit-Based Progression of Women and the Reasons Why More Women are not Making the Australian Defence Force a Long-Term Career’; and became aware of other Defence Reports that could be relevant to my research. Ultimately, the various Defence Reports that deal with policy issues arising from the presence of women in the ADF all informed the development of this thesis, but none more so than the Burton report. Her report focuses on the integration of women in Defence, the main barriers women face, and the reasons why women leave the ADF. Burton conducted thirty-eight two-hour focus groups with 389 participants and interviewed 49 senior people in Defence (many of these were senior female Officers) (Burton, 1996: xxv). The views of both women and men regarding women’s increasing involvement in the ADF, as analysed in the Burton report, have illuminated issues pertinent to this research – especially in the areas of integration and the masculinist culture of the ADF. Burton’s writings on women in work in Australia have also been relevant to this research.

Apart from familiarising myself with the available literature and its preoccupations, this stage of research was also directed towards developing an application for ethics clearance for conducting interviews with women in the ADF to the University of Western Sydney’s Human Research Ethics Committee (UWSHREC). The application outlined a proposal for recruitment and sampling that was very different to what ended up occurring.

In June 2001, I contacted the then Chief of the Defence Force, Admiral C. A. Barrie, as a courtesy to advise him that this research was taking place that concerned the ADF and female personnel. (I had previously been informed by academics with affiliations within the ADF that whilst this courtesy would be appreciated, it was in fact Defence Force protocol to abstain from contact with outside researchers.) So I was surprised when soon after I was contacted by members of his staff, at the
Careers Development and Research Directorate, asking for more information on the study. Upon advice from my supervisors I sent off a summary of the thesis and methodology. The Directorate of Strategic Planning Personnel and Research (DSPPR) then requested a meeting with my supervisor and myself in Canberra.

Associate Professor Carmody and I attended a meeting with DSPPR in November 2001. At this meeting I was advised that if I were to submit a successful research proposal to DSPPR they would be able to offer some assistance with the research.

My proposal had several purposes: to gain ADF clearance and endorsement for the research; to gain the use of ADF resources; and to support the recruitment and sampling phases of the research – to gain access to women currently serving in the ADF. DSPPR advised me that if the proposal were to be accepted I would be issued with a letter that declassified and endorsed the research. This letter would permit me to interview women once I had requested permission from their Commanding Officer. In the ethical guidelines I had previously set out in my application to UWSHREC, I had explicitly stated that I wanted all participation in the research to be voluntary. Due to the ethical implications in gaining such an endorsement, I declined the offer.

The ADF, through DSPPR, were at this time able to offer me other support in the following areas: access to their database, communications with their personnel, and access to documentation that might otherwise be unavailable to non-ADF personnel. In return for this support the ADF required six monthly progress reports and copies of the thesis at its completion. Since this time an affiliation has developed that has facilitated and enhanced the research process and ultimately the outcomes, and I am very grateful for the assistance given to me by the ADF and DSPPR.

I had contacted the chief of staff because I was about to begin advertising in local newspapers, magazines, and community centres near ADF Bases in order to recruit participants. DSPPR were concerned that if I proceeded with this approach I would recruit a sample with a biased leaning, in that many respondents might be past

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6 I had conducted, via word of mouth one interview with an ADF woman prior to this time, she is included in the 30 women mentioned in this chapter.
serving members. This could lead to an overbalanced sample of disaffected women. DSPPR were eager to provide the means toward recruiting a sample of women who were actively choosing and pursuing careers in the ADF. Given the nature of the research aims - which include providing a platform for female serving members to relate their experiences and opinions in relation to current debates and to conduct research that will potentially benefit women serving in militaries – it seemed more appropriate to interview a sample comprised mainly of women choosing long-term careers in the Defence Force. Whilst I saw the value of this reasoning I was aware that the research would be richer in its outcomes if a proportion of women who were leaving or had left the Defence Force were also interviewed.

At the beginning of 2002 the research proposal I had submitted was accepted by the ADF. Between April and June 2002 I worked with a member of DSPPR to design and produce a Defence Minute\(^7\) that would inform all female personnel in the ADF about the research and invite them to participate in it. This Minute was promulgated by DSPPR in June 2002.

The response to the Minute was immediately favourable with 36 inquiries on the first day alone, including requests to see the Information Package\(^8\) and agreements to volunteer. The total number of responses amounted to two hundred.

During the time that I was compiling information, receiving and sending emails to two hundred responses to the invitation, I received word from DSPPR that the Australian Defence Human Research Ethics Committee (ADHREC) required that I submit an application to them before commencing interviews. As soon as ADHREC approved the research in December 2002 I began contacting the women and arranging suitable times for interviews.

**Accessing The “Lived” Experience Of Women In The Military**

Recruitment of participants was facilitated by the ADF, specifically by DSPPR. A purposive sample was designed in collaboration with DSPPR and myself as a

\(^7\) See appendix B
\(^8\) See appendix A
strategy to meet the specific needs of the research. The choice of a sampling method must reflect the study as qualitative and necessarily small in size (Bryman and Burgess, 1994; Patton, 1990).

All women in the ADF had a similar opportunity to volunteer for the study as the invitation to participate was sent to all units. Whilst participants self-selected for the study after being invited to contribute, the research parameters, i.e. the qualitative nature of the research design and the size of the study, prohibited all of those wishing to participate from doing so.

Consequently the sample is defined as purposeful. ‘The purpose of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the question understudy’ (Patton, 1990: 169). The initial sample came from an unknown group drawn from all female service personnel in the ADF. The approximate total of this group was 7,000 women. Next, a possible sample was identified by 200 incoming requests to participate from a group of women volunteers. The women were chosen by viewing incoming requests based on the individual’s representation of the sample needs and the theoretical constructs of the study. Sampling was done ‘carefully and thoughtfully’ (Patton, 1990:179) and was ‘guided by theoretical principles’ (Mason, 1994:102) as well as practical considerations – who would best add to the developing theory in a manner that would support or contradict that developing theory. Therefore the theory could be validated further by looking for ‘counter-evidence’ as well as supportive evidence (Mason, 1994:103).

**Sample Design**

- A balance between Branches of Navy, Army, and Air Force
- Time spent in service. Approximately half of the sample was to be drawn from women who had served prior to the 1990 recommendation of the Chiefs of Staff Committee that the ADF would open combat-related positions to women – and approximately half from women who began service after this announcement was made
- A balance between Officer and Other Ranks was to be sought to some extent
- Peacekeeping deployment experience and combat support related experience were desirable
A balance in experience i.e. postings and employment categories among participants
A representation of the diverse nature of ADF service personnel including, marital and family status, sexual preference, and age

Geographically the sample needed to be centralised in particular areas to ensure accessibility for the researcher but also to provide sufficient variety demographically for the required sample. Those areas that met the needs of the research included:

- Richmond/Glenbrook NSW
- Canberra ACT
- Sydney NSW
- Newcastle NSW
- Brisbane QLD

These areas were chosen because I was able to travel to these locations for 2-5 day periods for interviews. I conducted telephone interviews to Melbourne, Victoria and Wagga Wagga, New South Wales.

The sample representation was on par with expectations in all areas except rank. Women from the Officer ranks volunteered to participate in numbers far outweighing volunteers from the Other ranks. Women at Officer rank seemed to feel more comfortable with being a participant in research. Many had either completed higher education and/or had been involved in research prior to this or had conducted research projects of their own. These factors appear to satisfy women about issues of confidentiality.

**Women Interviewed for the Research**

This research only really came alive when I began to have contact with women who served with the ADF. After sending out an invitation to participate in the research I started to receive enquires, as well as details about women, and explanations as to why they wanted to participate. Without their input the research was dry and rather impersonal. I was reading and writing about women and gender, women and war,
integration and militaries, but the women that the texts referred to weren’t fleshed out, they weren’t real in the way they became when I started to dialogue with women from the ADF. At this time I felt that the women participating not only enlivened the research but that the research came alive only when they entered into it. They became its memory, its living parts, its voice, its reality and its potential. Issues that had been described as public issues became personalised and were being lived every day by these women.

Thirty women were interviewed for this study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Number of Women Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Civilians</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ratio of Officer to Enlisted Personnel was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Officer Rank</th>
<th>Other Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Some of the Officers interviewed had been Other Ranks prior to becoming Officers)

Of the thirty women interviewed:

- Fourteen had peacekeeping or peace monitoring deployment experience;
- Eight worked in areas in defence that would be considered non-traditional employment categories for women such as mechanics and engineers;
- Twelve worked in areas that would be considered traditional employment areas for women such as nursing and as administrators;
- Eight could be regarded as ‘trail-blazers’ in that in some regard they had, or were, participating in employment or deployments that would be considered ground breaking for women in the ADF (They are considered trail-blazers...
because they are the first woman to reach a particular rank in their branch; because they are the first woman to be deployed on specific operations; or because they are the first woman to have held a specific position);

- All had had deployments throughout Australia where they have engaged in a variety of roles;
- Sixteen had been deployed outside of Australia;
- Twenty four identified as heterosexual;
- Three identified as lesbian;
- Ten had parental responsibilities;
- Twenty eight were Caucasian and from an English speaking background;
- Two were from a non-English speaking background; and
- The ages of women ranged from 25 to 50 years of age.

Due to the relatively small number of women in the ADF who hold officer rank, any further detail about the participants’ personal or work details could result in identifying information being disclosed.

**Ethical Clearance**

Ethical clearance was obtained firstly from the UWSHREC and secondly from the ADHREC. Ethical considerations were many, given that the interviewees were ADF personnel and their roles and responsibilities make confidentiality particularly sensitive. I tape-recorded interviews having gained informed consent from the participants prior to taping. All tapes were assigned with a code during the transcribing phases of the research. I kept transcripts, tapes, and disks in a locked filing cabinet and have a password on all computer files. I am the only person able to access them. In order to ensure complete confidentiality and privacy I do not use the real names of participants in this thesis. I have also omitted details such as ‘where’ women have served in peacekeeping. In one specific case I omitted the women’s names and the identity of the country they were discussing.

Confidentiality is necessarily a concern for participants and whilst some felt comfortable having their rank and/or employment identified, others did not. Therefore, for the purposes of maintaining confidentiality for all parties I have
chosen to identify rank of participants broadly, identifying them as Other Ranks or Officer. I have not identified whether a woman is a ‘senior’ Officer as there are so few in Defence this information may identify a woman. Rank alone will not identify a participant but when combined with other information such as place of employment, specific roles, and position of command a woman’s identity could be revealed. To limit this possibility information provided about women is done so in general terms.

**Acculturating into the Interview Setting**

To acculturate into the military environment whilst simultaneously doing interviews was challenging. The women did their best to inform and guide me as I went and I appreciate their extra time and kindness in doing this. Issues that immediately became central emerged which previously I had thought were sideline issues without much consequence.

The process of acculturation was a necessary one, as I had to learn Defence Force protocols. For example, I had intended to conduct a series of focus groups but was advised by a woman Officer in the ADF that focus groups only work successfully in the ADF if officers of the same rank in the same branch are worked with together – and if enlisted personnel of the same rank and branch are worked with together. To conduct focus groups with mixed branches and mixed ranks would create a degree of awkwardness between personnel that may detrimentally affect the proceedings of the group and therefore the data obtained.

Interviewing began in December 2002 and was completed by April 2003. All interviewing in this research was semi-structured. I conducted the interviews in environments where women worked, with new recruits marching in formation around us, or fast jets screeching overhead. I acculturated myself whilst interviewing, by visiting bases, and ADF offices. I also went to women’s homes, wherever was comfortable for them, to ensure that the environment was relaxed. By travelling to military establishments I was able to experience the environment that women worked in. Prior to visiting these establishments I had had very little
exposure to the Department of Defence, the work environments, living arrangements, and general military infrastructure.

Participants As Experts

I had been unprepared for the wealth of knowledge and experience that these women embodied both as a group and individually. That I was impressed is an understatement. These are truly inspiring women, with skills and expertise, education and training, life and work experience, that is remarkable. They have fortitude and courage, not only to work and live in a man’s world, but also to do the jobs that are so imperative to Australia’s defence, to their lives, and the lives of others.

As part of the information package sent out to women prior to the interview I had included a list of potential questions, an ‘interview schedule’. In a typical interview we followed that list as a guide only to provide prompts for questions. I feel that semi-structured interviews gave participants the space to be part of guiding the interview and therefore have some power in shaping the research process. In this way, the women are participants of the research and not objects (Cook & Fonow, 1990; Reinharz, 1992; Westcott, 1990).

Semi-structured interviews meant the women involved could question me and make suggestions about my part in the research process and provide me with valuable responses. The women had some freedom to add ideas they believed to be important which in turn was important to the research. In many of the interviews women took time to inform me of issues I didn’t completely understand. For example one woman took a great deal of time to inform me as to the structure and protocol of the Nursing Corps which shed light on issues women from this corps were experiencing.

They asked me questions about the research, my affiliation with the ADF, how I experienced working with ‘the bureaucracy’, how I was finding the interviews, and what I was mostly interested in myself. I enjoyed the interviews completely; they were stimulating and brought the research to life. It was, therefore, a pleasure to relate my experiences and enjoyment to participants when they questioned me. The
technique of semi-structured interviews supported me in the process of understanding the issues facing women in the ADF.

The interviews ran between 1 and 1.5 hours in length depending on the time restraints of the women, where there were no restraints they often ran longer with a few running over 2 hours (even though the tape had ran out!)

The interviewing process was an essential step in crystallising the central issues that are discussed within the thesis. It became clear through this process that my focus on the apparent contradiction between combat and peacekeeping roles was somewhat misconceived – peacekeeping also presents the threat of injury, capture or death to participants. Issues that I thought from my reading would be paramount such as the experience of harassment and discrimination were less prominent for the research participants than issues such as the lack of promotional opportunities.

**Coding and Categorisation of Interview Material**

Because late coding will essentially weaken the eventual analysis of data (Miles & Huberman, 1994), tape recordings were listened to and notes from them recorded immediately after an interview. Tape recordings were again listened to prior to transcription. All transcription was performed personally to ensure complete immersion in the data.

I decided not to apply a computer program to the data which would perhaps seem archaic to some, however, weighing up the time it would save to use a program against wanting to be familiar with the data, and trusting myself more than I trusted a software program – data familiarity and self trust won out. Coding goes beyond labelling issues or themes, it is a way of organising data for retrieval, of recognising, discovering, developing, reorganising, and making sense (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1990). Therefore, I wanted to intimately know the data and didn’t trust a computer program to give me a good sense of the richness of the women’s experience.
I was looking for concepts, ideas, themes, and topics. I was searching for key issues, identifying peripheral issues. This required looking for the ‘expression of ideas’ and ‘reading between the lines’, going beyond what was said into a wider context. (Minichiello et al, 1990: 252). I was attempting to read ‘interactively’, looking for the individual’s knowledge, attitudes, interactions, and evaluations. This was basically a search for meaning. ‘The researcher’s aim, when doing data analysis, is to extract the essence of the informants’ meanings as they are verbalised either as intended and unintended accounts’ (Minichiello et al, 1990: 254).

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was thematic. Prior to conducting interviews I had completed reviews of literature and had designed an interview schedule based on the recurring themes from this literature. I wanted the interviews I conducted with women in the ADF to elucidate and expand the themes from the literature. My wish was to hear from the women themselves what they thought about the issues dominating debates about women’s military integration. I asked for their opinions, thoughts and ideas on questions designed for the interview schedule.⁹

On the subject of peacekeeping for example, the women interviewed highlighted the need for peacekeeping battalions to represent a gender-balanced force. They also elucidated a debate from the literature about whether peacekeeping operations ‘unfit’ the military for its primary purpose – which is seen by some commentators as war and not peacekeeping. This was not a question discussed at any great length by commentators on the subject of peacekeeping, but is one that is explicated from the perspective of women who have served on peacekeeping assignments. On combat issues the women’s responses were as diverse and complex as they are in textual data sources, however, some women’s responses drew attention to areas such as the necessary competencies for combat employments. In the literature, proponents for women in combat focus primarily upon technological advances in warfare and less upon merit based progression for women (and men) in combat employments.

⁹ See appendix A
Several of the questions combined to bring together women’s beliefs on issues concerning equal rights in the work force and the value of women’s work.

Once the data was categorised adequately and could be retrieved easily I started reviewing it with information I had from secondary forms of data collection. I needed to use the data to think with, to seek meaning (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). I was comparing what the women said with what I had found in documents, reports, other research and literature. I realised I couldn’t just report or describe what the women had said, nor could I let only their perspectives guide what was of importance. I chose to focus in on topics that had generated the majority themes. For example, in the literature the issue of integrated training is highlighted. It became apparent in the analysis phase that most of the women did not see training as an issue, three did but the rest did not. Discussions about training were mostly retrospective. The sample group were generally well-advanced in their careers and were more concerned with promotion and deployment opportunities and highlighted the ‘glass-ceiling’ issues they had encountered in their career progress. This does not change the potential importance of training in moving towards an integrated ADF but it does direct the thesis content away from the issue of training and toward issues of promotion, deployments, and the lack of career progression experienced by the research group.

Interviewing is a central method of collecting information for this research, but not the only one. As Coffee and Atkinson (1996) say, the generating of ideas cannot only depend on the interview material and it cannot be approached as though it were in a vacuum, I also needed to rely on the literature, theory, the traditions of disciplines and their theories, and upon my own thinking. In regards to the latter I needed to ask questions of the interview material, and coding and categorising sharpened my ability to do this. How to present the information that came from interviews as central was also important. ‘Writers make moral choices about portraying respondents, designing how to tell their stories, and delineating ways to interpret them’ (Charmaz in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 528). Therefore I have clearly placed the interview material, the scripts of women’s words, in a format that keeps them central to the analysis whilst also giving them definition.
**Textual Sources**

There are five types of textual sources apart from the transcripts from the interviews that are significant to the content of this thesis:

- Literature; books and journal articles that focus upon women’s integration into the military, (of historical and contemporary nature) as well as feminist texts about women’s participation in the public realm;
- Research reports compiled by the ADF, the Canadian and the British Defence Forces, that focus upon women’s full integration into the military;
- Media reports that cover issues concerning women’s involvement in the military;
- Government and Defence policy documents that concern the integration of women into the ADF; and
- Statistics as compiled by the ABS, the ADF and other Western militaries.

Throughout the course of this thesis, its development, analysis, and the writing of it, I have carried out literature searches on university library systems in Australia including the ADFA library, and in Ireland (the Cork University Library in 2002); enjoyed the benefits of inter-library loans to obtain books and articles; and followed up references in bibliographies to identify other works.

Other Australian commentators works have similarly provided useful analysis and insights: for example, Hugh Smith and Ian McAllister’s ‘The Changing Military Profession: Integrating Women in the Australian Defence Force’ (1991); Hugh Smith’s ‘Debating Women in Combat’ (2000a); Eleanor Hancock’s ‘Women, Combat and the Military’ (1993), and ‘Women as Killers and Killing Women: the Implications of “gender-neutral” Armed Forces‘ (2000); and Graeme Cheeseman’s ‘Submission to an Inquiry into Sexual harassment at the Australian Defence Force Academy’ (1998) and ‘The Suitability of the Australian Army for Peacetime, Peacekeeping and War’ (1999).

Two journal articles appearing in the ‘Australian Defence Force Journal’ have been of crucial importance to the writing of this thesis, both have been written by current serving members of the ADF. Sarah Chapman’s (1999) ‘Increasing the Operational Effectiveness of Women in the Australian Defence Force’, and L Nemitschenko10, (2001) ‘Is Increasing Gender Equity in the ADF Improving Operational Capability? Consistent with my aim to keep central the experiences of women in the ADF, I have prioritised these articles during the theme-development phase of the thesis and in the analysis in the text of the thesis. Each article outlines integral areas of debate about integration and provides analysis that has been extremely useful to my own work. It would be remiss of me not to mention M S Barrys’ ‘Do We Really Want Equality Of Employment For Our Women In The Armed Services?’ (1993), also from the Australian Defence Force Journal. This is a significant paper in terms of its position in the debate about women in combat employments.

To some extent the discussion of women undertaking combat roles in the ADF is academic at present. There is no sign that the Australian Government will change current policy on the existing combat restrictions. Overseas experience, where combat restrictions on women have been lifted, is instructive both in terms of what that experience might tell us in relation to the debate about lifting combat exclusions and also what lessons might be learnt about any future integration of women into combat roles in the ADF. In this regard I considered the Davis Reports - ‘Chief Land Staff Gender Integration Study: The Regular Force Training and Employment

10 The authors first name is not provided on the article though her gender is made apparent as are her role and rank.
Environment’ (1997) and ‘Chief Land Staff Gender Integration Study: The Experience of Women Who Have Served in the Combat Arms’ (1998) and the Women in the Armed Forces Steering Committee’s report ‘Women in the Armed Forces’ (2002).

It was through the process of considering the interview material and how it stood in relation to the secondary sources that the overall concept of mythology came to be prominent in the thesis. I started to identify categories that would fit under the heading of ‘myth’ as well as areas concerning how women resist and manage these myths. My work with mythology changed the direction of analysis, in that the mythology of femininity and masculinity emerged from the data as dominating each issue/theme as it arose.

This led me to a range of work as a means of understanding notions of ‘gender’ and the questions these raised. Do constructions of gender underpin how women integrate in the military? What areas do they integrate into? Is integration successful or unsuccessful? The texts I considered inform not only what military expectations are concerning gender integration but also what women’s expectations are. Feminist texts have been reviewed, as have overseas publications that focus upon gender integration in the public realm and specifically into the military. Of particular importance have been the works of Robert Connell (1987, 1995, 2000), Linda Grant De Pauw (1998), Cynthia Enloe (1983, 1989, 1993, 2000, 2001), Joshua Goldstein (2001), Azar Gat (2000), Mary Fainsod Katzenstein (1998, 1999), Brian Mitchell (1998), Louise Olsson and Torunn Tryggestad (2001), Mandy Wechsler Segal (1995), Judith Hicks Stiehm (1982, 1983, 1989, 1996, 1997, 2001), Jeff Tuten (1982), and Martin van Creveld (1993, 2000, 2001). This also led to a consideration of media portrayals of women captured while serving in the Gulf Wars. In my view, these portrayals demonstrate the powerful operation of myth.

In identifying relevant Defence reports, I was assisted by the personnel of DSPPR who made available a large number of these reports and other Defence material including Defence policies. Interview participants who referred in particular to the Grey Review. Also I found references to these reports in non-ADF published works and via the internet. The key reports prepared by or for Defence that deal in some way with the experiences of women in the ADF include:


The most relevant to this thesis is the Burton Report.

Relevant information has also been drawn from other Defence sources including the Defence Annual Reports which are readily available online and provide up-to-date statistics concerning the numbers of female personnel in each branch and at particular ranks. The Defence Equity Organisation (DEO) Annual Reports provide an in-depth examination of policies and procedures currently in use in Defence or under review for implementation. The DEO website also provides information that has been useful for this thesis.

**Conclusion**

‘The Gendered Battlefield’ takes up the question of the connection between women’s rights and the prevailing views of gender in society and in a military setting. The research has sought to discover whether assumptions about women’s worth determine policy. Whether these assumptions also determine the actual positions and ranks occupied by women. The views of women in the ADF have been paramount in analysing these questions. Textual data sources have also been integral. The five areas of textual data chosen for this research and the interview material do not run in a linear fashion beside one another as these questions are explored. Rather each set of data intersects with the others, merging, and sometimes blurring. Tracing developments within analysis requires that all six levels of data collected are handled in unison. In the text of this thesis the interview data is presented in the style of ‘scripts’ and stands independently whilst also intersecting with and elucidating other
data sources. In the tradition of feminist research the words, the stories, opinions and beliefs of the women interviewed for the study are brought to light so that their words may speak for themselves. The women’s stories represent their own experience, beliefs, and opinions.
Chapter Three

The Making of History
Introduction

‘If women knew their past, they would be so much better prepared for their future. And knowledge of that past includes not just the things that women have done, but the how and the why those great achievements have been left out of history’

(Spender, 1994: ix).

The historical record is heavily relied upon by both proponents and opponents to increasing the level of female participation in militaries. The first uses the historical record to demonstrate women’s proven competence; the second relies on history to prove that women have never had a military role.

This chapter overviews the history of Australian women’s involvement in this nations’ wars and looks at women’s participation in the Allied Forces in WW2. It shows how the historical record has been interpreted to substantiate views about women’s roles in the military and in wartime.

Women in WW1 and WW2 faced opposition from society, from individual men, and from Government, industry and Unions when they were needed for war work of various kinds. The hostility women faced when they were seen to be taking jobs from men arose from the disruption of traditional gender roles. Today this is analogous to the hostile response to the demand to allow women to serve in combat roles.

For women in the military, the power of historically constructed knowledge can be problematic. The historical record is continually brought to bear in debates about their ability to perform well in their roles as members of their nation’s military. Yet the historical record contains only partial information about women’s participation and what information does exist is often trivialised rather than validating women taking significant roles.
Women’s Involvement in the Australian Military

The Boer War

Australian women’s involvement in wars and in the military began with the Boer War. When Australian nurses made their entry into the pre-federation Australian military during this war in 1898 (Adam-Smith, 1996; Bomford, 2001), the social climate was such that it was not regarded as a memorable event. Little is recorded of this milestone for women, though much was and still is recorded regarding the participation of male soldiers and the consequences this war had for the Australia colony in developing a national identity. Patsy Adam-Smith reviews the occasion in her book, ‘Australian Women at War’ (1996), calling the information she received from official war records, to support her writing about women, ‘scanty’ (Adam-Smith, 1996:11). The paucity of records about these Australian nurses Adam-Smith puts down to one reason: the public distaste for their chosen occupation. Nursing, Adam-Smith informs the reader, was a career choice on par with prostitution. However, she does accredit this with an observation that all professions staffed primarily by women were thought disreputable in Australia at this time (Adam-Smith, 1996: 17 & 18).

It is interesting to note, in the present light of military debates about women’s increasing military roles, that in the late 1800’s there was resistance to women serving in military base hospitals. ‘Medical Officers early in 1899 urged that women nurses be sent, but the reluctant Army Department believed that soldiers preferred to be nursed by male orderlies and that women would interfere with the wounded soldiers’ freedom. South Africa was said ‘not a proper place’ for women in wartime, and that flirtations would occur’ (Adam-Smith, 1996: 9). The reasoning here is similar to that put forward today in regards to women fighting alongside men in elite combat units.
The First World War

During the First World War (WW1), nurses were the only Australian women to leave the country on active service (Barker, 1989). From 1914 until 1919 as many as 3,000 Australian nurses served in theatres of war (Adam-Smith, 1996; Barker, 1989). ‘Australian members of the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) served overseas in New Guinea, Egypt, Lemnos, Malta, Palestine, Mesopotamia, India, Northern Greece, England, France, Belgium, Italy, Russia and on the hospital ships and troop transport ships in the Mediterranean and on the high seas’ (Barker, 1989: 4).

Information about these women is not as scarce as it is for the Boer War but it is scarce all the same. Official records concerning women’s nursing roles and experiences during WW1 are limited – what we do know is anecdotal and often comes from diaries kept by women, letters written home, and newspaper articles (Adam-Smith, 1996; Barker, 1989; Bomford, 2001). Marianne Barker could find no official role of dispatched Australian nurses for her book ‘Nightingales in the Mud’ (1989) and therefore relied upon a piecing together of ‘… eye-witness accounts and contemporary records … the surviving diaries and letters of participants as well as from official records’ (Barker, 1989: 7).

The expertise of Australian army nurses became well known during WW1 and military and civilian society began to hold them in high esteem (Adam-Smith, 1996; Barker, 1989). It was the reliance on and need for women workers on the home front that was to abound with challenges (Damousi, 1992). Australian women, especially poor women, had of course worked before. Nevertheless, they had never before been in a situation where they were seen to be taking jobs from men. Approximately half a million Australian men enlisted for WW1 representing about ten-percent of the entire population (Adam-Smith, 1996). This left many job vacancies open that desperately needed workers. Many women were endeavouring to support themselves and their children and consequently, willingly fulfilled the wartime need. They did this, however, in a climate of conservative opposition. A multitude of complaints and resistance accompanied women into their new positions as factory workers,
secretaries, clerks, and general office workers (Damousi, 1992; Damousi & Lake, 1995).

The Australian nation is said to have been forged by WW1 and the Australian army’s experience in Gallipoli (Tacey, 1995; White, 1981). It has become increasingly recognised that the making of national identity during WW1 and afterwards also involved a depiction of gender roles in rigid terms. Propaganda in the Great War ‘... defined masculinity in terms of heroism and violent aggression and femininity as motherhood, maternity and sacrifice’ (Damousi, 1992: 351). The Women’s movement, that had gained great strength prior to the war, was sidelined and made inconsequential as ‘... women’s rights were considered peripheral and indeed divisive [to the war]’ (Damousi, 1992: 351). Women were entering the public realm, paid employment, and military service in unprecedented numbers, however, the relegation of women’s labour as inferior meant that wages for women decreased in this period as the threat to masculinity rose (Damousi, 1992).

**World War Two**

During WW2 Australia would follow the example of her Allies in creating a military force of women who were involved in a multitude of activities to support the war effort (Adam-Smith, 1996; Bomford, 2001). Australia needed the support of women, again as nurses, and, again as workers who would replace men who were overseas fighting.

In WW2 women’s military roles increased beyond that of nursing and caring for injured and dying soldiers. Women were needed on the home front to fill not only civilian job vacancies but military positions as well.

The first rumours of war in 1938 saw some Australian women begin training (at their own expense) to ready themselves for national emergency. They trained as signallers, nursing aides, motor-drivers and mechanics. However, the Minister for Defence, the Hon. G. A. Street, did not see women having a wartime role beyond such things as relief and mercy work, canteen work, transport work, and non-Government activities (Adam-Smith, 1996: 110). These women were not
discouraged and by 1941, when the Women’s Australian Army Auxiliary Force (WAAAF) was created, it easily recruited 27,000 members. In the same year the Women’s Royal Australian Nursing Service (WRANS) attracted more than 3,000 women and the Australian Women’s Army Service (AWAS) saw as many as 24,000 women join its ranks. At its first recruiting in 1941 the Australian Army Medical Corps had 1,100 women register for full time duty (Adam-Smith, 1996; Bomford, 2001).

The AANS left for overseas deployments in 1940 and these women served in every battle area where Australian soldiers fought (Adam-Smith, 1996). The nurses worked under high pressure, during air raids, and whilst under attack. Of the 3,500 who served, 71 were killed whilst on active service and 32 were taken as prisoners of war by the Japanese (Adam-Smith, 1996). The AWAS and the WAAAF both served overseas, mostly in intelligence units, forty-one AWAS and fifty WAAAF women died in active service (Bomford, 2001). Women in Defence worked originally as nurses, typists, cooks, and drivers but were soon called upon to fill positions in signals, intelligence, chemical warfare units, female operated fixed defences, radars, and search lights attached to anti-aircraft guns (Bomford, 2001: 6).

By the time Japan entered the war at the end of 1941 there were 2,755,000 women working in Australia. Women’s increasing roles, and the demand for their service and support, ‘… did not automatically bring about a change of attitude to women in the workforce … there were still doubts as to whether women were as “strong and reliable” as men’ (Adam-Smith, 1996: 112), and equal service did not bring about equal pay. Women worked in a myriad of environments, they were engaged in theatres of war, in munitions factories, ship building, aircraft works, and as workers on the land as part of the Australian Women’s Land Army (AWLA) (Adam-Smith, 1996; Saunders & Bolton, 1992), but they were not entitled to the same acclaim or to the same money as men. Women’s roles in the military and in civilian employment created ‘deep anxieties’ especially as women entered traditional male occupations (Spurling, 2000: 84).

In post-war Australia, political decisions were made to disband women’s services and restrict women’s employment in the labour market (Adam-Smith, 1996;

Women’s mobilizations during WW2 is worthy of further investigation. Especially in the light of women’s capabilities in wartime and their emotional and psychological capacity to survive the stress of combat environments (De Pauw, 1998; Nemitschenko, 2001).

**Women’s Involvement in WW2: Cross Nationally**

The WW2 period provides numerous examples of women participating in every facet of war. It is not the intention of this chapter to list them all, but they include British, French, Italian and Polish women – with Russian women probably being the most visible of all women who fought in WW2 (De Pauw, 1998; Goldman, 1982; Hancock, 2000; Saywell, 1985).

Shelly Saywell’s research authenticated that, ‘[t]here is hardly a nation that does not have in its history at least one martial heroine…’ (Saywell, 1985: viii). Nevertheless, it was difficult for her to find written documentation of this. When an effort is made to explore women’s history, it becomes apparent that mainstream historians simply do not include the involvement of women in their remembrances of military facts. War historians frequently neglect to examine female participation in any depth. Alternatively, they dismiss women’s experiences as ‘women’s studies’ – therefore relegating it to a sphere separate to real history (Adam-Smith, 1996; De Pauw, 1998; Eisler, 1990; Scott, 1988).

The experience of British women in WW2 provides us with a useful example of the multitude of roles women performed on the front line and in combat support roles. In 1941, severe manpower shortages meant that the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, asked for the conscription of single women between the ages of eighteen and thirty years. British women worked in traditional roles but were also active in non-traditional areas such as on searchlight and anti-aircraft sites. They drove trucks, filled sandbags, and dug roads (Saywell, 1985). These were the women of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) who were ‘… roughly trained and lived in rough conditions … and suffered from both animosity and, later, anonymity’
English women pilots flew for their country in dangerous skies, were trained as spies and active in the underground movement in Europe, yet their experience and their abilities is a rather downplayed aspect of the war, making them almost invisible, even in today’s historical accounts (De Pauw, 1998; Nemitschenko, 2001; Saywell, 1995).

However, the record is indisputable and, ‘By September 1943, over 56,000 women were working for AA (anti-aircraft batteries) Command. In terms of our (ADF) definition of combat duties, these women served in ‘the situation where an enemy is directly engaged over long distances and can retaliate...’ that is to say, they were serving in a combat role. A total of 389 ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service) women were either killed or wounded’ (Nemitschenko, 2001: 36).

Nemitschenko goes on to point out that prior speculation about women’s inability to work well in a combat environment, their potential to upset Unit bonding, or to involve themselves in sex scandals were, after all, unfounded (Nemitschenko, 2001: 36). But in today’s armed forces in Britain the debates rage on as to whether women are capable of doing what they have already proved they can do. Although relatively progressive, the British military still has combat restrictions.

Tens of thousands of women in France were active in the French Resistance (De Pauw, 1998; Reynolds, 1996; Saywell, 1985; Weitz, 1995). ‘In the tradition of Joan of Arc, women led partisan units into battle … some were organised heads of other networks’ (Saywell, 1985: 38). Thousands of other women in France operated as couriers, spies, nurses, and even as armed fighters, they published underground newspapers, and risked their lives on a daily basis as they fought the occupation of their country (Saywell, 1985; Weitz, 1995). Ten thousand French women were taken to concentration camps during the war. Eighty five percent of these were deported to the camps because of their involvement with the Resistance. Others were executed or killed whilst active in underground activities (Saywell, 1985).

Even after Italy’s surrender to the Allies, German forces continued to occupy much of the country. At this time armed partisans began operating, ten percent of these partisans were women (Saywell, 1985). ‘To conventional military historians, the
civilian partisan activity is a mere footnote … the partisans, however, are of particular interest because they offered the most visible combatant roles for women’ (De Pauw, 1998: 235).

In Poland hundreds of thousands of women were involved in the resistance. Many of these were Jewish women who fought in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 and in partisans units in the forests outside of the cities (Saywell, 1985). Poland’s large Communist partisan movement included women in its ranks, some of these women escaped to the Soviet Union where they joined Polish regiments and fought in the same capacity as Russian women (Saywell, 1985). Women also served in large numbers in the Home Army in Poland, it is estimated that forty thousand Polish women served in ‘… sabotage, weapons building, message carrying, liaison, weapons smuggling, assassination and armed fighting’ (Saywell, 1985: 103).

Women served with the Soviet Union in WW2 on an unprecedented scale. ‘Every able person was needed to fight … including women, who served in all roles and fought at every front’ (Saywell, 1985: 131). Russian women have a history of fighting in their country’s wars. They fought in the Napoleonic wars and in the Revolution as well as in WW1 and WW2 (De Pauw, 1998; Goldman, 1982; Hancock, 2000; Saywell, 1985). This history did not mean that Russian women did not face discrimination when they first assumed their roles in WW2. A case in point is the 588th Night Bomber Regiment who were made up entirely of females. The regiment moved around and often shared bases with men. ‘Their first assignment had been delayed because the male commander of the air base thought their training was inadequate, their inexperience in searchlights hazardous, their discipline lax and their presence a distraction to his men … The prejudices evaporated, for the most part, after the 588th had proven itself … by 1943 damages inflicted by the night bombers were so extensive that the women earned the distinction of becoming a Guards Unit, the highest honour awarded a regiment’ (Saywell, 1985: 144 & 145). Despite opposition, Soviet women volunteered in the Army and Air Force, they were participants in hand-to-hand combat in infantry, as machine gunners, tank commanders, bomber and fighter pilots, parachutists – in fact, in every area of the war (Hancock, 2000). Women in medical roles on the frontline also fought as combatants when they were needed to do so. Women were found to be efficient
snipers, so much so that specific sniper training was set up for women, more than 1,000 women graduated (Hancock, 2000; Nemitschenko, 2001; Saywell, 1985).

Laurence Rees, when making a documentary for the BBC about the Eastern Front, found that women fought as effectively as men, were as capable of killing, and showed the necessary aggression in battle (Nemitschenko, 2001). In light of today’s debates about women in combat, in the ADF, the Soviet experience can provide essential information about gender and combat. The Soviet women set a ‘precedent that needs far more study’ (Hancock, 2000: 160). Indeed, the reports that come from the Laurence Rees, documentary found no ‘accounts … that men in battle were distracted from fighting the enemy by instincts to protect women soldiers. There were no accounts of women soldiers becoming pregnant’ (Nemitschenko, 2001: 36 & 37).

The Soviet experience in WW2 was unstudied until the late 1970’s (Goldman, 1982) and as Eleanor Hancock (2000) suggests, it is an area that warrants further investigation. Although this experience is well documented and sufficiently contemporary to satisfy scholars that it is not ‘myth’ the Soviet experience is nonetheless downplayed by opponents to women in militaries and in combat. ‘Soviet women have been directly engaged in combat with arms of every sort, in separate units as well as mixed units deployed in combat’ (Goldman, 1982: 7).

Opponents to expanding women’s military roles who write about women’s involvement in wars, historically as well as in a contemporary light, have dismissed the experiences of women who participated in the WW2 war effort. Jeff Tuten (1982), for instance, says that most Soviet women were assigned to combat support duties and not direct combat. He asserts that, ‘reliable information on the performance of the female combat formations is [not] available … It is known that the percentage of Soviet servicewomen assigned to combat units was relatively small’ (Tuten, 1982: 243). The percentage of Soviet women may be small when compared to the percentage of men in Russia but it is enormous when compared to the sum total of many nations’ militaries. Martin van Creveld (2000) also denies that women’s involvement on the Eastern Front was significant and he also bases this on the percentage of women who fought in the war. He contests that ‘the vast
majority served in administrative and medical positions behind the front, whereas others manned anti-aircraft defenses as they did in other countries. Only a small percentage actually carried weapons and fought, whether in the field or as pilots, in the air’ (van Creveld, 2000: 833 & 834). In comparison to other compelling evidence, such as that which comes from the Soviets themselves, this is a misinformed stance. Yet, these examples are a stark reminder of how mainstream historians and commentators, wanting to influence decisions made about women’s roles in militaries, engage with women’s experiences.

The Historical Record

Historians’ attempts at reassembling the historical record (if done at all when concerning women) have been done naively with gendered stereotypes that exclude the experience of women or misrepresent it (Boulding, 1992; Connell, 1987; Miles, 1989). The ‘historical record’ should therefore not only be approached with an awareness that it is inconclusive but one needs to approach it with a sense of caution. Too often historians and academic scholars looking for women’s part in war turn to this fragmented historical record to ‘prove’ their biased, speculative, and emotive theses that ultimately serve to perpetuate the undermining of women’s ability and agency in the world generally and in the military.

As Tuten (1982) demonstrates in his explanation of why women should not serve in combat, ‘…for the five thousand years or so that we know about, women were not only excluded from combat but this exclusion was also accepted as right and natural’, and, ‘[t]he historical record is quite clear. War and soldiering, with few if any substantial pre-twentieth century exceptions, have been an exclusive male preserve’ (Tuten, 1982: 239). Tuten does not deem to make explicit from where he has derived this ‘unequivocal fact’ about the past five thousand years. Nor does he examine the ‘few pre-twentieth century exceptions’ he mentions.

In a similar vein van Creveld denies women’s involvement in war. He asserts that, ‘[w]omen have never taken a major part in combat – in any culture, in any country, in any period in history’ (van Creveld, 1993: 5). This is quite a bold statement for a modern historian to make. Academically it is a proclamation of no consequence as
van Creveld fails to substantiate the statement with source material. Yet in later work he credits women with being ‘absolutely’ critical to wars by instigating and causing them, ‘… to the point, indeed, that [war] may almost be said to owe its existence to them’ (van Creveld, 2001: 12 &13).

Jeffrey Grey’s ‘A Military History of Australia’ (1999) has been acclaimed for its detailed and thorough overview of Australian military history. Grey is an Associate Professor from the Australian Defence Force Academy’s History Department. However, ‘A Military History of Australia’ is a disappointing read for one interested in women’s involvement in the ADF. Grey informs the reader, at the beginning of the book, that throughout the text is ‘…consistent, if scattered, reference to the role of women’ (Grey,1999: 3). Yet I found scant reference and little of substance about women in this comprehensive volume about Australian military history, except, contradictions with other literature I have read. Grey assures his readership that WW1 had no great impact ‘…upon the role and position of Australian women…’ (Grey,1999:117). His reasoning being, that woman in Australia had already achieved the vote. Historians of women’s war history, to the contrary, illustrate the impact of the war on women by detailed descriptions of their diverse responses to war. Their commitment to the war effort was demonstrated through supporting troops, raising money, filling essential war work positions, and struggling to survive the hardships presented to them and their families (Adam-Smith, 1996; Damousi, 1992; Damousi & Lake, 1995; Lake, 1999).

In Grey’s telling of WW2 he is a little more inclusive of women when he briefly discusses work done by women in the industrial and agricultural sectors. In his analysis of equal pay disputes he goes as far as to say that ‘moral crusaders disapproved’ of the inequity of women’s wages though the unions did not (Grey, 1999). Women’s lives during WW2, we read, were impacted on in that rationing was ‘strict’ but that ‘…there were few real hardships on the home front, and the level of real wages rose considerably in the course of the war’ (Grey, 1999: 80). This he says after citing that 849,000 women were in service and in the workforce when numbers peaked in September 1943 and women were receiving fifty four percent of men’s wages (Grey, 1999: 81).
In conclusion to his book, by way of addressing current military happenings, he does point out that women’s involvement in ‘non-traditional’ branches of the ADF has brought problems such as sexual harassment. Here he emphasises the attention this has received from the public and the media, but he fails to address the problem this may be for the women harassed, or the ‘problem’ that men who harass women present to the ADF. If one were to look to Grey’s volume in a hundred years from now, one would be grossly misinformed as to the role and the experience of Australian women in war.

Elise Boulding (1992) critiques the assumed and constructed nature of this type of history as a ‘Western preoccupation’ that fails to keep the historical record in proper perspective. She names the historical record as ‘...a myth called the Evolution of Mankind’ and contends that the ‘...history of human kind has been written as if it were the History of Western Man’ (Boulding, 1992: 3 & 4). This omission of women, or ‘elimination’ as Boulding calls it, renders the human identity as partial, therefore, ‘[w]e don’t know fully who we are. We know even less what we might become’ (Boulding, 1992: 4). How are we then to know what women are capable of when we have a historical record that excludes women? How can it then be used as evidence of women’s capabilities, experience, or previous lived realities?

Investigations of history in a gendered context must include more rigorous attention than simply ‘... adding women and giving the discipline a good stir’, [we must] ‘rethink history quite radically, by identifying everyone as a sexed – or gendered – being’ (Reynolds, 1996: 9). Therefore, we must not just tack women on to established interpretations of history, we must critically examine the ways which these interpretations shape understandings of women. And we must examine the sexual bias in history, analysing how that sexual bias ‘... operates as a particular kind of cultural institution endorsing and announcing constructions of gender’ (Scott, 1988: 9).

As Boulding’s (1992) work has made apparent; deconstructing the historical record and placing women as a consideration within it leads to women regaining their status as actors. Not only does this provide a new visibility, and give silenced experience a new platform on which to be heard – it also means that humankind can begin to
analyse history in such a way as to understand how we might construct the future. This is an essential concept within debates about women in militaries and wars because it is this that decision and policy makers are aiming to achieve – a constructed future for militaries and for the women and men who work within military institutions. It is on this basis and in regard to women’s increasing roles in the ADF that mainstream or dominant versions of history must be deconstructed. Firstly, to place women within the historical paradigm – not only into the ‘rise of civilization’, but also into war history – as active players. Secondly, it is vital to explore the fragments of historical knowledge in order to truly understand the diverse and complex lived realities of women through time. Actual experiences must be differentiated from assumptions made by historians that are based on their subjective gender bias. To rely on gender biased dominant knowledge about women’s history would be to relent to grand narratives that see women as non-actors within the historical record (Boulding, 1992; Miles, 1989; Scott, 1988).

In the field of women’s military and war history ‘new facts’ have been acknowledged by proponents of women’s expanding roles (see De Pauw, 1998; Segal, 1995). Nonetheless ‘[n]ew facts might document the existence of women in the past, but they did not necessarily change the importance (or lack of it) attributed to women’s activities’ (Scott, 1988: 3). Newly available information about women’s roles in war attributes to women an agency in the past that can be emulated in the present and in the future. It is not enough to say that women have participated in wars and been a part of militaries in the past, and then dismiss this information on the grounds that: there were not that many; or that they were only there to shame men into fighting (see Gat, 2000; Goldstein, 2001, Mitchell, 1998; Tuten, 1982; van Creveld, 2001).

Whilst women in nations around the globe are continuing to defend their countries by fighting in war, in a variety of roles, the Western world continues to conduct research into the viability of ‘women in combat’. Contemporary American women’s experiences in the Gulf and Bosnia are similar in the respect that although women have already achieved the desired result – flying combat missions over both Iraq and Bosnia. Nonetheless, ‘[p]opular’ debate about whether women should be in combat
continued unabated without reference to what women were doing’ (DePauw, 1998: 294).

Women’s inclusion in the military and in wars is at best tolerated for the duration and afterwards, it is ignored. It is not that women have no history of participation in war and military institutions; it is that they have been written out of history or had their experience downplayed (De Pauw, 1998; Segal, 1995; Scott, 1988). The limitations placed on women during peacetime have once again been sought at the war’s end. As we saw earlier, Australian women’s services were the first to be disbanded at the end of WW2. This trend occurred in all nations that were part of the war: ‘… the end of World War II saw a return to limitations on women’s military jobs …. When women are no longer needed, their military activity is reduced. Women serve as a reserve labor force, both civilian and military’ (Segal, 1995: 761).

The roles women have performed during wars are significantly downplayed when peace resumes and women are expected to return to the lives they lived before as though they have not acquired new skills that could be used to benefit the public realm. WW2 could not possibly have been won by the Allies without the assistance of women, yet it is rare that the vital roles women play are acknowledged in this manner. ‘There is … a process of cultural amnesia of the contributions women made during emergency situations. In the aftermath of war, women’s military activities are reconstructed as minor (or even nonexistent) allowing culture to maintain the myth of “men in arms and women at home”. When a new emergency arises, history is rediscovered’ (Segal, 1995: 761).

De Pauw contends that women’s desire and ability to be patriotic and fight for their country does not ‘… fit into the traditional formula’ (De Pauw, 1998: 16) of femininity. The traditional formula demands that boys be made into men through military service, and that men learn how to be real men in theatres of war. Combat being the ‘…centuries-old site for testing masculinity…’ (Enloe, 1983: 151), must be kept reserved for men, and any participation by women in war must be forgotten to preserve the sacred male realm. Women and men, however, continually defy social constructions of gender forced on them by societal expectations. Cooke (1996) provides the following example of male and female behaviour in WW1. ‘A few male
writers such as Glenn Gray and Erich Maria Remarque even described men [in war] who nurtured and loved each other, whereas women such as Helen Zena Smith, in her 1930 Not So Quiet … demonstrated that the women who had volunteered, such as the ambulance drivers, became hard and fearless’ (Cooke, 1996: 263).

These inherent contradictions defy notions of gender that are institutionalised by socially constructed roles of masculinity and femininity. Constructed notions of gender pose difficulties for males and females alike. During wartime traditional gender divisions are disrupted, as role expectations for both men and women change to meet the demand of the emergency situation. Women who break constructed moulds of gender successfully, make it all the more important to research, record, and analyse women’s experiences of military and war roles. The historical formulas that have been constructed by society often do not adequately represent women. Women have always had roles in war and wherever wars break out women’s military roles increase (De Pauw, 1998; Segal, 1995). Without inquiry into women’s involvement in the military and in wars, the inherent assumption that women play no significant role remains to act as the only truth.

**Conclusion**

van Creveld, in his analysis of women’s responses to traditional history classes in the academy concludes that women are uninvolved and disinterested. ‘In the war academies and staff colleges … for a woman to raise her hand and actually ask a question about war or military history is almost unheard of; it is as if even the few who are present could not care less about what is going on’ (van Creveld, 2001: 11 & 12). The women in this research study revealed that women are interested and they have knowledge of war history, but war history excludes their gender and trivializes their roles within it. Teachers with attitudes similar to van Creveld’s may prove intimidating to female recruits, as the attitude in the above citation would indicate. van Creveld is perpetuating popular mythology that women have had no part in war and that they demonstrate no interest in it. Resistance to women’s increasing role in militaries and in wars ‘… plays a part in constructing real restrictions on women’s military service which defy or ignore historical experience. This process inhibits popular memory, despite the wide range of accessible
information available to the public, and it reciprocally affects the debates on women’s integration and participation as well as very real official and unofficial conditions of women’s service. The mechanisms are interactive: resistance encourages historical amnesia and amnesia supports resistance’ (Fenner, 1998: 28).

The women I interviewed had knowledge of women’s involvement in past wars. Knowledge included information about Nancy Wake the little known Australian war hero who is famous in France for her work with the resistance. Wake was dubbed the ‘white mouse’ by the Nazis for her knack of slipping through their traps. She trained with the British Special Operations Executive and worked in France as a leader in the underground fighting force the Maquis (Fitzsimons, 2001). Mata Hari (1876 – 1917) was also identified as a significant woman with a military history. Hari was a woman with a mysterious past who was alleged to have worked as a spy for the German Secret Service just prior to WW1; later she was to claim that she was a double agent for the French. She was tried for espionage in Paris in 1917 and was executed by a firing squad (Seth, 1999). The women also held considerable knowledge of the roles of Russian and British women in WW2 and were aware of women participating in conflicts cross-nationally.

That Australian women have been, and currently are, at the front line of wars in nursing and support roles is widely held knowledge, confirming for many women that Australian female service personnel are capable of holding positions in the military that require courage, expertise, and strength. Margie confirmed this and lamented that societal knowledge of women’s roles in wars is limited. She said, ‘I don’t think people realize just how many women have fought!’ Restrictions on women’s military service were seen by many of the women interviewed as ironic, because Australian women have served in and do serve in dangerous conflict situations in potential and actual war zones. As Lynn points out:

Lynn (Army non-Commissioned Officer): … you see females have been supporting the combat forces for years! Always! So it’s really no different now. They [the ADF] seem to think that it’s [women in combat] a brand new sort of trend that we want to create, but its not.
Within historical and cross-cultural analysis one is able to observe actual situations where women’s military service is proven to be of an acceptable level for optimum military effectiveness. Military training and military trials can demonstrate military competence to a certain level, however, as the quote below suggests – real life situations are a clearer illustration that women have, and still are, proving themselves capable of serving their countries in a variety of ways through military service:

**Margie:** *Defence does need to look at what history has proven in real environments. If you look at the Grey Review, some of the literature in there on training versus the real situation – this is broadly in real situations, like WW2 – a lot of the men and women were saying that they learnt more through being in the field than in training. [They said] that their training didn’t help them that much – well it did to an extent – but it was nothing compared to the field.*
Chapter Four

Integration: Barriers and Breakthroughs
Introduction

*I really think that things are changing, maybe slowly. And a young woman joining the Defence Force these days will be enormously frustrated by all the things that she is still not allowed to do. But in the time I have been in [the ADF] it has changed so much (Sheila).*

This chapter places women’s military roles in a societal and political context: doing so de-mystifies the military as a sacred institution and places it within the bounds of institutions that serve society, that exist within society, and are made up of members of society.

The term gender integration illustrates women’s increasing participation in military roles and operations. ‘Full’ integration refers to the prospect of women integrating into the military, in all positions, and in all ranks; specifically combat employments as these are roles women are currently excluded from. This chapter will highlight significant events upon the road of gender integration in a chronological format. This chronology clearly demonstrates; how and when women were first included in the ADF, what their roles were, legislation that has brought changes to original roles, what roles women now perform, and how policy initiatives have enabled increased integration.

Policy that concerns gender integration in the ADF is improving and has been for some time, however there is some disparity between policy initiatives that favour increased integration and the translation of that policy into action. This chapter seeks to elucidate the barriers to integration. The most difficult barriers to overcome, as identified by literature reviews and women interviewed for this research are: mythologising about women as inferior to men in a military context; the culture of the ADF as ‘masculine’; individual behaviours of some male personnel (including males in leadership roles); and the contradiction between policy objectives and the lived experience of women.

The culture of the ADF emphasises masculine values (Cheeseman, 1999; Pringle, 1997), which are exacerbated, in part, by mythology surrounding the ‘birth of the
Australian nation’ in feats of war (Damousi & Lake, 1995). Myths about the Australian nation and war, and their connection to masculinity, complicates women’s integration into the military. Such myths can translate into a culture of resistance where women are relegated into the sphere of ‘other’. This not only potentially damages their relationships with men, but also with one another. Harassment of women is used as a strategy to continue the differentiation of women and men. Women are forced, in this masculine environment, to conform to standards of gender that have been set out by males. Such management of gender means that women are required to perform to a level over and above the average demands of military life.

The ADF is experiencing positive change, in the form of legislative and policy reform, and also in the facilitation of gender integration by some males in the organisation. More women are being recruited into the ADF and recruiting strategies to attract more women are being designed and implemented. The reality of women’s career opportunities needs to be considered in the light of recruiting. Women in this study primarily joined the ADF because of the educational and career benefits it promised to offer. Therefore, the ADF needs to deliver those promises. Women interviewed discuss their career prospects in this chapter, their struggles, their hopes and the main barriers they face today.
A Chronology of Women’s Integration into the ADF

I’ve gone through a whole range of changes since I joined the ADF: from makeup classes; to ‘Annie get your gun’; to doing peacekeeping! (Lynn)

1899
- Women in Australia first served as part of the military in May of 1899 when the New South Wales Army Nursing Service Reserve (NSWANSR) was formed. Superintendent Ellen Julia Gould founded the NSWANSR which was the first official nursing organisation in Australia.

1900
- In January of 1900 the NSWANSR departed for South Africa to serve with the Australian Army in the Boer War. Ellen Gould led thirteen Australian Nurses into war.

1902
- The new Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) was formed.

1914 – 1919
- Three thousand AANS nurses served in WW1 in New Guinea, Egypt, Lemnos, Malta, Palestine, Mesopotamia, India, Northern Greece, England, France, Belgium, Italy, Russia and on the hospital ships and troop transport ships in the Mediterranean and on the high seas.
- In 1918 the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) was formed in Melbourne by a group of civilian women. Although the WAAC made repeated offers of service to the Government, these were rejected. The corps continued to serve in any way they could. They taught themselves to parade and drill, raised funds for comforts, and assisted in nursing during the ‘Spanish’ influenza pandemic.

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11 All information within this chronology has been extracted from: Adam-Smith (1996); Bomford (2001); the DEO ‘Chronology of Women in Defence’ which can be accessed at www.defence.gov.au/equity; the Defence Annual Report (2003-04); the Workplace Equity & Diversity Annual Report (2003-04); and Horner (2001).
1938
- The first rumours of WW2 inspire some Australian women to begin training (at their own expense) as preparation for a national emergency. Despite opposition from Government and disinterest from the military at this time, the women involved trained as signallers, nurses aids, motor drivers and mechanics.

1940 - 1945
- In response to WW2 Australian women are needed as a reserve labour force on the home front where they worked in civilian and military employments.
- Approximately 3,500 AANS served in overseas theatres of war. During the course of the war a total of 71 AANS nurses were killed, 32 were taken prisoner of war by the Japanese.
- In 1941 The Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service (RAAFNS) was formed. The Women’s Services were formed; the Australian Women’s Army Service (AWAS) saw over 24,000 women serve in its ranks, as many as 400 were deployed overseas, a total of 41 died in active service. The Women’s Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) saw over 3,000 women serve. The Women’s Australian Auxiliary Air Force (WAAAF) attracted the highest number of women with over 26,000 serving Australia in WW2, and of those that served in overseas theatres of war fifty were killed.
- In 1942 The Royal Australian Naval Nursing Service (RANNS) was formed.

1946
- The WRANS were disbanded.

1947
- The AWAS and WAAAF were disbanded.

1948
- The ANNS were disbanded.

1950
- In July the Federal Cabinet approved the establishment of a women’s Air Force as a branch of the Permanent Air Force until November when King George V1 approved the title ‘Women’s Royal Australian Air Force’ (WRAAF).
- The WRANS were reformed in response to the Korean War.
1951

- The Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) was formed. Training and management for women was conducted by women. Government policy set a limit on the number of female personnel of four percent of the entire force.
- RAANS became a corps. Part of the Australian Army Medical Women’s Service (AAMWS) became subsumed by RAANS the remainder being subsumed by the WRAAC.

1959

- The WRANS was granted permanent status after the acknowledgement that the corps could not function on a temporary basis. Service was restricted and members could not serve at sea.
- Women personnel were granted the Defence Force Retirement Benefits fund meaning that women could now plan to make the Defence Force a career (provided they didn’t seek to marry or have children).

1964

- RANNS was reformed in response to the Vietnam War.

1967 - 1972

- RAANS members serve in Vietnam. Approximately 1,000 Australian women went to Vietnam, not all as female personnel of the ADF, some served as entertainers and members of the Red Cross.

1967 – 1975

- WRANS and WRAAC members served in Singapore after lobbying by the women’s services, and particularly Colonel Dawn Jackson, the then Director of the WRAAC, to approve overseas deployments for women was successful.
- Women served as typists and stenographers, mess stewards and clerks.

1969

- Women are permitted to stay in service after marriage after much lobbying by Colonel Jackson the then Director of the WRAAC\(^{12}\).

\(^{12}\) Married women’s service remained restricted and retention was not automatic. Women could remain in service only if the Defence Force required her ‘special talents’ and if her husband’s written consent was obtained. Restrictions also applied to a married woman’s access to training and promotion. Married women could not be recruited (Bomford, 2001: 75 & 76).
1974
- Pregnancy did not automatically mean a woman must discharge from the services after a long process where all three services worked to develop a policy that was satisfactory to the Government of the day.

1975
- Women in the ADF became entitled to twelve weeks paid maternity leave and twelve months unpaid leave which was set in line with the public service. Although the ADF wanted women to discharge when they were five months pregnant Government policy directed that women could serve as long as they could perform their roles.
- Chiefs of Staff Committee set up a Working Party to examine and report upon the role of women in the ADF. The ensuing report recommends that women be permitted to serve on active service but not in a combat role.
- Employment categories once closed to women are opened – these include engineering and technician roles.

1976
- Women in the Army begin weapons training.

1977
- Women are integrated into the mainstream RAAF with the abolition of the WRAAF.
- Equal pay for women officers in RAAF is approved.

1978
- Equal pay in the WRANS is established.

1979
- All women across the three services are granted equal pay with males.\(^{13}\)

1980
- Female officers in the WRAN embark upon a short familiarisation cruiser in HMAS Jervis Bay.

\(^{13}\) Equal pay was granted to women in the ADF after the 1969 Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission ruling of ‘equal pay for equal work’ and the Commission extension of equal pay concept to ‘equal pay for work of equal value’ to be fully implemented by 30 June 1975 (Summers, 1992: 9).
The rank structure in the WRANS is abolished and the rank structure of the RAN is adopted.

1981
- WRAAC members complete their first recruit course with weapons training.

1983
- CEDAW is ratified with the Reservations of women being excluded from combat and combat-related duties.

1984
- The Sex Discrimination Act - allowed ADF exemptions from employing women in combat-related and combat roles.
- Women working in combat-related duties, such as third-line transport in the army, were unable to continue in these roles.
- The WRAAC is disbanded and amalgamated with the mainstream Army.
- From September 1984 all women joining the Navy would be liable for sea duty.
- The first female officers in the RAN were permitted to complete full training courses in HMAS Jervis Bay.
- 23 per cent of positions in ADF open to women in competition with males.

1985
- WRANS is abolished and women are integrated into the mainstream RAN.
- Women officers and sailors are permitted to serve in seagoing billets.

1986
- Defence promulgate an instruction on sexual harassment.
- 35 per cent of positions in ADF open to women in competition with men.

1987
- The first two women graduate from pilots course in RAAF.

1988
- Ros Kelly, the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, conducted a conference that focused on women’s future employment options in the ADF.
It was followed by a formal review that resulted in the 1990 decision to open combat-related positions to women.

- Navy appoints the first woman Commanding Officer.

1989

- Forty three percent of positions in ADF open to women in competition with men.

1990

- Chiefs of Staff Committee review the employment of women in the ADF expanding the number of combat-related positions available to women. The Army opened 55 per cent of positions to women before this women could only serve in 17 per cent of Army positions.
- Defence instruction on sexual harassment is reviewed.
- The Combat Related Employment of Women Evaluation Team (CREWET) is set up by Army.
- The ‘Employment of Women at Sea Implementation Plan’ is initiated by Navy.
- Navy agrees to allow women to serve in combat-related positions on all ships in peacetime (except submarines).
- All women assigned to ships deploying to the Gulf remained on board.
- Three RAAF female pilots were employed in combat-related roles.

1990-1994

- During a peacekeeping mission in the Western Sahara a female medical officer is killed in a plane crash.

1991

- Chief of the Naval Staff agreed that women could serve in Collins class submarines.
- Women serve on RAN ships during the Gulf War.
- Female medical staff and nursing officers serve in Iraq.

1991-1993

- Women serve in Cambodian peacekeeping operation.

1992

- The Review of the Employment of Women in Combat and Combat-Related Positions submitted to Chiefs of Staff Committee resulting in eighty seven percent of ADF positions being open to women in competition with males.

- A federal parliamentary inquiry into sexual harassment in the ADF is conducted due to complaints of sexual harassment on the HMAS Swan.

**1993**

- Six hundred and fifty four women were serving in Army combat-related positions. Twenty-one women were serving with the Royal Australian Engineers Corps. Three thousand women were serving in the Reserve in combat-related positions.

- Women serve in peacekeeping in Somalia.

**1994**

- The report ‘Sexual Harassment in the Australian Defence Force: Facing the Future Together’ is released.

- Women serve in peacekeeping in Bougainville.

**1994-1995**

- Women serve in peacekeeping in Rwanda.

**1996**

- The Burton Report, ‘Women in the Australian Defence Force. Two Studies: The Cultural, Social and Institutional Barriers Impeding the Merit-Based Progression of Women and the Reasons Why More Women are not Making the Australian Defence Force a Long-Term Career’, was produced.

**1997**

- The Defence Equity Organisation (DEO) is established on the recommendation of Dr Clare Burton.

- The Navy announced that women would be able to serve in Collins-class submarines. Women made up 40 of the total 160 volunteers to serve upon these vessels.

- Lieutenant Jennifer Daetz is appointed command of HMAS Shepparton. She is credited as being the first woman to command a RAN ship.

**1998**

- The Ferguson Report, ‘The Review of the Employment of Women in the ADF’, was produced.
- RAN commenced training for women in submarines.
- Lieutenant-Colonel Tracy Dobie is appointed Army’s first chief instructor of a Training Command unit.

1999
- The Chiefs of Staff Committee endorsed a decision from the Ferguson Report that employment in the ADF should be competency based.
- Four hundred of the 5500 ADF personnel serving in East Timor were women. Women have served in a variety of roles including medical, transport, public relations; in Navy, Army and Air Force.

2000
- A project team was established to develop competencies for the Combat Arms employment categories to determine whether these work areas could be opened to women.
- The first two RAAF F-111 navigators qualify.
- The Air Force promoted the first female officer to reach one star rank, Air Commodore Julie Hammer (she has since reached two star rank).

2000-2001
- Work commenced on the development of competencies for those employment categories which women are currently excluded from.

2001
- A report commissioned by defence ‘A Survey of Experience of Unacceptable Behaviour in the ADF’ is released.

2002-2003
- The Defence Equity Organisation implemented a Gender Diversity Strategy and working group to focuses upon: recruitment strategies that target women; ensuring ongoing development and learning opportunities for women to increase retention; and establishing a re-entry program for personnel who have had absences from service.

2004
- The Defence General Instruction ‘Management and Reporting of Sexual Offences’ is released.
A chronology of women in the ADF tells a story of the transition of an all male institution into an institution that is becoming gender balanced. Women’s integration began only as a response to war. The reserve labour force of women was never meant to evolve into a gender-integrated force. Yet change over the decades since the Boer War has been enormous.

**The Feminisation of Work**

Women gaining a foothold into areas that are customarily reserved to men is not unique to the military (Burton, 1991; Cockburn, 1991; Lake, 1999). In fact, ‘*the steadily rising participation of women in the workforce, and especially married women with children, has been one of the great social and economic phenomena of the past thirty years*’ (Summers, 2003: 160).

The prospect of women integrating in greater numbers and into higher positions in the ADF does not stand alone as a unique or peculiar workplace transformation. There are many prevailing similarities in the arguments against full integration that resemble those made against women’s integration into other defence and civilian employments in the past. The most striking similarities are to be found within professions and trades that are traditionally masculine.

Women’s demands for equal pay, equal rights, and equal opportunities in the work sphere has radically altered work and society (Anderson, 1992; Burton, 1985, 1991; Game & Pringle, 1983; Lake, 1999). The military has not escaped the impact of this change (Bomford, 2001). Women have been demanding equal rights and opportunities for centuries now, and while change has been enormous, nonetheless there is a ‘*… surprising continuity in patterns in female labour in Australia* (Frances, 1992: 246). Women may have been granted, or taken, positions traditionally denied to them, such as those served in by many military women today. However, women’s work in non-traditional areas continues to be a struggle and women’s work in more traditional areas continues to lack any true value (as the pay rates in occupations such as nursing, and teaching demonstrate). A sexual division of labour continues to exist in Australia (Frances, 1992; Summers, 2003) and restrictions placed on women’s employment opportunities in the Defence Forces reflect this segregation (Burton,
Women in civilian employments and in defence employments continue to work in the ‘... lowest echelons of the occupational hierarchy’ (Frances, 1992: 248). Smith and McAllister (1991) identify that a continuation of restrictions on women’s employment in Defence will ensure that women do not receive the promotions necessary for senior positions.

Women in Australia and the world over have always worked. This work has often been domestic, unpaid or under-paid, and has been unskilled or menial labour. Entry into skilled work and into the professions has been recently acquired by many women in the Western world (Game & Pringle, 1983; Lake, 1999; Saunders & Evans, 1992) though women still tend to make up the majority of unskilled and low paid positions in employment as well as occupying most part-time and casual positions (Burton, 1991; Frances, 1992).

**Australian Women and Work**

Gaining entry into the public sphere, into the work force, and into educational institutions in Australia has been a long and arduous road for women and it is a journey that is still in progress (Game & Pringle, 1983; Lake, 1999; Saunders & Evans, 1992). It was only just before the turn of last century that women were granted access into Sydney University and slightly later when they were finally accepted into Melbourne University. In early education debates it was believed that the uterus would shrink or that women’s reproductive systems would be damaged if they were to use their brain in the pursuit of higher learning (Herbert, 1998: 1 & 2). As ridiculous as this might sound, these were thriving and compelling arguments for a considerable amount of time and kept women out of the education system for centuries. Unfortunately, similar arguments based on presumptions concerning biological determinism are put forward by some military commentators today and they continue to disadvantage women (see Mitchell, 1998; van Creveld, 2000).

In the Western world, unskilled labour, unpaid work, and menial work have always been undertaken by women from the working classes and peasant classes and by women living in poverty. Women working in areas that are seen to reflect women’s ‘inferior’ skills and that do not disrupt the male sense of ‘superiority’ has been
unproblematic (Anderson, 1992; Game & Pringle, 1983; Lake, 1999). But jobs in
the professional public sphere, those that require education and training, and that pay
well, have been relatively recent acquisitions for women in Australia as in other parts
of the world (Game & Pringle, 1983; Lake, 1999; Saunders & Evans, 1992).
However, women remain disproportionately in unskilled and low paid positions
progression into professions such as law and medicine and their late access into
professions such as engineering, the church and the military with gender bias. ‘At
least part of this inconsistency [in employment] is often attributed to conscious and
unconscious strategies to discourage female participation in professions strongly
linked to male gender identity’ (Smith & McAllister, 1991: 370). Gender relations in
the work sphere in Australia have consistently been a reflection of women’s unequal
access to employment (Saunders & Evans, 1992). The Australian military is no
exception to this.

During WW2 women in Australia worked in unprecedented numbers. Women were
seen as a reserve force of labour to be used in the exceptional scenario of a national
emergency (Smith & McAllister, 1991) and were not taken seriously in their newly
acquired roles (Scutt, 1992). Women’s work was considered to be less valuable and
this bias dictated pay rates which were set at fifty percent of the male rate (Scutt,
1992). Women’s ability to work without supervision was questioned as was their
physical strength. The efficiency and productivity of women was considered to be
lower than that of men, and absenteeism was considered to be higher, though both of
these considerations were based in bias against women as a gender (Scutt, 1992).
Women were viewed as being better at tedious, unskilled, and routine tasks
subsequently pay rates reflected these attitudes (Scutt, 1992).

In contemporary military debates this line of argument against women’s capability to
do an equal job with men continues. Brian Mitchell makes this apparent, saying that,
‘… on the job, men actually do more to make up for the limitations of their female co
workers’ (Mitchell, 1998: 143). Mitchell also states that women ‘degrade’ a unit’s
ability to accomplish missions because of their limitations, specifically in physical
strength (Mitchell, 1998). As to women’s suitability to perform tedious, routine and
unskilled tasks he cites American studies conducted in WW2 that found that women
were indeed suited to this type of work (Mitchell, 1998: 173). But this too is of concern ‘[i]f war were always tedious and routine, women would be better suited for it. But war is not always tedious and routine. Even in peacetime, many military jobs require quickness and daring’ (Mitchell, 1998: 173).

The subordination of women in society and sexism in the workforce has at its base a historical and traditional gender bias. Clare Burton, in her extensive works into women and equal opportunity in employment, provides numerous examples of how this tradition of sexism has been perpetuated in Australian society including by theorists on the sociology of work. One of these is Theodore Caplow who in 1954 said it was ‘…disgraceful for a man to be directly subordinate to a women…’ and that ‘…intimate groups … should be composed of members of one or other sex but not both…’ (Burton, 1991: 4). Although writing in 1954, Caplow’s opinions are shared by many in today’s military and by many military commentators. Burton also cites the Report of the Royal Commission on Public Service Administration from 1920, which put women’s employment into the category of subordinated support, to release ‘…promising youths from duties which are largely routine, thus widening their scope for training and improving their prospects for advancement’ (Deacon in Burton, 1991: 4). This, then, is the foundation that has been laid for women who wish to work in the public sphere. Outdated views such as the ones above are still shared by many people today because these are views that have a long history and are firmly entrenched in society (Burton, 1991; Smith & McAllister, 1991).

**Valuing Work**

Insecurities surrounding women’s entry into roles considered masculine often contain a fear that the employment area will be ‘feminised’ (Burton, 1991). If women do enter a place of employment traditionally held by men that area can be seen as becoming ‘feminised’, and it will be accorded less status and could also be accorded less financial reward (Burton, 1991: 6). The next consequence for men is that any man doing the work would also be duly feminised. He would lose his status as a masculine man and be afforded the inferior status of a feminised man. He could, as a result, also lose job satisfaction because ‘…part of the satisfaction in some jobs derives from the belief that it is masculine work…’ (Burton, 1991). van Creveld
validates this perspective. He states that when women *penetrate* (his word) male preserves, prestige and income collapse (van Creveld, 2000: 831). He believes that this is enough reason to deny women a place in combat roles. It is hard for men, he says, to ‘...mark off any field as their own in order to assert their masculinity’ (van Creveld, 2000: 831).

An increasing number of women in the workforce has not necessarily changed society’s perceptions of women’s quality or merit (Burton, 1991; Smith & McAllister, 1991). In fact, increasing numbers of women into a profession may instead ‘... have an adverse effect on the general standing of that pursuit; consequently ... [this produces] a tendency in males to leave’ (Cassidy, 1983: 20). It also causes men to resent women and blame women for the transformation of a field from one of prestige to one of low worth. van Creveld fears that ‘... the social prestige of the [military] organisation ... [will] be eroded and the budgets cut ...’ (van Creveld, 2001: 200) because of women’s entry. I do not believe that social prestige is at risk but rather the masculine perception of that prestige – and this perception will not be felt by all men.

Many men relate to themselves and to other men as masculine because of the work role they perform and identify with (Burton, 1991; Cassidy, 1983; Connell, 1995). Masculinity is a fragile construction if it needs constant day-to-day recognition by self and by other men at work. But masculinity can be fragile. It exists, for many men, only as a polarization of femininity (Connell, 1995: 68). Such an identity with masculinity leads some men to attempt to prove they are indeed men by *not* exhibiting qualities they view as feminine and by denigrating what they see as feminine traits. Therefore, if a woman can do a job that a man sees as a defining characteristic of his masculinity then this could lead to his feeling less of a man (Cassidy, 1983; Burton, 1991).

Professions linked to gender identity are particularly resistant to women’s entry (Smith & McAllister, 1991). The prestigious positions of law and medicine have again seen women’s entry be slow and fragmented and today women are still struggling to obtain high-level positions. In fact, women are ‘...disproportionately represented in the lower ranks of [these] profession[s]’ (Smith & McAllister, 1991: 200).
370), despite having gained reasonably early access to them. The military as the ‘last bastion of male power and prestige’ is all the more resistant (Bomford, 2001; Burton, 1996; Enloe, 1983, 2000; Segal, 1995; Stiehm, 1996).

**Mythologising: One Barrier to Integration**

The culture of the ADF places an emphasis on masculine values (Cheeseman, 1999). This is exacerbated, in part, by mythology surrounding the ‘birth of the Australian nation’ in feats of war (Damousi & Lake, 1995). Women’s war and military experiences are largely absent from the folklore that the Australian nation is based on.

Regardless of excellence shown by young women at military academies in Australia, and the strides women in the ADF have made in their professional roles, female personnel still do not occupy, in any significant numbers, positions of decision-making, power and prestige in the ADF (Bomford, 2001; Burton, 1996; Smith & McAllister, 1991). The Air Force has one woman at two star rank, none of the services has any women at one star rank (Defence Annual Report, 2003-04). In the Officer ranks the Navy has six women at the rank of Captain and eighty men occupy this rank. In the Army only three women serve at the equivalent rank of Colonel, 118 men occupy this rank. In the Air Force the equivalent rank is Group Captain, only two women serve at this level, 104 men occupy this rank. In the Other Ranks Non-Commissioned Officers can rise to the rank of Warrant Officer – nine women have risen to this rank and 184 men occupy this rank in the navy, the equivalent rank in Army is Warrant Officer Class 1, there are 25 women serving at this rank and 484 men, 18 women serve at Warrant Officer in the Air Force and 483 men occupy this rank (Defence Equity Organisation, 2003-04: 54).

Women’s career prospects are somewhat shaped by attitudes and beliefs about gender and prevent women from reaching their true potential (Walbank, 1992). Merely integrating women into a masculine environment will not suffice (Johnson & Bethan, 2002). The culture of the ADF where it values stereotypes of masculine attributes over feminine attributes will need to change significantly before integration can become complete (Agostino, 1998b; Burton, 1996; Hancock, 1993).
A Culture of Harassment?

Since women’s admission into the ranks of the ADF, they have faced many complex hurdles. Most, if not all of their difficulties easily fit under the heading of ‘male objection to women’s presence in the military’. Problems for women have ranged from feeling unwelcome, to being forced through violence and abuse (some of it sexual) to leave their positions and lives in the military (Enloe, 1983; Cheeseman, 1999). Women have been subjected to harassment on verbal, physical, and sexual levels by some of their colleagues and by some authority figures during their service in the ADF (Cheeseman, 1999).

Margie (Air Force Officer): When I was at ADFA I knew of six girls who had been raped at ADFA and that’s quite a number. And in most cases it was someone that they knew, that was drunk, that was friends with them ... and then they got called all these awful things if they came forward about it ... Women are often too scared to report rape because they have seen what happens to other women.

A report commissioned by defence ‘A Survey of Experience of Unacceptable Behaviour in the ADF’ (Power, 2001), revealed that, ‘[m]ore than three quarters (77.3%) of the females … surveyed indicated that they had experienced at least one of the behaviours examined by the SEQ [Sexual Experiences Questionnaire] in the previous 12 months … one third (37.9%) of females indicated that they had experienced unwanted gender related harassment’ (Power, 2001: v). In this report, where 5,000 ADF personnel – made up of 2,500 women and 2,500 men – were surveyed, it was found that the people responsible for sexual harassment were men, or groups that included males. The report revealed that younger women were more likely to experience harassment and males of senior rank were the least likely to experience harassment (Power, 2001: vi, 31).

The numbers of attempted sexual assaults experienced by women within each branch were: Army - 14; Navy - 9; Air Force - 4. Actual sexual assaults by branch numbered: Army - 7; Navy - 2; Air Force - 1 (Power, 2001: 13). The effects and
consequences of ‘unwanted’ behaviour were that 42.4% of women indicated that ‘… their feelings about being in the ADF were negatively affected’, and 39.5% reported that they, ‘… felt like resigning …’ (Power, 2001: 20). Women described harassers as older males of superior rank. This correlates with Quinn’s (1996) findings, showing that there has been ‘… little, if any change in the nature of harassers in the ADF’ (Power, 2001: 31) in the five years between the two reports. However, ‘[l]evels of sexual harassment have … increased amongst female respondents when compared with the results of the 1995 ADF Career and Family Study’ (Power, 2001: 34).

Policy initiatives within the ADF such as those put forward in the Defence General Instruction ‘Management and Reporting of Sexual Offences’ (2004) and initiatives put into place by the Defence Equity Unit (DEU) are having a positive effect upon changing the culture of the ADF where that culture has condoned harassment. Through the DEU the ADF now has three national and one international toll-free Defence Equity Advice Lines (DEAL). Through DEAL members of the ADF have been provided with a confidential information and referral service where they can discuss any issue of concern and receive support in endeavouring to find a resolution to their problem (Defence Equity Organisation Annual Report, 2003-04). The DEO develops, implements and communicates equity and diversity policy and initiatives and has implemented a ‘… comprehensive network of trained Equity Advisers to support all Defence personnel in the resolution of unacceptable behaviour complaints’ (Defence Equity Organisation, http://www.defence.gov.au/equity).

Through these initiatives female personnel surveyed for the ‘Survey of Experience of Unacceptable Behaviour in the ADF’ reported feeling more confident in the system to stamp out harassment (Power, 2001). 61.8% believed that people in the ADF who harass do not get away with such behaviour; 79.7% said that sexual harassment was not tolerated in their units; 61.1% reported that actions were being taken to prevent sexual harassment (Power, 2001: 26); and 51.3% of women agreed that sexual harassment training was at least moderately effective in stopping or preventing sexual harassment (Power, 2001: 29).
The Myth of the Digger

The emphasis on masculine values in the ADF is reflected by Australian culture and is explicit in the wider global context (Cheeseman, 1999; Pringle, 1997; Tacey, 1995). There are connections between masculinity, the military, and Australia as a nation, that adversely affect women. The way that men behave toward women, ‘are not just the machinations of a few malevolent or chauvinistic servicemen. They reflect broader political and cultural processes and understandings which stem from Australia’s historical circumstances and continue to be reinforced by its military and popular cultures’ (Cheeseman, 1999: 1).

The collective Australian psyche (based on white colonizer values) has modelled itself on images of men alone in the bush or outback, and on men together in the trenches (Pringle, 1997; Tacey, 1995; White, 1981). The folklore that surrounds these images is not based in the reality of all Australian experience. Most Australians live in cities or in urbanised areas and only a small number serve in the ADF. Nevertheless, these myths have managed to maintain their connection to the warrior culture of the Australian military regardless of women’s population numbers dominating that of men’s, and regardless of Indigenous people and their place in society and expanding multiculturalism (Cheeseman, 1999).

The myth that especially concerns us here is the myth of the ‘digger’ and the ‘birth of the Australian nation’ (Damousi & Lake, 1995). The digger is an integral factor in any analysis of the ADF and gender ideology (Lucas, 1995). Within the military, the digger is not an abstract concept; he is a representation of masculinity and of the bonds between men. He is celebrated every year on ANZAC day, a national holiday. The significance of which clearly reflects the importance of the digger and of Australia’s celebration of its war heroes. I do not intend here to deny the significance of ANZAC day, nor do I wish to take away from the value of mourning those who died fighting in wars. My intention here rather is to explore how mythology furthers women’s oppression and makes integration into the military more difficult for them. It is also to see how we build mythology into culture, whom this benefits, and whom it disadvantages.
David Tacey (1995), critiques the white Australian desire to invest its emotions in war and especially into the massacre of Australian soldiers at Gallipoli (where the myth of the digger arose). He believes that Australian masculinity is an ‘…adolescent style of masculinity…which desires to prove … that it is indeed male … in rituals of combat and battle and overseas in exotic theatres of war’ (Tacey, 1995: 51).

Women’s experience of war is thus rendered insignificant because the myth of the digger is about military service and the making of men through battle (Cheeseman, 1999). If women are considered in such an equation Australian male perceptions of masculinity could be quite unconvincing. Moreover, if it were in theatres of war and in the military that Australian males ‘prove’ their manhood – how then could women participate? To do so would be to harm the perception of national identity and masculinity itself.

Jane Ross’ study of the ‘digger’ in white Australia culture (1985), goes as far as to make explicit the main components of the myth. However, like most, she does not extend her analysis to measure how myth relates to the lived experience of the soldiers it is based around nor does she analyse the masculine adolescence that accompanies such mythologising of males in Australia. Ross carries her theorising into the realm of the military by maintaining that the armed forces in Australia have been ‘endowed’ with a ‘… special sensitivity and sacredness …’ (Ross, 1985: 11) because of the Australian soldiers’ identity as ‘digger’. Whilst I do not dispute this occurrence in Australia, my concern is that the author shows no consideration for, and does not explore, the detriment that the ‘myth of the digger’ has on women in the ADF (Nor does it consider the de-masculinisation of men injured and crippled in war). In fact, if the author’s analysis is to be heeded at all, then the creation of Australian masculine identity has formed in isolation to women. Denying women a role in the forming of the Australian nation is a common theme in the telling of the historical factors in the making of Australian national identity (Pringle, 1997).

In a similar vein to Tacey, Richard White in ‘Inventing Australia’ views the digger myth as an Australian ‘… obsession with masculinity’ (White,1981:136). This ‘obsession’ has the effect of omitting women from national identity and from
military status. Clear evidence of this was demonstrated when there was suggestion that a statue of a woman be erected at the Australian War Memorial as representative of Australia. The outcry against this was insistent upon the statue being that of a naked male warrior figure (White, 1981).

The mythology of masculinity surrounding Australian national identity, and folklore attached to the Australian soldier, from a feminist perspective, are part of the root causes of discrimination, harassment, and other such symptoms of male resistance to women’s presence in the ADF (Enloe, 1983).

The myth of masculinity and the myth of war complicates women’s integration into the military, the women in combat debates, and women’s emerging roles in peacekeeping. It is in the myths about war that many of the contradictions that plague perceptions of women and, for that matter, perceptions of men, become apparent (Jeffords, 1996). These stories are essential in determining the mythology of the warrior. And ‘...war stories offer an ideal place to examine portrayals of masculinity’ (Jeffords, 1996: 228&229). And also to examine ‘...broader cultural and social tensions related to shifting gender roles’ (Jeffords, 1996: 229).

Women’s integration into the military challenges society’s perception of who men and women are. Myths about war not only provide information about gender roles in war but about gender in society generally (Jeffords, 1996: 232). War and gender contain a comparable dichotomy. War is offset with its polar opposite ‘peace’ and masculinity is offset with its polar opposite ‘femininity’. The concept of peace can only exist because we live in a world that has wars. Masculinity only exists in relation to femininity (Connell, 1995: 68). War and gender are not only ‘...thought of in binary terms...’ but they are, ‘...said to be “natural” ’ (Cooke, 1996: 236). But as Cooke goes on to say that gender is, ‘...far from being natural, [it] is a cultural code that describes, prescribes, and thus shapes social expectation for sexed bodies...’ (Cooke, 1996: 236). Mythology about warfare and about gender is rife in the way we narrate the stories and myths about war, and ‘[o]utworn essential clichés of men’s aggressivity and women’s pacifism are revived [within them]’ (Cooke, 1996: 236).
Women’s Integration into a Masculinist Culture

Women’s integration into any work sphere or organisation is often met with extreme and illogical opposition. Examples of this abound, a more severe one being an instance given by Cynthia Cockburn of a Canadian tragedy episode. ‘On December 1989 in the Polytechnic of Montreal fourteen women engineering students were shot dead by a man who said he “hated feminists” ’ (Cockburn, 1991: 2). In the Australian military no such episodes of extreme reaction have occurred in response to integration. What has happened, however, is a series of smaller more individual reactions of resistance resulting in systematic discrimination and various forms of assault. The ADF is not unaware of the resistance that meets integration. Systematic reviews and inquiries into the discrimination and harassment of women have been and continue to be conducted. Two of the most prominent investigations, both of which inform this research, into problems with integration are the ‘Grey Review’ (1998), a report that investigated the policies and practices that deal with sexual harassment at the Defence Force Academy, and the ‘Burton Report’ (1996), which is two studies, one on the cultural, social and institutional barriers that impede merit-based progression for women, and another into why women are not pursuing long-term careers in Defence.

Women excel at ADFA and RMC and regardless of their limited numbers are currently dominating positions of excellence in both institutions (Barry in Spuring, 2000; Smith & McAllister, 1991). However this excellence is under-utilised, as is shown by how few women are in the top echelons in the ADF. The slow progression of women in the ADF is obviously not because of their lack of ability. Cath expresses the difficulty in trying to succeed when the status of being a woman is one of inferiority. She describes it as ‘wearing women down’:

Cath (Army Officer): I think because women are a minority we feel there is a lot of pressure on us. I’ve always found that to succeed in the military you not only have to be as good as the men you have to be better to be considered anywhere near equal. That’s a difficult thing to do day after day after day,
for years and years and years, and it wears you down and that’s one of the big issues – it actually wears people down.

Emily sounded confused when she reflected on women’s achievements at ADFA and RMC and their lack of career progression:

**Emily (Army Officer):** Its seems to me that we have to justify ourselves – well my impression is that women are good in Defence, and in the army … I hope there isn’t an attitude that women aren’t good, women are doing really well at ADFA and RMC and there are ones who get good marks, and awards, and accolades there. I don’t know why there is this gap though between the potential there and where we end up?

Walbank’s (1992) research looked into men and women’s opinions concerning job suitability for female officers in the RAN. ‘The data supported the concept that the RAN is an organisation based on perceptions of male superiority where gender is at the forefront of job suitability … there are various myths that support this belief system’ (Walbank, 1992: 13). The myths most often cited concerned women’s seafaring ability. Reasons given for women’s unsuitability for going to sea were their lack of physical strength, their inability to handle stress, and their potential to disrupt cohesion. Over half the men interviewed for the research believed that women should not serve on combatant ships during a conflict. ‘The opinions of males are important … the attitudes and beliefs of male members dominate the broader belief system within the Navy, the opinions of men are central to the career prospects of women’ (Walbank, 1992: 13).

Walbank stipulates that it is ‘belief systems’ that determine whether women will serve in combat positions and it is belief systems that must change otherwise women’s ‘… prospects of being promoted … are virtually nil’ (Walbank, 1992: 14). Policy that excludes women is indeed shaped by attitudes and assumptions about women’s inferiority to men (Walbank, 1992: 11).

Belief systems that construct women as inferior and restrictions placed on women’s service that stem from these belief systems prevent women from reaching their true
potential. They also undermine women’s confidence and ‘set them up’ for additional discrimination.

Simply adding more women to an environment that has traditionally and intentionally excluded women and degraded femininity will not in itself detract from the unwarranted assumptions made about women that have built up over centuries (Johnson & Bethan, 2002). Negative assumptions about women’s abilities and pervasive myths that women do not have a natural aptitude for military roles is perhaps why progressive ADF policy and initiatives – set up to increase gender integration – are working too slowly. There is a disparity between policy initiatives and women’s progress. Few women occupy positions of seniority and prestige in the ADF (Burton, 1996). This situation is frustrating for women who want equality and equal opportunity in the ADF. As one woman in Burton’s study expressed ‘… there’s more smoke than there is fire … if they were actually fair dinkum about some sort of equality, in bettering things for women … they would have more women there’ (Burton, 1996: 10).

The Defence Equity Organisation has implemented a Gender Diversity Strategy and working group that focuses upon: recruitment strategies that target women; ensuring ongoing development and learning opportunities for women to increase retention; and establishing a re-entry program for personnel who have had absences from service (Defence Equity Annual Report, 2003-2004: 52). Initiatives such as these are in theory workable strategies to increase women’s integration in the ADF. However without being combined with the necessary cultural change, theory will not develop into practice. The Burton Report (1996) found that commitment to gender integration was viewed on an individual level with those in senior positions being seen as responsible for imparting a positive attitude and commitment toward integration. A commitment to gender integration was not believed to be ‘embedded’ institutionally by participants in Burton’s study. One female Navy officer described a commitment to integration as existing within ‘pockets’ of the ADF with ‘… some broad-minded males out there … who genuinely believe that women do a good job and should be promoted in the Service and given equal opportunity’ (Burton, 1996: 9). Participants in Burton’s study expressed the view that senior officers who are
‘deeply committed’ to gender integration ‘… are undermined by the behaviours and practices of some of their peers’ (Burton, 1996: 10).

A Culture of Resistance

Of course not all men in the military believe that women are inferior, or that women should be denied access into some military employments (Agostino: 1998b). But the beliefs, opinions, and assumptions of those that do believe in and uphold the myth of male superiority are fuelling resistance to integration. And military men who are ‘pro-women’ do not always outwardly support their female colleagues, ‘… those men who support women colleagues often do not openly express such sentiments, usually because they are sensitive to the unofficial reprisals which may come from other male members’ (Agostino, 1998b: 65). Therefore, women often do not get support from those areas where it may make a difference, in their careers, and in their places of work.

Michele reports having found one particular posting a very lonely experience because her male colleagues did not include her socially, the environment they were in was isolated and she had little support or companionship at work and after hours:

Michele (Army Officer): It was a very male environment, there weren’t many women; it was very macho, armoured corps officers that weren’t very friendly. They weren’t used to having women there and out of hours there wasn’t a lot to do. It was isolating we were out of town. I found it [the masculine culture on base] – I don’t know whether it was me having a big chip on my shoulder because they have a reputation that proceeds them. But I found that no one was really willing to engage me, there were the occasional guys, but it was difficult. Maybe it was me not being out there enough. On a couple of occasions they were rude to me, and ignored me, they could be really aloof. After a while you just give up and you don’t want to make an effort anymore.

Michele mentions that there were ‘the occasional guys’ but obviously none that made a wholehearted effort to engage her. This probably occurs as Agostino (1998b)
reports, because males who are pro-women, or simply like to socialise with women, will face ‘reprisals’ from other males if they are seen being too friendly.

Men in this regard are endeavouring to protect the worth of the work they are engaged in, the value placed upon it is higher if it is male (Burton, 1991). The so-called – natural division of labour – where men do important and interesting work – and women do menial and repetitive tasks has its foundation in prejudice and assumptions about women’s competence and ability, not only in work, but as a general overriding ‘rule’ about the female gender. Some men will use harassment to deliberately undermine women’s confidence and make them look bad in front of their colleagues. Lesley recalled an incident where a male colleague spat at her during her work in an area traditionally reserved for men:

Lesley (Army Officer): I proved myself to be a good soldier and to be a good _____ operator; once I had done that [proved herself] it wasn’t an issue. About eight years later [after the spitting incident] I was acting commander of a signals unit out the back here, and there was a big do at the boozer, and the guy who spat on me, he’s out of the army now, came up to me and apologised. He realised now that he was out of the army, he understood that his wary attitude was completely inappropriate, and that made the world of difference to me.

Lesley’s legitimacy as a good soldier and a good operator was in question before she had begun her work. Had she been a male this would not have been so. The man who spat on her said that he had changed upon leaving the military, while he was serving, his views, his animosity toward her, were reflecting cultural norms.

The culture of the ADF is based on masculine principles. It employs women in a disproportionate number of subordinate positions that are afforded little value and that do not lead to advancement within the organisation. It systematically excludes women from positions of power. Its male members often resist integration or further integration of women (Burton, 1996; Smith & McAllister, 1991). Furthermore, many of the men in Burton’s study (1996) expressed the opinion that ‘... women’s
traditional role in clerical, administrative, medical and other support areas is the appropriate one for women within a military organisation’ (Burton, 1996: 32).

Often, when women are promoted or receive a position in an area considered to be a male domain, men will discount her role:

Michele (Army Officer): You also have the problem of sending women into certain jobs because of this tokenism thing. And if a woman gets a position over a man they will say ‘oh she only got it because they had to put a woman in’, that sort of thing.

‘Resistance of course is also motivated by individual’s fear of increased competition for positions and promotions, and a desire to maintain the status of the profession, which is higher because it is not “feminised” ’ (Hancock, 1993: 90). Hancock also makes the point that the masculine identity of combat roles would be diminished if women could be equal members of the profession (Hancock, 1993: 89).

Opponents to women in the military such as van Creveld (2000) claim that woman’s roles in the military: in administration; the health services; and support areas; are generally proof that women do not want other roles. van Creveld offers no sociological explanation for this phenomenon but does extend his analysis of it into other areas. He uses the police force as an example to show how women generally do not want to work in areas associated with violence because violence is the realm of men (van Creveld, 2000: 837& 840). van Creveld contends that the only branches of the police to escape feminisation are areas that include violence. Women in the police are in administration, communication, and logistics, or in ‘white collar’ jobs in laboratories, or investigating fraud. When women do join commando teams and riot police – a rare occurrence – most, he says, don’t stay long. The inference being that it is too violent a role and the gear is too heavy for women to carry and/or wear. In some cases where women do work in these roles it is because they are there to deal with minors and/or other women. van Creveld’s concluding analysis is that women have not changed the ‘near monopoly’ of males over violence; they have rather placed themselves into roles concerning women and children and into support roles. This, states van Creveld, is a replica of modern society where women continue to
avoid violence. van Creveld fails to take into consideration the continuing barriers to women’s open involvement in areas of work that include violence.

van Creveld believes that it is only countries that have no real threat of war that are feminising their armies (van Creveld, 2000: 842). He does not however look at structural and organisational resistance to women, or at why surveys might show women avoiding roles that are traditionally male and involve violence. Male resistance often being an indicator of why women say they would not want to choose these roles (Barry, 1993).

In countries where there are still wars, van Creveld states that, ‘...women are no more taking part in violence that they ever have’ (van Creveld, 2000: 842). He does not, however, illustrate what he means by women not taking part in violence in countries at war. He does provide an example of Sri Lanka where he says only one of the thirty-three forces permits women to carry arms. On the contrary, Linda Grant De Pauw, a noted historian of women and war, and the head of the MINERVA Center in the US, informs her readers that women serve as combatants on both sides of the civil war in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan Government forces recruit women, as do the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The one force that van Creveld dismisses is probably the separate cadre of Tiger women who have trained as a separate force since 1987 (De Pauw, 1998: 292). Joshua Goldstein’s research also validates the involvement of women in the Sri Lankan civil war. The five sources Goldstein cites are slightly at odds about just how many women serve as Tamil Tigers, with some estimating women make up two thirds of the force and others believing approximately half (Goldstein, 2001: 83).

The Paradox of Cultural Responses to Women’s Integration

Clare Burton’s report revealed that ‘... a strong resistance to women's increased involvement in the military is reasonably broad based’ (Burton, 1996: 33). Burton’s interview data found that resistance comes from all generations of men, from ‘... a significant proportion of young people ... [and from] senior Officers in each Service who hold attitudes and have belief-systems which are not sympathetic to women’s broader role in the military’ (Burton, 1996: 33).
Sharing what is considered to be a male only space is difficult for some men, and making adjustments to male culture in order to allow for difference is also a challenge. For both of these reasons some men will emphasise and compound their beliefs that women are inferior to men and that women do not have a role in the military (outside of health and clerical areas). This is contrary to the fact that many women are proving to be indispensable workers (Burton, 1996). One woman I interviewed put it like this:

**Holly (Army Officer):** *Military men generally don’t allow women the opportunity to show what they can do because in the long run women might show the men up. Men at higher ranks are less inclined to feel threatened or be competitive; once they reach the higher ranks they are more secure in their positions.*

It is also a reality that the ADF cannot maintain a voluntary force without women’s voluntary participation, women will remain as part of the Defence Force. Military personnel who do not want women in the military are then left in a double bind. Policy makers encourage women to enlist which leaves the men in a position where they are forced, against their better judgment, to work with women. Some of the men in Agostino’s study (1998b) expressed concerns that having female colleagues restricted them in the work place and interfered with their friendships with one another. *‘These “restrictions” are seen to curb “natural” male bonding behaviours important for warriors’* (Agostino, 1998b: 65).

Moreover, women are the sex that the military devalues and establishes as ‘other’, different from masculinity in every possible way. Bronwyn Grey’s research into sexual harassment at ADFA examined instances where women, predominately confined to what Grey calls ‘the out-group’, were disparaged due to their ‘femininity. The ‘in-group’ consists of males and ‘… adopts a more masculine form of identity and self-expression …’ (Grey, 1998: 1.14). Examples of training situations where women were put down in order to inspire males are provided in Grey’s report. *‘In this instance, a female cadet was observed to be firing more accurately than the male cadets. The latter were challenged by the NCO who pointed this out to the males and*
asked how it felt to be outshot by a female. The obvious and clear inference is that in the rightful order of things males should outperform females in this traditionally masculine activity, which ‘motivates’ the males while at the same time (inadvertently or not) denigrating the females’ (Grey, 1998: 1.15).

Margie experienced this ‘in-group’ mentality later in her career in the Air Force when she was doing extra training. She explained to me that her understanding of hegemonic masculinities helped her cope with being a minority in the environment that she describes below:

**Margie (Air Force Officer):** When it comes to a ‘boys club’ its very much about social status, this little hierarchy or pecking order that they set up for themselves, so if you are high up in the pecking order you have a good chance of making it into those inner circles. But as a female – its not that you are disliked – cause I get on really well with my peers, but you are part of a different group … you are never going to make it into those inner circles. One of the previous CO’s at one of the training squadrons, he said, ‘As long as I'm here it will be over my dead body that a woman gets through’. If you look at the squadrons there’s a lot of that mentality. They are very arrogant so you would need to be a very arrogant woman to be able to pass through.

Grey reveals that young women at ADFA report being told not to look or act too much like women (Grey, 1998: 1.42). The ideals that inspire such advice come from a culture that values masculinity over femininity. For women who find adapting to this culture or who do not display sufficient masculine characteristics, life at ADFA could be extremely difficult. Maria excelled in her studies at ADFA but found the physical regime gruelling. She managed to keep up with the programme expected of her, however, some of the male cadets she trained and studied with constantly belittled her for not being strong and athletic:

**Maria (Air Force Officer):** It was a group mentality thing [discussing ADFA] if you didn’t fit in with the group then that was it. But it wasn’t so much ‘you are a girl you don’t fit in’ but the things that marked you out as
being good or better were things that I always had trouble with, you know physical activity and all the strength type of things, and being loud and obnoxious, that just wasn’t me and the things that I was good at weren’t seen as being all that important.

Yvonne describes her time at ADFA as ‘nasty’ and implies that the culture of ADFA (especially in the army divisions) resists women to the point that they leave the institution rather than continue with their studies and pursue careers in the ADF:

**Yvonne (Navy Officer):** It was petty and nasty. In my year there were something like 28 women who joined the army and 3 graduated, so that gives you a fairly good idea of the kind of culture that they had to deal with, and they all left for all sorts of different reasons. Some were terribly persecuted, I think that sort of thing really got flushed out in the 90’s.

It has been common especially in the past for military trainers to call men ‘girl’, ‘women’, ‘pussy’ and other derogatory names that are associated with the female body or with femininity, as a means to humiliate and disparage them (Herbert, 1998). Such treatment of male recruits is supposed to transform them into real men. Although the ADF is endeavouring to change this name calling it was apparent from interviews that this was still occurring up until recently. Margie made the point that Drill Sergeants at ADFA, for instance, could try using gender neutral language when searching for a derogatory term, but always insulted people by calling them ‘girls’ or ‘sissy girls’ and such. She said this ‘automatically’ labelled females as inferior. Looking back on this still has the power to make her angry:

**Margie (Air Force Officer):** … being told by drill sergeants [to] ‘stop acting like a sissy girl’ they could say, ‘stop being a woos’, use another derogatory term, but you never ever hear that. Its always ‘stop being a girl’. Which is automatically labelling females and that used to really piss me off.

Perceiving women as other is a military tradition. It is a strategy employed in order to define masculinity as determinedly opposing to femininity. Furthermore, ‘…denigrating that which is feminine’ (Herbert, 1998: 9) is a method to separate and
define manhood more completely. These methods of training recruits can only affect female recruits in a powerfully negative way, as the above statement from an interviewee would indicate. This training amounts to verbal and emotional abuse of female and male personnel, and are factors needing consideration when inquiring into the diverse forms of mistreatment women encounter in the military (Grey, 1998).

Some men use harassment of women in the military to either show their disapproval about the presence of women in the ranks, or to force women to leave the military altogether (Burton, 1996). Susan believes men use harassment to have women moved out of their workplaces:

**Susan (Air Force Other Ranks):** Ok, women are doing the integrating, in the sense that this has been an all male environment and now women are coming in – but it should be seen as both genders integrating – but those with the problem with it are the males … If a woman is having a problem with a guy she is the one who is moved, but is it her that is having a problem with integration or the guys? Men can see that if they harass a woman enough eventually someone will move her.

Harassment strategies are devised by individual males and are infused within the culture of the Defence Force – a culture that has been permeated with resistance to women’s integration. In his ‘Submission to an Inquiry into Sexual Harassment at the Australian Defence Force Academy’ (1998), Graeme Cheeseman reinforces that Australian cultural identity and its ties with the military and masculinity aggravate women’s existence in the ranks. Cheeseman maintains that these ties create ‘tensions’ and ‘contradictions’ that form a great deal of the underlying causes of female harassment with the ADF. Women are in a difficult position in their roles in the military precisely because they are the gender that masculinity defines itself against (Connell, 1987).
Managing Gender in a Masculine Culture

Women living, working, and socialising in an environment that favours masculine values, standards, and behaviours requires that women must manage their femininity (Agostino, 1998a; Burton, 1996).

Agostino’s research (1998a & 2000a) indicates that women in the military, specifically Navy, are pressured to ‘adjust’ to and ‘accept’ stereotypes of femininity (Agostino, 1998a). In this, Agostino maintains that women do not passively accept roles and behaviours that are uncomfortable for them but resist in a variety of ways and subvert cultural norms. Agostino identifies the ways women resist and subvert as: ‘confrontation’; ‘accommodation’; ‘resignation’; ‘intervention’; ‘avoidance’; ‘sex’; ‘sexual ambiguity’; and ‘solidarity’ (Agostino, 2000a: 59).

As we will see in the section entitled ‘attrition’ of this chapter women in the military are pressured to conform over and above the usual demands of military life. They are forced to negotiate their gender within an environment that maintains their gender is inferior. This leaves them in a difficult position. They have the choices of continuing to be themselves and fear that this is not good enough; or conforming to dominant notions of femininity; or acting like ‘one of the guys’ in order to find acceptance. This treatment of women, the higher expectations, and the ‘setting women up to fail’ is highly unfair. It places unnecessary stress on women and makes their lives in the military, and their work roles, harder than they need to be.

In the military it is femininity and not masculinity that is seen as problematic. Consequently it is femininity then and not masculinity that is altered (Agostino, 1998a). Although some forms of masculinity are highly problematic, men are not pressured to alter their behaviour but are often validated even when their behaviours go against Defence policy. One woman described a dominant belief system about sexuality and the disparity involved in gendered behaviour. In some behaviours a man can act a certain way and be validated for it but if a woman is to act in a similar manner she is penalized, isolated, and rejected:
Samantha: (Air Force Other Ranks): There have been girls in our mustering that have caused a fair bit of strife for the wrong reasons. They are trying to fit in by doing it the guys’ way. They don’t understand that you can’t. There is no female equivalent of stud. One girl got pregnant, a lot of them just set themselves up for a fall. The boys didn’t respect them professionally either.

These pressures demand that women ‘manage’ their gender. Women manage their gender in a variety of ways in order to cope, to succeed, to gain acceptance, to forge a place for themselves in their military roles, to reduce isolation, and to model their competence and ability. Given that throughout the military women are often thought to be emotionally, physically, and mentally unfit or ill suited for military roles they must not only perform in their roles but also prove that assumptions and bias are unfounded. To do this they often ‘de-emphasise’ their female ‘characteristics’ in physical, sexual, and emotional ways (Burton, 1996: 97). Some women ‘…negate the feminine by adopting a more masculine position as a means of enhancing their legitimacy in the work place’ (Agostino, 2000a: 60).

This type of gender management is common for women in work places that resist women’s entry (Cockburn, 1991) but what is unique for military women is that they have additional strains placed on them by the culture of the military being one of extreme masculinity. As Cath made apparent, earlier in this chapter, coping in this environment imposes an additional strain; additional energy is required to manage themselves individually and as part of a resisted group. And this extra energy can ‘wear women down’.

Divided from the Ranks

Some women, therefore, deliberately or unconsciously, separate themselves from the female group as a management technique to lighten the responsibility that being a woman in male environment entails. Being one of ‘all’ women might be seen as setting themselves apart from the dominant group of men. Separation from one’s own gender is damaging in a few distinct regards. It takes away from the support a woman might gain from being part of a group, having friends and allies, role models
and confidantes. Some women prefer to become ‘one of the guys’ because being part of the dominant group is easier and one could acquire more legitimacy from being part of it (Agostino, 2000a). Burton identifies women’s relationships with one another as being a ‘casualty’ when women identify more with men than with women (Burton, 1996: 98). Wanting to be ‘one of the guys’ does not necessarily work, as men do not accept women who conform to their standards. And further to this, as Burton makes apparent, ‘…all attempts at conformity may indeed be in vain’ (Burton, 1996: 98).

Several of the women in this study confirmed this:

**Margie (Air Force Officer):** It’s unfortunate because there are some women who will try very hard to fit in with guys and in doing that they lose part of themselves. And then they struggle, and get sick of it, and then they will go to the other extreme and get really touchy about stuff. I don’t think they are coping, just spending a lot of time pretending to be someone else.

Other women ‘desexualise’ themselves as much as possible (Burton, 1996: 97) so that they will fit in or so they do not receive unwanted sexual attention. In this way they lead double lives, not discussing their private lives at work, not mentioning partners, dates or crushes. Many women are conscious of their sexual reputations and do not want to be perceived as lesbian, sexually available, or promiscuous (Burton, 1996: 97).

Some of the women I spoke to were nervous about the attentions of men in any regard and modify their behaviour to ensure that they were ‘invisible’ to men:

**Bridget (Army Officer):** I was always aware that they were going to look at me no matter what, so I was always quite conservative in what I wore, and I didn’t try to bring anything into question or make it any more uncomfortable.

Ultra-feminine behaviour and dress is another gender management strategy. Some women choose to emphasise their femininity so that they do not appear masculine, butch, or lesbian. Agostino says that choosing femininity ‘…enables them to
maintain a sense of credibility because it fits in with the dominant heterosexist position’ (Agostino, 2000a: 62).

Managing gender then, is a technique, a strategy, be it conscious or unconscious, aimed at surviving in an environment that is resistant to one’s presence. It is an attempt to dispel or reduce the harshness of the environment. Altering behaviour is an attempt to do what is expected, it is not doing what one wants to do. Overall it is a confusing situation for women to live, work, and socialise in. One woman thought this was especially so for younger women:

**Cath (Army Officer):** There is peer pressure, even at the academy, I think, that the girls think that they’ve joined a male environment – not a male dominated environment, but actually a male environment – so they have to be male to get through it. I think a lot of them, probably are in the workplace, very masculine in their behaviours and yet socially are extremely feminine. Or they become one of the boys, and alcohol I think plays a really big part in how they react. A lot of the problems they have had in the past can be related to the fact that both the girls and the boys are very confused about their roles when they are at the academy or at troop school because they are being trained to be this type of being that will fit into the ADF, and that type of being is actually a gender neutral being, but they are male and female and the only time they really get a chance to be feminine is in a social situation.

The way many ADF women manage and negotiate their gender is ingenious and highly adaptive. Managing gender can be either conforming to stereotypes or resisting, defying, and disrupting them. It can also be about actually expressing the confusion people in the military feel; calling men on behaviours that offend; and expressing one’s own frustration. One woman I spoke to feels this is the best approach:

**Margie (Air Force Officer):** [An incident of a male swearing around her] ‘Oh don’t worry about Sarg, she’s one of the boys’, and I turned around and go, ‘excuse me! Just because I don’t mind when you swear, or because I’m
pretty easy going and don’t get offended by too much, does not mean that I’ve given up my rights to be a woman!

Conforming to masculine stereotypes, acting like one of the guys, can be perceived as achieving acceptance, and in some environments, with some men, it may work some of the time. However it can backfire as a strategy and cause more exclusion, as many men are threatened when gender norms are disrupted (Burton, 1996). Conforming to the masculine can strengthen hegemonic structures and culture and is an attempt to assimilate rather than integrate. In this way a culture that resists women is compounded and not changed (Burton, 1996). The double bind for women is that conforming to feminine stereotypes can perpetuate assumptions, bias, and mythology surrounding the female gender and again can compound the culture of the military rather than changing it.

The issue is not with women being women. Issues revolve around notions of how people, men and women, perceive gender. How should women behave, look, speak, dress? How should they express their sexuality? Should they appear to be non-sexual or should they be sexual beings? Most of the women I spoke to preferred not to be seen as sexual beings in their place of work. They expressed resentment at unwanted sexual attention, rumours about their sexual preference, or sexual availability.

It devalues women in their work roles to be seen as primarily sexual beings. They want to be seen primarily as professional workers. Women should be left to work in their roles without focus on their bodies as sexual or their gender as problematic. One woman expressed it perfectly:

**Deb (Navy Officer):** We are still too focused on how different we are rather than on you being a person; you are a body; you can do that job, doesn’t matter if you are a male or a female all we worry about is the outcome and we want the job done.

It is a ploy, a strategy, to devalue women in their professionalism to sexualise them and to draw attention to their gender as inferior. And as Agostino maintains, such
behaviour perpetuates and reinforces the sexual division of labour in the military (Agostino, 2000a: 59).

A ‘Fair Go’ for Women in the ADF

Positive change is occurring and this can be seen in changes in policy that directly concern integration; and in research being commissioned into integration such as the Burton Report (1996) and the Grey Review (1998); and in measures such as the implementation of the Defence Equity Unit. Some senior males in the organisation are also outwardly supportive and encouraging of women – such as Admiral Chris Barrie, the once Chief of the Defence Force who said ‘… since much of our Australian military tradition has been based on the original ANZAC spirit of equality, tolerance and a fair go, no matter how it has been applied in the past, is a uniquely Australian concept, and one on which we still have a great deal of work to do’ (Barrie in Spurling et al, 2000: 1). Barrie is aware that military tradition and the myths it is based upon have, in the past, excluded women. His opinion is that the ‘macho/blokey’ culture of defence needs to change. These changes, of course, are occurring slowly ‘… albeit more slowly than some of us would like’ (Barrie in Spurling, 2000: 5).

The women interviewed for this study agree that there are individual men in Defence who are supportive of women’s integration. Some women have found that the support of men in higher positions facilitates integration and makes their individual experiences of integration less stressful. Jacinta finds the attitude of the Chief of the Air Force encouraging:

**Jacinta (Air Force Officer):** The Chief of the Air Force … doesn’t see women as being any different from his men. He treats us as individuals and we are judged on our ability to do the task at hand. And I find that support quite encouraging.

Jade found the support of a superior officer assisted her in a work role where her gender and rank were not always respected by some men. She felt that her superior
officer was able to see her as a specialist in her field, as a competent woman, and he backed her up when she needed it:

**Jade (Army Officer):** A Brigadier … he gave me a lot of support as a woman and as a ______________. He didn’t view me as a female but as a ________ specialist, which made me feel more able to do my job. And even though I did get a bit of stick from some people, because I had him on side I could go in and say right the Brigadier said! And that’s how I found I had to deal with my whole military career was to get that top cover and so I had sway.

Margie describes an incident where two young women had reported that they were being harassed by a fellow student who was living in the same quarters as them. The man allegedly continued to harass them regardless of their complaints:

**Margie (Air Force Officer):** This other instructor [male] got wind of it [a situation where a man was harassing two women] and said ‘what!’ And went down to the senior administration officer who was being a total prick about everything and saying ‘we need to do an investigation about this’ and ‘you cant assume he is guilty’. This instructor said ‘this isn’t ok, I’m arranging for him to move from student accommodation then we can decide what happens, we need to think about the victims sure if they are both lying fine, however, what if there not! You need to isolate this person’.

Although Maria’s dealings with men at ADFA were extremely difficult her experience of working with men in the Air Force has been unproblematic:

**Maria (Air Force Officer):** When I was _________ I had a lot to do with Pilots and they were like ‘oh you are here to do this part of the mission’, and they were quite willing for me to do it. There was never a time when there was a feeling that they didn’t want to have any girls.

Males in the ADF who are supportive of integration give women faith in the military system and confidence that integration is indeed being assisted.
Recruiting Women

Current trends in Australian society indicate that the population is aging (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). For the ADF, the consequences of this trend are that the applicant pool from which new recruits are drawn is reducing. Population trends also show that males make up less of the population than do females and that male deaths between the ages of 15 – 34 years are three times greater than female deaths in the same age bracket. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). Given that this age bracket coincides with the ADF recruitment group, this mortality rate amongst males is significant.

The population of Australia at May 2004 was just over twenty million people. The working population of females is approximately four and a half million and the working population of males is approximately five and half million. Unemployed people in Australia for the same period constitute just fewer than one million people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). The Defence Recruiting Organisation needs to recruit from this pool of Australians (including school leavers). For the ADF this is complicated by the standard requirements for enlistment which requires that all applicants must be 17 years of age or over but younger than 50 years of age; standard educational levels for recruits need to be in line with a 70% pass at year 10 level or equivalent; applicants must be citizens of Australia or have permanent residency; all applicants must undergo a police check and have their criminal history assessed on a case by case basis; applicants must be free of disease, illness, and disability; all applicants must be over 152cms in height (Australian Defence Recruiting Organisation, 2004). Naturally the above requirements reduce the potential defence recruiting pool further.

To counter the potential impact that these requirements and population trends have on the ADF applicant pool, it is essential to broaden the applicant pool. Consequently, women must become a target population as well as men. The inclusion of women into this applicant pool means that the ADF has a larger and wider population to select recruits from (Barrie, 2000; Holden & Tanner, 2001; Smith & McAllister, 1991).
Recruiting women into the ADF has increased the size and the quality of the applicant pool that the ADF can recruit from (Barrie, 2000). Women have shown that they have considerable talents to offer their country through serving in military employments (Barrie, 2000; Bomford, 2001; Smith & McAllister, 1991).

Military employments offer women equal pay, educational benefits, and a security that they may not find in civilian employment, (Enloe, 1983; Greer, 1999) and for many women the choice to pursue a military career is a well thought out conscious decision (Muir, 1992). Many women join the military for the opportunities in education, travel, and employment. Some join because it is a family tradition, others because they have a desire to serve their country and feel that the military offers them the opportunity to do something worthwhile with their lives. Time spent in the ADF can frustrate a woman’s desire to serve her country. Restrictions placed on service and male attitudes and resistance to women does not always match with recruitment advertising.

As well as exploring the above issues this section looks at interview data to explicate women’s thoughts on entering combat employments for themselves and for other women.

**Recruiting Women Enhances the ADF Recruiting Pool**

Recruiting women into the ADF not only increases the size of the recruiting pool but also increases the quality of recruits (Barrie in Spurling, 2000; Bomford, 2001; Segal, 1995; Smith & McAllister, 1991). Admiral Chris Barrie the former Chief of the Defence Force, during his term, said that ‘… the cold hard realities of the demographics of our modern Australian society [means that the] …integration of women into the Australian Defence Force becomes a very important priority’ (Barrie in Spurling, 2000: 1). Further to this Barrie stresses that it would be ‘exceedingly foolish’ to ignore the ‘considerable talents of women’ (Barrie in Spurling, 2000: 3). Women are currently demonstrating strengths in academia with ‘… 20 per cent more women than men undertaking advanced education in Australia, and the recent higher school certificate results in New South Wales demonstrated once again that a greater
percentage of girls are doing better than boys at this important point in their lives (Barrie in Spurling, 2000: 3). Barrie also makes the observation that recent results at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) show that women are dominating the top ten percent of academic and military achievement. Military psychologists have found ‘... that women have higher levels of comprehension and perceptual speed skills’ (Barrie in Spurling, 2000: 4). Other commentators on women’s integration into the military note additional skills women bring with them into their roles in the Defence Force with Smith and McAllister (1991) saying that, ‘[a]nother indicator of the overall quality of the female intake into ADFA can be seen in the award of military prizes. In 1988 – the first year by which female cadets had reached third year status – 9 out of 13 prizes were won by women; in 1989 the figure was 6 prizes out of 13. Given that females constitute only 15 – 19 per cent of the cadet population, they are clearly of high standard’ (Smith & McAllister, 1991: 378 & 379). Bomford (2001) conveys other skills that many women possess such as dexterity and agility, skills that are important for ‘... computerised, high-technology warfare. Women are also more likely to excel at leadership, because they consider motivations and relationships which is especially important in a volunteer army’ (Bomford, 2001: 127). Bomford goes on to say that female applicants, on average, have higher IQ’s and education levels than their male counterparts, as well as management and negotiation skills that may be highly sought after in peacekeeping roles (Bomford, 2001: 127).

Naturally, then, the ADF is eager to utilise the considerably rich recruitment pool that Australian women represent. Adele Manderson from the Defence Force Recruiting Branch (DFRB) highlights the need to attract women into the ADF with a targeted campaign that takes into account the diversity of women within the population (Manderson, 2000: 122).

**ADF Career Benefits for Women**

Some feminist commentators are adverse to Defence Forces recruiting women. Germaine Greer (1999) maintains that women are, however, not the voluntary force they are considered to be. She maintains that many women do not choose enlistment but are coerced in to ‘signing up’ because of the associated benefits. The choice to
sign up she calls a ‘forced choice’ and bases this upon the reality that women are the 
sex most likely to not have access to money and resources. Therefore, free training, 
education, and financial benefits are initiatives that many women find difficult to 
resist (Greer, 1999). Economic vulnerability especially affects black women and 
women from ethnic minorities (Enloe, 1983; Greer, 1999). The military provides 
opportunities for women that they would not find in the civilian world; therefore, it is 
not a military career that is desired but a guaranteed income for themselves and/or 
their families (Greer, 1999: 162).

Such an analysis denies women agency whilst at the same time is grounded in the 
reality of many women’s lives. However, despite this reality, enlistment in the 
military appeals to some women precisely because of the unequal place women 
occupy in society, because the labour market in the civilian sphere lacks opportunity 
that can be found in the forces, such as equal pay (Bomford, 2001).

A high percentage of women in this study cited educational benefits and free 
education and training as reasons for joining the ADF. Especially where family 
support was lacking, the Defence Force provided an option that just wasn’t available 
in the civilian workforce. Margie, for instance, includes educational benefits, a 
career where experience as well as a qualification would be gained, fitness and team 
related aspects, as well as the desire to do something meaningful with her life:

**Margie (Air Force Officer):** *Essentially I was applying for scholarships 
everywhere to go to university. My parents couldn’t afford it, I thought I may 
as well apply to ADFA, I thought that would set me up well as an engineer 
because I would get experience. It was also the fact that I was always an 
outdoor person, liked to keep fit, the team aspect. The initial attraction was 
definitely the educational and financial benefits associated with it.*

Jade wanted a career in the Army because in doing so she would be contributing to 
society, to her country, doing something that would make a difference in the world. 
She felt that in doing so she would also gain personal satisfaction from her career:
Jade (Army Officer): For me the big thing about joining the army was … contributing to the big picture, doing something that mattered, something in the larger scheme of things, not something for my country necessarily but just something that meant something in the big picture. I wanted to do something that gave me some personal satisfaction that I was actually making a difference … and I wanted to go somewhere that was a more positive environment where they were actually doing something that Australians appreciated.

Sheila wanted the financial rewards of a career in the military, but also links this to being valued in her work as an educated woman. Her mother’s service in the British Army and having a brother in the Air Force also motivated her decision to join:

Sheila (Navy Officer): I did my nursing training and then went out into the job market and discovered that because the degree was linked to higher pay it was difficult to get the work I wanted, in the sense that I wanted to be paid for the degree. I went along to defence and sure enough, they were interested in people with qualifications, and were going to give me extra money for having a degree instead of seeing it as a liability. My brother being in the air force has probably encouraged me. My mum did nursing training in the British army.

Melissa also cites family tradition as a reason to join the military. She also wanted a career that was meaningful:

Melissa (Army Officer): I joined because my father was a serving member and because I saw it was more than just a job. The wider community, wider family, attracted me and it wasn’t just a 9 – 5 job. I actually wanted to do something meaningful, worthwhile, and not just for myself.

Veronica was inspired to join the Army for the aspects of adventure and travel. As well as this she wanted to be the first person in her family to attend university:
**Veronica (Army Officer):** I joined for adventure, travel (and the postings are phenomenal), and education. It gave me an opportunity to go to university (no one else in my family had been to university before), and to have the opportunity to be a Command Officer.

Bridget saw a career in the Army as challenging, both to herself personally and to societal expectations of women:

**Bridget (Army Officer):** I was at uni for a year before I joined, it [the Defence Force] was something I’d looked at when I was at school. Uni wasn’t as challenging as I wanted, so I applied for ADFA, I’ve never regretted being in the army. Not only did I want to do engineering, I wanted to be in the army, so it’s not an easy path, not the path of least resistance. Its always good to go over and above what people expect of me so it has totally transformed my personality and given me a lot more confidence in my own abilities and the way I communicate with people, so the challenge side of it was definitely an appealing thing and the fact that its not what people normally expect girls to do. I like to do different things.

Lynn cites stability and financial security as reasons for joining:

**Lynn (Army non-Commissioned Officer):** As a woman I need to be able to know for my own peace of mind that I can be secure, I can sustain my own self – be self sustainable. And defence actually gives you, as a serving member, that capability. I have a daughter so I need to provide her with security, and Defence gives me that.

**Strategies to Employ More Women in the ADF**

Despite the opportunities that women can find in the military, there are serious downfalls for women as well. Opposition to women pursuing military roles in the ADF is well documented (see Agostino, 1998a, 1998b, 2000a; Bomford, 2001; Burton, 1996; Cheeseman, 1998; Walbank, 1992). Martin Watts links the ‘ceiling’ created by combat exclusions with the reduction of the number of females applying
to enter the U.S. Defence Force in the 1980’s (Watts, 2000: 158). This may be a yet unidentified trend in the Australian population as well. Women with an interest in combat positions may be deterred from a military career altogether either because they know it won’t provide what they ultimately want in a job or because they are deterred by the biased nature of the restriction.

Manderson has called for more research to determine what types of advertising would appeal to women (Manderson, 2000: 123) and encourage them to apply for various careers in the ADF. As has been discussed previously, most employments and positions in the Defence Force may be open to women but few women actually occupy the positions that are available. To attract women into these roles the Defence Force Recruiting Branch needs to create ‘positive initiatives’ to ‘…overcome the cultural stereotyping of Defence careers as predominantly male’ (Manderson, 2000: 125). But advertising must reflect reality, and the culture of the ADF can be very different from advertising slogans used to recruit female members. Holden and Tanner (2001) report that ‘… strategic marketing campaign advertisements produced during 1999 … portrayed [women] undertaking many different types of employment activities. Advertisements showed female pilots and women driving large trucks, working on aircraft and talking about the trade qualifications they had received’ (Holden & Tanner, 2001: 15 & 16). Whilst this portrayal is realistic for a few female Defence personnel it does not reflect the majority of roles and employments that women are currently engaged in. The ‘overall feeling’ was that ‘… the outcome was an unrealistic portrayal of women’ (Holden & Tanner, 2001: iii).

Cath rightly points out that recruitment policies will fail if the culture of the organisation is not changed:

Cath (Army Officer): I think the recruiting has failed because the culture of the organisation is still very masculine and very Anglo-Saxon. A lot of their recruiting efforts are a waste of money until they actually can change the culture, and that’s not an easy thing to do.
Given the biased nature of combat exclusions, a question the ADF must ask is, ‘is opening combat roles for women a way to increase female recruitment?’

**Attrition and Women**

The reasons why women leave the ADF or consider leaving the ADF such as: limited career options; lack of promotional rewards; male attitudes towards women’s integration; and the demands of family and relationships in regards to postings and operational deployments will be explored in this section.

By relying on information from overseas research and by analysing current local data available a degree of clarity can be gained about women’s expected attrition in the future. Statistics compiled by Allan Shephard (1999) revealed that women are enlisting in and separating from the ADF in numbers that outweigh those of their male colleagues. Gathering and compiling statistics to show trends is an important factor in assessing and monitoring gender integration with quantitative as well as qualitative studies. However, statistics gathered must not be compiled and displayed in ways that set women up and single them out as problematic and therefore ‘predictably’ a future problem as well.

A reliance on statistics can distort perspectives on issues and how those perspectives are shaped depends on how the statistics are managed. Firstly, as a group women are seen to be costly, unstable, and high risk in terms of recruitment, training, and employment because their attrition rates are high (Bomford, 2001; Shephard, 1999; Smith, 2000a).

The average career of a woman is also shorter than that of a man (Shephard, 1999). Shephard’s reading of the statistics is that this trend is attributable to women’s ‘decision to have children’ and other factors such as injury rates in training (Shephard, 1999: 85). However, women discharge from the ADF for a myriad of reasons including parenthood and injury as well as other more complex reasons (Burton, 1996). Some of these may be seen as special circumstances impacting mainly upon the female gender only, such as: parenting; pregnancy; issues
concerning dual service couple status and deployment; harassment; career discrimination, and a culture that favours masculine values (Burton, 1996).

Women make up approximately 13 percent of the total Permanent ADF (Defence Annual Report 2003-04). The attrition of this group is an issue when high. Addressing issues that contribute to attrition would then be a priority. Men make up 87 percent of the total Permanent ADF (Defence Annual Report 2003-04), and the attrition of this group is also significant when high and/or unstable.

In 1990 – 7,699 men discharged from the ADF and 993 women discharged. In 1994 – 5,813 men discharged, and in this same year (the highest recorded attrition year between 1990 and 1998) 1,106 women discharged. In 1998 – 5,025 men discharged and 945 women discharged (Shephard, 1999: 86). These statistics were analysed, for the purposes of this research, by comparing the attrition rates of males and females percentages. The analysis concluded that ADF concerns about female attrition are overstated. Shephard’s analysis of these statistics shows that women’s mobility in regard to enlistments and separations make them more expensive, as a group, to recruit and train than are men (this is especially important when the ADF is confronted with expenditure cutbacks) (Shephard, 1999: 85). However, the statistics do not show a marked or extensive difference in attrition by gender.

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<td>Females discharging by %</td>
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The variable for each year is as follows:
- 1990 – 0.88%
- 1993 – 0.79%
- 1996 – 3.26%
- 1998 – 2.17%\(^4\)

The variable rates are quite low percentage wise with 1996 showing that women discharged from the military at 3.26 per cent rate higher than men, the highest rates for these years yet moderately marginal.

These statistics also show that a downsizing of military personnel has been occurring (Shepard, 1999). Between the years 1990 and 1998, only the year 1991 showed higher enlistments for men than separations. The other seven years all indicate that separations far outweigh enlistments, with 1993 proving a vast difference with 1,968 enlistments and 6,127 separations. Female enlistments, on the other hand, outweighed separations in 1990, 1991, 1995, and 1996 (Shephard, 1999: 85-89).

Societal factors, especially those concerning the national economy relating to the employment sector can to some extent explain variations in defence enlistments and separations (Shephard, 1999). High unemployment in the civilian sector, for instance, will reduce separation rates and increase enlistments in the ADF. Career opportunities in the civilian sector will influence defence recruiting by lowering the number of those interested in a defence career and see separations become higher. However, Government policy has also been impacting upon defence in the form of budget cuts, in an attempt to reduce personnel expenditure the ADF has been being ‘down-sized’ (Shepard, 1999).

Of the three ADF branches, the Navy has seen a steady increase in representation by female personnel. In 1990 there were 12.3 per cent women and in 1998 there were 15.2 per cent women in the total force. In 2003-04 the percentage of women in Navy had increased to 16.8 percent. The Navy reported more women enlisting than separating in six out of the nine years mentioned here (Defence Annual Report, 2003-04; Shephard, 1999: 87-94).

In the Army the proportion of women making up total strength is the lowest of the three Branches, with only 8.5 per cent in 1990 and 10.8 per cent in 1998. By 2003-04 the proportion of women in Army had reduced to 10 per cent. The Army saw women’s enlistments outweighing separations in only four out of nine years (Defence Annual Report, 2003-04; Shephard, 1999: 87-94).
In the Air Force in 1990 females represented 14.8 per cent of total strength, rising to 16.0 per cent in 1998 after a pattern of extreme fluctuations over the nine years. 2003-04 saw the percentage of women falling back to the early 1990’s proportions with 14.9 per cent of women making up the total strength of the service (Defence Annual Report, 2003-04; Shephard, 1999: 87-94).

**Why Women Leave the ADF**

The Burton report found that most members of the ADF who are considering leaving had not one but several interrelated reasons for leaving (Burton, 1996: 186). These were: limited career prospects; family commitments and responsibilities; and male attitudes toward women’s integration. Burton specifically emphasises that women leave the forces due to their limited career prospects as well as because of family commitments and responsibilities. Burton found that if women’s career prospects were better many would adapt to the extra demands that being in the ADF places on family life (Burton, 1996: 195). Many of the limited career prospects cited in Burton’s report correlate with my own findings.

**Dual Service and Career Frustration**

In the ADF a dual service couple must nominate one person’s career to take precedence over the other (Burton, 1996). Whilst the women I spoke to were dissatisfied with the trend of women choosing to put their own careers behind the careers of their husbands, most of the women I spoke to had worked out arrangements in their partnership that for now suited them. Most women identified this trend as discriminatory toward women. Only two of the women I spoke to did not have an issue with making their husband’s career a priority over their own.

**Marion (Air Force Officer):** *They like you to choose a career … and they want to know which one is the preference. So as a couple you work out whose career is a preference. So they will post that person and then do their utmost to get the other person a job that they want. My husband is also in the RAAF and we have put down that his career comes first, we are both at*
and there are ____ people here so there are heaps of jobs. But if it came down to it I would put his career first and I would go wherever. I would take a general officer job to be with him.

**Michele (Army Officer):** It is interesting, if we had gotten married, his career would have come before mine, and I guess I would have been reasonably ok about that. I wasn’t overly ambitious and I knew that my career in the army would only go a certain level where he would have more potential. In that situation it makes sense.

Sometimes, as Anita points out, it is a multi-faceted decision for a woman to leave the Defence Force. The decision may be based on difficulties faced, such as the career priority rule, but women may also feel resigned to a situation where she feels that her career prospects in defence are limited, regardless of her commitment. The issues are complicated further by women having primary responsibility for children and other dependants.

**Anita (Defence Civilian):** I work with a lot of spouses, who are former members, who did leave because of that [being a dual service couple]. It is as though they can’t – and they have said it to me, there are two families and they can only be with one, and they recognise that perhaps they were less committed, or that they wanted to be a primary care giver, and they also mention that he will get higher than she ever will. So they assess that ceiling. Because one of them has to take precedence over the other, and it’s the guys who get the postings and stuff.

It must be remembered that not all personnel in Defence nominate the male career for priority. The influence of changing gender roles in society also impact on Defence Force personnel:

**Marion (Air Force Officer):** It doesn’t have to be the guy’s career that gets chosen, ‘cause there are a few couples that have actually chosen the woman’s career. In one case she is an engineer and he is an admin. officer so she had more chances at getting to a higher rank with more pay and that sort of thing.
She was offered a posting in the _____ and he couldn’t get a posting so he took leave without pay for about 4 years and followed her. He stayed at home with the kids.

**Michele (Army Officer):** I have seen relationships where they must talk about it and they see what the woman does, maybe a female doctor, and they decide to prioritise the woman’s career. The man, in this situation, is obviously secure enough to realise that his wife is going to have opportunities that he is not going to have but generally the male career is prioritised I think. It’s just that it is set up like that, its fine to get married but these are the sacrifices you need to make.

The career priority rule is ‘indirectly discriminatory’, it leads to more women’s than men’s careers being disadvantaged. Women’s careers and the management of women’s careers in Defence are therefore ‘… regarded as subordinate to another member’s career and its management’ (Burton, 1996: 103).

**Career Advisors**

My interview data found that career advisors did not always take women’s careers as seriously as women would like. Some women were very proactive about their own careers and worked in unison with career advisors but many felt that their preferences and promotional opportunities were ignored. Career advisors are extremely important when women are attempting to achieve roles and positions that lead them to promotion. The comment below reflects how several of the women felt about the roles of career advisors:

**Deb (Navy Officer):** I've done my studies now and I've said I want to stay in a health related job. My career advisor? I said I wanted to stay in health and he offered me a staff officer job, you know a totally non-related health position, so that gets a bit disappointing.

One woman in Burton’s report stated that career advisors believe that ‘… the wife’s place is beside her husband, with her children’ (Burton, 1996: 104). The attitudes
and practices of career advisors are not perceived by all women as being directed toward removing gender bias.

Isobel did not feel at the whim of career advisors and has always managed to be proactive in what opportunities she wants to put herself forward for. Her comments reflect those of other women who felt that advocating for themselves had worked positively in their careers:

**Isobel (Air Force Officer):** You have to look out for opportunities and know what you want and be prepared to be an advocate for yourself … to have the confidence to do that. Sometimes personnel leave it to others and you feel at the whim, I think a lot of people aren’t good at enunciating their strengths; they are better at admitting to their weaknesses. I think it is an Australian characteristic. I think too it is a matter of being a realist and actually knowing what your limitations are as well and not chipping yourself about things that you can’t do.

**The Ceiling on Promotion**

Promotion was a contentious subject for the women with some women stating adamantly that if they were not promoted they would definitely leave the ADF. One woman had already decided to leave if she was not offered a command position in the next round of promotions:

**Chris (Army Officer):** I feel at a crossroad in life because I can’t commit the time and effort to make myself marketable for higher promotion. I don’t think I am at my ceiling but I think it is unlikely that I will get a command position soon which means I won’t get promoted. It is not my capability that limits me but my time availability and effort needed (it’s because I have a son). I would need to command a ________ unit – such is the high-flyer position needed [for the next level of promotion].

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15 This issue will be canvassed in more detail in section titled ‘combat exclusions’
Yvonne also felt that having a child was a factor that would reduce her chances of promotion.

**Yvonne (Navy Officer):** One of the fears I have is that, as a mother now, will I be taken seriously in the services? I’ve done all the right things to be promoted, sea time, extra study, well reported, I’ve done a good job. I’m in the running so it will be a good test.

**Leadership Roles**

Some women feared that if women remained in subordinate positions it would become increasingly difficult for women to find a place in leadership roles. These women were aware of the small numbers of women in the ADF who had achieved high rank but expressed concerns that there are so few. Women feel that women work harder for less reward. Some also expressed concern that leadership and seniority can make women too visible, placing an additional strain on them in their roles that can lead to burnout and eventual resignation:

**Emily (Army Officer):** I went to the Defence Women’s Network … they do monthly keynote lectures or topics that they discuss and they had one about mentoring and women networking … How women should copy what men have done and look up to women in higher positions and use them as your mentors. They had this panel of women up there, I think 10 women up the front and these were all Brigadier equivalents in the public service. There were also military members and there was one military woman Air Commodore Julie Hammer and she is the commandant of ADFA and that was it! Just one! All the rest were high up in the public service. I mean straight away that’s blatantly obvious. So, ok, if you want to get to those levels in Defence you have to go through public service because they only have one woman that high up and she hasn’t been that long promoted. It’s going to take time to get women to those levels but in Army the highest we have ever got is full Colonel and she got out. All I know is that I went to this thing and straight away you can see they haven’t managed to get any women in the military to high levels. It’s frustrating. It’s a signal to everyone present, ‘yeah we’ve been quite
Lynn believes that people in the military who are responsible for promotions, do not promote women because of gender bias. She says they don’t believe women can adequately perform leadership roles at a higher rank but won’t admit this:

**Lynn (Army Non-Commissioned Officer):** I’ve just seen the appointment list for the senior Officers and there were only two female Officers there – and I knew them when they were young lieutenants and they are finally making it up to that Colonel/Brigadier level, and that’s taken them a long time, its taken them 20 years to get there. But it’s like anything I suppose, the corporate world is exactly the same, to have women high fliers, it seems to be the exception and not the rule, and Defence is the same. I reckon men need to have the courage, the balls, to just say: ‘Well you are a woman and I don’t think you can do the job’ instead of … using all the other excuses under the sun.

Added to the frustration of seeing so few women in the higher ranks is the belief that women are capable of positions in leadership. Holly believes that – given the opportunity – women in the military would exhibit more potential than they are currently being permitted to have:

**Holly (Army Officer):** I believe women's potential is absolutely more so than is granted to them. Women only have as much potential as they are allowed to have. Given the opportunity, women would expand in their roles and increase their potential.

Lesley believes that whilst it is a possibility that a woman may prove better in a role than a man, women do not command the respect that men do:

**Lesley (Army Officer):** I think we need to come a long way into the future before a female would have the respect from everyone else in the Defence Force to be able to be running things. From a strategic point of view a
female might be better than a lot of the males but I just don’t think they would have the respect to do it. I think it’s a long, long, way off.

There was an overall feeling amongst the participants that women need to prove themselves in their roles, precisely because they are women. Erin feels that men are granted legitimacy in their roles simply because they have been chosen for the role and wear the rank:

**Erin (Army Officer):** I feel that military men don’t have to try the same way women do, don’t have to say anything because they look the part. They are big strong army guys and just look like leaders, so they are accepted. I believe that within the selection process for leadership – 80 per cent of it is based on what a person looks like. If you look the part you will get the part.

Melissa echoes these sentiments saying that women must first establish credibility in a role whereas males automatically carry that credibility:

**Melissa (Army Officer):** If you just throw us in an environment that we haven’t been able to establish our credibility, then no we are not [good leaders] and Defence is full of that. If you get sent to a position you have to establish your credibility as a female. In the first instance the males most of the time can get posted anywhere and they’ve already got the rank they’ve already got the credibility.

**The Nursing Corps**

Women in the Nursing Corps have a particularly difficult time being promoted and gaining respect and equality in their positions. None of the nurses I spoke to were considering leaving Defence. All were interested, though, in endeavouring to develop innovative ways to expand their careers regardless of the discrimination they feel the Nursing Corps faces. All identified being in the Nursing Corps as the biggest barrier toward career progression. This was seen primarily as a typical response toward a Corps that was dominated by female personnel, and therefore not granted the respect or importance that it is worthy of. For some nurses in Defence
the lack of career prospects faced could well contribute toward attrition. Holly identifies the attitudes that prevail about the nursing corps as ‘misogynist’:

**Holly (Army Officer):** Being in the Nursing Corps is my biggest career barrier ... I would rather be seen as an officer who can do anything. Career options in the Corps are restrictive due to Defence mentality about the Corps – nurses are always at the bottom of consideration. This occurs because of misogynist people and their values – they devalue the military nurse. And really - who do they want looking after them? A civilian or military nurse?

Jo sees the barriers to the Nursing Corps as closing off promotion, education, and denying women the flexibility of extending their careers into other operational areas of the ADF:

**Jo (Army Officer):** I think the barriers have been for my Corps generally. The Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps started off its history in the Boer War and from there – well, it wasn’t until the 40’s that army nurses actually became Officers ... They were given the respect of being an Officer but they were not actually Officers. The main barrier that I have in my career is that no one in my Corps ever goes and does the kind of courses that would allow them to work outside of their core area. We are employed for our expertise as professional nurses. The reality is that the majority of us will after a time move out of that clinical setting and into a headquarters area and we are not adequately educated to do those tasks easily. What has happened for army nurses is they would maybe do a Direct Entry Officers Course but that could maybe be long after they had first joined. They wouldn’t be panelled to do any staff courses. No nurse at this time has been panelled to go to Command and Staff College to do the twelve month course which I think is essential ... So I have been arguing for a long time that nurses in my Corps get to go and have those opportunities because we are disadvantaged by not having them, we are being asked to go and do all these jobs without the background training to allow us to do them, and we survive, but we could do better with the training.
Relationships

My data found that women were managing long distance relationships because they could not get postings with their partners. Conducting a long distance relationship becomes tiring, I was told, and options to be together often result in women taking jobs with less responsibility and prestige than they would prefer. Below, Jade explains that it was conducting a long distance relationship that led to her decision to leave the ADF:

**Jade (Army Officer):** *The main reason I decided to leave was to move to ________ to be with my partner and get some stability. I couldn’t get that in the ADF and because of the specialization and once I had made that decision things got even busier at the head quarters that I was posted to and it was the most frustrating six months!*

Yvonne stated adamantly that she would not live apart from her husband again (especially now as they have a young child):

**Yvonne (Navy Officer):** *I wouldn’t do a long distance relationship again, maybe for a few months if my partner had to go off and do a job somewhere, but not for any longer, I would rather quit and go with him [laughs]. I would not consider going back to sea now that I’ve had my child. I wouldn’t necessarily have to in my branch; I have already ticked the boxes that I need to. I’ve done my operational charge posting and in fact it would be quite difficult to go back to sea because there are so few sea postings. From my perspective I wouldn’t do it and if I was forced to I would get out of the services.***

Emily feels intense frustration in having to juggle her family with her career in the Army. She chose to take a position that would reunite her with her family and this has resulted in her missing opportunities for promotion. She feels that the missed opportunity is discrimination against her specifically because she chose her family
and not the ADF. She identifies this as the overall reason why she is planning to leave the military in the future:

**Emily (Army Officer):** When you think about it, there are a lot of women who uproot themselves from their career to follow their husband around but the flip side of that doesn’t seem to be the norm. I’m happy to settle ... I’d love to settle here but it discounts any further career as far as the army goes, the army is so frustrating at times. I said I would like to come back to [to be with my family] and they said ‘ok, but you have to offer restrictive service’. I realise that by relinquishing my ... position I will not be as competitive ... You know I put my family before service needs. So they hold that against me. I’m frustrated, it pisses me off. So these are the things that make you bitter and burns you up and that’s why, and I may have sounded selfish at the start when I said I’m only staying now while it is beneficial to me as far as maternity leave and job stability while I am still having a family. I still figure that I’ve been in for now and I would like to get something back from the [ADF] before I say It’s enough and It’s time to get another job.

Two lesbian women told me that the strain on homosexual relationships was particularly strong as they are not taken into account by Defence. Consequently no provisions are made to have couples stay together nor is the travel allowance extended to heterosexuals given to homosexual couples.

**Erin (Army Officer):** The ADF just ignores the partners of gay and lesbian personnel. There was a Bill put to parliament and the ADF agreed to recognise it but it was stopped by the government. And I would consider getting out based on this. The relationship issue, generally, is that the drifting around has impacted on every relationship I have had. And every partnership I have had has broken up with every posting, every move. Relationships are cut off before they can go on and blossom; it puts unnatural pressures on them.
One lesbian woman, Alice, an officer in the Army, who had recently left the ADF, told me that her lesbian partner and herself had a child together. The relationship was not recognised by Defence and neither was the family unit. Extra strain was placed on the family unit because of this lack of recognition. Neither partner could have the other listed on record as a defacto partner and only one of the women could have the child listed on record as a dependent. This situation meant that the couple was posted separately without regard for the welfare of the child or the relationship. Due to their ‘status’ they had no entitlement to allowances or reunion travel to compensate for the costs of maintaining two locations and needing to travel extensively to see one another. The effort to sustain a relationship in this manner and to care for a child, consequently, became too high for the couple, the relationship broke down and the birth mother of the child resigned from the Defence Force.

**Balancing a Defence Career and Children**

Women and men with children in Defence are struggling to maintain a commitment to their careers and their families simultaneously. Difficulty finding care for children, as a general rule, and when parents are posted overseas, or spend time in the field was reported as presenting a career hurdle that would impact on a woman’s decision to leave the ADF. Parents reported finding Day Care hard to find for the very young. Parents of high school age children did not want to disrupt their education by moving them around. Moving around presents several difficulties, the experience is often disruptive and postings can be out of alignment with family demands. Susan believes that there is little support for people in Defence who want to remain longer in postings to meet family demands.

**Susan (Air Force Other Ranks):** Time and time again you see your friends. They might be asking to stay at ______ for another year because their wife has a business or their children are in year 12 and the response is ‘we don’t care get out’. And all these people in these directorates have no idea what it is like for the average Joe Blows. The people at unit level should be supporting them more as well but it needs to be pushed up. People tend to accept it and say, ‘well that’s just how it is’, but I would say ‘well why is it like that?’
Some women want to settle down somewhere and many expected that they would feel this way eventually. Moving is disruptive and women believed that when they were young this was less so. However, after ten years plus, a desire to settle down can become very intense.

**Isobel (Air Force Officer):** Usually at about the 15 to 20 year mark ... when the kids go into high school, that’s when people think it is so important to get a solid education for their children and they can’t afford to be chopping and changing all the time between schools, and that’s when a lot of them will get out, both officer and other ranks, in those high school years ... It is a major issue for families.

Women’s careers often suffer because they take ‘time out’ to have children. This disrupts their progression and women feel penalized for this. Each year a serving member is issued a report that discusses their progression; selection committees review these reports and people are chosen on merit to be promoted and/or to receive command positions. Women who have taken time off to care for children are viewed as being less desirable for promotion and/or command positions because they have a gap in their careers. A service member in the ADF is expected to spend a specific amount of ‘time-in-rank’ before being promoted. The rule applies to both men and women yet it is women who mostly take extended leave to have children. The policy excludes more women than men from promotion, which may be viewed as being ‘indirectly discriminatory’ (Burton, 1996). The merit principle could be applied in these situations to reduce discriminatory practice against women. A woman who has had a break in service could then be promoted on the merit principle rather than upon the amount of time she has spent in service (Burton, 1996).

Some of the women interviewed for this study believe that the ‘time-in-rank’ rule is discriminatory and identify it as increasing rates of female attrition. Emily feels that the consequences of a break in service reduces a woman’s career potential:

**Emily (Army Officer):** I really think that that is the biggest thing that stops us reaching our potential. Women have children and you are going to have
to take time off. And therefore you aren’t available necessarily for postings. Say you have maternity leave, and some long service leave, and you take 6 or 9 months off out of a year of your time in the Defence Force, say you take leave without pay and wait till your child is a year or two years old before you come back in, so it’s time you’re not going to recover as far as career wise, and postings … You know your classmates have progressed and they have done Command and Staff College … well you’re two years behind the eight ball.

Melissa notes, from her experience of sitting on selection boards, that a gap in career does stand out detrimentally and that women are penalized for this.

**Melissa (Army Officer):** It is interesting to note, however, now that I’ve sat on selection boards for promotion, how it jumps out at you that there’s been a gap in a career. I don’t think they’ve come to grips with how to manage that yet, so that you don’t penalize women who have gone and had families. They interrupt their careers to have children and they are actually penalized for that. It’s not intentional but they don’t have reports for a couple of years, so when you’re looking at a female officer whose been out for a couple of years and your looking a male officer, her peer, and he has had continuous service? She’s down two of those annual reports that you get. So we need better ways to work around that so a woman is still competitive with her peers. There is that perception of a glass ceiling and we need to get better at managing that break in service for our female officers.

Isobel also believes that the ADF needs to find ways to help personnel who have children, not only women but men too. Isobel draws attention to an important issue, that childbearing is important to society:

**Isobel (Air Force Officer):** They [women with children] do it tough, I think we’ve got to find more ways to help them and single fathers. And we’ve got families where both parents are in the military and they have to deploy. The average woman in society is trying to juggle a career and children as much as in the military – I think there are added pressures in the military but its not
as if it’s a unique sector of society where it’s difficult – it’s difficult right through our society for women progressing through a similar sphere. There isn’t recognition that childbearing is something that society values, and something we actually want people to do, and therefore we should welcome them back and help them get back on the career front because they have been off doing something good.

Having children would certainly impact on attrition rates amongst females (as it also would with males). Some navy women are reluctant to keep going to sea after having children. All of the women with children expressed some concerns about moving, deployments, and overseas separations when it came to caring for their children and/or their children’s education. Some women are reluctant to leave children or to move them too often.

Yvonne (Navy Officer): I don’t think it’s too much of a generalization to say that mothers would prefer to be with their children than away at sea. I knew of a couple of mothers who were at sea when I was on HMAS ________ and their children were being looked after by their father or the grandparents and they found it incredibly difficult and I believe that it packed them in. … Once children are part of the equation, how do you get someone to go back to sea if it’s not what they want to do? So you’ve got to account for that and no one can really answer that at the moment. The army has a whole different sorts of issues with that sort of thing with women in the field and women in combat.

On the other hand, many have been on overseas deployments and being a mother has not deterred them from taking postings:

Lesley (Army Officer): I got a call from Land Headquarters saying ‘we need a ________ in ________ next week can you go?’ My family was on standby to look after my daughter … obviously I was a single parent for a number of years so they were very supportive and close. If I was told I needed to go then yes, I would still go … If I had to go for three or four months I know that I have my parents and fiancé and a strong family unit so [my daughter] who is my primary person would be fine.
Lesley goes on to say that having a child isn’t the barrier so much as societal expectations and pressures that dictate how she should behave as a parent:

**Lesley (Army Officer)**: *Having a child is a personal barrier because I feel a responsibility to [my daughter] as well. But that’s a psychological thing, in that I have to weigh up, you know, the pressure of my family and civilian friends who think I am doing the wrong thing if I went away. But then there is what is going on in my own head and my personal desire to go and do what I have been trained to do. If my family all understood and were encouraging me it wouldn’t be such a big barrier. For me it’s not being a mother or being a female in the army, but it is insofar as it is not what my family and friends want me to do, so they are the barrier to me.*

Women in the military may feel pressured by societal expectations of them as women and as mothers. Women have been traditionally assigned roles in society that confine them to the domestic sphere and working in the public sphere in any role can make women who are also mothers feel as though they are defying their natural role. This may shape individual perceptions of their roles as mothers.

**Conclusion**

Burton’s research (1996) found that men in the military often expressed views that women’s roles in society should be in the community and family arenas and not in the military. The interview data from this study revealed that the masculine culture of the ADF places unnecessary burdens on women. Women feel that in order to succeed in their careers in the ADF they must outperform men just to be regarded as equal. Such an environment was described as ‘wearing women down’. Women expressed concerns that male attitudes were difficult to overcome. Even when women are successful in their careers this is interpreted negatively by some men as reverse discrimination in operation.

Cultural and societal influences directly affect women’s perception of their roles. (as Lesley’s confusion shows). The role of soldier and the role of mother are often seen
as ‘antithetical’ to one another (Segal, 1995). The perception of women within this culture presents a myriad of issues. This study revealed that women with children were particularly concerned that they were viewed as less able to perform well in their careers. When women take leave to have children their careers suffer. Yearly reports clearly show a gap in a woman’s career and she is not treated as being as competitive as colleagues who have no break in service. The current culture of the ADF does not value the need of some people in society to have children. Rather, this is experienced as a choice that ultimately leads to a dead-end in a person’s career.

Cultural expectations of women are changing in society as more women work in the public sphere. Policy on family-friendly work practices and family structures are changing to accommodate this. For example, Lesley’s family is supportive of her by taking care of her child while she serves her country. This shows a positive change beginning in Australian society, one where family structures are adapting to women in the work force: ‘[t]he greater the cultural acceptance of various family structures, the less everyone is expected to fit one pattern, and the less gender determines social roles’ (Segal, 1995: 770). As women take more of a role in the public realm, family structures change and so do gender expectations (Segal, 1995).

The Burton Report found that when women consider leaving the ADF they have several interrelated reasons (Burton, 1996). Limited career prospects was the most often cited reason for leaving: with family commitments and responsibilities; and male attitudes, impacting upon those prospects. Women in Burton’s study expressed the opinion that if career prospects were more favourable they would adapt to the extra demands that being in the ADF places on family life (Burton, 1996).

In the same study, Burton found that men leave the ADF for similar reasons as women. Lack of career progression; leadership and management issues; and deployments that impact upon relationships and family affect both men and women. The particular concerns that affected women were identified as: the career ‘priority rule’; the ‘time-in-rank’ criterion; difficulty in combining an enhanced career with family responsibilities; bias in job allocation by supervisors; the attitudes of males toward female members; and lack of preparation for new roles (Burton, 1996).
Five years later, the interviews for this study revealed that these issues continue to be a source of frustration for women in the ADF. They believed strongly that their prospects of receiving promotions and vital career advancement positions were limited. The ‘boys club’ is believed to deny women access to inner circles that are important points for career development.

Policy reform within Defence and positive initiatives to support gender integration are, nonetheless, improving the situation for women. The women I spoke to were inspired by supportive men, some of whom are in positions of authority. Leadership that supports integration was seen as necessary to enhance and facilitate women’s integration into the ADF.

Many of the issues that directly affect women’s integration can be addressed within the Defence Organisation by applying the equity principle: ‘Equitable, not “same” treatment is what the ADF is expected to aim for, under anti-discrimination laws and government policies’ (Burton, 1996: 3). To be fair, women’s specific circumstances need to be taken into account. Particularly for example in the treatment of maternity leave as it appears on annual reports. Military norms that perpetuate gender bias are clearly contrary to the equity principle as enunciated by military and government policy.
Chapter Five

Myths Under Siege: Masculinist Ideologies
Introduction

This chapter explores in detail three arguments that are currently portrayed as reasons why women cannot serve in combat roles. These arguments are not confined to excluding women from combat however; they also pertain to women being generally unsuitable for military employments.

The Chapter is divided into three sections: the first section, ‘The Myth of the Gendered Body: Female Inferiority’, explores the binary view that sees the male body as strong and useful in war and the female body as weak and ineffective in war. Military studies into size and strength focus on the ‘average’ bodies of males and females and do not consider that women and men do not regularly fit into averages. Some people surpass averages and some are below the average. The female body is seen as problematic in debates about women’s abilities in combat; that women menstruate and are able to become pregnant is seen as preventing their overall capacity.

Arguments about the gendered body fail to take into account technological changes that have revolutionised warfare and reduced the size of equipment and the difficulty of manoeuvring it. These arguments also fail to take into account the concept of ‘task allocation’, which is being widely canvassed by some military commentators both inside and outside the military. Task allocation, or ‘competency based employment’, refers to people being assigned roles based upon their attributes as required for the actual task, rather than according to generic requirements set out for all combat roles.

‘esprit de corps: The Myth of Male Bonding’ examines the argument that women in combat roles would upset male bonding and cohesion in previously all male units, and therefore undermine military effectiveness. The cohesion arguments assume that mixed-sex units do not bond as well as all male units. Further to this they claim that women do not bond as well as men. Research into cohesion as an issue suggests that task cohesion is a more reliable predictor of combat performance than is social cohesion. Social cohesion places the emphasis upon male bonding as a way of
ensuring military efficiency. Task cohesion on the other hand places emphasis upon individuals working together to achieve a common goal; and therefore military efficiency is ensured through the successful completion of an assignment.

The last argument to be considered in this chapter is the ‘protectionism’ argument. Protectionism refers to the protective instinct that males naturally feel toward women. There are several myths tied up in protectionism. One argument assumes that male instinct will undermine military effectiveness because men will protect women to the detriment of their missions. There is a contradiction evident in this theory: male instinct to protect colleagues on a battlefield extends to male colleagues also. Men are often rewarded with bravery medals for protecting one another. Yet the idea that a man would protect a female colleague is relegated to an entirely different arena, one where military effectiveness would suffer if men were to do so. Men do not have a monopoly on the protective instinct and women are often protective of others as well.

Another aspect to the myth of protectionism in practice is that women are supposedly protected by not being in combat roles on the frontline. But women who are in combat-support roles during war do not feel that their status as ‘non-combatants’ protects them from the hazards of war. Nor do they feel incapable of protecting themselves, their colleagues and nations.

**The Myth of the Gendered Body: Female Inferiority**

The military organisation values the attributes assigned to the male gender over traits that are considered feminine (Agostino, 1998b; Grey, 1998), and reveres the physical characteristic of strength that is traditionally associated with the male gender. (Grey, 1998). For women, and men, who do not have roles that require a great deal of physical strength, or who do not fit the stereotype of ‘macho’, the culture of the organisation can cause them to feel inferior (Burton, 1996; Grey, 1998). Lesley describes this experience and highlights that the importance placed on physical strength does not always match with the task at hand, that is, that not all military employments demand brute strength for the required task to be achieved. Warfare is changing, it has become technology driven and largely electronic:
Lesley (Army Officer): I struggle because I hate running. One of the things that has always annoyed me is that a lot of people hold that [running] in the highest regard about how good you are in your job. If you can run fast then you must be really good at what you do, as opposed to being able to do a job properly. A lot people will hold the physical side of it as most important. And it is an important element, but it is a different warfare today where we have trucks and tanks to get us places. There is more electronic warfare as opposed to your conventional troops on the ground. I don't think it is as important as it used to be; there are other methods of getting us around the battlefield.

Not all military personnel are required for combat roles, and not all combat roles need a high level of physical strength. Many men in the military do not have the physical requirements that would enable them to serve in all combat roles such as infantry (Barry, 1993; Goldstein, 2001), however, this does not prevent them from being viewed as legitimate members of the military in the eyes of their colleagues or organisationally. However, the size, height, and strength of women renders them as ‘not-legitimate’ in the eyes of their colleagues and organisationally (Burton, 1996; Grey, 1998; Youngman, 2000).

Evidence suggests that some female bodies can be used effectively in a combat environment, (De Pauw 1998; Kennedy-Pipe, 2000; Ardener et al, 1987; Saywell, 1985, Segal, 1995). But the size and strength of an average female body is, for opponents to women in combat, a valid reason to restrict women from combat roles (Chapman, 1999; Hancock, 1993; Nemitschenko, 2001; Peach, 1996; Smith, 2000a). As has been shown in this thesis, women’s bodies have been used in wars successfully. Yet arguments about size, weight, and relative strength continue to be considered valid reasons to exclude women from participation in combat.

It has also been shown previously in the chapter ‘Threads into the Labyrinth’ that exclusions placed on women’s service confine their career progression (Chapman, 1999; Hancock, 2000; Nemitschenko, 2001).
This thesis has previously revealed that opponents to women’s participation in the public sphere are no longer able to rely on arguments that pertain to women’s deficiencies in women’s minds as a basis for excluding them from the public sphere. In education and in the workforce, many women have shown that their minds are parallel with men’s. Having lost hope of gendering the female mind as substandard opponents are now focusing on women’s bodies as inherently inferior to men’s. These so-called ‘inferior bodies’ have become an excuse for excluding women from participation in combat roles, with the effect that women are denied full citizenship rights. It is now vital that the female body is also reclaimed from this inferior status.

We have to assert our bodily reality, make our bodies visible, invest them with new value … it is hazardous of course, because our bodies are a key site of our stigmatisation and exploitation. There are understandable reasons why so many of us try to ‘pass’ for something we are not. But this new sense we have, as subordinated groups, of fully inhabiting bodies of which we are no longer ashamed can be the source of both new knowledge and new politics (Cockburn, 1991: 212).

The female body has been constructed in society as ‘less-than’, and as inferior to, the male body (Greer, 1999). Reclaiming the female body as a vehicle of power in the world is vital (Cockburn, 1991).

This section explores debates about women’s physical capacity to perform in combat employments. Women’s size, height, and strength in comparison to men’s, is less on average. In hand-to-hand combat a great deal of physical strength is required (Barry, 1993). However, in today’s modern warfare it is questioned whether all combat employments require this physical capacity (Chapman, 1999; Hancock, 2000; Peach, 1996).

Many combat roles require aptitudes that many women do possess, such as stamina, bravery, intelligence, strategy, discipline, and technological skills (Peach, 1996). Technology has changed the face of warfare and weapons are lighter and smaller. They do not all necessitate great feats of physical strength in order to be operated. (Ehrenreich, 1997).
Regardless of these technological changes, women’s physical bodies are seen, at the present time, as unable to perform combat employments – even ones that do not entail the use of large, tall, beefy, bodies. It may be that task allocation – where the level of strength required for specific tasks are matched will see women being employed in combat roles. Task allocation is based on the performance needed to complete the task rather than on gendered and generic standards. Therefore, ‘… the ADF may be best served by ensuring a more sophisticated system of selection and employment of members wishing to serve in combat … This will enable competency-based employment of all those seeking to work in combat operations, irrespective of gender’ (Chapman, 1999: 27 & 28).

The Body

Of all of the opponents to women in combat, van Creveld is perhaps most well known; he is certainly one of the most ‘outspoken’ (Chapman, 1999: 26). My own exploration of his work began with intrigue and ended with disappointment. Indeed his attempts at maintaining the myth of female physical inferiority are a reiteration of the usual size, strength, and height differences between men and women. van Creveld is unable to extend his analysis beyond the phallic ‘Size is Everything’ argument. His sociological examination into ‘big is better’ in an earlier paper extends to men doing hard physical labour whilst women potter about ‘…doing light work in or around the home…’ (van Creveld, 2000: 829), something he believes to be ‘readily understandable’. An example he uses to support this thesis is that the road crew, working outside his house as he writes, includes no women, this is perhaps because, he goes on to say, ‘…the hands of women are more delicate than those of men…’ (van Creveld, 2000: 829). van Creveld’s Professorship has obviously not led him to study labour in a global context as he demonstrates no awareness of the global and gendered division of labour.

van Creveld has a dated and over-imaginative view of women’s physical anatomy. Particularly so, is his focus on the reproductive system. His example of women’s morphological characteristics that make them ill-adapted to violence describes: thinner skulls; lighter bone ridges; weaker jaw bones; and he also includes, ‘…large, pendulous breasts that impede movement and require special attention’ (van
Van Creveld is not alone in holding this concern: the British army’s preoccupation with a regulation brassiere that would be ‘comfortable as well as attractive’ is also testament to this weighty and cumbersome problem of women. Van Creveld also holds that after childbirth a woman’s breasts will ‘...almost certainly grow...’ (van Creveld, 2000: 833), and her pelvic structure will become more noticeable. The potential harm to women’s reproductive capacity is viewed by van Creveld as somehow different to the risk of injury, ongoing physical disability or death faced by all soldiers. (van Creveld, 2000: 834) The manner in which van Creveld articulates some of the examples he provides of women’s health is nothing short of hilarious. He cites women losing their menstrual periods for months during basic training (van Creveld, 2000: 834), a connection between women competing in sport and anorexia and bulimia (van Creveld, 2000: 835), and his own experience of one woman who lost her ovaries because of trying to keep up during a forced march in the US army (though he omits explanation as to how this came to happen). In the field, he warns, the lack of ‘creature comforts’ for women invites ‘disease of the urinary tract’ and sterility (van Creveld, 2000: 836).

**Menstruation**

Many of the debates against women in combat contain dubious double standards. Barry (1993) asserts that women need to be more ‘careful’ than males in relation to personal hygiene. The suitability of women for roles in combat is apparently complicated by the menstrual period: the lack of hygiene may render women incapable of a combat role. Women interviewed for this research paper believe that in most respects men also need to worry about their personal hygiene, with one woman laughing at this discussion and saying:

**Erin (Army Officer):** I’ve always thought that was ridiculous, ‘cause it’s the other way around!

Barry points out that female non-combatants have dealt with menstruating bodies in the field for many years and that there is ‘...little evidence that menstruation has more than a marginal effect on ... performance’ (Barry, 1993: 16). Women in partisan and guerrilla warfare have always managed.
Menstruation can be inconvenient, unpleasant, painful, and/or embarrassing for a woman at any given time. This however, does not prevent women living full and productive lives. Menstruation is not an ‘unusual condition’ among women nor is it a ‘disease’. It is unusual for a woman not to bleed every month and most women, unless ill with a condition or disease, manage to live normally despite their menstrual cycles. Most manage discreetly and competently, without fuss or a great deal of logistical support. Women in combat environments, no doubt, will also manage. Contrary to van Creveld’s (2000) concerns, only one woman in this research study thought that menstruation could restrict women participating in a combat role.

Michele, a nurse in the army, is offended by the attention female hygiene receives in the military. She believes that women are quite capable of maintaining good hygiene, and with a little privacy, manage very well in the field:

**Michele (Army Officer):** There is this argument in the army that if women are out in the field for any period of time, women have to be taken back in to have a shower every few days, and I find that really offensive … I think in the field you can look after your hygiene, and women probably do a better job than men. That really annoys me to say that I am dirty just because I am a woman, and really this just doesn’t make sense. The army has wet ones and stuff, its just not that hard to keep clean out in the field, and if you are changing tampons or pads or whatever you just need a small amount of privacy and you can do it. You could also suspend menstruation if you want to. It can happen that the period stops when the body is stressed. That won’t happen for all women. But you can also take contraceptives and other things.

Holly found ways of maintaining personal hygiene when she was on an overseas deployment. Holly agreed with what Erin said above, male hygiene is more of an issue than women’s:

**Holly (Army Officer):** There was no water in ________, I had to have birdbaths in my helmet. As long as hygiene is kept up to a point its not an
issue ... everyone smells in the field and men are foul and disgusting – some on purpose, just to get a reaction.

The Physical Body

A more compelling argument against women participating in close range armed combat is related to women’s size, height, and relative strength compared to men’s (Chapman, 1999; Nemitschenko, 2001; Smith, 2000a; Hancock, 1993; Peach, 1996). Women’s comparative size difference is taken into account especially in relation to infantry positions where ground and hand-to-hand combat is expected (Chapman, 1999; Barry, 1993; Goldstein, 2001). In this scenario it is necessary for a soldier to travel distances on foot whilst carrying heavy equipment, to fight in physically difficult conditions, and to be able to lift and carry wounded colleagues away from further harm. ‘General physical fitness, which consists of a combination of strength, endurance, balance, speed, agility and motor power, is an essential criteria for any combat soldier’ (Barry, 1993: 16).

Opponents to women in combat tend to focus upon physical strength and size differences between men and women (see Mitchell, 1998; Van Creveld, 2000 & 2001). A case in point is Azar Gat (2000), who points out that men are on average ‘considerably stronger’ than women and that the physical strength differences between men and women derive from men being bigger, taller, and heavier than women. In muscle and bone mass he notes that men are even ‘bigger still’. He promotes in men’s favour their being ten percent faster than women, having advantages in aerobic capacity, carrying twelve percent less body fat, and with being doubly as strong as women (which according to the research of others is a very high ratio, see Hancock (2000) who cites men as being thirty percent stronger as opposed to fifty percent). Male superiority Gat claims is ‘...obvious and generally controversy-free...’ (Gat, 2000: 21). Size difference between the sexes is relatively controversy free in relation to averages. Gat is working with averages and he concedes that some women (outside of averages) are stronger or as strong as some men (Gat, 2000: 22). However, using size and strength differences between men and women in averages, as a measure of ability and capacity to perform well as combat
soldiers, is not controversy-free (Chapman, 1999; Hancock, 2000; Segal, 1995; Smith, 2000a).

Isobel notes the discrepancy between the use of averages in physiology measurement and the skills that individuals need to perform specific tasks:

**Isobel (Air Force Officer):** Measuring the physiological capacity of the genders is all on average, what you have got to do is say, ‘well that’s fine but these are the skills that I need, and anyone who can meet those skills should be allowed to do this role, and I shouldn’t arbitrarily exclude one group because perhaps a larger proportion of them can’t do that’.

Proponents for women in combat do not lightly brush over size and strength differences (see Chapman, 1999, Hancock, 1993, 2000; Nemitschenko, 2001, Peach, 1996). But they question exactly how important body size, height, and strength is in relation to combat tasks. Studies on physiology show that on average women have smaller heart size, lung capacity, body size and strength in comparison to many men and in many physical tasks have to operate at a level closer to their maximum, therefore reaching exhaustion sooner (see Barry, 1993: 16). Of course the studies that Barry cites work on averages only. Studies that work with averages only do not take individual capabilities and levels of fitness into account. An average will not hinder the performance of an extremely fit, strong, woman with great stamina and resistance to fatigue.

Size alone does not hinder a woman’s performance sufficiently for combat exclusions to continue. An example of this was given by a guest speaker who came and spoke in an annual lecture at ADFA, Isobel tells this story below:

**Isobel (Air Force Officer):** There is an annual lecture at ADFA when people come and speak to the cadets. Last year the most fantastic woman, by the name of Dr Jane Hall, spoke. She has for some years been the leader of Australia’s world Eco Challenge Team. She’s slim, wiry, unbelievably fit. It’s a five day challenge where they do white water rafting etc, she has been doing this for about 10 years. She is about 5’6, very slim, and strong as an
ox...And she talked about the value of diversity of skills in a team; and capitalising on the strengths of the team members; about leadership; and situations of physical and mental endurance. She is 46. I think that is the sort of approach we need in Defence where we say 'ok diversity is good'. But, sorry, what got me onto this: she would occasionally carry two packs to give one of the men a break. So, even if you are a woman you can be strong, you don’t have to be a big boy to be strong. But you also can manage diversity and capitalise on it.

The physical characteristics of size, height, and strength are only one factor here. Intelligence is perhaps more important on today’s battlefield. Technology has changed the nature of war. Tasks that once took one or several brawny men to accomplish can now be achieved at the push of a button. Weaponry is smaller, lighter, and has been streamlined. Regardless of advances in technology, however, militaries generally design equipment for the average male to use and women are on this crucial point disadvantaged. Equipment is seen to disadvantage and injure women due to its inappropriate design and its unnecessary size and weight.

Women in the ADF claim that equipment lets them down. Packs for instance are designed for the body shape and size of men. Women’s bodies are stronger around the hip than men’s and it would be more ergonomic for women’s packs to sit on the hip and take the weight rather than have the shoulders take the weight. Sleeping bags are another point of contention with women pointing out that military sleeping bags weigh double that of the streamlined equipment designed for activities such as mountain climbing. It is not being suggested that women as soldiers should carry less that male soldiers, but that women could carry packs that are designed to suit their bodies more appropriately and equipment that is lighter in weight. Injury associated with military equipment is a well-known occurrence and it happens to men as well as to women. Women have told me that ergonomic-based changes in equipment would reduce the incidence of injury in both genders in training and in operations, with the added benefit of reducing costs associated with people being away from work and medical bills. Many said that outdated equipment, were injuring men’s as well as women’s bodies:
**Veronica (Army Officer):** The Army still has really heavy equipment – in rock climbing everything is light. I think our infantry should go as light as possible. More could be done on this aspect, it affects the men as well.

**Jade (Army Officer):** Yep, there are certain things that I don’t think women could do – I had trouble carrying everything I had to carry in ________. I weighed 57 kilos when I went to _______ and all my gear all up weighed 60 kilo’s. So I was carrying my own body weight and I couldn’t stand up by myself I had to get help. I didn’t have to carry it very far, not like the infantry guys who would be out 2 weeks carrying 60 kilos which is just insane. In the end it doesn’t just come down to the men but what we are expecting them to carry. The number of backs that have been done over in ________ because of the strain we are putting on them is incredible. So, we need to do more to develop equipment and how we support our troops in the field rather than keeping on getting them to carry it. We carry a ridiculous amount.

**The Average Man and Woman**

*The January 26, 1996 report by the US Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine at Natick, Mass., was led by senior analyst Everett Harman who concluded that ‘you don’t need testosterone to get strong’. A similar study completed in December 1995 by the British Ministry of Defense, decided that ‘by using methods of physical training, women can be built up to the same levels of physical fitness as men of the same size and build’. The question is not, then, changing the nature of women, but changing the nature of the military culture in which they attempt to excel (Brower, 1996: 6 & 7).*

On average, men have greater strength than women, especially in the upper body region (Barry, 1993; Segal, 1995; Smith, 2000a). I stress on average because it is averages that are emphasised within debates that concern women’s physical appropriateness for combat roles. However, when it comes to combat roles, averages don’t really count. Strategically what does count, in any specific combat role, is the capability of a soldier to achieve any given task. Therefore, if a specific combat role should require enhanced upper body strength to perform tasks associated with that
role, then only those with that desired strength should probably fulfil the role (Segal, 1995). This framework of task allocation is perhaps a common sense approach and will be addressed later within this section.

Some women, as demonstrated in the above quotation (Brower, 1996) can be physically built up through the proper training to become excellent combat soldiers. Goldstein provides examples of women’s physical strengths, particularly stressing that women have overall much stronger constitutions than men. Women live longer than men; are more resistant to disease and illness; and are more resilient to fatigue and famine. A rather apt illustration offered by Goldstein is of African women who can be observed, on a daily basis, carrying large and heavy loads great distances (Goldstein, 2001: 161), possibly just as heavy a load and as long a distance as is expected of an infantry troop member. In Western cultures the conditioning of the sexes is almost opposite of what we see happening in these African cultures. In many cultures social influence demands that men become ‘big and strong’ and that girls stay ‘thin and pretty’ (Goldstein, 2001: 162). Big, strong, physically competent women are most often ridiculed in society for defying the bounds of femininity, isolated, and frequently harassed. The body can be adapted but the social price is usually a high one (Greer, 1999).

A large physique and dominant physical strength is only one factor in combat. There are many skills required that are just as important such as, ‘bravery, intelligence, and technical skills...’ (Peach, 1996: 168). If physical strength and size were of the utmost importance in wars then the side with the biggest participants would win. But, as Goldstein stresses, this is not the case. America, for instance, lost the war in Vietnam to an army that was by far smaller, shorter, and less physically strong than the American soldier (Goldstein, 2001: 165). Other factors besides the physicality of soldiers come into play that will determine casualty rates and success in battle. ‘Strategy, discipline, fighting spirit, accurate intelligence, and (especially) the quality of weaponry, [are vital] in determining the outcome of battles...’ (Goldstein, 2001: 165).

The nature of combat roles is changing and it is the ‘ability’ to do the task at hand that is required of soldiers serving in combat. Some tasks, those that require a large
size and a great deal of strength, can be carried out by those that fit these criteria. While other tasks can be carried out by those who qualify for them. ‘Ability to do the job, rather than gender, may, therefore, be more relevant criterion for job selection’ (Nemitschenko, 2001: 37). For some combat roles, physical strength can be measured against the task. For others it may simply be a change in equipment design that is needed:

**Isobel (Air Force Officer):** Another example in the Air Force – we all know that the average woman is shorter than the average man, the average seat in any aircraft is designed around the average percentile man, which means that a height restriction is applied as to who can and can’t be aircrew. You are going to debar a lot more women than you are men. So you really need to start thinking about designing weapon platforms, seats of aircraft, so that they can accommodate average women as well as average man. So you are not going to debar very talented women for no more reason than they are five foot. I actually had to fight for an exemption for one of my troops to get her approved as aircrew, and we argued, and got approved because of all her other skills.

**Technology and the Smaller, Lighter Approach**

Whether or not military policy adheres to the belief that women are not genetically strong enough to engage in combat, modern munitions are highly sophisticated and no longer demand brute strength as an operational requirement. Barbara Ehrenreich (1997) claims that modern munitions are ‘de-gendering’ wars. Ehrenreich discusses the implications of weapons so light that children can use them. No longer can those opposed to the participation of women in combat base their arguments on women’s inability to handle heavy munitions (Ehrenreich, 1997). Correspondingly Germaine Greer (1999) contends that restrictions placed on women regarding combat roles is unjustifiable based on the fact that modern munitions are light and do not require the exertion of force to handle them. Greer maintains that dexterity and promptness are attributes more suited to modern combat than are the attributes of physical prowess.
Technologically enhanced equipment is very light and are changing how wars are fought (Peach, 1996). ‘Technological advances have reduced the importance of physical strength. The relevant consideration may no longer be how strong women are but how strong they need to be to perform the tasks required of them’ (Nemitschenko, 2001: 37).

Michele (Army Officer): I don’t think we are talking about a lot of women but similarly you don’t have to be big and strong to be in a combat role especially nowadays with technology. And it’s really annoying when men do make those arguments, but no I don’t see why women shouldn’t be in a combat role for any reason.

Task Allocation

Changes in technology have changed the required physicality for many combat employment tasks, and strength is one of these (Chapman, 1999; Goldstein, 2001). Modern weapons have become smaller and lighter. ‘... contemporary researchers and commentators have noted the greater emphasis in modern warfare on technical skill than physical strength’ (Chapman, 1999: 26). Tasks involved in combat roles can be carried out by personnel of lesser strength than in the past.

It is in this light that many proponents for women’s expanding role into combat advocate for task allocation based on how much strength is required for the given task as opposed to a generic level of strength being required of all combat soldiers. This is a rationale that would apply to men as well as to women (Segal, 1995; Barry, 1993). As Chapman explains, ‘[w]hilst commanding a submarine requires a significant degree of physical stamina in resisting fatigue, it requires considerably less power and strength in lifting and carrying heavy loads, a task still synonymous with infantry operations’ (Chapman, 1999: 26 & 27).

Isobel believes that competency-based employment is fair and just in terms of women’s employment. She says that traditionally combat roles have been assigned to males, but if task competency was examined it is likely that many women could also perform these roles, not only those who are above average in size and weight:
**Isobel (Air Force Officer):** *I think what is just and fair is that those combat areas that are currently open to women do need to be looked at as competency based … the right people with the right attributes and skills can be assessed whether they be male or female because women may be able to do those roles as well … you also have to make sure that you look at the roles, and the jobs themselves, and the tasks involved (and I think this is a bit of a crux), so that they are not defined in historical terms that are subliminally couched that a male is going to do it. For example, where a task is designed with the average males physical abilities an assumption is made that you will only get the really beefy girls being able to do it.*

Isobel goes on to explain how tasks can be redefined in accordance with efficiency:

**Isobel (Air Force Officer):** *You have to examine each task and say how does that task need to be done, instead of dissembling the gun into four pieces is it possible to actually have a tool to move the gun instead of disassembling it and carrying it. Using different approaches to the task, so that you can actually redefine the task, so that more people can do it.*

‘Air Marshall David Evans … a former Chief of Staff of the Air Staff, says that “if … physical strength were the only constraint, the task of increasing the employment of women in the armed services would be eased considerably” (Barry, 1993: 15).

Comments like these made by knowledgeable and experienced males in the military show that the focus upon physical strength is in fact obscuring deeper issues. Barry cites Evans, but argues that Evans’ opinion is ‘simplistic’ and only relevant to the Navy or Air Force but not to the Army where higher levels of physical ability are required. Barry also dismisses Segal’s 1982 Olympic athlete comparisons where she shows that women athlete’s in the 1980’s were stronger than male Olympic athletes five decades prior (Barry, 1993: 15). Barry is not an irrational opponent to women in combat, his research into women in the ADF is thorough and balanced, but he believes women should only be used in a national emergency. But he does accept evidence that proves that there are some combat roles that women could or can
perform. His recommendation is for the establishment of ‘gender neutral employment criteria’ for specific roles where only those who meet the criteria are possible candidates for the role, regardless of gender (Barry, 1993: 16).

‘Since the early 1980’s, military personnel and others have suggested that combat roles be assigned on the basis of the physical strength required to perform them rather than exclusively on the basis of gender’ (Peach, 1996: 168).

**Conclusion**

Combat exclusions combined with negative attitudes towards women, incorrect assumptions about their capabilities and behaviours that actively thwart women’s progress are discriminatory and can ultimately lead to female attrition. Further to this, a failure to look into performance based assignments demonstrates that it is gender ideology rather than effective operations that is dominating military focus when it comes to physical strength, combat assignments, and women (Peach, 1996). Generic standards of physical strength for combat roles are indirectly discriminatory. If the standards applied for each specific task are not ‘job-related’ and therefore make one group of potential workers in that role unable to meet the standard then the standard is unfair (Burton, 1996). Developing individual competencies for all tasks and setting realistic standards is fair and just.

Again it must be stressed that the ADF would not be training all women to serve in combat roles that require high levels of physical strength if combat exclusions based on gender were removed and replaced by competency requirements. And physical strength should not be considered a liability for women in other roles. Yvonne makes some insightful and important points below:

**Yvonne (Navy Officer):** When I was at ADFA there were about 1000 guys and maybe 100 girls. Of those 100 girls, there was probably about 3 who could have physically have met the infantry or diver standard, and of those 3 only one could have coped mentally, or would have wanted to do it. I look at that and I think, ‘do we get caught up on these issues for the right reasons, and is the whole physical issue really that much of a big deal?’ … I think we
waste a lot of political effort and energy on that particular issue. Where I think it would be better spent is looking at women’s role in the military. We don’t say ‘this guy isn’t effective because he is not in the SAS’, so I think it’s a red herring that sidelines the whole issue of females in the services.

Yvonne believes that the issue of opening all combat roles for women concerns one percent of women in the ADF and would like to see more effort expended on issues that affect the other ninety-nine percent of women. There is a small percentage of women who would qualify for and seek the most gruelling combat employments, However, as Isobel explains, the ADF is a volunteer force and removing restrictions on women’s combat employability does not require all women to serve in the infantry. The double-bind is that all members of the ADF must be trained and ready for potential combat zones regardless of their employment roles. Isobel believes that all ADF personnel should be prepared to serve in combat:

**Isobel (Air Force Officer):** In Australia you don’t get conscripted and told where you will go, I don’t think they will put women into a combat role if they don’t want to. What I think is that any woman in the Australian Defence Force must be prepared to go into a combat area, in whatever role they have trained for. I don’t think we should allow any person be it a man or a woman to serve in the Australian Defence Force who says I’m not prepared to go into combat.

Cath questioned whether the process toward full integration will be managed fairly. She thinks there has already been some negative attitudes towards the notion of physical standards for certain roles. She also believes that minimum standards for the range of combat roles will be set so that most women can not reach them rather than setting the desirable standard for men and women and monitoring what happens from there:

**Cath (Army Officer):** There was an awful lot of good work done I think at Kapooka, and other places, about what women could and couldn’t do, and should and shouldn’t do. I think for a while there the males thought that the standards had been lowered to accommodate women whereas the standards
had been lowered to accommodate what the base level was to enable someone to come into a specific trade and do a specific job. I have a feeling now, based on some comments made by a friend of mine who was working in ________ that it will never be equal for women because Army will set a minimum standard at a level that most women won’t ever reach. I have a feeling that is exactly what will happen, even though they say they will open up every trade. They will set standards that are just out of women’s reach. If they opened them up and just said ‘this is the minimum standard for males and females and if you can do that job at that standard then you should be allowed to do it’ and see what happens from there.

Isobel is concerned that the issue of defining competencies to ascertain whether women can serve in roles they are now excluded from will be thwarted through slow processing. She rightly thinks that the cultural environment will also have to change in the ADF and that prejudice against women could cause problems with the process:

**Isobel (Air Force Officer):** I actually think that the current approach of looking at the competencies and trying to define what we need people to do … and then looking at whether that will allow women to be involved in that role is the right way. Provided that people don’t go so slowly that it never happens. I think that the one thing that people can’t argue with is a person’s individual competence. It’s hard to argue with people who are individually competent. Provided we can change the cultural environment through good leadership. If there is some sort of prejudice you might encounter problems, it does take time.

Katzenstein argues that the military ‘…has curtailed women’s full integration into the military, by extending women’s right to compete for jobs and promotions without fully confronting the question of whether the maintenance of an efficient fighting force requires adherence to traditional models of military prowess’ (Katzenstein, 1998: 80 & 81).

Denying all women a right to serve in all combat employments based on the average physical strength of males and females is discriminatory. This is especially so as the
current exclusions limit women’s career progression in other areas of defence operations. The exclusions also serve to perpetuate the prejudice that women are generally not as capable as men in military operations.

**Esprit de corps: The Myth Of Male Bonding**

*Arguments about unit cohesion and effectiveness are like cliffs of sand against ceaseless historical waves (Brower, 1996: 4).*

**Introduction**

An argument used frequently by opponents to women in combat relates to ‘esprit de corps’ or ‘cohesion’ and the male bonding necessary to create and enhance unit cohesion (Barry, 1993; Chapman, 1999; Goldstein, 2001; Nemitschenko; 2001; Youngman, 2000). It is argued that women either do not bond in the same way as men, or disrupt male bonding that is built upon a shared sense of masculinity. The bonding of men at war is imbued with sacred and impenetrable overtones, and the upsetting of male bonding rituals and practices is viewed as almost sacrilegious. However, it is a myth that women cannot be a part of unit cohesion.

In 1994 in the United States, women’s exclusion from combat was explicitly justified by the US Army on the sole basis of the ‘unique’ nature of male bonding. The US Army Chief of Staff reasoned that ‘uniformity’ enhanced the cohesion necessary for combat (Goldstein, 2001:195). The ‘unique’ nature of the bonds between males is based on military and war mythology and opinions to the contrary are based on empirical evidence. Goldstein found in his extensive reviews of research literature that, ‘...the male-bonding hypothesis finds little empirical support’ (Goldstein, 2001: 195).

‘Can women and men bond?’ is a commonly asked question about integrating women into the military. It is a question that always gives me pause because it seems to me that male and female bonding underpins western society as we know it, we bond with family members regardless of their sex, create family units with those of the opposite sex, and there are other examples too numerous to mention. It is
certainly not unusual to live, work or play in a mixed gender environment. In fact, segregation of the sexes could be said to be what is artificial and not mixed sex units. Youngman believes that male bonding only became a relevant cause for discussion in America after the Vietnam War. Before this the emphasis on maleness or masculinity was not regarded as such important criteria for bonding. She says it is as if such warrior ‘ideals’ emerged ‘...primarily to justify excluding women from military service in combat’ (Youngman, 2000: 43). She also draws attention to the fact that it is in non-academic books and articles where bonding is seen to be exclusively male. Scholarly studies, she says, do not ‘...substantiate the emphasis on the ‘maleness’ or ‘masculinity’ in bonding’ (Youngman, 2000: 41).

There also appears to be a lack of common sense being applied in such theories, about the uniqueness of male bonding that seem to evolve in social isolation. One only needs to interact socially to find numerous women bonding deeply with brothers, fathers, male partners, and boy children. It could be said that a woman’s capacity to bond with either gender in significant and profound ways, may far outweigh a man’s capacity to do the same. Based on the manner in which women are socialised their bonds with friends, children, sisters could be taken to be more natural and deeper than male bonds. Consequently it could be acknowledged that, ‘[t]he presence of women may enhance familial-type bonds in integrated primary units’ (Goldstein, 2001: 202). But an important question to ask is whether familial-type bonds in units are also wholly and singularly desirable? Evidence points to there being more to gain when a unit focuses on the cohesion necessary to complete any given task.

This section explores cohesion and argues that social cohesion – the type of cohesion that is advocated for in the military is not as effective as task cohesion (Kier, 1999). Social cohesion, in a military context not only excludes women (Agostino, 1998b) it also has the potential to separate a group from the main organisation (Goldstein, 2001).

Male bonding in the military context is by definition exclusive of women. This section explores ‘task cohesion’, the possibility of both genders working together and being bonded around the tasks they are performing.
The culture of the military is suspicious of women bonding together, and this section also discusses the resistance women face in bonding with one another.

**What is Cohesion?**

The Collins English Dictionary (1995), defines cohesion as, ‘*the act or state of cohering; tendency to unite*’ (208). The same dictionary defines ‘cohere’ as, ‘*to hold or stick firmly together. To be connected logically; to be consistent*’ (208).

Simply put, cohesion is about people sticking together in a united relationship where they feel a consistent connection to one another.

Cohesion in a military framework is more complicated: in this context, cohesion is defined as social and psychological bonding between people in a group (Barry, 1993: 13). It is not just the connection to one another but also the connection to a goal and that connection to others providing a motivating force toward that goal (Goldstein, 2001: 195). In a military context the male bonding thought necessary for unit cohesion is ‘*characterized as camaraderie and team spirit…*’ (Peach, 1996: 166).

There is also a strong link made between leadership and male bonding: a leader’s ability to have strong interpersonal ties with the unit is thought to be compromised if women are part of the unit. Peach points out that this is an ‘assumption’ and has not been demonstrated, whereas evidence suggests that mixed gender units can bond (Peach, 1996: 166)

It is not disputed here that cohesion is central to military training and is an essential component in military operations especially in the combat environment. Cohesion is seen as important in most organisations but is of more significance in the military where war is although anticipated, unpredictable and specific responses are required from groups and individuals at all times (Kier, 1999: 26). Fighting a war is a group task and decisions and coordination must be achieved quickly in a confusing and complicated environment. Cohesion enhances the ‘willingness’ in soldiers to risk their lives through positive identification with others (Keir, 1999: 27). But as Keir demonstrates, cohesion may be ‘*considerably less significant and more complex than is often assumed*’ (Keir, 1999: 44).
Initiation into military culture starts with building cohesion. Disconnection from civilian life is instant and the new recruit is encouraged to transfer to a connection with military life. Identification with the group is an integral part of military training and recruits are immediately expected to think of themselves as a group. Such procedures as pursuing collective goals, isolating the recruits from the outside world, and dispensing group punishments for individual misdemeanours, all combine to reinforce the group membership (Kier, 1999: 29).

Cohesion has two faces, one is ‘social cohesion’ which is the type commonly elevated by opponents of women in combat (van Creveld, 2000; Mitchell, 1998). In this type of bonding a social connection to group members is emphasised. Closeness is formed between members of a group that is based on sameness, and homogeneity (a contested concept as it is) within the group is specifically favoured. When social cohesion is advanced in arguments against women in combat it is clear that homogeneity within a group of men will be upset by the introduction of persons who are different. Therefore the introduction of a woman into an all male group would possibly disrupt the cohesion within that group. Advocates for women in combat dispute that social cohesion is an appropriate goal for military units and promote task-based cohesion as a more desirable focus (Chapman, 1999; Kier, 1999; Youngman, 2000). In task cohesion it is the shared commitment to achieving a task that is the goal and not an interpersonal or emotional connection to the group whole. Hugh Smith says that, ‘[i]t can be argued, for example that homogeneity is not essential to unit cohesion, and that unit cohesion can be distinguished from the more essential task cohesion’ (Smith, 2000a: 12). A focus upon social cohesion can also deny the range of skills needed to achieve a complex task.

**Social or Task Cohesion?**

‘Decades of social science research into social cohesion, work performance, and military effectiveness, however, demonstrate the importance of distinguishing between two types of cohesion: social and task cohesion’ (Ferguson, 1998: 9).
Social cohesion is a socialisation tool used to unite a group based on the similarities of persons within the group, such as a shared brotherhood. It is an emotional type of bonding built on friendship, closeness, and emotions (Kier, 1999; Ferguson, 1998). Task cohesion is about a group sharing a commitment to combine their efforts as a team to collectively achieve a task (Kier, 1999; Ferguson, 1998).

Research is finding a possible relationship between task cohesion and performance but any link between social cohesion and performance is inconclusive and some research has shown a link between social cohesion and poor task performance (Kier, 1999).

The social cohesion within a group can have a negative as well as a positive influence. As Goldstein points out, cohesion can be a ‘two-edged sword’ if connection to the unit results in a separation from the main body of the defence organisation (Goldstein, 2001). Operational performance can be limited when the smaller cohesive group encourages goals and values that are incongruent with the goals and values of the larger group or organisation (Kier, 1999). Research has found that high levels of social cohesion can undermine discipline and impair group decision-making (Kier, 1999: 44). This is evident in wars when soldiers encourage each other to commit, or turn a blind eye to, war crimes such as perpetrating violence against non-combatants, mistreating prisoners of war, and raping women. Whilst homogeneity may increase a sense of group solidarity and cohesion it can also create problems when relating to those outside of the group. Within the military organisation I would identify a problem when small group cohesion based on maleness, heterosexuality, or whiteness contributes to resistance to women’s integration, and/or harassment and discrimination against homosexuals, those of different races, ethnicity, religion, or background.

Studies of WW2 have pointed to cohesion as a factor in ‘motivating’ soldiers in combat (Kier, 1999). But five decades of research has proven to be inconclusive as to whether cohesion is linked to high military performance (Kier, 1999). Indeed many armies with similar training and resources have performed differently in combat (Kier, 1999). In WW2 heavy casualties were sustained which meant that ‘raw’ recruits replaced original troop members regularly with similar performances.
noted (Kier, 1999). Clearly it was task cohesion and not social cohesion that motivated the men who continued to engage in battle. It may be as Goldstein theorises that cohesion is strengthened through shared experience and not through gender (Goldstein, 2001). The experience of British mixed gender AA batteries during WW2 showed that ‘... morale, bonding and unit cohesiveness were, if anything, better than in segregated units’ (Nemitschenko, 2001: 39).

A critical analysis of the above points about social and task cohesion points to task cohesion and not social cohesion as being more likely to enhance military performance. Task cohesion is not dependent upon shared homogeneity or upon shared values and similar attitudes or an emotionally close bond. It is therefore, less likely to enhance sexism. Studies have shown that mixed units do not exhibit lower levels of task cohesion than single sex units (Employment of Women in the Armed Forces Steering Group, 2002; Ferguson, 1998; Goldstein, 2001; Kier, 1999). Some studies have ‘... shown that there is a great difference between social cohesion and task cohesion. The reports conclude that it is task cohesion that creates superior performance ...’ (Ferguson, 1998: 9). Ferguson concludes that ‘The ADF has integrated a growing number of women into combat and combat related units over the past decade and there has been no evidence that the operational capability of integrated units has diminished. Cohesion, therefore, is not a single gender experience; it is a function of leadership, shared purpose, and common risks and rewards’ (Ferguson, 1998: 9).

Cohesion in the military has traditionally been built upon masculine identity. A group bonding may find a sense of shared identity as an all-male group, especially where there may not be other common grounds to identify with. Until recently the military was until recently all male and building a sense of mutual identity upon masculinity has been convenient as well as powerful (Morris, 1999). But social cohesion can have a negative side. A strong sense of who we are can be based on hostility towards who we are not (Keir, 1999: 27). ‘In looking at RAN [Royal Australian Navy] men at work it becomes apparent that taking flight from the feminine is an important aspect of their identity while male bonding functions in many instances to exclude women in both the work and play arenas’ (Agostino, 1998b: 68). Too strong a focus upon male bonding (social cohesion) versus the
bonding of a unit (task cohesion) will potentially undermine military effectiveness. This will become sharply apparent if some members of a group put energy into excluding other members of the group in preference to putting their energy into the task at hand.

Yet the exclusivity of male bonding in a social cohesion context is a widely dispersed and entrenched myth in military establishments (Barry, 1993; Chapman, 1999; Goldstein, 2001; Nemitschenko; 2001; Youngman, 2000). It is common for military personnel of both sexes to believe that male bonding is sacred and exclusive, that women do not bond the way men do, and that women will interfere with the cohesiveness of units should they be permitted to join. Three of the women I interviewed were concerned that women’s entry into combat units would disrupt male cohesion. Bridget is not saying that women are incapable of serving in combat roles, she states clearly that ‘a lot of women can do the work’, however, she identifies cohesion as the greatest barrier against permitting women to serve in infantry:

**Bridget (Army Officer):** A lot of females can physically do the work, [required for combat roles] but it’s how they integrate within the unit … so it’s about unit cohesion I suppose.

DB: What do you think is the impact of that?

*I think it would have a negative impact because, especially when, say infantry for example … you’re going out on patrols or laying ambushes and stuff like that, as much as I would rely on my training – but when you are doing it in a war time situation it puts a whole different spin on things. I just think that in that environment females complicate things rather than add to the cohesion of the group. I’m not saying that they should never be able to do it but you’ve got to really be quite picky as far as what females you do put in that environment umm cause I think that [cohesion] is the biggest barrier. You’ve got to look at the cohesion of the group as well as how well they work together. That’s why you have to be really quite picky as far as females go, cause females can have quite a big impact on such a close working group, especially if the work they are doing – if someone is slowing them down or
holding them back then basically that is going to cause a lot of harm in the group

Bridget is valuing the social cohesion of the group over the task cohesion of the group. This is not a surprising viewpoint given how entrenched the myth of the sacredness and exclusivity of male bonding is in the military.

Veronica also expressed reservations about women entering infantry units. In her terms, the nature of the work required by infantry units also requires the development of a culture that promotes conventionally masculine stereotypes.

**Veronica (Army Officer):** It's a tough job [referring to combat] ... we want them to do the worst job and be perfect gentlemen – how much do we allow them to develop culture of toughness, bravado? The impact of putting women into that culture could threaten it and that’s what they [opponents to women in combat] are worried about.

It is not a conclusive argument that men need an exclusive male domain where they can play out their masculinity in displays of toughness in order to achieve cohesion and therefore military effectiveness. It is part of the cohesion myth that men must exclude femininity and females in order to achieve manhood. (Agostino, 1998b). Melissa echoes this myth:

**Melissa (Army Officer):** I think that all male cohesion is really important for that type of environment [infantry patrols] and that's the importance of that structured training that we have - you form one body, you are not an individual – can a female integrate into that? I don’t know, I’m not convinced that we should be in that environment. When you are talking about group cohesion macho type infantry battalions – I don’t see us [women] there. I actually think we [the ADF] may become less effective if we start putting females in that environment.
On the issue of task cohesion Melissa was less certain of the need for an all male environment. In her mind if a woman can do the task then she should be able to perform the role:

**Melissa (Army Officer):** *So I think we really need to look at what the task is, what the competencies are, and then see who the best people are – look at the task. And if these best people are a group of females then I don’t see any difference.*

It did not surprise me that Melissa was doubtful of women’s capacity to bond as well as men in a military environment. Women who live, work, and socialise in a military environment are bound to struggle with that environment’s dominant ideologies including its ideologies around gender. The military constructs the female gender as inferior (Brower, 1996; Cooke, 1996; Mitchell, 1996) to the male gender therefore it stands to reason within this construction that if males bond extremely well together females will bond less adequately.

Marion said she hadn’t noticed gender impacting upon cohesion. The only issue she has witnessed affecting cohesion is when one person does not contribute to the task at hand:

**Marion (Air Force Officer):** *I haven’t noticed problems in groups I have been in during exercises or being on deployment. You get a good-natured bantering but it doesn’t affect morale or cohesion at all, I've never known it to. Unless perhaps, the only thing that will affect cohesion is if someone isn’t pulling his or her own weight and everybody else is having to compensate to look after that person. But that might not be a girl it might be a guy who is lazy or over weight. That would affect cohesion, it’s about pulling your weight.*

Marion, in her comments about people ‘pulling their own weight’ is placing emphasis on the importance of task cohesion, where the group are committed to the task they need to perform. Michele’s comments about ‘privilege’ are interesting to note. The group needs to feel that all people in the group are equal, and are equally
committed to performing their obligation to the task. Gender is not seen as the issue by Michele so much as equality within the group:

**Michele (Army Officer)**: *I guess where cohesion can fall down is when a male or a female in a unit is seen to be getting advantages that other people aren’t. Once again if someone wants to take on that role in infantry they have got to be aware that things are going to be a certain way, and you have to be prepared to make an effort to get in there and do your job and not expect to have special privileges.*

**Sexuality**

Central arguments turn to sexuality as the component most likely to prevent male-to-male bonding and female-to-male bonding (Barry, 1993; Smith, 2000a; Morris, 1999). Hugh Smith says that the ‘burden of proof’ lies with proponents of women in combat who must demonstrate that sexual liaisons, or competition amongst men for women, will not occur and disrupt cohesion (Smith, 2000a: 12). As with ‘privacy issues’ and issues about menstruation, some of the arguments that place sexuality at the centre of debates are limited. It may be that some men and some women will be diverted from tasks due to an attraction for a colleague, or by jealousy or competition, and that some sexual tension may be expected. However, it is difficult to believe that trained soldiers in a conflict will go off to a secluded trench somewhere to be intimate with one another to the detriment of a mission. It is more likely that this behaviour might occur in peacetime environments, such as in training, than it is during combat on the battlefield. Trained professionals in war, it could be generally assumed, will focus on the task at hand and will not let a romantic or sexual attraction distract their attentions whilst their country or their colleagues are under fire.

It is been reported that sexual relationships developed between men and women in the first Gulf War but they seem to have had *‘...little or no effect on readiness or moral’* (Goldstein, 2001: 202). Survey research completed by US personnel revealed results that were contradictory as to whether unit cohesion suffered, showing perhaps
that personal opinions differ. The research found there was little impact on readiness and moral, there was little impact (Goldstein, 2001: 202).

Sexual relationships might occur, but it is not inevitable that they will distract men from their mission. Such a hypothesis can ‘…ignore the capability of the sexes to interact in nonsexual ways’ (Peach, 1996: 167) which are, in fact, how men and women interact most of the time. Any other manner of behaviour in the workplace is inappropriate and ultimately problematic. Sexual fraternisation in combat units might also be attributed to poor or ‘ineffective’ leadership (Peach, 1996: 167).

None of the women I interviewed identified sexuality as an issue relating to cohesion. One woman stated that sexual politics was a fact of life and would always be there, she added:

**Chris (Army Officer):** *It's easier now with the younger generation, groups can work together with less vibes and if professionalism in people is instilled then it might not be such an issue as we think it is.*

**Resistance to Female Bonding**

Women’s groups are often subject to outward hostility by men, some men appear to be threatened by women’s relationships with each other and actively prevent women involving themselves in all female groups (Cockburn, 1991; Katzenstein, 1998). If women in the military are also suspicious or don’t get involved with other women for fear of losing their connections with men, being ostracised, ridiculed, threatened, or branded a lesbian then this is not unexpected.

Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, in her interviews for the book ‘Faithful and Fearless’, found that there was ‘…continuous pressure on women [in the military] to find individual rather than collective solutions to problems and to do so without making waves’ (Katzenstein, 1998: 81). The contradiction here lies in the former point, that women were pressured to find individual solutions and not group solutions. This goes against military principles and training. If a woman were to have embraced
cohesion with her group, as military doctrine teaches her, and integrated within her psyche, then she will be confused and undermined by such pressure.

‘...despite all the flap that goes on in the military about how desperately men need to bond with one another, male soldiers seem categorically unable to perceive or to forgive a similar need in women. In fact they often appear to possess an irrational fear of women’s groups believing that, in their midst, men will be plotted against or, perhaps worst of all rendered somehow unnecessary’ (Carol Barkalow in Katzenstein, 1998: 84).

As Eleanor Hancock points out, this issue begs the question, ‘does the military need to recognise that bonding between women, as well as between men, is important’ (Hancock, 2000: 168).

Katzenstein maintains that within the military it is a form of ‘social control’ to discourage women from finding a common cause and spending time together. Women’s meetings incite jokes and can draw unfavourable attention. Basically women meeting ‘collectively’ seems to incite some form of paranoia in many men (Katzenstein, 1998). An example of this is Melissa’s experience of being discouraged from associating with other women:

**Melissa (Army Officer):** I find most of them are more threatened by confident females than the terms of the equal opportunity or Network of Defence Women ... There is one senior officer who refers to a number of the senior civilians as the ‘skirt brigade’. And then the other expression he uses is they are just a bunch of amazons.

Women are discouraged from forming associations with one another and then they are disparaged for not being able to bond well. Myths that involve the exclusivity of male bonding impinge upon women’s right to feel a sense of normality in their contact with one another. They also contribute to and perpetuate myths that women are inferior to men. Melissa brings to light issues about men in the military keeping ‘bonding’ exclusively for themselves and leaving women in an isolated realm:
Melissa (Army Officer): But do you think we bond as well as men do? With each other, I haven’t seen it in, I’ve seen all female training units and I don’t see that bonding that I’ve witnessed with a group of males. When I left my officer training which was a 12 month course the same as the males, we all went our separate ways. When you look at the boys for instance they have their reunions etc bonding sessions in the mess. I often think that one of the main things that holds us [women] back is that we don’t mix like the males do, we don’t meet after work to have a few beers with our mates. I don’t feel comfortable just going into the mess and just walking up to people and just having a beer with them.

Informal socialising, which is clearly thought important by men in any organisation, often excludes women. Cynthia Cockburn, when researching why men are resistant to women having roles in organisations, found that when women are prevented from joining in informal drinks after work, or from playing games like golf, they are also cut off from valuable information gathering (Cockburn, 1991: 152 & 153).

Madeline Morris asks, ‘…in contemplating changes to the military’s traditional masculinist group identity, what alternative bases of group identity and cohesion could successfully replace the existing, gender based structure?’ (Morris, 1999: 186). She includes in her alternate suggestions identities based on ideology such as the ‘just warrior identity’ adding that, ‘[s]urely, if armed force is ever to be deployed, then idealism and moral conviction are preferable motives to macho posturing (Morris, 1999: 187). She also puts forward non-ideological bases which include ‘unit and buddy’ identification. Her basic point is that alternatives to male bonding exist and that these may be more sustainable than the macho stereotypical image which could possibly disintegrate in the reality of battle whereas task cohesion is more likely to remain a motivation in the combat environment.

Thus, while masculinist images may be potent motivators for young men, their productive effects may be short-lived and followed by counter-productive ones. Alternative bases for group identification might, thus, be not only equally but actually more efficacious that the traditional masculinist construct (Morris, 1999: 188).
Integrated units in the ADF do not show signs of a reduction in cohesion, anecdotally evidence is positive, but it is an area needing further investigation and formal studies (Barry, 1993: 14; Burton, 1996; Ferguson, 1998). Task cohesion, ‘the buddy identification’, and the ‘just warrior’ alternatives are models that can include rather than exclude women. A culture that supports these ideals would clearly enhance the operational effectiveness of the ADF.

**Protectionism**

**Introduction**

I once outlined some of the arguments involved in the protectionism debates to an ex Defence Community Organisation social worker. I told her that the central arguments revolve around fears that combat soldiers would not engage professionally as soldiers if women were to fight beside them (Barry, 1993; Chapman, 1999; Hancock, 1993, 2000; Nemitschenko; 2001). Men would compromise missions and consequently military effectiveness in favour of protecting women (Barry, 1993; Chapman, 1999; Hancock, 1993, 2000; Nemitschenko; 2001). I told her about military unease that enemy soldiers might fight harder against forces with women in the combat ranks. I also told her about concerns that enemy soldiers may refuse to fight against troops with female combat soldiers either walking away in disgust or being opposed to killing women (Hancock, 2000; Mitchell, 1998; van Creveld, 2001).

At this outline she was completely amazed. For a moment she stared at me in simple disbelief. Then she exclaimed, ‘*But men kill women all the time! On the streets, in the home, as innocent victims of war, so why not as soldiers?’* And, she added, ‘*why would they suddenly get all protective because these women are combat soldiers?’*

I was reminded of this conversation when I read Eleanor Hancock’s article “Women As Killers And Killing Women”: The Implications Of “Gender-Neutral” Armed Forces’ (2000), where she was asked to consider the questions, ‘Will women kill, and will men kill women?’ Hancock’s response echoed my friends’ response, saying
that it had never occurred to her to ask the latter question precisely because ‘…
history and the treatment of women in many parts of the world suggest that this of all
issues is one about which military policy-makers should not worry … many men do
not appear to have a problem killing women – at least killing unarmed women’
(Hancock, 2000: 173).

I reiterated the social worker’s sentiments, and Hancock’s judgment that many men
will kill women, a few months later at a seminar in Canberra where the subject under
discussion was ‘Women in Combat’. The seminar was attended by female personnel
from the ADF, female public servants from the Department of Defence, and a
scattering of male personnel. To my surprise my comments were greeted with
laughter. While, I understood their amusement, I hadn’t meant to be funny but there
is a level of irony involved in the protectionism debate.

When protectionism arguments are put forward to restrict women’s participation in
combat roles they are presented twofold. One line of the argument puts forward that
men will take inappropriate measures to protect female colleagues and put missions
at risk through these actions (Chapman, 1999; Hancock, 1993, 2000; Nemitschenko;
2001). The other line is that women need to be protected from the hazards of war,
from killing or being killed, and from being taken a prisoner of war (Cooke, 1996;

The impossibility of protecting female personnel from injury, death, or capture in
war, regardless of non-combatant status and policy is highlighted in this section of
this chapter.

The Gulf Wars have particularly highlighted the inability of the military to protect
women from being taken prisoner of war. Two examples, the Rhonda Cornum story
and the Jessica Lynch story are included in this section to illuminate how opponents
to women’s full integration can manipulate women’s experiences to advance their
position.

The first side of the protectionism debate, as outlined above, concerns the ‘naturally’
protective instinct of the male gender. This assumption has several implications: that
men are protective and women are in need of protection; that men are able to protect women in a combat zone; and women are unable to protect themselves and unable to protect others. Many of the women interviewed for this study did not feel that their status as non-combatant translated into them being defenceless and unable to protect themselves. To the contrary of these arguments they feel quite able to protect and defend others. These women were largely in disagreement to the components of these arguments, with only one woman agreeing that men would protect women to the detriment of a mission. Most felt confident of being able to protect themselves in their military roles, to protect the patients they nursed, and the compounds they were assigned too. The arguments based on protectionism deny women an opportunity to be protectors themselves, to fight for and defend their nations (Stiehm, 1982).

The Protectionism Debates

Arguments in the protectionism debate focus upon the need to protect women from the hazards of war (Cooke, 1996; Steihm, 1982, 1996). In 2001 the RSL spokesperson, Ken Bladen, was cited as saying that that 200,000 RSL members were against women serving in combat roles because if a woman is taken prisoner ‘... she’s going to be raped and possibly tortured more than the men will. For that reason alone, she shouldn’t be there’ (McGrath, 2001). The overriding factor that counteracts these concerns is that it is impossible to protect anyone from the hazards of war, whatever their status and whatever policy is in place (Chapman, 1999; Cooke, 1996; Nemitschenko, 2001). The fact is that women are already employed in combat zones or areas that have the potential to become combat zones. In these roles it is possible for them to be injured, to be taken prisoner, or to be killed.

Complicating the issue is the belief that men need something to fight for and that women as mothers, wives, sisters, sweethearts, and as child bearers are necessarily their motivating reason (Segal, 1995; Steihm, 1982, 1996). Therefore, women must remain in need of protection to give men a reason to fight (Cooke, 1996; Peach, 1996).

That women need men to protect them from war is an age-old adage that rests in gender stereotypes. And yet in this age of warfare, more civilians, many of them
women and children, die as innocent victims of war than do combat soldiers (Agostino, 1998b; Hancock, 2000; Saul, 1997). It is estimated that for every 1,000 military casualties at least 5,000 civilians are killed (Saul, 1997). In the war in Iraq, as of February 1, 2005 there have been 1,608 coalition troop deaths. Most of these have been American soldiers with 1,437 Americans deaths, 86 British deaths, and 20 Italian (CNN International, 2005). Civilian deaths are estimated at approximately 15,654 as at February 6, 2005 (The Iraq Body Count Project, 2005).

Of the thirty women interviewed for this study only one woman agreed adamantly that men would indeed protect women, she said:

**Jacinta (Air Force Officer):** I look at the Israeli experiment where they found that women who were on the front line in combat were sometimes protected, the men felt that they had to protect them and therefore they weren’t able to do their job as well, and I think that would happen in Australia as well.

Another was aware of the issues within the argument but was unsure whether men would protect women to the detriment of a mission:

**Emily (Army Officer):** You know, men sort of think they have to be protectors of women so if they had a female in their section and she got shot they would have to go out of the way to risk there own lives to save her. Which they may not do, in the heat of the battle, for a male. They would keep on pressing forward to get to the enemy, whereas there is a lot of comment that they wouldn’t necessarily do that if it was a female, you know, their priority would be to the female. I don’t know if that’s true or not.

Interview data indicated that the majority of women disagreed with the protectionism arguments. One Air Force officer dismissed it as ‘caveman’ mentality saying:

**Margie (Air Force Officer):** They think that it’s their right. That they are protecting their women and the children as opposed to protecting perhaps
everybody. You know, ‘if we have to protect the women then how can a woman come in – it’s our job’. This is the whole cave man situation.

Lynn saw the issue of protectionism as an excuse that masks the concern that women could not perform their roles satisfactorily:

**Lynn (Army Non-commissioned Officer):** Well I’ve heard it all – all the excuses, ‘we can’t do it because we’d hate to see a female beside us get hurt’, yeah right! ... ‘I’d have to look after her ‘cause she wouldn’t be able to do the job’.

Jade feels that the Israeli experience of female combatants is used to continue to deny women in Australia combat roles. Although she has looked for evidence to support ‘protectionism’ claims she has been unsuccessful:

**Jade (Army Officer):** One example they keep trying to put up is the Israelis trying to have women in their Defence Force, in their combat units and when they did actually find themselves in a combat situation the women were targeted and taken away by the Arabs and raped and beaten and the men felt really bad about that and they couldn’t protect the women folk. And that’s put up time and time again and I can’t find any historical evidence of that actually happening.

American commentators and theorists who are proponents for the lifting of combat exclusions attacked protectionism arguments after the experience of the first Gulf conflict (1990). Combat exclusions on women’s military service remained in place based upon the military’s goal to keep women safe. The Gulf War showed that, regardless of their good intentions, they are unable to achieve this. ‘Despite their declared intent to protect women from risk of combat of enemy assault, the exclusion rules had failed to keep women from being the targets of enemy fire’ (Katzenstein, 1998: 48). Of the 33,000 American women who served in Desert Storm, six were killed in action, and three taken prisoner (Katzenstein, 1998: 48). The reality is that ‘[w]omen are in contemporary wars, whether by fiat of a governing body or because they find themselves in a place that has burst into violence’ (Cooke, 1996: 265). It is
apt now then to look at a real life, contemporary, situation when American women have been captured in the Gulf War.

**Rhonda Cornum: An American P.O.W.**

Rhonda Cornum, a doctor with the U.S forces, was taken prisoner by Iraqi forces during the first Gulf War. The helicopter she was flying in was on a rescue mission when it was shot down by enemy fire, five U.S. personnel were killed, three were taken prisoner. Major Cornum’s capture incited a media response that she believes placed more significance upon her capture and her gender than was warranted. She questioned this, saying that she hadn’t done ‘anything different to anyone else’, nor had she exhibited bravery that out weighed that of her colleagues (Cornum, 1996: 20).

Whilst in captivity in ‘miserable conditions’, Major Cornum was eventually permitted to share a bunker with a young American infantryman, Sergeant Troy Dunlap. She is adamant in her view that it was important to her to be with another American regardless of gender, and that it was not relevant that he was a man and she was a woman (Cornum, 1996: 14).

Cornum reflects on a conversation she had with her cell mate where he commended her for her bravery, she asked him if he thought she was going to cry (because she was a woman), he said he thought she would have. Cornum replied ‘Well, that’s okay. *I thought you were, too*’ (because he was so young). She goes on to point out that in this situation the young man’s expectation that she would cry was based on her gender. Her expectation that he would cry was based on his youth (Cornum, 1996: 14 & 18).

During a press interview after their release a reporter asked Sergeant Dunlap if he thought women should be permitted to serve in combat. He replied that he didn’t think women should be in combat. When the reporter asked if he would go to war with Major Cornum he said ‘Of course. *I’d go anywhere with Major Cornum*’ (Cornum, 1996: 22). Cornum believes the young infantryman’s response was based on experience. His words express a belief that she was a competent soldier, one who
did not require his protection but a colleague of equal fortitude in a time of war but in his mind this did not extend to all women. In Cornum’s view, Dunlap was right not to generalise. It led her to appreciate the value in granting women in the military the right of competition so that they might prove themselves. In this way she says that all people in the military can base their opinions on first hand experience and not on prior experience they have of women. This experience is typically based on ‘…memories of their mothers, their wives, their girlfriends, and their sisters’ (Cornum, 1996: 22). She goes on to say, ‘I have to admit that if I had to form my opinion of women based on my mother and my two sisters I probably wouldn’t be an advocate of women in combat either’ (Cornum, 1996: 22).

As to how the Iraqis dealt with Cornum being a woman? She thought they seemed surprised but not overwhelmed. She believes her gender made a difference to the American media more so than it did to the Iraqis or to U.S. soldiers she served with (Cornum, 1996: 22 & 23).

Major Cornum’s experience of being a prisoner of war makes explicit how theory often does not match reality. Military theorists concern themselves with speculating how a woman might cope during a P.O.W. experience, how a man might experience a female colleague being held captive as a particularly traumatic event, and how an enemy force might treat women P.O.W.s differently. Cornum’s experience shows that in contemporary situations women are treated similarly to men by enemy soldiers and that male colleagues view women as precisely that, a colleague. Her experience also shows that a woman can cope professionally when this is required of her.

Below is a first hand testament from Rhonda Cornum about her experience of sexual molestation by an Iraqi soldier. Her words speak for themselves.

**Rhonda Cornum:** Well, I was... just leaning back on the seat, and all of a sudden, I feel this, this guy sitting next to me, who puts his hands on my face and starts to kiss me. I thought, ‘Well, how bizarre!’

And... I never, I don't know what I was thinking, but I really thought, ‘Surely he can do better!’
I mean I've got ... a cut above my eye that's soaked with blood and ... I'm sure
I don't smell very good. And I'm thinking, ‘How can he possibly want to do
this?’

...And then he ... unzipped my flight suit and started fondling me. And I
thought, ‘I can't believe it!’

But I really wasn't ... there was no way to fight, I couldn't move anything
anyway. I didn't really want to make him real mad, I didn't want to bite him.
And so I did nothing. I just sat there.

Except when he tried ... to take me by the back of the head and put my head
down in his lap, and I couldn't because my arms didn't move then. And that
was excruciating.

And... I feel confident he knew he shouldn't be doing what he was doing.
Because every time I'd scream, he'd quit. So I think the idea was that the
guys in the front of the truck weren't supposed to know.

... No, I don't... Well, I don't know. I suspect that ... it was more he didn't
want to get in trouble. I think if the other guys hadn't been there, he probably
wouldn't have stopped either way. But I don't know that. I mean ... I don't
know.

And that was really my biggest concern. I mean, a lot of people make a big
deal about getting molested, and I'm ... sure ... it's a big deal. ...But in the
hierarchy of things that were going wrong, that was pretty low on my list.

Well next, he stopped, zipped my flight suit back up, ... 'cause we were
obviously getting to wherever it was we were going. And I was grateful that
it had been a shorter trip than it could've been ... (Frontline, 1996).

Cornum is a career officer in the United States military and her perception of sexual
molestation as it happened to her was that it was low on her list of things that were
wrong that day. All women may not survive this ordeal as well as Cornum was able
to. However, many would also be as mentally and psychologically prepared as
Cornum.

Contemporary testimony such as this makes it fair to say that ‘protectionism’ – as
deleted by military and government policy makers involved in arguing the ‘women
in combat’ debates is not an argument persuasive enough to continue to deny women places in military combat employments.

**Jessica Lynch: Manipulating and Fabricating Women’s Experience**

Private Jessica Lynch was captured in the second Gulf War. Her much publicized capture came on March 23rd 2003 when the 507th Ordnance Maintenance Company accidentally lost their way. The 507th was a unit responsible for mechanics and computers, cooking and driving trucks. They were trained to supply combat troops and to keep equipment in good repair (Hart & Simon, 2003). Jessica, a 19 year old supply clerk, was one of five captured from a unit that was supposed to be behind the front line and not at risk in their roles (Hart & Simon, 2003). The women who were part of this unit were, according to policy, and much military philosophy, ‘protected’ from combat and capture by their status as non-combatant.

Private Lynch’s story captured the imagination of the press and her ordeal was publicised extensively during her prisoner of war experience as well as after she had been captured. The events she lived through, as cited by the media, were both real and imaginary. When Lynch was able to respond she criticized the media for ‘exaggerating’ and for ‘recasting her ordeal as patriotic fable’ (Kirkpatrick, 2003). In the book Lynch was later to publish, she says that she was hurt and embarrassed by the exaggerations that saw her exchanging fire with the enemy and fighting them heroically. In truth her weapon jammed before she could fire. The greatest military and media lie of all was to explicitly state that Lynch had been heroically rescued when in fact the hospital where she was in was in ‘friendly hands’ when the rescuers arrived (Kirkpatrick, 2003).

Another woman was also captured, Shoshana Johnson, and Private Lori Ann Piestewa was one of the eleven killed in the ambush (Hart & Simon, 2003). Media reports about the fate, and the exploits, of Jessica Lynch far outweighed media attention about the other two women and the men involved in the ambush (or any men serving in the Gulf for that matter). Shoshana Johnson was taken prisoner and held for 22 days, she was shot through both legs. However Johnson’s capture did not excite the media into a ‘fury’ the way Lynch’s did (Hockstader, 2003).
Jessica Lynch’s capture and rescue appealed to both the media and the US military and both sought to capitalise upon public interest and sympathy. Jessica Lynch is a nineteen year old blonde haired young woman, whereas Shoshana Johnson is a thirty year old black woman. There is now speculation as to whether the discrepancy between Private Lynch’s 80 per cent disability benefit and Specialist Johnson’s 30 per cent disability benefit may be a result of racial discrimination (Hockstader, 2003). Private Lynch, upon her rescue, was offered book and movie deals. Shoshana Johnson was not. Jessica is the archetype of what the Western military wants to protect, or wants to be seen protecting. Stories like this of vulnerable young women could have military policy makers even more reticent to remove exclusion policies currently in place. In fact not long after Lynch and Johnson were taken prisoner, Elaine Donnelly, president of the Center for Military Readiness in the US, was campaigning for a change in policy in order that women no longer be allowed in war zones. She is quoted as saying, ‘[i]f we say it’s O.K. to put women in combat, we’re saying it’s O.K. for sex abuse by the enemy’ (Booth Thomas, 2003: 65). Booth Thomas makes an important point in answer to Donnelly, ‘if rape is the concern, men too have been victims while in captivity’ (Booth Thomas, 2003: 65).

**Double Standards: Men and Women Face Similar Treatment in War**

Rape and sexual molestation of men in prisoner of war situations is not openly discussed. Though men are likely to be subject to this type of treatment, and men ‘... captured by the Iraqis in the Gulf War feared rape and sexual assault’ (Hancock, 2000: 169), it may also be that the numbers of males who are victims of rape in the Western world are underestimated especially as they are quite likely to be underreported (Hancock, 2000).

For many people it is seen as natural and right that men fight in wars and that women do not. In the same vein it is equally natural that a woman would fear rape, or be raped, and that men would not fear rape or be raped. Discussing male rape and sexual molestation generally or in a P.O.W situation is not a comfortable topic for many people. As Hugh Smith (2000a) makes apparent, the deepest layer of the
combat debates lie in ‘principles’. How people view the so called ‘natural’ roles of men and women is a matter of principle and, ‘[p]rinciples are by their nature rarely amenable to factual argument’ (Smith, 2000a: 11).

Questioning whether a male P.O.W’s experience unwanted sexual contact in the same way that a woman might touches on an area of great sensitivity, the principles that determine one’s concept of gender (Connell, 2000). The protectionism debates hinge upon the notion of prescribed gender roles. They are that men protect and defend and that women are protected and defended (Cooke, 1996; Stiehm, 1982).

Judith Hicks Stiehm (1982), outlines how the State, namely male government officials, ‘…have forbidden women to act either as defenders or as protectors’ (Stiehm, 1982: 367). Accordingly women must remain as ‘the protected’. Stiehm theorizes that feminists can speculate about policy but are ‘obliged’ to ask why it is that men do not want women to serve as soldiers and therefore act as protectors of the State. It is also pertinent to ask whether it is women they want to protect or the sanctity of combat as a male preserve?

**The Gendered Cost of Casualties**

According to the protectionism myth, the cost of losing a woman in war – of women coming home in ‘body bags’ is greater than the cost of losing a man in war (Stiehm, 1982). Hugh Smith argues that societal trends indicate that there is an unwillingness to see lives, women’s or men’s, sacrificed in wars ‘… and a growing uncertainty about the value of war itself’ (Smith, 2000b: 70). Volunteer forces mean that membership in the military is more diverse and community concern for military personnel, their rights and ‘status as individuals’ has increased. These trends, he says, may ‘… steadily increase concern over casualties and alter how democratic societies perceive the armed forces and war’ (Smith, 2000b: 83).

Women interviewed for this study are aware of these trends in society and they do not see them as gender specific. We discussed the protectionism arguments and the concern that society will not tolerate seeing women shipped home from war in body bags. Women did not believe that women’s deaths would come at a greater cost, or
at a greater concern, than male deaths. Whilst one woman did believe that the Australian population was not ready for women to come home in body bags the others felt that male deaths would be equally as tragic:

**Margie (Air Force Officer):** Another excuse they use is that society won’t accept it if women die, well society doesn’t like it that our sons, our brothers, our fathers die.

**Michele (Army Officer):** I don’t know if Australia is ready for any of her soldiers to come home in body bags. Male or female, I think its bad regardless. It’s tragic, regardless of sex.

Jade discussed how societal and family trends have changed people’s acceptance of Australia being involved in wars where attrition rates of service personnel are high. She didn’t believe that people were accepting of male or female deaths:

**Jade (Army Officer):** People are still scared by the phrase ‘women in combat’. Everyone says society isn’t ready to see women coming home in body bags. If I hear that one more time I’m going to be sick. The population cares if anyone comes home in body bags … people still think that war is male dominated and they can’t see a role for women in it. We will never fight like we did in the world wars again, waves of people being mowed down! It’s war and it’s tradition, it’s what we fight for, it’s what made Australia what it is, the attrition was incredible. We have moved on a lot since then, people used to have 4 or 6 sons so they could afford to lose a few to war. These days you might have one son and one daughter you can’t afford to send those children away.
Protection: A Gendered or Human Response

Susan notices an ironic contradiction in the protectionism debate that saving a woman’s life is not a valid act during a conflict yet saving a man’s is courageous:

**Susan (Air Force Other Ranks):** What difference would it make if it was a woman you were saving as opposed to a man? But they’ve got the excuse that she is a woman. I would have to think that sometimes they make excuses.

Military personnel are rewarded when they save one another in warfare, ‘... men go to great lengths to rescue, and protect their mates. The idea of men as only having a protective instinct towards women therefore, is not matched with people’s lived realities’ (Agostino, 1998b: 62). The emotion that drives a soldier to protect friends and colleagues is not restricted to the male gender only. Women also embody the desire to protect.

Cindy could see how a man might be protective and ‘do something stupid’ to save a woman. However, she felt that she might also do the same thing. She believes that protecting your friends would come without question in a war conflict:

**Cindy (Army Other Ranks):** It [protectionism] could be an issue, they [men] might do something stupid – but I might do the same. So maybe it’s more of a relationship issue, who the other person is to you and not about gender, protecting a friend would come without question.

Maria echoes these sentiments pointing out that all people have protective instincts toward people they are connected to regardless of gender:

**Maria (Air Force Officer):** I don’t hold anything with the idea that guys’ instinct is to protect women. And all that stuff about missions failing because women are there. Isn’t it all of our instinct to protect friends and the people you work with would be your friends, so I don’t see why it would be any different if they were women or men.
Susan asks a crucial question when she compares policing with combat. In policing, as in combat, protection of ‘a mate’ or ‘a partner’ can be considered a natural instinct:

**Susan (Air Force Other Ranks):** I don’t think it should matter if you are a male or female … and I guess I ask, how do police men and women work so well together if there is that protectionism thing? I mean they are going to protect their partner be they male or female so why does it have to be an issue that it’s a woman when It’s in the military.

One woman believed that training should overcome any misplaced sensitivity, or inappropriate over-protective behaviour that might prevent a man doing his job properly.

**Jo (Army Officer):** The other thing they throw up, is you know, women in a fox hole and something happens and the chap will want to look after the woman. I would hope that their training would allow them to internalise the fact that because of their training irrespective of the gender of the person next to you, you would do your task the way you have been trained to do.

Military effectiveness should come down to training and the cohesion of the group, and not gender, as Marion explains:

**Marion (Air Force Officer):** Protectionism could be an issue, maybe. It would depend on the guy. Males in general feel they should be in a protector role. But I would think the survival instinct would mean that you get on with the job, especially if you are in the same unit with someone and have been training with them and know their capability … People in those units would know each other very well they would have to because they are relying on each other to do the job.
The Myth of the Battlefield

It must be a very real consideration for the ADF that combatant and non-combatant status are difficult, in a war zone, to differentiate (Nemitschenko, 2001; Segal, 1995; Stiehm, 1982). Infantry lines can be broken by enemy engagement and all military personnel may be required to engage in combat at any given time. Simply excluding women from combat on a policy level will not necessarily keep them from being killed or killing. As Maria makes clear, support areas such as supply troops, where numbers of women may be serving, are frequently enemy targets:

Maria (Air Force Officer): I think people tend to forget, we have all these women doing all these other things, and while they might not be in the infantry they might not be far behind, and they are driving trucks and they are in the stores compound and that’s not very far behind. And it is still a target if you are in a camp with all the stores and all the trucks and all the helicopters and all the planes there on the runway – well it’s a bigger target than a single guy hiding behind a tree. But everybody seems to think that you are nice and safe, because you are not actually out there, but you aren’t any more safe than anybody else.

It is a military myth that a clearly defined battlefield or combat zone exists. At least, one that is separate from other aspects and areas of life. On the contrary, a battlefield is often in a city or a region where civilians live and work. It may move unexpectedly, spread quickly, or be ruined entirely, but it is not an isolated, ‘distant’, ‘uninhabited’ no-man’s-land (Stiehm, 1996: 279).

Women in their military capacities spend time in administrative, health care, and supply roles as well as in combat support employments within the range of enemy fire. Many of the roles women perform in the military such as refuelling fighter planes or staffing supply ships make them prime targets for enemy attack (Peach, 1996: 156).
It is increasingly difficult for military organisers and observers to monitor combat zones, or even to establish where the boundaries to them lie. Modern weapons technology ‘blurs’ the line between combat and support (Peach, 1996: 163).

‘We have at our disposal sophisticated surveillance technology, yet not even those who have been trained to observe and judge the conduct of wars can in the final analysis separate the combatant from the noncombatant, distinguish where exactly the fighting is taking place from where it is not, and differentiate who is pulling the trigger from who is stoking the gun from who is receiving the shock of the explosion’ (Cooke, 1996: 257).

The battlefield is, clearly, ill-demarcated. Peach calls it ‘…an elusive and increasingly illusory front line (Peach, 1996: 163), which many women are in proximity to, despite restrictions. This contradiction leads Peach to question whether exclusions apply because of concern for women or because of ‘…not wanting them [women] in control of powerful weaponry’ (Peach, 1996: 163). Certainly in the first Gulf War the women serving in Desert Storm participated in ‘…support and rescue assignments that were as physically demanding as combat and involved significant risk’ (Peach, 1996: 156).

In my discussions with women in the ADF I found a great deal of awareness about this ‘ill-demarcated battlefield’:

**Jade (Army Officer):** I think we talk about women in combat, combat is not combat anymore, not in the traditional sense of the word. You used to have a line of infantry and they’d all push forward to break through the enemy line. Well we don’t have that line anymore. We find ourselves dumped in the middle of a country, peacekeeping or war fighting, and the enemy or the opposition is all around us. So there’s no line. Now because the whole environment is an area of operations, there is no combat line, so who are your combat troops and who are your support troops? You might have a unit that is support, and one that is combat in the same location, so you say there are no women in combat but at the same time all your troops are sitting next to each other. The difference is in the task that they do, one will go and
engage the enemy and the other will provide support, yes, that’s still true. But how often do we go and engage an enemy these days? You look at the operations and exercises that the ADF has done lately and the only place where there has been actual war fighting is Afghanistan.

The women I spoke to were only too well aware that when they go on a peacekeeping mission, or to a war in a support role, that they are in a potential combat zone:

**Emily (Army Officer):** As a logistics officer I can easily be in that situation, and that’s the area enemy targets, that soft area where you are focused on the tasks you are doing we haven’t got fortified. Our other role is defending our position; we don’t have infantry dedicated to us, to defend us, so we have to defend ourselves. So if you have enemy come through then you have to be prepared to defend yourself and I have no qualms about that at all.

**Women Soldiers: Trained And Ready**

The women I interviewed did not believe that they need a high level of protection. I asked approximately half of the women how they would feel and react should they find themselves in a volatile situation where combat soldiering would be required. Only one expressed concerns about this situation. Her position was reflective, she had been on a peacekeeping mission in her role as military nurse. A role she found herself performing was to guard the medical compound. She describes this situation below:

**Sheila (Navy Officer):** One of the things we were told when we joined was, ‘you realise you are joining the Defence Force and you have to be armed’. But it didn’t occur to me till I was over there in _________ I didn’t expect to be confronted with it [being armed ADF personnel], I suppose. When we went to _________ we had to do lots of weapons training and we had to have our rifles with us at all times. For jobs we did early on in the deployment we

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16 This question emerged midway during interviews, therefore, only half the women were asked this question directly.
didn’t have a Security Force and I found that quite hard and I’m not sure whether that was because I hadn’t really thought about what being in the Defence Force and being armed really meant. Next duty was to go out to the front gate and protect the compound from god knows what. Because we didn’t even know what the security situation was when we first got there. But over time as we got used to the environment we got much more confident.

The women I spoke to have, on the whole, thought out what their roles might require them to do and they believe they are competent and trained to perform these roles:

**Emily (Army Officer):** Yeah I do [feel competent to perform a combat role] and that’s what is good about RMC now, the training there, it’s all equal. Everyone’s first role is meant to be soldiering so the secondary role is what you have been trained to do … but you are always a soldier. So yeah, I think we are trained for it, but infantry then go on and do more training because yeah, that’s their role … we are all trained to do it.

In a peacekeeping role nurses have the dual responsibility of caring for their patients’ health and protecting them from enemy forces should the need arise. Jacinta felt that these dual roles were well within her capabilities:

**Jacinta (Air Force Officer):** Yes we were armed the whole time, 24 hours a day we carried a loaded weapon with us. I had no problem with that, not at all. I was armed to protect my patients, I wasn’t going to go out there and injure anybody unless they were affecting the well being of the patients in my care. I would defend my patients, my staff, and myself. I’m a non-combatant under the Geneva Convention: I carry a weapon to protect my patients. Chaplains are also non-combatants. But as you know from the history of the world that it makes no difference as some countries don’t subscribe to the Geneva Convention and they are usually the ones that are our enemies.

As Jacinta points out, nurses are non-combatants under the Geneva convention, however the military nurses I spoke to felt passionately about protecting patients in
their care. Michele said she thought about having to shoot somebody if it was necessary, however, she felt she would do it if she had to:

**Michele (Army Officer):** Well you would do what you had to do at the time. If I couldn’t or didn’t have a say in what I did, I don’t want combat role personally but if I had to defend the hospital and the patients then I would do what I had to. We were armed in ________ the whole time and had our red crosses on the whole time too. You did think about whether you had to shoot somebody … I suppose if you had to you have to.

Air Force women sent on peacekeeping missions also have a dual role, they fulfil the role they are primarily assigned to do and also defend the airfield where they are stationed. Susan felt adamant that when stationed to protect the airfield she was armed and ready to defend it:

**Susan (Air Force Other Ranks):** Absolutely, we carry weapons around, yeah I agree. In ________ we were put on pickets. So what happens if someone fires on us? We fire back! So I guess you are put in that situation and you handle it.

Maria also felt strongly that her role in the Air Force required her to defend her station:

**Maria (Air Force Officer):** When you go and do your training you do all this ground defence and you learn how to use a rifle and you do all these things, and you are aware that you are doing all these things so you can defend an airfield, defend wherever you happen to be stationed. We are all taught how to do it.

Marion expressed confidence in her training and in her aptitude, as a member of the Defence Force, to do her job to the best of her ability:

**Marion (Air Force Officer):** Everybody in the ADF is trained to be combat ready. And if I was put into a position like that [a combat situation] then I am
in the Defence Force and that’s why I joined, it wouldn’t worry me, you do your job and you do it to the best of your ability.

On two occasions in separate articles, Eleanor Hancock (1993, 2000) considers the protectionism debates. She states that it is ‘obvious’ that women are not spared from suffering in war whether they are military personnel or civilian. ‘Indeed it is hard to believe, in the light of the experience of civilians in bombing in the Second World War and Gulf War, or the treatment of German female non-combatant prisoners of war at the end of the War, that this sort of argument can be seriously advanced’ (Hancock, 1993: 91). At a later date she refers to it as ‘astonishing’ that combat restrictions could ‘…derive from a belief that excluding women from combat protects them from the dangers of war … Civilian or noncombatant status leaves women even more defenceless’ (Hancock, 2000: 169).

In relation to two questions that Hancock was asked to consider for her (2000) article on women in combat: ‘Will women kill, and will men kill women?’ Veronica assertively states that women will kill, in war zone a combatant is operating on survival, regardless of gender:

Veronica (Army Officer): Men will kill women and women will kill men. It comes down to survival, you won’t hesitate because of gender. A target with a weapon is a target with a weapon.

None of the women I interviewed for this study felt that their status as non-combatants protected them. Participants believe that the desire to protect is not restricted to the male gender but is a trait embodied by women as well. However, most reported that their training prepared them for war. All of these women convey certainty in their roles as ‘protectors’ and ‘defenders’ of their stations and of their countries. For these women the debates about women’s need for protection are redundant.
Conclusion

Each of the arguments outlined in this chapter are based on deeply scripted notions of gender. When examined, the arguments are based on myth, which supports an ideology based on traditional gender stereotypes; ‘men are naturally warriors and women are not’. Empirical research has made some inroads into the myth of male bonding as an essential component of combat roles. However the existing combat exclusions operate to support and sustain these myths by perpetuating the notion that women as a gender do not belong in combat.

Competency based engagement for combat employments is recognised by most of the research participants in this study as the fair and just way of determining the suitability of people to specific combat tasks. Basing roles upon the competency needed for tasks within the role is equitable and ensures that tasks are not defined in terms of gender suitability. This approach is also likely to lead to reviews on how equipment is designed which would benefit both sexes.

Data from interviews conducted for this study reveal that women are acutely aware that there are many options open to them in the military that have not yet been adequately explored. Competency based employment is one of these. The issues regarding female hygiene, pregnancy and menstruation are viewed as sideline issues that are ultimately offensive rather than ‘real’ for most women. The participants in this research were concerned that women would be ‘set up to fail’ and that processes to integrate women would be deliberately slowed down to prevent any real progress being made.

Whilst the concept of social cohesion and the sacredness of male bonding is well entrenched in military culture most of the women in this study concurred with the literature on task cohesion enhancing military effectiveness. Mixed gender units uniting around missions were thought to be more productive and useful in the military setting than was the concept of social cohesion. Cohesion is therefore not viewed as a gendered phenomenon but one that may extend to a group of people with any ratio of males and females. Only one woman in this study believed that women
do not bond as well as men. There is no empirical evidence to support the notion that women cannot or do not bond as cohesively as men.

In the same light, this research has revealed that the protective instinct is not confined to one gender only. Men may well display protective behaviour toward women, however, they may also display it to one another as well. The lives of both men and women are after all intrinsically valuable. Men do not have a monopoly on the protective instinct and women in this study feel that they too embody protective and defensive instincts. All of the women interviewed for this study reported an ability to protect themselves and others during a conflict.

The myths that surround gender and the military are deep-seated within the narratives of society (Hancock, 1993 & 2000; Smith, 2000a; Smith & McAllister, 1991). I would equally add that they are insidious. They imply that it is natural that women are confined to the private spheres of life, to domesticity and childrearing, while men have a natural entitlement to the public sphere where excluding women is justifiable (Grossman, 2000; Segal, 1995; Stiehm, 1982; Youngman, 2001).

It is ‘ideas’ about men and women, assumptions and prejudices, stereotypes and myths, about gender, that Peach calls ‘gender ideology’. And it is these ‘…rather than established facts about women’s or men’s capabilities, that too frequently dominate the discussion…’ (Peach, 1996: 157). Indeed, gender ideology looks to stereotypes before, or instead of, looking to an individuals unique characteristics or capabilities. Gender ideology, then ‘…perpetuate[s] myths not only about women but also about men, the military, and the nature of war and combat’ (Peach, 1996: 161). After serious appraisal of the issues it is clear why ‘[m]ost analysts with considered perspective have dismissed the arguments for combat exclusion as largely myth…’ (Brower, 1996: 4).

Myths about women’s inferiority in the military are insidious and difficult to overcome. To those who would like to keep women from positions of power and prestige in the military, myths about women being inferior to men serve the purpose of keeping these positions as a preserve for men. As Judith Stiehm (1989) contends, myths are ‘functional’ because they encompass contradiction and because they are
‘... not very susceptible to either logical or empirical disproof’ (Stiehm, 1989: 223). Women have consistently proved that they can be competent and talented members of the military, however, the mythology that surrounds women such as inferior physicality, their inability to bond (or to upset males bonding), and to be unable to protect others, sees them as unable to adequately fill prestigious military roles.

Billie Mitchell (not her real name) a woman in the US military irreverently states that male perceptions of women on the battlefield are superstitious and conjure up images of witchcraft.

Consequently, like witches who cause the cattle to die or the beer to go sour, Army women are responsible for poor morale and unit unreadiness. Sometimes their presence emasculates units. Other times the opposite obtains: displaying prowess men fight over sexual rights to women soldiers (Mitchell, 1996: 39).

For many advocates of women in the military, Mitchell’s extreme comments might prove refreshingly amusing, merely putting arguments against women having military roles into a realistic perspective, and into the mythological framework where they belong.

Mythology surrounding combat as a site of masculine superiority and stereotypes of the male gender as aggressive and the female gender as peaceful are the most substantial reasons that women remain prohibited from sharing the right to serve in combat employments (Peach, 1996; Mitchell, 1996; Stiehm, 1982, 1996). None of the reasons given in the arguments against women’s full integration in this chapter have been derived from empirical evidence. Rather they are irrational and infused with emotionality about the natural order of human society (Hancock, 1993). Opposition to women in combat, however, does not stand as the only military debate about women’s integration. If opponents to women in combat were basing their arguments on the reality of gendered limitations then surely they would spend an equal amount of energy arguing for women’s increased participation in peacekeeping?
Chapter Six

Women in Combat:
“Gender Under Fire”
Introduction

Instead of dying screaming, being raped by an aggressor army, it is a relief to face the enemy with your own weapon.

Tamil Tiger – Sri Lanka

(Cited in Greer, 1999: 164)

Presently all that remains, as a final barrier to full gender integration and equality for women in the ADF, are the exclusions that currently prevent women from entering into combat roles (Nemitschenko, 2001; Walbank, 1992).

In Australia women are currently restricted from serving in combat roles that would require them to engage in hand-to-hand combat with an adversary in war. Combat duties are defined as:

‘Duties requiring a person to commit, or participate directly in the commission of, an act of violence against an adversary in time of war’ (Department of Defence, 1986).

However, women are not restricted from combat-related duties, these are defined as:

‘Duties requiring a person to work in support of, and in close proximity to, a person performing combat duties, being work performed in circumstances in which the person performing the work may be killed or injured by an act of violence committed by an adversary (Department of Defence, 1986).

Between 1984 and 1992, the ADF opened the majority of combat-related categories to women. As it stands presently, 88 percent of employment categories across the board are open to female personnel.

- The Navy has 98.4 percent of employment categories open to women and 98.3 percent of positions are available to females.
- The Army has 74.9 percent of employment categories open to women and 51 percent of positions are available to females.
- The Air Force has 97.4 percent of employment categories open to women and 96.6 percent of positions are available to females.

The employment categories and positions that come within those categories that are unavailable to the female personnel include:

- Navy: Clearance divers
- Army: Armour, Artillery, Infantry, Combat Engineer
- Air Force: Ground Defence officers and Airfield Defence Guards

Exclusions also prevent women working in some areas of ADF employments (those areas where the composition of chemicals worked with are toxic to the reproductive systems of women) due to occupational health and safety rationales mostly to do with reproduction (Department of the Parliamentary Library, 2000: 2).

These restrictions are all that now remain between female service personnel and full gender equality (Nemitschenko, 2001). Exclusions continue for a variety of reasons and separating those reasons, which are based in bias and speculation concerning women’s ability, and others, which are based in fact is the point of this chapter. In this section these reasons will be described, analysed, and debated with the most pertinent aspects of the women in combat debates illuminated and scrutinised.

**Women In Combat: The Issues**

Integrating women into combat roles is probably one of the most complex, controversial, and hotly debated issues in the Australian military today (Barry, 1993; Smith, 2000a). The issues involved have been described, analysed, and debated by commentators from within and outside of the military and are usually done so from two very different sides of the fence (Hancock, 2000; Nemitschenko, 2001; Smith, 2000a).

Rhetoric about the Defence Force having an obligation to reflect and to meet the needs of a tax paying civilian population abound (Smith, 2000a). Debates concerning women’s increasing participation in the Defence Force need to take into
account advances made by women: prior achievements in relation to entry into public life where women were once thought to be unsuitable and are now successful. That women are taxpayers and equal citizens needs to be taken into account. Opponents sometimes assume that women’s liberation in a military context is a destructive feminist project, or social experiment, that seeks to or could undermine national defence (Barry, 1993; Gat, 2000; Mitchell, 1998; van Creveld, 2000, 2001). And even those who see little reason for exclusions such as Barry reminds his readers that national defence is more important than the ‘…social or egalitarian needs of one section of society’ (Barry, 1993: 6). Women are not, however, one section of society, they equate to more than half of Australian society.

Lifting restrictions that limit women’s service would not be, as Barry suggests, providing employment for the sake of it, or meeting an ‘alternative social function’ (Barry, 1993: 6). Lieutenant Sarah Chapman, from the ADF, is correct in observing that the ADF cannot afford to lower standards in combat employments as some of the commentators she cites are suggesting would be necessary should women be included in combat (Chapman, 1999). These commentators, however, are also suggesting that women’s inclusion amounts to a social experiment and that areas of integration would become a ‘test bed’ with senior officers becoming ‘managers of social programs’ (Brennan in Chapman, 1999: 27). These arguments express a fear that including women in combat will reduce military effectiveness. It is alleged that a military that includes women as combatants will be less likely to win wars therefore weakening the power of the state. The military has a responsibility for personnel and for the successes of its operations. Opponents to women in combat are concerned that military capability would be threatened should women assume roles of combatants.

Arguments are forwarded that the safety of the nation is of more significance than the ‘equal rights’ agendas of women (See Hancock, 1993; Nemitschenko, 2001; Peach 1996). However, it is difficult to understand how the issue of defending a nation and equality for women in the military have become so intertwined. It is as though women’s equality is being constructed as a concept that will ultimately weaken national security.
In this context societal trends must be considered as significant indicators to determine whether changes in women’s status have ever threatened the nation. For instance, it could be considered useful to determine whether women’s right to vote impacted detrimentally upon the political system, upon Government, or upon the international relations of Australia as a nation. Given that debates against suffrage and women obtaining the vote revolved around such questions it is wise to consider whether or not these questions, were based in bias. In England in 1907, for instance, an English earl blocked a bill to allow women some limited voting rights based upon his opinion which was ‘I think they are too hysterical … I do not think women are safe guides in government, they are very unsafe guides’ (Miles, 1989: 228).

Women’s ability to understand political processes were, after all, unsubstantiated fears.

Societal trends can demonstrate how, in the past, arguments about women’s inferiority were constructed and presented, how they managed to prevail, and how they were ultimately contradicted and disproved. They indicate how limitations based within stereotypes and assumptions are prejudicial and have little basis in reality. There is no empirical evidence that significant numbers of women in any one area of military operations has lessened that area’s effectiveness (De Pauw, 1998).

It is imperative that the ADF considers the reality of world affairs and events in historical and contemporary contexts and incorporates this knowledge within their assessment of what women’s capabilities in the military might be. If restrictions are to be lifted, an assessment of women’s past achievements needs to be considered and so do the present accomplishments of women in other cultures (De Pauw, 1998; Segal, 1995; Stiehm, 1996). These debates need to be shifted out of the social and historical isolation they are currently located within.

The mythology in the military that surrounds male superiority and female inferiority is widespread and deep-seated (Agostino, 1998a; Burton, 1996; Grey 1998). It is this myth that most needs to be scrutinized, contradicted, and transformed; more so than any other opposition to women’s integration into combat. By illuminating the myth of female inferiority it need not be transformed into ‘women are superior, and men are inferior’, as some fear based resistance would indicate (see Mitchell, 1998; van
Creveld, 2000, 2001). The myth is that one gender is superior over the other. A transformation of the myth would see military personnel, all personnel, as being seen as exceptional in that their roles are as national defenders. Men need not lose their sense of being part of an elite force by including all their colleagues within this status. However, the belief system within the military that views men as superior to women is extremely powerful. ‘The real issue is that men do come to be more highly valued and rewarded for their tasks than do women … In the case of the military, the combat exclusionary policy which prohibits women from the most prestigious military tasks ensures that combat (the most highly rewarded activity in terms of honour and promotion) is reserved for men’ (Walbank, 1992: 12).

The Physicality of the Female Body

Physiology is particularly controversial and proves to be one of the most difficult areas for proponents to prove that women can achieve combat standards. This is precisely because men are usually larger, taller, and stronger than women.

Training in the military has been designed by and for men and since women have been participating in mixed unit training many women have been consistently injured from doing tasks and exercises that have been designed specifically for the male body – their upper body strength specifically (Chapman, 1999; Nemitschenko, 2001; Smith, 2000a; Hancock, 1993; Peach, 1996).

Margie expresses the view that the training environment could be adapted to suit women’s physiology. She believes that female physical training instructor’s skills could be utilised to enhance programs for women and improve training outcomes:

Margie (Air Force Officer): They need to change the training environment which is run by men, for men … We do have female physical training instructors, maybe they can somehow get involved in stuff that is good for women, the training we are doing really hasn’t changed from my understanding for at least 50 or 60 years. ‘Oh but we have always done it this

17 Most of the issues about physical strength were canvassed in the previous chapter, this section takes up issues that were not discussed in depth
way so it must be right’. Well that doesn’t mean it can’t be improved, that we can’t change the focus of it so it is better suited toward actual outcomes.

Military training standards are a matter of contention. Double standards cause resentment amongst males and set women up as second class before they have even started. Given that combat standards are set to ensure that personnel who go into combat are physically equipped to withstand the gruelling physical nature of that environment it has been suggested by both opponents and proponents that physical standards for combat roles remain generic for both genders or are competency based (Barry, 1993; Brower, 1996; Peach, 1996). Veronica believes that the uncertainty about standards reflects a deep-seated fear that some women may prove that they are capable as combatants and that it may be revealed that some men are not capable of the role. She likens the arduousness of military training to childbirth:

Veronica (Army Officer): Policy makers are scared that if they are clear on standards, or went higher, they would knock half the men out as well – some women are incredibly fit. Military training is arduous – but not as hard as childbirth.

Pregnancy is also a condition that warrants consideration. It is not possible to deploy a pregnant woman and if a woman does become pregnant whilst on a deployment she will need to be removed from the possible hazards involved. Whilst women can and do become pregnant it is likely that concerns in this area are over overestimated. ‘Whilst it is widely acknowledged and largely undisputed that pregnancy limits the operational effectiveness of a female member of the military, prevailing attitudes about the degree to which pregnancy is correlated with absenteeism, lost productivity and lack of work-related commitment do not concur with many statistical findings’ (Chapman, 1999: 29). It is likely that a combat soldier would either abstain from sex due to professionalism and/or conditions in the combat environment, or she would take the necessary precautions to ensure that she did not become pregnant.

Some military studies into women in combat concentrate on differences between men and women in regards to the body, to hormones, and general brain function
(Goldstein, 2001). Cynthia Enloe (1983) contends that military studies into gender perpetuate sexist ideology based on biological determinism. Enloe maintains that these studies search for ‘intrinsic’ differences between male and female soldiers that only serve to justify women’s exclusion from combat roles. Such ‘confines’ she says are perpetuated by the media and women find them difficult to escape (Enloe, 1983). It is explicit that military policy, practice, and debate are shaped by a focus on biological determinism where it is perceived that women cannot escape their physical inferiority. Some military women do, however, resist the stereotype that women are not as physically capable as men. Bridget, for instance, passes standards set for women and for men when she is doing physical training:

**Bridget (Army Officer):** I also make sure I pass to the male standard. It’s more of a personal thing for me I suppose because [I] don’t want to give someone the opportunity to say ‘you can’t do this job because you can’t even pass the physical standards’.

**Aggression**

Women’s psychology is equally questioned in regards to how appropriate it may be for roles in combat (Gat, 2000; Goldstein, 2001; Mitchell, 1998; Tuten, 1982; van Creveld, 2001). A woman’s psychological and emotional constitution is seen by many opponents to be somewhat weaker than men’s (Nemitschenko, 2001). Women are understood to be less aggressive than men. Men are responsible for most of the violent crime in society and their behaviours are generally more aggressive than would be the average woman’s. It is however disputed whether violent crime and military service should be compared and whether aggressiveness is a necessary characteristic in the personality of a combatant. ‘… the assumption that more aggressive individuals are likely to be more effective soldiers is not proven’ (Nemitschenko, 2001: 38).

Studies on women and aggression are highly inconclusive with some studies supporting the stereotype that women are not aggressive, others contradicting this, and some remaining ‘ambiguous’ (Goldstein, 2001: 136). Whether aggression is learnt by males or is determined by genetics or testosterone is widely debated
(Campbell, 1993; Goldstein, 2001). Observation of world affairs and crime statistics would point to males behaving aggressively on a much higher level than females. However, not all males are aggressive, and some females commit violent crime (Connell, 2000; Goldstein, 2001). What is an important consideration is whether or not aggression is a desirable attribute in a soldier.

Some women may be aggressive and some may respond favourably to aggressiveness training. As such, it does appear that information about individual women is ambiguous. Women interviewed for this study confirm that aggression is dependent upon individual characteristics and is not defined by gender. Cindy believes that certain personalities will exhibit aggression as opposed to only the male gender:

**Cindy (Army Other Ranks):** *I don’t agree that women aren’t aggressive enough [for combat]. I think it [aggression] is a personality thing not a gender issue.*

Marion believes that some women she knows of in the military are more aggressive than males because they are motivated by competing with men:

**Marion (Air Force Officer):** *I think women can be aggressive, some of the girls I am thinking of might have more aggression than the guys because they have a desire to beat the guys at their own game so they have double the motivation.*

Michele makes an insightful point placing the onus upon individual women to decide whether they embody enough aggression to perform a combat role. She contends that military personnel are trained to kill, and that they are aware that they are training for this purpose, and that training enhances a person’s aggressiveness:

**Michele (Army Officer):** *If you have a combat role, that means you are going to kill people, we all do that training in the army … you are trained to kill. I think that women who go into a combat role go into it with the understanding that they are going to be killing people, and I guess they would*
know that they have it within them to kill people. If they want the role then they probably have the aggressiveness to do the job … Women don’t have a monopoly on nurturing … you give someone a weapon and you train them and … it brings out qualities in them … If you were trained in a certain way then you would be able to do certain things. We train to be aggressive. When we are doing weapons training we are told to take an aggressive stance … I can see how if you are training women to do those sorts of things then I think it could lead on to them being able to do those things.

Sociological Arguments

Objections to women in combat are powerful. Arguments may be easily unpacked, disproved, and abandoned, but as Hancock (1993) argues, one resolved argument will merely be replaced by another. As Hancock points out, arguments against women in combat are not static; they ‘shift’, with objections changing. When one is overcome another takes its place (Hancock, 1993: 90). Unfortunately, even if the replacement argument is emotive or speculative, the power of the objection will guarantee the argument a lengthy and involved hearing. An example of such a creative change of tactic is the argument that an army might seem weak and effeminate to others if women were in their ranks (Hancock, 2000; Nemitschenko, 2001). Another is that enemy soldiers would fight more fiercely if engaging against women and would not surrender as easily to women (Hancock, 2000; Nemitschenko, 2001). Counter arguments point out that a nation may be perceived as even more dedicated to winning because of their willingness to use women soldiers (Hancock, 2000; Nemitschenko, 2001).

In response to these arguments, I asked some of the women I interviewed how obvious gender might be to enemy soldiers:

Marion (Air Force Officer): I think if we are ever in a combat role where we are seeing the enemy … I don’t think you can see if it’s a boy or a girl,

18 Cohesion and protectionism are considered to be sociological issues, they are not explored here because they are fully canvassed in chapter 5
you are all overloaded with stuff you are carrying. You are all wearing the same thing and are covered in mud. It’s not obvious even doing the exercises we do.

**Bridget (Army Officer):** When you’re all geared up, you’ve got your kit on and all that, you can’t see gender. And the fact that you’re female ‘goes out the window’ ‘cause you are there to do the job you have to do, so you tend not to pay too much attention to that at all. From a distance, the enemy usually hit you at about 100 meters away, so until you actually get to them you wouldn’t know what gender they are.

Many military theorists who oppose women being in combat fear that there will be a public outcry should the military permit such a thing (Barry, 1993; Youngman, 2000). It is thought that once female personnel start arriving home in body bags that the public will revolt and demand an overturning of policy. However, proponents for women in combat present evidence that points to public attitudes to women in combat changing (Brower, 1996; Youngman, 2000). Some commentators assert that society is generally less concerned about the issue (Brower, 1996; De Pauw, 1998; Nemitschenko, 2001; Youngman, 2000). Women making strides to achieve a status equal to that of men isn’t such a novelty anymore. Barbara Ehrenreich’s opinion about the American public’s response to the death of eleven women and the capture of two in the Gulf War was that it ‘…aroused no special indignation...’ (Ehrenreich, 1997:229).

**Who Should Serve?**

When considering women for combat roles clarity must be gained. Not all women should become combat soldiers, but some women who are capable of doing so. As Kathyrn Quinn was reminding her readers over a decade ago: clear distinctions need to be made between all women and those who will qualify for the role (Quinn, 1991:48). Only those individual women with an aptitude for such an environment would be considered, and not the entire population of the female sex. As Isobel states, if a member of the military is competent; can pass the standards required to qualify for a
combat role; and is prepared to fight for their country, then they should be entitled to do so, regardless of their gender:

**Isobel (Air Force Officer):** Competencies, judging people on individual merits … not putting people into gender groups … that’s where my really firm views are, that women should be allowed an opportunity to participate if that’s what they want to do, and if they have got the ability then allow them.

The ADF is responsible for putting only those women most appropriate for the role into combat training. When the time comes, the process will need to involve more than the filling of quotas. Moves must be taken to ensure that individual women are not simply set up to fail. If inappropriate moves are taken then it must be remembered that such stresses are caused by organisational problems and active resistance and are not the problem of individual women. As is demonstrated continually throughout this thesis, presently it is women that are disadvantaged by resistance to integration. And of course a second set of disadvantages occurs on an institutional level when the ADF is faced with the results of an undisciplined force. Yet, difficulties with the process are commonly thought to be ‘the problem of women’.

**Cross-Cultural Perspectives of Women in Combat**

‘It must be remembered that contemporary … attitudes toward women in combat have not been shared by every age and culture. Some people have not had the luxury of deciding to exclude some members of the population from the hazards of war’  
*(De Pauw, 1998:25)*.

This section discusses women’s involvement in wars cross-nationally and provides examples of countries in the world where women are participating in wars. A British military trial concerning women in combat is examined, to show how Western militaries continue debates about whether women could serve in combat – despite the prior experience of women in their countries’ past wars – and regardless of cross-national participation of women in wars around the globe. This section also highlights the ways in which Western militaries refuse to acknowledge women’s
achievements in war and in military trials. An exploration of a report from the Canadian Defence Force is also provided. The Canadian military has integrated women into combat roles, the report monitors the progress of integration and highlights the barriers and difficulties women have been encountering.

**Global Trends in Women’s Military Participation**

Azar Gat disputes that women’s roles have been significant throughout time or cross nationally. Despite making concessions for women due to historical and cross national competence in war, nevertheless, Gat attributes the propensity of women to perform secondary roles in war, such as in factories; on farms; and/or auxiliary work, as confirmation of an inborn lack of interest in primary roles (Gat, 2000: 27 & 28). Women’s exclusion from the military and the consequential return to domesticity after revolutionary and guerrilla wars is theorised in a similar fashion, with Gat assigning ‘sex-related predispositions’ as driving this trend. He makes no mention of the fact that this trend is driven by policy exclusion, and/or resistance to women’s participation, and amounts to structural inequalities. Nor does he deem that these trends are chosen for women and not by them (Gat, 2000: 28 & 29). His lack of sociological analysis is nothing out of the ordinary in these debates.

After WW2 women were denied a continuation of the liberty they had found in the military and in war work and this corresponds with the experiences of women in contemporary revolutionary armies (Cooke, 1996, Segal, 1995). In both the Western and non-Western contexts when new governments and organised militaries are formed, women return to traditional roles in society and no longer perform integral roles in the military (De Pauw, 1998; Ejiougu, 2000; Enloe, 1980; Segal, 1995). The contribution of women in its entirety is quickly overlooked or forgotten after a war is over. In Eritrea, for example, women were respected as soldiers, even revered and emulated. But after the revolution they were relegated again to subordinate positions in their society where they once again found themselves confined to domestic duties (Cooke, 1996: 259).

Women doing men’s work in a crisis or emergency situation, where there is no choice, seems permissible. *Choosing* to do what is considered a role for males only,
after the war is over, seems to be a different matter entirely and is treated with suspicion (Cooke, 1996; De Pauw, 1998; Segal, 1995).

Some commentators describe the using of women’s expertise and skill for the duration of a conflict and then denying women continued military careers after the conflict has ended, as a trend that they put down to women’s *nature* (see Gat, 2000; Barry, 1993). That is, women’s natural predisposition for traditional roles in society, as opposed to the *unnatural* role of combatant (Gat, 2000). However, women do not necessarily voluntarily choose to be relegated back to subordinate roles (Segal, 1995).

Such a trend indicates that women’s roles in society are socially constructed. The male role as protector and combatant is also socially constructed. The ‘amnesia’ that is experienced when wars are over, makes evident that women’s combatant roles are forgotten in order to perpetuate the myth that war is entirely the business of men and that women either ‘waited at home’ during the war; have no desire to participate in war; and are not suited for war (Segal, 1995).

**Devaluing Women’s Efforts in Combat**

van Creveld states that women have ‘never’ had a major role in combat in any ‘country’, ‘culture’, or ‘period in history’. He does however acknowledge the part women have taken in ‘rebellions’, then he adds a ‘but’, ‘…once a revolutionary movement has succeeded, an established State does not send its women into combat’ (*van Creveld, 1993: 5*). The implication seems to be that this is a ‘civilized’ way for a new State to behave. The agency of women is denied in such analysis. The inference being that a nation may use the abilities of women when there is no other choice to be made, but then may strip women of any independence, honour, and value earned during her participation and stipulate that she is now to resume a position in society that is dependent, without honour, and devalued.

Such a trend also ensures that women’s military participation is not one of advancement through merit, but one that is cyclic, and dependent upon a nation’s
need rather than upon the proven competencies of women (Nantais & Lee, 1999, Segal, 1995).

In chapter three it was seen that women in the Allied Forces, including Australian women, had participated in WW1 and WW2. Below I have provided some contemporary examples of women participating in wars as combatants to show that they are indeed contributors in wars in their countries:

MujahedIn National Liberation Army
- Opposed to Islamic fundamentalism
- Operates against Iran from bases in Iraq
- Maryam Rajavi, a woman, is their Commander
- 70% of her top officers are women
- A male member of Mujahedin National Liberation Army was reported as saying to a New York Times journalist that it is a source of pride to be commanded by a woman – He said that it is not merely accepted, it is welcomed (De Pauw, 1998: 291).

The Shining Path guerrilla movement in Peru
- Has always had a woman as Second in Command
- In 1992, 40% of its members were women
- Popular belief is that the women are more ‘ruthless’ than the men (De Pauw, 1998: 291).

The Nicaraguan Contras
- Have women in the ranks and as platoon Commanders
- Photos in the Wall Street Journal have shown women advancing to the front line under enemy attack carrying heavy packs, ammunition, and babies (De Pauw, 1998: 291 & 292).

Sri Lanka
- Women have been employed as combatants on both sides of the war
- Of the Liberation Tigers, two thirds are women
Tamil Tiger women train separately in an all women camp (De Pauw, 1998: 292).

The Former Yugoslavia

- Women have a long tradition of involvement in ethnic warfare
- The Western media gave little or no coverage of this in recent conflicts, preferring to focus on rape as a war crime (De Pauw, 1998: 293). (This reportage was vital but it is interesting to question whether we in the Western world are more comfortable with woman as victim of war, than we are with woman as aggressor?).

**Cultural Relativism or International Gender Stereotyping?**

Contemporary comparisons when applied to cultures that differ from our own are not always accepted as relevant because cultural expectations, experiences, and values differ widely. Sarah Chapman (1999) for example, notes that although Canada, Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway and Portugal do not exclude women from combat, ‘... the lessons which may be learned from these nations are limited, given that they are a culturally diverse group and each nation is very different from our own’ (Chapman, 1999: 25).

In my opinion, cultural diversity is relevant in these debates only to a point. The arguments that prevail against increasing women’s military roles, pertain to gender in such a way that they override cultural difference. Cross cultural comparisons are relevant to arguments that focus on women’s physicality; their size, height, weight and strength in comparison to men; their capacity for aggression in combat; and the potential impact on cohesion within troops. Women’s bodies do not differ significantly throughout cultures nonetheless militaries are seen as a male preserve in many parts of the world.

The potential lessons learnt from other nations can be limitless if the lens of exploration is widened enough to take them into consideration.
A British Case Study

By way of comparing a culture as close to Australian society as possible, I am providing a summary of recent events in Britain. The study below shows that regardless of female performance, resistance to women’s expanding military roles is not easily diminished.

In 2002 The Ministry of Defence in Britain carried out a two-part research study entitled ‘Women in the Armed Forces’. The report consisted of several smaller reports:

1. Two formal literature reviews detailing:
   - The experiences of other nations
   - Physiological aspects of gender
   - Health
   - Human performance
   - Issues into unit cohesion

2. Another report on the results of questionnaire research where Defence Force personnel and their families were surveyed as to their opinions on the issue of women’s integration into combat.

3. A report on a field experiment, conducted to determine the cohesion of mixed gender and single sex small group combat units (Employment of Women in the Armed Forces Steering Group, 2002: 3&4; paper presented by the Ministry of Defence, 2002: 2&3).

The British report into women’s integration into combat employments is interesting to note because of how research conducted in the area, whilst productive, failed to bring about any change to the status quo. On May 22, 2002 the British Secretary of State for Defence announced that current policy imposing restrictions on women’s integration into combat roles would remain in place.
The decision behind this announcement in 2002 came from a 1997 decision by the then-Secretary of State for Defence to widen employment opportunities for women. Whilst some employment categories had been opened in 1995, exclusions remained on ‘face to face, close range’ combat, i.e. the Royal Marines General Service, the Household Cavalry, the Royal Armoured Corps, Infantry, and the Royal Air Force Regiment (paper presented by the Ministry of Defence, 2002: 2). It was concurrently ordered that a review of and investigation into the impact of women’s integration into the remaining employment categories be conducted and reviewed again in three years.

The research conducted here was largely unimaginative. The field experiment conducted offered a slant that was somewhat innovative, in that it was based on a practical experiment, but it was rendered inconclusive due to its inability to be measured against similar experiments or real life combat situations.

The writers of the report are transparent in their reluctance to engage in argument or analysis rendering the report apolitical in intention. Yet its contents and its impact on policy is highly political.

The field experiment that was conducted as part of the research was based on the hypothesis that cohesion is the most important factor in small group combat situations. Fifty-three soldiers spent two weeks participating in a field experiment that consisted of seven phases.

- The soldiers were divided into six sections
  - Male section Commander; male Second in Command (2IC); 2xfemales; 4xmales
  - Male section Commander; male 2IC; 1xfemale; 5xmales
  - Male section Commander; all male section
  - Female section Commander; male 2IC
  - Female section Commander; male 2IC; 1xfemale; 5xmales
  - Female section Commander; male 2IC; 6xmales

(Employment of Women in the Armed Forces Steering Group, 2002: C- 5 & 6).
Women Found To Be At A Disadvantage: Physically

It is not surprising that the report finds that the physical capacity of females presents the greatest disadvantage to full integration into combat employments. The report chose only to review literature pertaining to the physiological characteristics of most women, revealing that women generally have lower testosterone levels than do men, women have lower body weights, are shorter, carry more body fat, have less muscular strength, show less endurance and must exert 25-30% more energy than do males in order to achieve similar energy output.

The extra effort exerted to achieve output, it was revealed, increases a woman’s risk of injury. However, the report revealed that women who have equal fitness to male peers also show the same rate of injury as their male peers and that training narrows the gap between fitness levels of males and females.

Menstruation was identified as a physiological disadvantage, specifically pre-menstrual syndrome and the onset of painful menstruation symptoms having the potential to impair performance (Employment of Women in the Armed Forces Steering Group, 2002: 4-5).

The second disadvantage identified was women’s general capacity for aggression. It was found that women were more reluctant than men to behave aggressively, that women feared the consequences of their aggression and required more provocation than did men. Countering this was the finding that training, provocation, and the granting of social licence to be aggressive brought female aggression in line with males (Employment of Women in the Armed Forces Steering Group, 2002: 5).

Parameters Of Report

On both the reported physical and psychological disadvantages, there were limitations in the information under study. No explanation was provided regarding the gendered standards of training situations. Nor was any detail provided about the psychological impacts of individual women in an all-male training environment.
The report offered no scrutiny as to the effectiveness of aggression in combat situations. Nor did it extend into the realm of the importance of strategy and intelligence in combat versus the use of aggression. Therefore, the report does not conclusively prove women to be lacking ability in combat roles.

The field experiment that was conducted as part of the research was based on the hypothesis that cohesion is the most important factor in small group combat situations. Fifty-three soldiers were divided into six section groups of varying gender composites. The groups trained together for two weeks and spent a further two weeks in a testing environment where they completed seven phases of assessment. The groups were observed, supervised, and assessed by psychologists from Human Sciences (Army). Cohesion was assessed according to five factors; leadership, teamwork, group membership, team building, and group stability (Employment of Women in the Armed Forces Steering Group, 2002: 15 & E-1).

Attitudes to gender, stereotyping, and positive and negative perceptions of gender were identified as factors that quite probably lead to poor group cohesiveness (Employment of Women in the Armed Forces Steering Group, 2002: 5). That such attitudes are held up as proof of women’s unsuitability for combat employments is problematic therefore, and reflects not on women soldiers, but on those people that hold these attitudes. The report offered no critique of the British Forces’ pandering to gender biased attitude but chose only to see this as a gender issue (i.e., a women’s issue).

That some military groupings favour ‘masculine values’ and that these values infuse organisational culture and therefore determine ‘norms’ about group behaviour and group identity was revealed to be an integration issue. Any violation of these ‘norms’ and/or values was seen to impact negatively upon group effectiveness and performance (Employment of Women in the Armed Forces Steering Group, 2002: 6). One can only assume that the implied message here is that women are seen as a violation to the norm of masculine values.
Once again the focus is narrow: taking into account the supposed known entity of group cohesion and what is considered to be effective in combat situations. What isn’t taken into account is that these ‘values’ can also be viewed as an organisational deficit. A more contemporary approach to dealing with negative perceptions and stereotypes would be to examine how they impact on group cohesiveness, instead of assuming that they are effective tools to ensuring cohesion. To continue to exclude women from combat engagements because of these values is to fall prey to a misconception that such values, stereotypes and perceptions enhance combat effectiveness. A masculinity that values aggression over valour, intolerance over teamwork, and victimization over mateship can only lead to poor cohesion and, over time, to a lack of combat effectiveness. These values impact upon men as well as women in a detrimental manner and this also must also be taken into account (Burton, 1996; Davis, 1998; Goldstein, 2001).

From the field experiment results, the report concluded that there was nothing to suggest that females enhanced or harmed cohesion. This conclusion was based upon the identified need to conduct more field research in order to test the results against other research. The field experiment did find that differences in section commander ratings, between males and females, did occur and were able to be identified. This information came from both subjective ratings from personnel and objective ratings of military performance. Although the report findings in this area are presented in an ambiguous manner and do not spell out that female command ratings were high, they do imply this (Employment of Women in the Armed Forces Steering Group, 2002: E-1).

Two groups in the experiment demonstrated ‘greater leadership’, received higher military performance assessments, and reported high subjective ratings for cohesion. It was clearly noted that these two groups both contained females. This was followed by the statement, “There is nothing to suggest from these ratings that females could command better or worse than males” (Employment of Women in the Armed Forces Steering Group, 2002: E-1). Yet it was made clear that the groups were assessed for leadership as well as cohesion. The all-male section was “…polarized towards the lower end of cohesion and military assessment” (Employment of Women in the Armed Forces Steering Group, 2002: E-1).
One is left wondering why the British Defence Forces conducted this research at all. Especially as it was unable to draw any conclusions from it. It also begs the question as to the resulting impact on the women soldiers who participated in the field experiment. Given that many did extremely well and that the experiment results were dismissed, and that the policy remains to enforce combat restrictions, the psychological impact could be serious.

**Canadian Experience of Women in a Combat Training Environment**

It will be useful now to turn now to Canadian research where attempts at combat integration have been monitored (Davis, 1997, 1998; Muir, 1992). The Canadian Armed Forces in 1989 was directed by a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal to remove restrictions on the employment of women and to achieve complete gender integration within 10 years. In 1997, the Assistant Deputy Minister ordered that the Chief Review Services conduct research in the form of an independent evaluation to monitor the progress of the Canadian forces’ gender integration (Davis, 1998). The research conducted by Davis, (1998) was extensive and thorough, leading to a transparent examination of the successes and difficulties faced by the Canadian Forces whilst attempts at gender integration were managed.

The research team interviewed approximately 50 serving members, including female Officers and Non-Commissioned Members, Command Personnel staff, staff from Canadian Forces Recruiting, Education, and Training Systems, and staff from the Royal Military College. Five focus groups were also held with serving females and males (Davis, 1998).

It was certainly refreshing to read this research, with its emphasis upon qualitative interview transcripts and its willingness to present the experiences of serving members beyond statistical measuring of how many women entered the combat arms, how many were injured in training and how many failed.

A study conducted previously by Davis, the ‘Chief Land Staff Gender Integration Study: The Regular Force Training and Employment Environment (1997) revealed
that the Canadian Forces had had little success in recruiting and retaining women in the combat arms employment areas. The later research then (Davis, 1998) was an opportunity for the Canadian Forces to explore, from the perspective of personnel, why this was occurring. The report found that low rates of retention correlated with low rates of success particularly in the area of training and physical standards. But the research findings suggested that the reasons for female soldier’s low rate of success were less than straightforward. They were in fact complex and obscured by these physical standards.

The research data suggest that the lens through which women are observed and evaluated is tinted in a way that discredits and devalues women in relation to male norms and standards (Davis, 1998: 14).

Ambiguity in training standards resulted in trainers setting women up to fail and then punishing the whole group. Such behaviours by leaders and trainers appear to be deliberate strategies to create a division between men and women which can only result in resentment. This kind of discrimination was overwhelmingly identified by women as a factor leading to their decision to leave the combat employment or to leave the military altogether. It also meant in some cases that women failed the training and were then discharged (Davis, 1998).

Harassment of women was also a factor in attrition. Harassment was sometimes identified as covert and at other times resulted in sexual or physical assault (Davis, 1998). ‘One rape and several physical assaults requiring medical treatment or hospitalization were reported’ (Davis, 1998: para 19).

The level of attrition of women from the training was then identified as also being cultural. Davis suggests that attrition is linked directly to a culture that has been ‘…defined by men and maintained to train and employ men’ (Davis, 1998: para 22).

Hostile leadership was also identified as contributing to the rates of women being discharged from or leaving the training environment. Davis reported that some leaders were observed to be openly hostile to women, while others gossiped about the inappropriateness of having women in combat. This type of behaviour by leaders
is seen to directly influence group and cultural processes leading to the overt non-acceptance of women (Davis, 1998: p17). A high quality of leadership would be required to ensure that all ranks are informed as to policy regarding integration. Good role modelling by leaders is also required. This was not found to be widespread, consequently, it was peer group pressure – influenced by outspoken males who exerted pressure to conform – who decided who was suitable for the environment. This kind of filter down effect was detrimental and added up to support being withdrawn from women and exclusivist behaviours (Davis, 1998).

Analysis of the interview data suggested then that women experienced not only the usual extreme physical conditions of the training environment but also extreme psychological demands compounded by gendered social behaviours (Davis, 1998). This was unnecessary and highly unlawful, reflecting a lack of discipline amongst men. For women failing the training it is impossible to know if they could have done better if their focus had been allowed to remain on the training.

**Recruiting and Retaining Women in Combat Roles in the ADF**

The question of whether opening all combat positions within the ADF to women would provide potential female recruits with extra incentives to join the forces is open for speculation (Barry, 1993; Muir, 1992; Smith, 2000a).

Recruiting women into combat roles presents a unique set of questions over and above the usual recruiting issues, which tend to concern attractive and motivating advertising. In regards to women, recruiting is complicated by the masculine image of Defence and combat restrictions. It may be that some women would interpret combat exclusions as a result of a sexist environment and although they may have an interest in serving their country, these exclusions could dilute their interest. On the other hand, the very real potential of having to serve in combat may deter some women from joining the military (Barry, 1993; Muir, 1992; Smith, 2000a).
Australian Defence survey research, asking current female personnel their views on serving in combat, has provided mixed results. In some of the research, women are reticent when asked if they would serve in combat, whereas, in other research, this is not so. In Kathryn Quinn’s 1989 research, 45 per cent of women serving in the ADF said they would serve in combat positions. This leaves 55 per cent saying they would not. In 1991, Quinn identified very different trends, with a very high 77.9 per cent of women serving saying they wouldn’t serve in combat positions. Of these, however 71 percent said they would if posted into a combat position (Quinn, 1991). By contrast, four years later, Hodson and Salter found that 51 per cent of female soldiers answered in the affirmative when asked if they would serve in combat, as did a very high 74 per cent of female officers (Hodson and Salter, 1995).

There is a huge discrepancy in these figures, and answers as to why this might be so are few and far between. It shows the inadequacy of one-off survey research, a more illuminative result could have been achieved had women been asked more specifically what their views on serving would be. For instance, women could have been asked for qualitative answers as to what their reasons for saying ‘yes’ or ‘no’ were.

Statistics such as these can be both interesting and confusing and left to themselves may not cast much light on why women do or do not wish to serve in combat. Little’s (1991) research does shed some light on why women might not choose a combat position. Women in Littles’ study admitted reluctance to serve in combat because they felt that they were not trained for such duties (Little, 1991). Women in the ADF are also well aware of the largely sexist culture they work in; combat employments may be seen, understandably by some, as a move towards further discrimination and harassment.

Asking women why they may or may not choose a combat role is vital. We need to further explore the barriers and not just take results at face value. Strategic questioning of women will reveal information that would change the outcomes of the research. All women I talked to identified more than one reason for not wanting to participate in combat roles or for thinking combat roles were inappropriate for women. None of these were a simple ‘because I don’t want too’. The women’s
reasons were complex and ranged from: organisational barriers; there being little infrastructure in place to support women’s integration; the system having been designed by and for men; poor equipment for the female body; and inadequate ill-suited training for women. A small percentage of women in the study believed that women were not physically capable of a combat role.

Lynn’s words sum up a great deal of the above-mentioned factors. Lynn expressed concerns regarding the care that needs to be taken when integrating women into combat roles and what she fears may happen:

**Lynn (Army non-Commissioned Officer):** I really think that they need to be selective about the type of female that they decide to put in combat related roles – and again I don’t think that Defence will even think about it, they’ll just go well – ‘you, you, you, and you – off you go, because we need those positions filled and now they have been deemed as female positions’.

Currently we don’t have the infrastructure set up to put females into combat related positions and that’s where it changes dimensions of ‘oh well we’ll just put them in’. A lot of forethought has to go into how we actually go about it and I think that is our sticking point – how do we go about it.

I’m not saying that they [women] should never be able to do it, but you’ve got to really be quite picky as far as what females you do put in that environment, umm, ‘cause I think that is the biggest barrier … it’s not going to work unless you have the right females in the job. I think it should be a case-by-case basis … even if you do meet the physical thing it doesn’t mean that you are mentally capable of being in that environment to begin with. Especially being one of the pioneering females, when the males aren’t used to having you there, you’ve really got to be mentally strong as well ‘cause it’s a very isolated world.

But then you have got a whole lot of other problems, the system does not work for you, you’ve got problems with packs so you will get back problems before the guys do. When the guys do physical training, even though you have met the minimum requirements, you are going to be working to their level and they won’t be doing a lot of sit ups, which women are good at, or swimming, they will be doing masculine upper body exercises. For example
with packs, women have excellent weight bearing hips but you won’t see any packs that are weight bearing on the hips in the military, there just aren’t any ...

They are coming up with some poor outdated excuses if you ask me. However, one thing that I do feel is a big barrier is that the system is not set up for it.

There are several factors involved in Lynn’s discussion, one is that the ADF needs to put the right women into the right role and that the physical and psychological competencies of the women chosen need to be robust. Lynn further mentions that the type of training involved does not suit the female body. The equipment issued currently is detrimental to women’s bodies and is causing injury. Training women correctly would be imperative to placing them in combat roles as would ensuring that they have equipment to use that will not cause them physical injury. Isobel aptly articulates that to do otherwise is to set women up to fail.

**Isobel (Air Force Officer):** I think it’s [combat integration] got to be well planned and not rushed. It needs to be managed in such a way that the aim is success rather than a surreptitious aim is ‘lets prove this once and for all that they cannot succeed’.

Women also identified issues that were gendered. Issues such as: male resentment of women; prejudice against women; poor leadership; and adversity to change amongst men. Many women believed that women would be intentionally set up to fail. They feared harassment, being isolated, not being accepted by male peers, and a general concern about being a woman in a ‘boys’ club’. Some said it would be too hard to be one of the first women to go through combat training, and that the boys’ club environment would be ‘horrible’.

American research indicates that women officers, as opposed to female enlisted personnel, are the most in favour of lifting combat exclusions. Hodson and Salter’s 1995 research confirms this may also be the case in Australia. Peach notes that in the US most survey responses have shown ‘...that military women favor allowing women to choose combat roles but are reluctant to require combat duty (Peach, 1996: 173). My interview responses have shown a similar pattern with a high percentage of
women agreeing that women should have the right to choose a combat role if it is desired. However a high percentage were reluctant to serve in combat themselves. Again, it needs to be acknowledged why this reluctance is prevalent rather than just noting that it is. And male exclusivist attitudes at all levels of the hierarchy were indicated by all women to be resistant to women’s entry into combat employments.

Women in this study also confirmed that they felt able to protect and defend their country should the need arise. They felt that their training and their roles prepared them for combat roles. The women believed that operational deployments all had the potential to become war zones and they may, in those situations, be called upon to fight for their country. Their disinclination to serve in specific combat roles surrounds a reluctance to be trained in and serve with a traditionally all male battalion.

The quotations below indicate that whilst most of the women in this study agree with women’s right to serve, they wouldn’t want to serve themselves:

**Veronica (Army Officer):** Women should be allowed into combat, but I wouldn’t do it myself.

**Chris (Army Officer)**: I try to stay un-emotive on this and try to keep to logical arguments. I think women should be allowed – but I wouldn’t want to do it myself.

Jo believes that women should be allowed into combat employments if they should choose to do so. As a nurse, however, she believes that duty at the frontline has always been an aspect of service:

**Jo (Army Officer):** Some women want to join and go in with the fighting corps, that’s fine if they choose to do that, that’s not my cup of tea, and it doesn’t need to be because nurses have been in the front line of battle since the Boer War. We don’t have to do that. We are there anyway.
Michele doesn’t believe women should be discriminated against by being denied roles in combat. If women are capable of the role she believes they should be entitled to perform them:

**Michele (Army Officer):** *I think if they are up to it they should be able to do it. I don’t think it would be for every woman, to be in combat – there would be women out there who would want to do that job and I don’t think they should be discriminated against because of gender ... I don’t see why women shouldn’t be in a combat role for any reason.*

Susan had an emotional response to the thought of women in combat employments based on the treatment she thinks they would receive from the men in the ‘boys club’:

**Susan (Air Force Other Ranks):** *I think they [women] should be [allowed into combat roles] But, oh my god! I would hate to be them! I would be concerned about them, I would be worried, because I think that men – your breaking the boundaries of a big boys club there and I would hate to think what they would put a woman through.*

**Resolving a Complex Debate**

Women interviewed for this study had complex and varied views on women in combat. Most reported not wanting a primary combat role themselves. One engineer in the Army did reveal that she wanted to serve in combat engineers; however, her firm opinion was that female officers could serve in this corps but not women from the other ranks.

Most women agreed that women who want to train for a combat role should be permitted to do so. Women identified many hurdles to gender integration in combat roles. There was overwhelming agreement that the attitudes and reactions of males in combat employments would be negative. Many believed that male resistance was so strong that it could determine the outcome of integration in combat training:
Jo (Army Officer): *It’s not the women themselves* [that is preventing gender integration into combat] or the capabilities that they have, and can prove, it’s the prejudices and the perceptions of the men.

Maria believes that men are attracted to combat employments because they are male only environments. She doesn’t have confidence that these men will want to change:

Maria (Air Force Officer): *I think it is more an issue with people who don’t want to change, or who like to think that this [combat] is the last male bastion. When I look back at the type of guys at ADFA that wanted to join the infantry, you know, ‘it’s a man thing’. They had a very low opinion of what women could accomplish, and what they were capable of, and I think that those sorts of people join the infantry because there are no women there. If there were women in infantry it would be the same as any other thing, logistics or catering or engineering or anything.*

Isobel believes, that with positive leadership, change can occur:

Isobel (Air Force Officer): *It is also a leadership issue … I think that it can be managed by good leadership. Provided the leadership does not tolerate those sorts of attitudes. If it is managed in the right way so that you are actually bringing people around rather than just burying resentment or burying prejudice.*

Isobel could see no objection to women in combat. She believes that Government and public opinion could impact upon defence decisions and is concerned that if the Chief of the Defence Force’s made a decision to allow women to serve in combat it could be overridden by Government:

Isobel (Air Force Officer): *Even if defence wants to [have women serve in combat roles] I think it is an issue with the public and with the Government … and I don’t know which way this will go, but certainly the Government of the day, if they say that they want to allow public opinion and public opinion was*
very negative they may well prevent the Chief of the Defence Force being allowed to make that decision.

Cath believes that Government policy restricts women by limiting the numbers of women in the ADF:

**Cath (Army Officer):** *We are still too small, the women in defence here* [in Australia] *such a small group in comparison to the Americans we don’t have that same opportunity* [as American women]. *Women have served very well on active service, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Timor, Bougainville … I think it is just a matter of time* [until women serve in combat roles] *but while we are restricted as a minority by government policy we will never ever be equal.*

Jacinta was adamant that women should not be permitted to serve in combat. Whilst she believes that women are capable of the role, the issues of privacy and the attitudes of men in the corps convince her that women entering combat employments will not work:

**Jacinta (Air Force Officer):** *No* [women shouldn’t serve in combat] *its been tried before and it hasn’t worked, I feel inclined to say it wont work, not in the very basic way in which we live in combat situations. You don’t go out there and set up toilets and showers and change facilities … I think strength wise women are just as capable and have proven themselves to be. Some women are naturally stronger than others, no I don’t think strength of mind or body has anything to do with it, I think it’s a gender issue. I don’t think it’s the women, I think the women can deal with all of that but the men can’t. And of course women are itching to get out there and be part of the combat role, but the men aren’t ready to have women do that.*

Samantha believes that some combat roles, particularly those in Infantry and the SAS, are physically too difficult for women:

**Samantha (Air Force Other Ranks):** *There are certain roles that I don’t think we should be involved in … its not an ethical thing its just because*
physically we can’t do it. The only two I can think of are Infantry and SAS and there’s nothing else I don’t think we can do, but those two (and its nothing against women, I’m all for integration as far as possible) those two jobs are hard enough for men without women trying to do it.

Emily ruled out women having roles in Infantry, Armoured, and Engineers. However, she feels that women could serve in Artillery:

**Emily (Army Officer):** Pumping a pack around the bush the way infantry do and living in filthy conditions for months, there’s no way, I think at this stage its not feasible for women … I saw what my husband was doing … and I have seen what it’s done to him as far as he has a really bad back. If that many men get affected by it what’s it going to do to women? No, I don’t think it is feasible to say women are meant to go into Infantry or in Armoured or Engineers. Yes, it would be feasible in Artillery … We can do it if we are called upon to do it, but to do it day in and day out, you’ll have the back of a sixty year old when you are thirty.

In putting the most appropriate women into combat roles, reverse discrimination becomes an issue, with some asserting that not all males are able to enter combat employments on a volunteer basis. In actual fact, it is considered ineffectual to place just anybody into such a vital role. Supposedly it is only the most elite men that are chosen therefore, it stands to reason that only the most elite women be chosen. Combat soldiers should be chosen on merit that extends far beyond mere physical capacity and gender. Other qualities such as intelligence, dexterity, and potential leadership ability are surely equal considerations.

**Conclusion**

Not choosing women on merit, and denying all women the right and responsibility to serve in combat makes these debates more an issue of a breach of citizenship rights, and as such they are highly political. They bear a striking resemblance to arguments that, in the past, denied women their right to participate in the public arena. That women participating in combat might emasculate some men; or leave them feeling
displaced; or that stereotypical notions of how women should behave may be upset; is not reason enough to leave policy in place that excludes women from full citizenship.

Chapman suggests that: ‘dispensing with the current exclusion of women from combat and the implementation of policy initiatives that will enable more flexible employment practices’, will ‘increase operational effectiveness and length of service of female members of the ADF’ (Chapman, 1999: 25).

The ADF would be remiss to continue excluding female personnel from combat roles. The role of combatant in war is not a highly sought after role and is ‘… either unpalatable or unattainable for the vast majority of Australians’ (Chapman, 1999: 29). Yet within the ADF, ‘[t]here are women who really want combat roles and they will just keep pushing and keep asking’ (Cindy Army Other Ranks). It is possible however that these women will leave the ADF disappointed with gender biased policy.

This research revealed: that women generally thought that more combat employments should be open to women; that women should not be restricted from combat roles based upon their gender; that women should not be set up to fail; and that positive leadership would support full integration. The women interviewed did not express a desire to serve in combat themselves but maintained these principles nonetheless.

The interview data highlights the issue that it is not women who would present problems for combat roles, but rather it is the systematic issues of training; equipment; and a lack of infrastructure within Defence that denies support for full integration. Only three women believed that women were not physically capable of certain combat roles. One woman believed that Officer positions differed from those of the enlisted ranks. Two women expressed concerns that the cohesion needed in combat battalions would suffer if women were integrated into combat roles. But most had reservations concerning the organisation of Defence or the masculine culture.
The overwhelming response was that the perceptions and the prejudice of men would impact detrimentally on women’s integration. For this reason many expressed concerns for the welfare of the women who would potentially be integrated into combat roles.

This study suggests that the initial enthusiasm for opening up combat employments to women has been dampened by an awareness of the difficulties that women face throughout the military. The Canadian research discussed in this chapter is a clear indication that apprehensions about women entering combat employments are valid. This highlights the need, if combat employments are opened to women, for the ADF to openly acknowledge the very real concerns of women in Defence. Women moving into these employments will need to be informed about the potential of harassment and discrimination. Effective complaints procedures and redress measures would need to be developed and communicated to all involved. Males need to be advised firmly that there is ‘no tolerance’ of any kind of discrimination and harassment against women as they integrate into combat training and employments. Those that do not facilitate the process to the best of their abilities should, at the least, not be rewarded (on reports), nor be recommended for promotion. Women entering combat employments need to be clearly informed and encouraged to take action if they encounter difficulties. Serious consideration also needs to be given to active screening of those in leadership positions to assess their attitudes and opinions towards integration. Only those who are clearly supportive and willing to uphold the principles of integration should have women in their command.

‘We are moving into a future where our Defence Force will rely more heavily on female recruits to make up shortfalls in numbers of male recruits, and where the conditions of war will no longer permit clear delineation into combat and non-combat zones. Policy distinctions will not prevent women soldiers finding themselves in combat roles’ (Nemitschenko, 2001: 41).

The commentator who wrote the above quotation is a female member of the ADF. And it must be remembered that the goal to lift the restrictions imposed on women’s employment in the ADF has been, and is, as much driven by women in the ADF as it
has been by governmental policy or the Chief of Staff’s Committee (Bomford, 2001). Hugh Smith reminds his readership, albeit condescendingly, that radical change can become a norm. ‘In 50 years’ time it may be as natural to think of women as warriors as it is now… to think of them as voters. And it was, after all, male parliamentarians who finally gave women the vote’ (Smith, 2000a: 18). Again, it needs to be remembered that women were not simply ‘given’ the vote; the vote was fought for and campaigned over a significant period of time. Suffragists had more to do with the vote than did male parliamentarians, and perhaps women in the ADF will have more to do with the lifting of combat restrictions than will their male counterparts.
Chapter Seven

Peacekeeping: The Future and a Gender Balanced Force
Introduction

Graeme Cheeseman, from the School of Politics ADFA, in Part One of his Submission to the Inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade into “The Suitability of the Australian Army for Peacetime, Peacekeeping and War” (1999) said that the ‘… coming century is likely to witness the continuation of the “complex emergencies” and “uncivil” wars we are currently seeing in the Balkans and parts of Africa. These “new wars” … cannot be dealt with using traditional military means or military forces … [they] require approaches which emphasise cooperation above competition, conflict resolution over war-fighting, and the pursuit of common rather than state security [and] … raise questions about the appropriateness of strategies that seek to utilise the “revolution in military affairs” to enhance traditional war-fighting capabilities and tactics’ (Cheeseman, 1999: 8). Cheeseman goes on to say that, regardless of traditional opposition, the military should be designing infrastructure that better supports the peacekeeping role. A continuation on the emphasis on war and war fighting, he says, contradicts the roles that the ADF is likely to be involved with in the future. He believes that this emphasis ‘… may also continue to reinforce an organisational culture which equates militarised violence with both manhood and statehood and fosters sexual stereotyping and harassment’ (Cheeseman, 1999: 11).

Indeed, peacekeeping is a role that is becoming more and more central to military operations the world over (Cheeseman, 1999; Nemitschenko, 2001; Stiehm, 1997). The Australian military has been involved in more peacekeeping than war since Vietnam (Australian War Memorial, 2004; Nemitschenko, 2001).

Australia has been involved in United Nations peacekeeping for over 50 years. Australians served in Indonesia in the world’s very first group of UN military observers. Since the 1970s, Australian RAAF helicopters operated in the Sinai, an Australian infantry force of 150 soldiers took part in operations in Zimbabwe and assisted a UN operation in Namibia. In the 1990’s UN imposed sanctions against Iraq saw Australians participating in peacekeeping both before and after the first Gulf War. Australian peacekeepers have also served in Cambodia, taking a leading
diplomatic role in restoring peace. In Somalia the Australian contingent battalion-level was successful in the delivery of humanitarian aid in the Baidoa area. Australians were in Rwanda; the Australian contingent provided medical staff who treated many of the local people and members of the UN force. Since 1997 Australians have also served in Bougainville, and in 1999 Australia led a peace enforcement operation in East Timor (Australian War Memorial, 2004). Australian women have been present as an integral part of peacekeeping forces.

Despite opposition to a change from traditional warfare training, Cheeseman (1999) suggests that the Australian military follow the lead of Canada and some of the Nordic countries in structuring and preparing some ground forces and some army personnel for ‘… multifunctional peacekeeping (and security) roles and tasks’ (Cheeseman, 1999: 9). Indeed there is a call for more specialised training for peacekeepers, especially in regards to ‘humanitarian’ training and briefings on the specific troubles and needs of host nations (Johnson & Bethan, 2002).

War and combat training may not prepare troops adequately for their roles as peacekeepers. But does peacekeeping train personnel for war? Interview data from this study suggests that it does.

The success of UN peacekeeping is marred by some military personnel in peacekeeping contingents who are responsible for crime against the people of host nations (Carey, 2001; De Groot, 2002; Kirshenbaum, 1994). There are alarming numbers of incidents of rape, sexual assault, prostitution, child prostitution, and the contracting of, and passing on of, AIDS are extremely high (Bratt, 2002; Enloe, 2001; Skjelsbaek, 2001). A balanced force of males and females on peacekeeping missions have been seen to reduce this scale of these crimes (Kirshenbaum, 1997; Olsson & Tryggestad, 2001; Skjelsbaek, 2001).

Women may be an untapped resource in peacekeeping roles (DeGroot, 2001; Kirshenbaum, 1997; Stiehm, 1997), however, the subject of women in peacekeeping is largely unexplored, ‘… there is a gap in the knowledge concerning women and peacekeeping – as opposed to men and peacekeeping … [there is a need] to broaden
our views by indicating certain areas where a gender perspective provides additional valuable information to peacekeeping research’ (Olsson & Tryggestad, 2001: 3).

The United Nations is eager to have member States send greater numbers of women as part of peacekeeping battalions (Carey, 2001; Kirshenbaum, 1997). United Nations studies reveal that a balanced force provides for positive peacekeeping objectives to be more easily met (Johnson & Bethan, 2002; Kirshenbaum, 1997). Evidence suggests that women in host countries confide more in other women and are comfortable negotiating with female peacekeepers (Johnson & Bethan, 2002; Karame, 2001; Olsson & Tryggestad, 2001). UN peace missions that have been most successful in the past have had equal numbers of males and females participating (Carey, 2001; Johnson & Bethan, 2002; Karame, 2001).

Peacekeeping operations generally could be enhanced by a higher critical mass of female participation (Johnson & Bethan, 2001; Karame, 2001; Kirshenbaum, 1997). However, member States continue to send small percentages of women to missions. At decision making/policy levels, in leadership and positions of power and prestige in the UN and in operations, women are not well represented (Johnson & Bethan, 2001; Kirshenbaum, 1997). The same gender dynamic that exists in militaries – where women are constructed as inferior to men in their ability to perform military roles adequately – exists at the UN level (Enloe, 2000). The UN has been described as a ‘boys club’, no more progressive in terms of gender than the military institutions that make up their member states (Kirshenbaum, 1992). The same myths that keep women from full integration in the military prevent women from assuming a vital role in UN peace operations.

Is it not a contradiction to argue that women can assume roles in both combat operations and peacekeeping operations? DeGroot (2001) believes it is. Indeed DeGroot asserts that women’s success in peacekeeping has rendered the ‘women in combat’ debates moot. Yet women’s involvement in both of these areas of military operations resembles too closely their involvement in all public arenas. Women’s representation is limited and positions at the ‘top’ are kept ‘off limits’.
This section will explore the role of female peacekeepers and the barriers that keep women from reaching a critical mass that is so desired by the UN.

**Peacekeeping: ‘Unfitting’ the Military for War?**

As Cheeseman (1999) suggests, traditional forces in the military strive to keep the status quo. Some commentators on military affairs are not supportive of peacekeeping as a primary purpose of military. On the subject of peacekeeping, Grey, an Australian war historian, is not enthusiastic. He outlines Australia’s involvement from the 1940’s to the present day acknowledging this country’s contribution, especially under United Nations auspices saying that ‘...peacekeeping corrupts armed forces and unfit[s] them for their primary purpose’ (Grey, 1999: 3). Some ‘doubtful critics’ on peacekeeping believe that troops may ‘go soft’ when on ‘human relief operations’ (Baschiera, 1999).

Such assertions are not supported by my research results. Baschiera believes that critics fail ‘to acknowledge the invaluable preparation and in the main “safe” experience that a deployment of this nature exposes all ranks to’ (Baschiera, 1999: 27). If the perspective is taken that the primary purpose of military training is the preparation for war, then peacekeeping can be supportive of this purpose. Interview data from this study revealed that peacekeeping experience has the double benefit of preparing and training personnel for war. Women in the Navy, the Army and the Air force all explained that peacekeeping requires many of the same skills as required in wartime.

Of the thirty women I spoke to, fourteen had had at least one deployment to a peacekeeping operation. Many spoke of their training as not only preparing them expertly for a peacekeeping operation but they also believed that their training and their peacekeeping experience prepared them for war. Many of the operations required to move a battalion into the field and maintain it in peacekeeping are similar to those needed in war. As Sheila explains:

*Sheila (Navy Officer): I really wanted to be deployed in _______ [as a peacekeeper] It was a way of putting into action all the planning and training*
that we had done. I had done all the courses and everything and I was qualified and I technically had all the skills I needed ... I didn’t really know how I would go but it actually was fine. We had a really good team and really good outcomes ... If it had transferred into a more warlike situation I think we would have handled that too. In terms of making the Defence Force unfit [for war] I don’t know that that is really true ... the kind of systems that you deploy for a peacekeeping operation are the same systems that you are going to deploy [for war]: you need all your different levels of evacuation chain; you need to have a logistics chain that will get everything you need into the country; and we ... definitely tested our logistics section and our health systems. We had to test policy issues as well, what were our rules of engagement going to be? How were we going to interpret the Geneva Convention? And all those sorts of things and they are all things that are going to happen in a war like situation as well. From our point of view we did exactly what we are trained to do.

Isobel confirms this view explaining that the field, planning, sequencing and logistic skills needed for peacekeeping are similar to those needed in a war:

**Isobel (Air Force Officer):** Of course [peacekeeping operations help train people for war], they certainly build field skills; build planning skills – because for a whole different variety of operations you still have to do the planning; the sequencing; the logistic support; I guess the controls that you then put in place when you are deployed – whether that is war time or some other sort of operation. There are lots of similar lessons to be learnt.

Every peacekeeping situation is a potential war zone. The question of whether the primary purpose of the military is war is a theoretical one, the reality on the ground is that the distinction between peacekeeping and war zones is not always so different. Chris likens her peacekeeping mission with a war zone in that the situation was dangerous, bandits were engaged in fighting, and personnel needed to be armed at all times:
Chris (Army Officer): It was a war zone, a dangerous place; there were firefights with bandits. It was easy to get caught in the crossfire. You had to have rigid rules to keep safe. Personnel were unable to leave the compound without weapons.

Cindy was also required to be armed at all times and some of her time on her peacekeeping mission was spent ‘digging in’ because the situation was becoming volatile:

Cindy (Army Other Ranks): In _________ I had to carry weapons at all times, I never filled so many sand bags in my entire life. We were digging in because things were getting bad.

Jacinta agreed that a peacekeeping mission was similar to war. The risk to personnel that is involved and the violence associated makes a peacekeeping operation war-like:

Jacinta (Air Force Officer): You look at Rwanda for instance. They were more at risk than we ever were in _________. Some of the things they had to deal with were awful, some of the trauma and the violence they dealt with.

The Need for a Gender Balanced Force

While the interviewees above discussed the similarities in skills required for both peacekeeping and combat, nonetheless there are questions about how far military training can equip personnel for peacekeeping. Currently the training for peacekeeping in many countries is no different to military training for combat (Stiehm, 1997). Some commentators state that a peacekeeping force needs a set of skills that is more complex than the skills required of a combat force (Baschiera, 1999; Nemitschenko, 2001). Yet many nations ‘… are reluctant to invest in the training of specialized (military) peacekeeping units, even though militaries are almost certainly going to continue to get and accept peacekeeping assignments … because they … are equipped [and] are ready …’ (Stiehm, 1997: 48 & 49).
The ‘conciliatory’ qualities, the ‘patience’ required for peacekeeping are not always embodied by soldiers. The Noble Peace Prize winner, the former second Secretary General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold, once said ‘Peacekeeping is too important to be undertaken by soldiers. But soldiers are the only ones who can do it’ (Hammarskjold in De Groot, 2002: 2).

Too often peacekeeping operations – run and staffed by military men – resemble wars. Too often in peacekeeping prostitution becomes an issue, peacekeepers contract and pass on AIDS, and people in host nations are subject to violence perpetrated by some military men (Bratt, 2002; Carey, 2001; De Groot, 2002; Enloe, 2000; Goldstien, 2001; Skjelsbaek, 2001). Some military personnel do not have the necessary skills to perform in the humanitarian manner that is demanded of them (De Groot, 2002). As a result De Groot contests these profound contradictions lead to peacekeeping operations being ‘…marred by aggressive behaviour that exacerbates tensions’ (De Groot, 2002: 2).

‘When the Vietnamese troops withdrew from Cambodia, UN peacekeeping soldiers arrived … the newly formed Women’s Development Association estimated that the number of women working in prostitution in Cambodia grew from 6,000 in 1992 to more than 25,000 in late 1994 (Enloe, 2000:99).

In peacekeeping operations that the ADF has contributed to, the propensity of some male members of the force to engage in illegal prostitution has been an issue. Jade explains that the Chief of the Defence Force is intolerant of such unprofessional behaviour:

**Jade (Army Officer):** Within weeks of us being there, there were brothels being set up in local buildings because the locals knew that they would get profit out of the peacekeepers. And I think they did, but anyone in the ADF who was caught participating was kicked out … and sent home and disciplined. These people were making more money than they would ever see again in their lifetime. I didn’t know much about the brothels in _______ but they were referred to as ‘coffee shops’ and guys would say they were going
for a coffee. When General _______ got wind of it he stamped down hard on it.

The women I spoke to stressed that the ADF does not permit male personnel to fraternise with women in host countries. The disciplinary procedure of ‘being sent home’ if caught exploiting prostitution was discussed with me in hopeful terms. Women ‘hoped’ that the Australian soldiers would be sent home and disciplined. Veronica told me that, no professional force would allow prostitution. Indeed, but whether it is allowed or not, some male military personnel support illegal prostitution in their roles as UN peacekeepers. And as Deb makes apparent, the chain of command is sometimes aware of this but does not always ‘stamp down hard’ on it:

**Deb (Navy Officer):** Well there was one incident where I think that was happening but in theory our guys weren’t allowed. I know when they went on their leave to ______ some did. They were given a lecture before they went and given condoms and told to be careful.

Cindy recounts her experience of male UN personnel who not only engaged in prostitution but also were responsible for the molestation and rape of children:

**Cindy (Army Other Ranks):** I was surprised by the prostitution and how Australian soldiers engaged in it. They were often mild mannered, normal people, had wives and girl friends at home. But as soon as they arrived, off they went, they all changed, weren’t the same people at all. I couldn’t believe they would cheat on their partners by going to prostitutes. They would go into _______. One day I went into a brothel, a friend [male] took me there to see. The madam didn’t want me there at all because my presence meant the Aussie men would shoot off as soon as they saw me. It wasn’t just prostitution but the molestation and rape of boys and girls by UN personnel. There were allegations from others who were non-European as well. I believe that the UN has a lot to answer for in this regard. Prostitution was rife and the UN caused the problem and didn’t deal with it adequately.
Peacekeepers who commit crimes are rightly so aware of a tacit protection from prosecution. ‘Peacekeepers guilty of sexual violence and other war crimes in Bosnia, Haiti, Somalia, Sierra, Leone, Liberia, and Kosovo have had immunity in their home countries and abroad because they helped to stop wars (Carey, 200: 162). Crimes against people in host nations could be seen as a continuation of wars – not an end to them. Further to this, ‘... crimes committed by UN peacekeepers have not been condemned by UN human rights bodies (Carey, 2001: 62).

A gender balanced force in peacekeeping has been shown to provide a tempering of crime (Kirshenbaum, 1997; Olsson & Tryggestad, 2001; Skjelsbaek, 2001). As De Groot says, these behaviours mar peacekeeping operations (DeGroot, 2002). Susan said that some men told her that they preferred women being on the mission with them. A gender balance in the force can ‘normalise’ gender relations during an operation:

Susan (Air Force Other Ranks): One guy said that the males were feral without females there it [having women involved] provides a necessary balance.

The UN Are Crying Out For More Women

Gayle Kirshenbaum reports that women working in the UN believe that ‘... peacekeeping has become a process too complex to remain the province of men only ...’ (Kirshenbaum, 1997). The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women is encouraging member nations to ‘recruit more women’ in order to achieve a ‘critical mass’ of women with the aim of achieving a balanced force and enhancing the effectiveness of missions (Kirshenbaum, 1997).

The recommendation to the General Assembly of 1995 by the former Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, was that UN field missions should reach a target of fifty percent of women (Karame, 2001: 92). However, this target is dependent on member States including women in their troops and by 2001 women’s roles had increased by a mere four per cent (Karame, 2001: 93).
In 2000 a comprehensive study ‘Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Operations’, (based on case studies in Bosnia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Namibia and South Africa), concluded that:

- ‘… Local women confide more in female peacekeepers;
- Women negotiators understand and articulate the implications of peace processes for women better than do men;
- Peace missions with high percentages of women, such as Namibia (40 per cent women) and South Africa (50 per cent), have been successful; and
- If at least 30 per cent of mission personnel are female, then local women more quickly join peace committees, which are less hierarchical and more responsive to female concerns (Carey, 2001: 53 & 54).

For UN peacekeeping missions to achieve the successes desired, then, it is vital that nations who send contingents into peacekeeping zones, such as Australia, recruit more women and focus upon the complementary nature of a balanced force. Women’s abilities in combat deployments have not as yet been tested in the ADF context. However, in a peacekeeping setting ADF women have had tried and true experience. It is unfair and unequal treatment then not to send more female personnel on peacekeeping deployments. Although 420 women from the ADF were part of the East Timor peacekeeping mission the numbers sent do not represent the percentage of women serving in the ADF (Horner, 2001).

The women interviewed for this study confirmed that they had developed the skills to continue working in this area of military operations. Lesley feels that women peacekeepers have a role to play in vital areas of operations in negotiation and in facilitating the peace process. The presence of men and women in a peacekeeping force can engender trust in people in the host nation. When peacekeepers simply ‘talk’ to people and play with children a trust between people can develop:

**Lesley (Army Officer):** _______ was all about negotiation and you would get out there and just talk to people, and that’s the way it all came about. You couldn’t push these people, you had to give them their own time, their own schedule … And having the females out there, being able to talk to the women and play with the kids and things like that made a huge difference …
The negotiation stage, facilitating the peace process, that’s where women excel.

First hand accounts from the women I interviewed confirm that women can and do integrate successfully into peacekeeping missions and that a representation of both genders within the force improves the perception the host country has of the peacekeepers and of the operation:

Cindy (Army Other Ranks): Knowing how women integrated in _______
[I] think every peacekeeping force should have women involved. Girls give locals a good perception of the force. I would highly recommend that all peacekeeping forces be integrated.

Reducing Sexual Violence

A higher critical mass of women has been shown to reduce sexual violence against members of host nations (Kirshenbaum, 1997; Olsson & Tryggestad, 2001; Skjelsbaek, 2001). Of course, the presence of women cannot stop sexual violence, it will deter some men but not others (Johnson & Bethan, 2002). But a ‘… more balanced number of male and female peacekeepers would … tend to reduce the level of sexual harassment and violence against local women a problem that has been steadily growing throughout the 1990’s’ (Olsson & Tryggestad, 2001).

In countries such as Namibia and Rwanda it was found that local women were more comfortable approaching female peacekeepers, ‘… especially about issues of sexual assault …’ (Johnson & Bethan, 2002 :11).

Therefore a balanced force of peacekeepers can reduce violence against women and children of host nations and engender trust in the people of a host nation.

Engendering Trust

The perception and the reputation of peacekeepers in the field is essential in a peacekeeping mission’s outcome. Women peacekeepers are well regarded by
members of host countries and this is a fundamental advantage. Whilst the uniform they wear commands a level of respect and authority nonetheless their presence normalises the force.

Local populations often fear male peacekeepers whereas they feel comforted by the presence of women (Karame, 2001; Carey 2001). Males often create ill ease that can be provocative even if this is not their intention (DeGroot, 2002). Having women present at checkpoints in troubled areas has benefits that are two fold. Women lower tensions (Karame, 2001), and can also search other women. In many peacekeeping operations women combatants are part of warring networks, female peacekeepers can conduct body searches and reduce the incidence of smuggling weapons and explosives (Karame, 2001; Olsson & Tryggestad, 2001). Therefore a balanced force where women are well represented will improve the outcomes of a mission.

‘Since the majority of the local population are often women, and since women as we have seen may be actors on different levels in the conflict, it is essential to have women personnel among the peacekeepers, both in civil and in military functions’ (Karame, 2001: 95).

In certain situations, such as in Bougainville where the society is largely matrilineal the presence of women is even more significant. To the ADF’s credit, they were aware of this, as is reflected upon below

19 Bougainville is a good example because it was a matriarchal society so the women were making decisions – in response the ADF used a lot of strong military women to be negotiators to pass on information and to work with female leaders in various areas. It’s like a psychological operations type mission, identify where you will have the most influence and if it happens to be with the female elders in a particular area then the best way of doing that then would be with another female. I remember at the time I was working in the __________ I identified females to go and do that job and when I was looking at the

19 I have removed the women’s names from these scripts as the text may identify them.
background of why they were picking women to do it I found out that it was a
matriarchal society and they were looking for women to do this specific role. That was a great thing that they did because they identified that the way to
get ahead was to use women. I think there is a role for women to do similar
things in other countries and sometimes it is easier for a woman to negotiate, even between two guys, a woman can step in and negotiate.

By utilising female peacekeepers in negotiations in Bougainville the ADF was able to access women who were knowledge holders and decision makers in the community. The quotation below, from a woman who had an integral role in peace negotiations in Bougainville, stresses the importance of gender awareness in the outcomes of peacekeeping missions:

*I think we [women] are perfect for peacekeeping. In Bougainville I’ve seen women out there and just the way they interact with people, with children, I mean really if you look at the Bougainville case the women were the ones you wanted to engage in discussions regarding the peacekeeping and negotiations ... We were targeting the females, targeting the wives, the mothers. The women had to get in with the women, Defence organised it, they had to bring in women negotiators with the teams and they had females integrated throughout the group, it really was important. Very important. A lot of us would go to the schools and talk to the kids and talk to the teachers and we played a huge role, I believe, in getting in at that level. I don’t know if its fully recognised that females played that role.*

Not all peacekeeping missions require the employment of only female negotiators or only male negotiators. In most nations it would be fruitful to have a balance between male and female negotiators. Developing a rapport with local people and engendering trust in the host nation is of vital importance to any peacekeeping operation and women in this study reported incidences where they felt that they were successful in this way. Below Jade explains why having a balanced force benefited the peacekeeping mission she was on:
Jade (Army Officer): I found in _______ that the women developed a really good rapport with the local women, whereas the men were seen as dominators and people to be feared, whereas when we came in, because there were women amongst us it was different. I saw some beautiful things with some of the female soldiers and the children it was amazing. And the men as well because the women were there the men were seen as approachable.

The Continuing Under-Representation of Women in Peacekeeping

(Lynn Army Non-Commissioned Officer): Can you imagine being a baker and never ever baking? Can you imagine being a bricklayer and never ever laying a brick or building a house? Can you imagine that? Even though we all train at the one level … women don’t get to put their training into practice. So when I got over there I had never ever done [what I had been trained to do]. I’d always been a baker but I’d never got to bake the bread. So all of a sudden I got the opportunity to do it!

According to Natasha Stott Despoja, former leader of the Australian Democratic Party, military debates about women’s involvement in the military focus on those things that women lack when compared to men. Stott Despoja rightly points out that women’s involvement in peacekeeping presents an opportunity to instead look at attributes and characteristics embodied by many women that are positive rather than diminutive (Stott Despoja, 2000).

As Stiehm argues, the target to increase gender balance in peacekeeping has many advantages: it will ‘increase the pool of talent’; ‘enhance understanding of complex situations’; and suggest ‘different approaches to the desired end’. Therefore the goal of gender equality can ‘enhance a mission’s success’ (Stiehm, 2001: 44).

Yet member nations of the UN continue to send a small percentage of women on peacekeeping missions and the UN itself is understaffed by women. The UN as an organisation is typical of any Western organisation in that female staff occupy the lower levels and men dominate important roles in decision making, policy and
leadership. ‘It may also be helpful to consider the analogy between women’s participation in peacekeeping and their participation in the political arena generally. Some similarities are obvious, e.g., “the higher, the fewer,”’ (Stiehm, 1997: 47). Despite a 1945 UN Charter that women should be able to compete equally with men for positions in the UN and participate in any capacity ‘... women have faced persistent discrimination at the UN’ (Goldstein, 2001: 126). At the lower levels of the UN organisation women make up half of UN staff and at the higher level women make up approximately ten percent, and women are a mere five percent of Assistant Secretaries General (Goldstein, 2001).

It is a paradox that the UN knows that a balanced force is essential in the peacekeeping role, yet the organisation is representative of the militaries from which female staff are supplied. The gender politics of the UN do not support the expectations they have of member nations. And not surprisingly leadership within the UN is often unnecessarily gender biased, as the Norwegian case study below will demonstrate.

Norwegian Women’s Experience in Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping roles for women are dependent on leadership (Stiehm, 1997). The Norwegian experience is an excellent case to consider in this regard. The Norwegian battalion (NORBATT) served in the occupied zone in South Lebanon for over twenty years. From March 1978 to December 1998 as many as 30,000 Norwegian peacekeepers served, and women represented up to six percent of the troops (Karame, 2001: 86 & 87). Norwegian women have had equal rights in the armed forces since 1984 and can hold combat posts and command in the field (Karame, 2001: 89). There were concerns, prior to women serving in Lebanon that ‘... women would not be able to act with authority, for instance at checkpoints and on patrol rounds ... The female peacekeeping soldiers, on the other hand, seem to agree that people saw and reacted to the uniform, and not to the sex. Sometimes they also had the feeling that their presence at the checkpoint lowered tensions’ (Karame, 2001: 89). The Norwegian women soldiers also spent time talking and building a ‘mutual confidence’ with local women. This they felt generated a better knowledge of the host country’s situation and the needs of the people (Karame, 2001: 89).
presence of women at checkpoints also meant that local women could be searched, a measure needed because of the involvement of women in smuggling weapons and ‘suicide operations’ (Karame, 2001: 91 & 92).

In 1992 a new commander of UNIFIL\textsuperscript{20} was appointed, the Swedish General-Major Lars Erik Wahlgren. The new commander wanted the Norwegian women to be assigned to traditionally female functions such as medical, staff unit, and technical services. The Norwegian women, who had been serving for years, suddenly had their opportunities limited by gender discrimination (Karame, 2001: 92). General-Major Lars Erik Wahlgren based his decision on the ‘negative’ attitudes of Muslim and Druze men. This was contrary to the Norwegian women’s experiences in Lebanon and regardless of this the Norwegian office did not question the decision and neither did the leader of the Committee of Defence in the Norwegian Parliament (Karame, 2001: 93). In fact when the Norwegian women protested, the Norwegian nation and the women were told to ‘adapt or withdraw’ (Karame, 2001: 93).

At this time the Norwegian women began a media campaign and lobbied political parties (Karame, 2001: 99). Eventually the Norwegian women won their campaign to serve in international peace operations on equal terms (Karame, 2001: 94).

Western responses to Muslim nations and to the sensitivities required may be overplayed and they may also mask what are really Western prejudices against women. Major Britt T.B. Brestrup, a Norwegian woman who served as head of department on a UN mission in the peace zone between Iraq and Kuwait, (Karame, 2001: 93) was once asked by a superior officer (male) from Pakistan why she had never applied for service in Kashmir. She explained the Norwegian army’s attitude against sending women to Muslim countries. ‘\textit{He was very upset and told her bluntly that he was tired of Western countries using religion to cover up for their own attitudes}’ (Karame, 2001: 94). Muslim nations in some instances have more progressive policy than do Western nations when it comes to women’s equality in the armed services. In Iran, Iraq, Syria, Indonesia and Nigeria women serve in ‘… single-sex or mixed-sex military units’ (Karame, 2001: 94). In Iran women serve in

\textsuperscript{20} United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
combat positions and in Libya a Military Academy for women was opened in 1979 (Karame, 2001: 94).

The Norwegian women’s experience was indicative of inadequate leadership in the UN and gender politics that is inconsistent and inequitable in regards to women.

**The Contradiction of Gender Stereotyping**

Assumptions and prejudice about the female gender and combat are pertinent to women’s roles in peacekeeping because the same myths that keep women from combat roles also keep women from having a significant part to play in peacekeeping roles. For instance in Canada where women make up twelve percent of the force ‘...their level of participation in peacekeeping units has consistently been lower than that figure because combat units (in which gender integration is least profound) are usually sent’ (DeGroot, 2002: 37). If the myth that women prevent male bonding in integrated units is maintained then the same could be applied to women’s impact on men’s bonding within peace missions. If the myth that women’s involvement in combat could reduce military effectiveness is preserved, then again, this analysis could be extended to women undermining military effectiveness in peacekeeping. If women’s perceived lack of physical strength prevents them from being in combat positions then it could also prevent them from being seen as competent in peacekeeping roles. The same myths could stand testament to women’s exclusion given that all peacekeeping missions are potential war zones. Peacekeeping can be violent (DeGroot, 2001) therefore these same arguments could be applied. In order to free women to take a role, a substantial role, in peace operations, the arguments that support combat exclusions must be revealed, unpacked, and exposed as myth.

Is it a contradiction to advocate for women in combat and to advocate for them in peacekeeping operations and military humanitarian operations? It makes perfect sense to advocate for both if one analyses how combat restrictions keep women from positions of leadership, responsibility, power, and decision-making in all areas of military affairs (Brower, 1996; Hancock, 1993; Smith & McAllister, 1991; Walbank, 1992). If the UN is to achieve gender balanced forces in peacekeeping operations then gender integration needs to take place on all levels of military operations. To
achieve UN goals women need to be involved in all levels of peace operations, from the level of infantry soldiers who patrol to keep the peace, to levels where important peace negotiations are taking place.

DeGroot, believes that women could offer peacekeeping a working alternative and whilst he advocates for a balanced force and for greater representation of women in peacekeeping he applies a biological determinist reasoning which is in effect simultaneously limiting and restricting women’s service. Women may be, he says, especially effective in peacekeeping because they are essentially different to men (DeGroot, 2002). DeGroot puts forward that although women often have a limited capacity to be aggressive they can be trained to be more so. This combined with their natural inclination to be less violent than males makes them effective peacekeepers. DeGroot describes female violence as more ‘purposeful’ and their aggression less likely to ‘rage out of control’ (DeGroot, 2002: 3). Whether this is the result of social conditioning or natural traits DeGroot feels that the characteristics embodied by women toward a purposeful and contained violence may be what peacekeeping missions require. Possessing aggression and the ability to control it are desirable qualities in any peacekeeping soldier. DeGroot’s observations from peacekeeping operations are that women do indeed demonstrate a capacity for the intricacies of the work required of them in the UN capacity. ‘… a great deal of evidence suggest[s] that the presence of women improves an operation’s chances of success’ (De Groot, 2002: 37).

DeGroot believes the that these arguments for women in peacekeeping render the combat debates ‘moot’, in that many proponents for women in combat argue that women are the same as men and can therefore behave the same in combat. To argue that women could be effective in peacekeeping he says ‘turns this argument on its head’. I have long wrestled with this reasoning and believe that women can (and do) do both. Some women embody levels of aggression similar to those of the average male, and some women are not aggressive. The same, of course is true of men, some are highly aggressive and some are not. The propensity of some males to commit violence does not run to all men being violent, and aggressive men can fear battle and not psychologically survive its aftermath. Differences within genders can be as complex as differences between the genders (Connell, 1987, 1995).
DeGroot has a point as far as the socialisation of women. Women and men are socialised differently and more women could embody the social characteristics that stereotypes imply, such as ‘conciliatory’, ‘peaceful’, ‘sensitive’ and ‘compassionate’ (Connell, 1987). Gender is considered to be dualistic (Agostino, 2000b). ‘The dominant sex role stereotypes are such that traits like aggression, dominance, competitiveness, objectivity and decision making are seen as masculine and thus appropriate for the male only. Attributes such as empathy, tenderness and consideration are thought of as feminine and thus characteristic of the female only’ (Walbank, 1992: 12). Gender stereotypes can be confusing; some women do naturally embody stereotypical qualities, as do some men. And some don’t. Lived realities and gender ideology often contradict one another – and sometimes they comply. Individuals, like gender can be ‘fluid’, ‘complex’, and ‘uncertain’ (Connell, 2002). Therefore, it is understandable but not always ‘watertight’ that some people will advocate for women’s roles in peacekeeping based on gender stereotypes and/or on the social conditioning of women.

However, such arguments fall into the trap of differentiating women’s roles from central military and UN roles. If only some operational roles are assigned to women then those roles run the risk of becoming ghettoised and reduced in value. The potential ‘feminisation’ of certain areas of peacekeeping missions could reduce the effectiveness of a mission and not enhance it as DeGroot is expecting. The integration of the force and a balance of gender is what has been proved to be effective and not gender segregation.

The women in this study had various opinions on why they thought women have a capacity for peacekeeping. Some based their view upon stereotypical or conditioned qualities of women while most based their views on a non-gendered ideology that supports men and women having an aptitude for peacekeeping. Bridget believes that the qualities of ‘tenderness’, ‘compassion’, and ‘cooperation’ are important for peacekeepers to embrace. Such qualities, she states, can be embodied by both men and women:
Bridget (Army Officer): Obviously it depends on what work you are doing. If it’s the type of job that appeals more towards tenderness, compassion, cooperation and things like that, obviously women are portrayed as having those qualities, but they are in men as well. In peacekeeping it would be good if everyone portrayed these things. The people you are trying to help would be more responsive if you weren’t barking at them … you are there for those people’s benefit and the whole compassion side of things comes from that. I’m not big on ‘female stereotypes’ ‘cause I think males can have them just as much.

Samantha said that men and women demonstrate desirable traits for peacekeeping roles in different ways. She believes that a ‘happy mix’ of men and women is advantageous for a peacekeeping mission:

Samantha (Air Force Other Ranks): I don’t necessarily see women as being any more compassionate or cooperative than men. I don’t really think that men have any more or any less of these traits, I just think they show them in different ways … I actually think that if you had a happy mix of both [males and females] it would be better.

Susan witnessed both women and men displaying a high level of negotiation skills when she was on a peacekeeping operation:

Susan (Air Force Other Ranks): In a peacekeeping role most blokes would show those qualities too, so there shouldn’t probably be a difference. Some of the big tough guys that I saw dealing with little kids over in _______ were just sensational, the way they were with kids and the locals was really, really, nice. So the blokes can be like that as well. One of my friends … got deployed within a different area of _______ she got employed as their negotiator and their translator because it was a ________ so she did all of it, and did an excellent job. I don’t know if women are better negotiators than men because I saw individual guys negotiate and their thought processes are incredible. I love it; you listen to them and think ‘wow you are a smart guy’.
Chris was concerned that stereotyping could potentially be dangerous:

**Chris (Army Officer):** Really the best person for the job with the best skill level should be chosen. Stereotypes can be dangerous. Lots of women in the army aren’t like that at all.

For a peacekeeping mission to be effective highly skilled and competent individuals need to be assigned. As Melissa explains, the best person to perform a task should be chosen to do it:

**Melissa (Army Officer):** In peacekeeping there are also some very good males. You have to look at the task and get the best person for it. So it works both ways.

And while Margie based her opinion – that women are ideal peacekeepers – on the socialisation of women, Lesley felt that women naturally embody traits that lend them to making good peacekeepers:

**Margie (Air Force Officer):** Well I agree with that [stereotypical qualities about peacekeeping and women] and the reason is that society has taught women to be like that and culturally are expected to be that way so that’s why I think it makes for that balance. That doesn’t mean men can’t be that way…

**Lesley (Army Officer):** I think there is a lot of potential for females in certain roles … I think traditionally, it could be really stereotypical but women are more compassionate and have strengths in areas that males maybe don’t, so … patience, tenderness. I think females in a peacekeeping role is the ideal place for women, negotiation skills, our ability to relate to children to other women.

What is important is that women’s strengths in their roles is acknowledged and that their roles in peacekeeping are extended beyond those they are currently participating in. As Emily points out, women have proved themselves in this area of military
operations and it is discriminatory not to employ their training in peacekeeping. It is also vital that women are ‘encouraged’ to volunteer for peacekeeping roles:

Emily (Army Officer): I think women can offer a lot to that [peacekeeping]. If they are doing what they have been trained to do, in a logistics role or a signals role. If they are doing a job they have been trained to do and they are being effective, then why can’t they. They should be employed, I think women should be encouraged to go for those positions and shouldn’t be discriminated against.

New Ways Forward

Cheeseman (1999) is calling for a change in the ADF’s current approach to the structure of peacekeeping forces. He advocates the necessity for the ADF to prepare some of its ground forces and army personnel for multifunctional peacekeeping. ‘This could involve making one of the Army’s existing brigade groups responsible for developing and maintaining Australia’s peacekeeping capabilities, doctrine and expertise’ (Cheeseman, 1999: 9 & 10). Further to this Cheeseman recommends that service personnel who have served previously in peacekeeping roles and civilians who wish to serve in humanitarian operations be included. ‘This would … release other regular soldiers for more traditional duties … [whilst imbuing] the force with the kinds of cosmopolitan values needed for the tasks at hand … humanitarian concerns and beliefs …’ (Cheeseman, 1999: 10). This is an ambitious project and if such a situation should come to hand no doubt it would be a process that would come slowly in the making. However, it is a practical and workable strategy and one that could see women who wish to serve in peacekeeping roles able to volunteer for training and duty. The UN would benefit from an increase in the numbers of Australian women in peacekeeping missions and from Australia striving toward a gender balanced force.

Baschiera (1999), a member of the Defence Community Organisation, suggests a new form of training and operations for ADF peacekeeping operations. His proposal moves from the concepts of ‘peace enforcement’ or ‘peacekeeping’ into the realm of a ‘peace development’. Baschiera is proposing a peace development operation that is
‘... proactive, effective, and sustainable … promot[ing] harmony in the cultural and political ideology of the host country (Baschiera, 1999: 23). He is using the model of community development to create a ‘Military Community Development’ (MCD) that links military command, strategy, security and intelligence with host countries’ social/cultural elements and a cooperative relationship with Humanitarian Aid organisations. Baschiera states that at present UN peacekeeping missions are ‘… an imposition on the host nation … the UN must get it right – this is its ethical responsibility’ (Baschiera, 1999: 27).

As was highlighted earlier in this chapter UN peacekeeping missions can be actually detrimental to people of host nations. This can extend beyond crimes against individuals host countries. Veronica pointed out that the UN troops generated a ‘false economy’. Cindy explains the situation:

Cindy (Army Other Ranks): The false economy stuff was an issue too. Some countries are cheap, everything is half price or less, generating a false economy caused more problems than it solved. Our presence crucified the ________ with the introduction of a black market, increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. The money brought in probably only benefited a few and they were maybe the wrong people.

Some of the women I interviewed were aware of the cultural impact that UN troops were having in the host countries where they were employed in their peacekeeping capacity. Individuals cannot resolve these complex situations; the onus is on the UN to ensure that peacekeeping is an ethical process. As Cindy expressed, she was frustrated that the UN was causing these problems and doing nothing to resolve them.

Jade explains how the UN can generate an artificial economy and create detrimental effects. She is concerned that UN peacekeeping missions are not culturally or socially aware:

Jade (Army Officer): Yeah, ________ wasn’t just the Defence Force it was the UN, so prices went up overnight, you would pay someone five American
dollars to do your laundry for you and that would be more than they would get in a month normally. So we have just totally jacked up the economy to the point where people are just expecting a decent income and they’re not getting it … and false hopes are being raised by this artificially generated economy. One thing they did say to us was: ‘these are the set rates so you aren’t allowed to pay more than this’ but even that was too much. But if we go in there and pay them peanuts then that’s exploitation of the local population. My fear is that we will keep making mistakes, doing what we did in ________, going in giving them a ready made social order and saying this is what to do! That wasn’t taking into account their cultural differences, their vision for their country. And we are forcing them to be something that they are not, I worry that we are still doing that, that we are still socially blind and culturally blind.

Cheeseman (1999) and Baschiera (1999) are offering alternatives to these issues. ‘The ADF is ideally positioned to develop a highly professional, coordinated and complimentary tri-service training regime combining the interdependent management between community development and military support’ (Baschiera, 1999: 29). A gender balanced force in military peacekeeping has been shown, at a UN level, to increase the success of operations. Gender balance combined with recommendations such as Cheeseman’s specialised training and brigades within the ADF and the implementation of approaches such as Baschiera’s Military Community Development are innovative and positive initiatives.

Conclusion

It is only women and men working together as an integrated force that will ensure that peacekeeping missions will effectively restore peace to troubled war stricken areas. The current approach of having a large percentage of males combined with a very small percentage of females is not proving to be as effective. Denying women equal roles in peacekeeping at any level is discriminatory and affirmative action strategies should be engaged to encourage ADF women to participate in peacekeeping at all levels.
As Cynthia Enloe puts forward ‘...all of us who are interested in peacekeeping need to develop several different levels of analytical curiosity ... we need to be able to understand and weigh myths ... how women and men are positioned differently in the fuelling and resolving of societal violence can scarcely be met by any of us working alone’ (Enloe, 2001: 112).

The women I interviewed who have peacekeeping experience felt competent and enthusiastic in their roles. When discussing these roles they are inspired by them. Yet the current climate of peacekeeping, maintaining its masculine culture, is not entirely inclusive of women. Assumptions about women being unfit for military roles, bias about their lack of competence, and myths that perpetuate resistance to women in the military effectively stop women having an equal part to play in peacekeeping. Combat exclusions complicate the matter further. Exclusions prevent women from having equal power in the military and therefore prevent them accessing the most significant roles.

Military women receive the same training as men and want the same opportunities to be deployed and enhance their careers. As Lynn makes apparent, being deployed in a peacekeeping role meant she got an opportunity to do what she had been trained for:

**Lynn (Army non-Commissioned Officer):** I wasn’t sure if everything I’d ever been taught was going to pop up when I needed it, do you know what I mean? I’d never done it [peacekeeping] firsthand. And it was like a big test, to see that everything that I had learnt all these years [would] become instinctive when ... I needed it. I thank my lucky stars that I ever got the opportunity to do it. I could have gone over there and not even got paid. I would have gone ‘cause I thought it was a great opportunity.

It is encouraging to see women from the ADF contributing to peacekeeping missions but more work needs to be done. A higher critical mass of women will lead toward a balanced force, which in turn will enhance the objectives of peacekeeping missions (Johnson & Bethan, 2002) and is therefore an advantage to global politics and global peace.
Chapter Eight

Conclusion
Extensive textual analysis and the analysis of interview material that arose from conducting thirty in-depth interviews with ADF female personnel has revealed that there are two factors that prevent women achieving full integration in the ADF. The first is the masculinist culture of the ADF (Agostino, 1998a; Burton, 1996; Chapman, 1999; Nemitschenko, 2001). The other is discriminatory Government legislation and ADF policy (Burton, 1996; Chapman, 1999; Nemitschenko, 2001; Walbank, 1992). All the barriers to women’s careers in the ADF can be seen to fall under one of these headings. Both of these factors prevent women achieving their highest potential in their work roles.

This research has revealed that both the masculinist culture of the ADF and discriminatory legislation and policy devalue, exclude, and therefore oppress women in the ADF. Beliefs about the female gender in Government and in the ADF are biased and not only construct the female gender as inferior to the male gender but also legitimise women’s place in subordinate military roles.

Assumptions about women’s worth shape the culture of the ADF where it resists integration and assumptions about women’s worth also shape policy that restricts women in their roles. The Catch-22 inherent in this dilemma for women is that a culture of resistance maintains and perpetuates women’s worth as inferior to the worth of men. The other Catch-22 is that government legislation and ADF policy impact on how women are then perceived. Women cannot serve in the most elite of military roles therefore their service is worth less than the service of a male. And so the cycle goes, creating, maintaining and perpetuating women’s inferior military status.

In assessing and analysing women’s military roles I have sought to balance the two central issues that impact on women’s careers in the ADF. ‘The Gendered Battlefield’ has not downplayed either the influence of culture on women’s place in the military or the influence of discriminatory legislation and policy. Rather the two influences have been seen as both interacting with and inflaming the other. The two are seen to intersect and create a minefield of debates and arguments against full integration that are difficult to clearly see, let alone to overcome. It is my thesis that both combine to restrict and limit the careers of all female military personnel.
Women are not excluded from military roles because their individual abilities and talents have been proven to be inferior; they are excluded based upon myths about gender.

Exclusions to women’s military service began with women’s introduction into military service in Australia over a century ago. How women’s military service is remembered traditionally, in the historical record and in war stories, is a downplaying of women’s experiences. Women have been excluded from the collective memory, from the recollections of history. Both of these forms of remembrance in society trivialise and/or omit the roles women have played in war and in military employments. Fenner (1998) identifies historical ‘amnesia’ as encouraging and supporting resistance to women’s integration and participation in the military. Women in Australia have war stories and they have a military history, even as I write they continue to forge these stories and their place in the historical record.

The way that war is remembered is that the ‘frontline’ is revered and all else is secondary. This is reflected in the countless recollections of military battles. Regardless of the role a male might have in war he is remembered as heroic precisely because he was there. Jefford (1996) in her critique of war stories, how they are created and reiterated, recounts an occasion when Tim O’Brian a prize winning war novelist and Vietnam veteran, was telling war stories to an attentive audience of West Point cadets in the United States. She recalls how in a moment of truth O’Brian turns to his audience and says ‘[y]ou know, of course, that none of what I’ve been telling you is true. These are all war stories’ (O’Brian as cited in Jeffords, 1996: 220).

Stories about war are interlaced with the emotion assigned to camaraderie and mateship between men. They are charged with the emotional intensity of battle, of loss, and of honour. Jefford identifies war stories as shapers of cultural attitudes to war (Jeffords, 1996: 227). In the same vein, the war story is vital to moulding the culture of the military. War stories need to be told and those who have served in their country’s wars need to be remembered, however, the truth about war needs also to be told. Women have war stories and they have a military history. That women
are sidelined or left out of these traditions is in part why the culture of the military resists women’s increasing participation and full integration.

Assumptions about how the female gender should behave overrides how they do behave and continues to deny the experiences that women have had in war and in the military. Men in the ADF who were interviewed in the Burton report (1996) expressed views that women’s roles in society should be confined to the realms of community and family. Attitudes such as those expressed by some men in the Burton report contribute to the creation and perpetuation of a culture that resists women’s full integration into the military. These beliefs place an unnecessary burden on women who are serving in military roles.

Women interviewed for this study felt they had to work harder and demonstrate higher performance simply to be seen as equal to men. They expressed the concern that when women are rewarded for outperforming their male colleagues, by receiving promotions or gaining important positions, they are undermined by claims that Defence had to put a woman in the role. The interviews conducted for this study have revealed that women need to strive over and above the usual demands of military life to establish a progressive career for themselves.

The military recruits women in order to increase the potential size and quality of their recruiting pool. However, it is unjust of them to do so when they are not prepared to ‘give women a fair go’ in military employments. This research revealed that women join the ADF because of the educational and career benefits that the military promotes. Women in this study also reported joining the ADF because they wanted to serve their country. Having joined the military female personnel then find themselves established in an organisation that restricts their employment opportunities and their ability to serve their country. They are also in the double bind of being on the receiving end of bias about the female gender. In such an environment they find themselves positioned as ‘other’ in the military culture and need to manage their gender in ways that are unexpected in other areas of society. This research has found that rates of female attrition rise when women find they cannot meet the extra demands that military life places on their gender.
Women in the Nursing Corps who were interviewed for this research expressed a need for avenues of advancement for members of the Corps. These women want more opportunities to study and to progress within Defence that are currently denied to them. At present they feel that the ADF is discriminatory toward the Nursing Corps by failing to meet the need for career advancement. The women believed the barriers to advancement that their Corps face arise because it is considered to be an all female Corps. One woman expressed the view that attitudes in Defence concerning the Nursing Corps were ‘misogynist’. Women in the Nursing Corps should be entitled to the same access to courses and to career advancement as members from other Corps. To continue to deny them these opportunities is contrary to anti-discrimination and Government policy.

Women with children are further disadvantaged in Defence careers. Balancing family commitments with the demands of a career affect women in the ADF in similar ways as it affects women pursuing civilian careers. What is unique for women in the military is that organisational requirements demand that personnel maintain ‘readiness’ for postings and deployments, which may occur with little warning. Compounding this and the usual parental struggles is the bias about women and societal perceptions that the role of mother is the antithesis to a military role. Women in the ADF who are mothers experience indirect discrimination in their careers. The time that women take as maternity leave, paid and unpaid, to have children is treated as a ‘gap’ in service on her annual report. She is seen to lose her competitive edge and this disadvantages her career. Breaks in career for maternity leave reasons need to be handled differently with other than the ‘time-in-rank’ criterion determining career progression. Cultural change is also required so that women with children are not treated as having inferior military status.

Women’s increasing participation in the labour force is one of the most significant social changes of this century (Summers, 2003). Cultural expectations of women as workers and as mothers is reflected in the trend towards family friendly policies in civilian employment and in the ADF. As was shown in chapter four of the thesis, to be fair and just in the employment of women the ADF needs to take into account women’s particular circumstances. In the 1970s married women were permitted to remain in service and pregnant women and women with children were granted
permission by Government to remain in service. These provisions need to be taken a
great deal further so that women with children can forge successful long-term careers
with Defence.

Quoting a male Officer at a seminar she once attended Miriam Cooke points out that,
‘...the US military is no longer an institution attracting only single young men; it is
now made up of families. Thus, these are simultaneously the families the military is
supposed to protect and the families who are supposed to do the protecting. The
military is no longer so different from civilian society (Cooke, 1996: 258). The same
is true for Australian society and the ADF.

Where the masculinist culture of the ADF and of Government is most resistant to
change is within the combat employments and women are currently restricted from
serving in employments where direct engagement with an enemy is expected. This
research has brought to light three prominent arguments that are used to deny women
the right to serve in combat roles. I have identified these arguments as mythology;
they are based upon the assumption that the female gender is unfit for military
service. These arguments put forward that men are ‘naturally’ suited to combat roles
and that women’s participation in these roles is ‘unnatural’. Such arguments are
based in gender stereotypes that do not represent the lived experience of many men
and women (Agostino, 1998b).

The first of these myths, as discussed in chapter five of this thesis, proposes that the
female body is not capable of a combat role. Arguments that seek to maintain the
combat employments as an all male realm are often based in biological determinism.
However, empirical research that proves that women are smaller and lighter than
men fail to examine the reality of the military employments under discussion. It is
unfair to deny all women the right to serve in combat roles based on the reality that
some combat roles require a level of brute strength that many women would be
unable to sustain. Many combat roles require aptitudes such as dexterity,
intelligence or stamina. The women interviewed for this research advocated the use
of competencies as a just and fair way to set standards for combat roles. In this
approach each role is examined to ascertain what competencies an individual would
need to adequately perform the role. Participants in this research highlighted the
need for the ADF to employ the best person for the job regardless of gender and to set standards for roles that are gender neutral.

The second argument against women’s full integration discussed in chapter five sees women as being incapable of bonding in the same way as men. Women entering traditionally all male realms are seen to undermine the cohesion of men. Women in this study largely refuted this myth espousing the view that ‘task cohesion’ is a more effective principle in military bonding and as being most likely to enhance military effectiveness. Social cohesion can lead to exclusivity in groups and this exclusive nature can divide the group from the larger body of the military. Task cohesion on the other hand unites a group around the task it must perform and therefore is more conducive to military effectiveness. Women interviewed for this research believed that task cohesion was efficient and gender neutral.

The third myth, protectionism, is equally a playing out of gender bias. Protectionism arguments espouse the view that women’s presence on the battlefield will distract men and ultimately undermine military effectiveness. In these debates it is put forward that women must be protected from injury, capture and death. Protectionism arguments are based on an outdated view of war (Hancock, 2000) they assume that women can be protected by policy that deems them as non-combatants. Evidence in this thesis, especially in case studies presented from both Gulf Wars, demonstrates that this is not the case. The women I spoke to do not believe that their status as non-combatants protects them, however, none expressed the view that they needed protection. This research has brought to light the assurance that military women are confident in their roles and feel able not only to protect themselves but to defend others. Combat exclusions will not protect military women from injury, capture or death they will however prevent them from ever reaching positions of power and prestige in the military hierarchy.

The myths described above are part of a prejudicial network of arguments that prevent women from reaching for goals and achievements that men are able to strive for. That they remain untested makes them all the more discriminatory and unjust.
Not choosing women on merit, and denying all women the right and responsibility to serve in combat is a breach of citizenship rights, and as such the arguments against women’s full participation in the military is political. Interviews in this research suggest that the combat debates are difficult to resolve. However, removing exclusions on women’s service will achieve the political gain of removing an obstacle to women’s full citizenship. Chapman rightly puts forward that the removal of exclusions will also have the three-fold benefit of reducing career barriers for women in Defence, increasing operational effectiveness and length of service of women in the ADF (Chapman, 1999: 25). This thesis opened with an example of a British Officer who was unable to accompany her troops to the Falklands War. The operational effectiveness of this Officer was put into question when Government legislation prevented her from performing her role to the best of her ability.

Cross-cultural perspectives are vital in considering how the ADF would manage and monitor the lifting of combat exclusions. The Canadian case study in chapter six has demonstrated that without cultural change in the military women will be resisted in combat roles to the point where they cannot possibly succeed.

Women interviewed for this research were positively in favour of female personnel having the right to choose to serve in combat. They were equally as adamant that they would not volunteer for a combat role themselves. Reasons given for their reticence overwhelming pointed to the masculinist culture of Defence and the response of individual males in these employments. Women expressed concerns that integration would be resisted to the point where the process was deliberately slowed down. Some thought that if combat competency standards were put in place they would be deliberately placed so high that very few women would be able to reach them. In this sense women were concerned that female personnel interested in the combat employments would be ‘set up to fail’. The interview data also confirmed that the issues of training, equipment, and infrastructure within Defence would become barriers to women in the combat employments if changes were not made.

This study has demonstrated that the interview group has concerns about women integrating into combat roles and that those concerns are valid. Awareness of the difficulties that currently face women and that could potentially face them in the
future present reservations for anyone thinking of the implications of women’s full military integration. The Canadian case study has shown that even when legislation changes women are often met with hostility and resistance that prevents them serving to their full capacity.

As Chapman (1999) suggested the operational effectiveness of women can be improved by the removal of combat exclusions. The example given of the British Officer in the introduction of the thesis shows how the operational effectiveness of the military as well can be improved by the lifting of combat exclusions. The UN is also demonstrating, through research, that the operational effectiveness of peacekeeping can be improved by the inclusion of women in peacekeeping missions. Surely then peacekeeping missions would become more effective should combat exclusions be removed from women’s service so that women can perform a more integral role in UN sanctioned missions. Currently the ADF sends large contingents of males on peacekeeping mission and a small percentage of women. Women in the ADF have proved themselves as being effective peacekeepers and deserve the right to serve Australia in these missions in greater numbers than they currently do. Denying women equal roles in peacekeeping at any level is discriminatory and affirmative action strategies should be engaged to encourage ADF women to participate in peacekeeping at all levels.

Cheeseman (1999) contends that the face of war in the modern age is changing. Nations will never fight as they once did in WW2 and the Western world will continually be brought to peacekeeping assignments away from their own nations. The UN is making it apparent that women are vital players in the peace process and that the most effective peacekeeping missions are achieved through a balanced force of men and women. Some member nations are answering the call to staff their contingents with a higher percentage of women, and some, like Australia, are unable as yet to meet that demand.

Interview data from this study suggests that women are inspired by the humanitarian nature of peacekeeping roles and succeed in them. The paradox is in order for women rise into positions of power, of rank and command, combat exclusions will
have to be lifted. Military women receive the same training as men and want the same opportunities to be deployed and enhance their careers.

‘Women in the world’s armies will continue their ascendancy, paralleling their increased social and economic gains in civilian society. This global movement should not be resisted, but managed. After all, it is not a question of whether or not women should be permitted to take up the most important posts in the national security apparatus and the military, it is a question of what effect this inevitable movement will have in a changing world’ (Brower, 1996: 7 & 8).

Final steps in eradicating gender bias in the ADF will have to focus on the elimination of discrimination and harassment at all levels. This can only be achieved by holding men who harass accountable for their behaviour. The implications of this suggestion are that harassers are disciplined and finally discharged should their behaviours continue to disrupt integration. Males in the ADF who continue to advance notions of one gender being superior over the other, and who resist integration are ultimately the ‘problem’ with integration and not women.

Following the rationale of the US military in the 1940’s when President Truman ordered desegregation on the basis of race of the American forces, Hancock calls for a similar accountability program in Australia where monitoring is in force to ensure that the process of gender integration is successful. A no tolerance policy for racism was in place in the US military at the time and failure to obey resulted in discharge. Training and specialist support was implemented to meet the demands of integration (Hancock, 2000: 172). Hancock suggests that the lifting of combat exclusions for women in the ADF will require a ‘…considerable degree of flexibility in military leadership and training’ (Hancock, 2000: 174). The process to full integration needs to start with the ADF wanting integration, at all levels, to be successful. Hancock may be right when she says that the lifting of combat exclusions will not be as dramatic as some expect. There is no reason for it to be. Women are, as Hancock points out, still on the road of achieving equal citizenship, and achieving the right to serve in combat roles is part of this process (Hancock, 2000: 175 & 176).
Interviews with women in the ADF have convinced me that when legislation permits full integration to go ahead, senior women in the Officer and Other Ranks should be consulted for their expert opinions on matters that concern the infrastructure of Defence, equipment needs, training, and task competencies. Women in the ADF are qualified to assist with full integration and the ADF would benefit from a task force of women to collaborate in the process.

This thesis has demonstrated that there has been no research to date that has proffered satisfactory evidence to prove that the increasing participation of women within the ADF could hinder the institution’s primary and essential roles.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The majority of issues that this thesis encapsulates are, I believe, ongoing and will warrant further investigation.

Further research from a gender/cultural studies perspective is desirable. There appears to be a hesitancy to explore women’s involvement in the military which is regrettable because ‘…uniformed occupations offer fertile territory for the understanding of gender and sexual orientation issues and of the frontiers for the promotion of institutional change and individual acceptance’ (Spurling & Greenhalgh, 2000: xiii). I see great scope for further research into the area of women’s military and war history in Australia. These are neglected areas and although some work is being done ‘[t]he revival of scholarship in women history over the past quarter century has scarcely touched the history of women in war. Feminist historians find military history unattractive; women as nurturers and peacemakers, even as victims, are more appealing than women who go to war’ (De Pauw, 1998: xiii).

To overcome the misinformation in Defence about women’s suitability for military employments an ADF sponsored study into women’s involvement in the ADF that outlines women’s war history, prisoner of war experiences, and women’s attrition during wars would be considered beneficial. This study could also include a
thorough and in-depth chronology of women’s advances since their time with the ADF.

I strongly recommend that the ADF conduct a follow up study to the Burton Report (1996).

Investigations into the harassment of males may also benefit the ADF. Such research not only supports people who are dealing with harassment it also has the potential of eradicating harassment and harassers from the organisation. Recent inquiries into military justice have proffered submissions from men who have experienced undesirable behaviour from colleagues.

Research into the experiences of homosexual men and lesbian women in the ADF would further the commitment the ADF is espousing regarding its no-tolerance policy on homophobia.

The introduction of this thesis outlined briefly incidences of racism by ADF members. The two occurrences mentioned concerned inappropriate behaviour by Navy when on operations (Horner, 2001) and the tragic suicide of a young Aboriginal man who had been taunted by Army instructors about Indigenous peoples (Das, 2004). These are two of a myriad of incidences that have come to the attention of the press in recent times. Research into combating racism in the ADF is also warranted.


Burton, Clare. (1996). *Women in the Australian Defence Force. Two Studies: The Cultural, Social and Institutional Barriers Impeding the Merit-Based Progression of*


Appendix
Appendix A

Friday, January 24, 2003
62 Honour Ave
Lawson
NSW 2783
(02) 47593 080
0427593080
donabridges6@hotmail.com

Research Study Into Women’s Expanding Role in
the Australian Defence Force: Peacekeeping and Combat

My name is Donna Bridges and I am Postgraduate Research Student with the School of Sociology and Justice Studies, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury. I am currently working on a Doctor of Philosophy that focuses on the experiences of women in the Australian Defence Force and their expanding roles into peacekeeping and combat positions.

This letter is to invite you to participate in this research if you are currently serving in the Navy, Army, or Airforce (and have done so for two years or more). The aim of the study is to understand the process and consequences of women’s integration in the ADF, particularly in the areas of combat employments and peacekeeping and to highlight the experiences and knowledge of ADF women on their own terms. The intention is to talk to women in a variety of positions and ranks within the ADF. I am particularly interested in talking to women who have served in peacekeeping missions, who serve in combat support roles, women who want to serve in roles that are currently unavailable to them and/or women who hold strong views regarding the position of women in the ADF.

Interviews with women who are serving members are especially valuable to this research as it is often the voices of those in positions of command, academics, and politicians that are heard on current debates that concern women. Participating in this research would provide
you with an opportunity to tell your story, to make recommendations based on your personal experience, and to highlight issues that either work or don’t work for you.

Partaking in the research would involve an interview with myself that would last between one and one and half-hours. In the interview you would be invited to discuss the issues most relevant to your own personal situation with issues concerning peacekeeping and combat roles being prioritised. At the interview you attend I will ask you to fill out a brief questionnaire which will ask for contact details as well as personal information including, name, rank, and length of service. I will also ask to audio tape interviews to ensure that I accurately record what is said.

I will be the only person conducting this research, therefore, you will only be required to meet and talk with me. I will not be including names or information that would reveal the identity of participants within the research documents. At no time and under no circumstances would your personal details be used for any other purpose than for this research. If you have any concerns, at any stage, regarding the use of information you have provided then you may contact me and I will be happy to discuss these issues with you. If you wish to see how information about you is dealt with in the research report I will send you, via email, the relevant documentation. Participants will have the right to omit or modify information that concerns them.

The Australian Defence Force has no entitlement to any of the information you impart in interviews or at any stage in the research process. All information will be kept in accordance with the Commonwealth Privacy Act of 1988 and the New South Wales Privacy and Personal Information ACT of 1998 and, as far as the law permits, assurances of confidentiality are guaranteed. There is no obligation for any woman serving with the ADF to become involved in this research. If you do become involved and then wish to discontinue your participation, you would be free to do so, and you are entitled to take any information you have provided with you. There will be no disadvantages or penalties for ending your involvement in this research.

All efforts will be made to ensure that your involvement in this research would be respectful, non-judgmental, and supportive. However, if at any stage you feel uncomfortable or distressed about issues raised in the research, or you feel as though you need support, then please see the attached sheet – for support, advice, confidential counseling.

If you are interested in participating in this research, please contact me via
Email on donnabridges6@hotmail.com

Or

Donna Bridges
62 Honour Avenue
Lawson
New South Wales 2783

University of Western Sydney
School of Sociology and Justice Studies
Richmond Campus Bldg. G7
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith South DC
NSW 1797

I look forward to hearing from you

Yours Sincerely,

Donna Bridges

The University requires that all participants are informed, that if they have any complaint concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher or if an independent person is preferred, to the Ethics Officer, Human Research Committee, University of Western Sydney, Research Services, Building 1 Room 2, Bankstown Campus, Locked Bag 1797, SOUTH PENRITH DC NSW 1797, Telephone 02-97726785, fax 02-97726786. Alternatively you can contact the Australian Defence Human Research Ethics Committee, CP2-7-066, Department of Defence, Canberra ACT 2600, Telephone 02-62663837, fax 02-62664982, email ADHREC@defence.gov.au.
Support Services

- **Richmond**: The Women’s Cottage (02) 45784 190
- **Penrith**: The Penrith Women’s Health Centre (02) 47218 749
- **Blue Mountains**: The Katoomba Women’s Health Centre (02) 47825 133
- **Liverpool**: The Women’s Health Centre (02) 96013 555
- **Nowra**: The Waminda Women’s Health Centre (02) 44217 400 or The Shoalhaven Women’s Health Centre (02) 44210 730
- **Newcastle**: The Hunter Women’s Health Centre (02) 49682 511
- **Sydney**: The Leichhardt Women’s Health Centre (02) 95603 011
- **Canberra**: The Women’s Centre for Health Matters (02) 62862 043

Or for Defence Organisations –
- The Director of the Defence Equity Organisation: Bronwen Grey on (02) 62654677
- Defence Equity Organisation on line EquityAdvice@defence.gov.au

Or, contact your local Defence Community Organisation

- **DCO Canberra**: (02) 62664951
- **DCO Regional – Sydney**: (02) 93773345
- **DCO Sydney – West**: (02)93773314
- **DCO Nowra**: (02) 44213855
- **DCO Williamtown**: (02) 49651880

Alternatively, contact one of the Psychology Support Teams Listed below

Queensland

- Psychology Support Team – Brisbane
  2 Health Support Battalion
  Gallipoli Barracks
  ENOGGERA QLD
  (07) 3332 4017

- Psychology Support Team – 3 CSSB
  Lavarack Barracks
  TOWNSVILLE QLD
  (07) 4771 1728

NSW
• Psychology Support Team – I Health Support Battalion
  Holsworthy Barracks
  HOLSWORTHY NSW
  (02) 9600 2019

• Navy Psychology Eastern Australia – Garden Island
  Maritime East Psychology
  Building 28
  GARDEN ISLAND NSW
  (02) 9359 2677

• Psychology Support Team – Kapooka
  Blamey Barracks
  KAPOOKA NSW
  (02) 6933 8482

Victoria

• ALTC
  Gaza Ridge Barracks
  NORTH BANDIANA VIC
  (03) 6055 2330

• RAAF Base East Sale
  East Sale VIC
  (03) 5146 6044

• HMAS Cerberus
  Western Port VIC
  (03) 5950 7520

• Psychology Support Section – Melbourne
  2nd Floor Defence Plaza
  661 Bourke Street
  MELBOURNE VIC
  (03) 9282 3547

ACT
Psychology Support Section – ACT
Canberra Area Medical Unit – Russell
Russell Offices
CANBERRA ACT
(02) 6265 4622

Tasmania

Psychology Support Section – Hobart
Anglesea Barracks
Davey Street
HOBART TAS
(03) 6237 7316

South Australia

RAAF Base Edinburgh
EDINBURGH SA
(08) 8393 2147

Northern Territory

Psychology Support Team – 1 CSSB
Robertson Barracks
PALMERSTON NT
(08) 8985 9211

If you do not feel comfortable contacting any of these services, please feel free to discuss your concerns with me and, we could arrange for an alternative support service.
Consent Form

Dear Participant,

I am including this consent form with your information package so that you can read and sign it if you decide to participate in this research.

I would like to go over and confirm some issues of importance that were mentioned in the ‘Information Sheet’. Firstly, I would like to advise you of your right not to participate in this research and remind you that you are free to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no penalties for withdrawing or for retracting any information you have provided during the research.

I would also like to remind participants that their right to privacy and confidentiality will be respected during the phase of this research in accordance with the Commonwealth Privacy Act of 1988 and the New South Wales Privacy and Personal Information ACT of 1998.

Please do not sign this form until you have read the information sheet and are satisfied that any questions you have had have been answered.

I (the participant) have read the supporting documentation accompanying this consent form and all my questions have been answered. I understand that this study may be published and understand that my name or personal details will not be used in that publication at any time. I understand that my right to privacy and confidentiality will be respected at all times during the phase of this research and that at no time afterwards will information I have provided be used without my consent. I am aware that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. I understand that I may retract information from the study at any time. I understand that I have a right to view research documentation that concerns me.

I (the participant) agree to participate in this research

Name: __________________________ Signature: __________________________

Date: __________________________

Primary Researcher

Name: __________________________ Signature: __________________________

Date: __________________________
Interview Schedule

Questions:

• What are the benefits, for you, of being in the Australian Defence Force?

• What motivates you to stay in the Australian Defence Force?

• What are the main barriers you face?

• How do these barriers impact? Personally, socially, professionally?

• How do you respond to, negotiate, and/or manage these barriers?

• What do you think the potential of women within the ADF is (on the ground, in policy, in decision making, in leadership)?

• How do you perceive policy initiatives that are in place to facilitate women’s integration?

• It is common to talk about the ‘masculine culture’ of the ADF – how do you perceive this ‘all male’ domain – this ‘culture of masculinity’?

• Where do you stand on the women in combat debates?

• What do you think are the implications of women being in combat – for women? For ADF capability?

• What do you think about the physiological arguments against women’s integration into combat (i.e. pregnancy, menstruation, training and injury, size and weight)?

• What do you think about the psychological arguments against women’s integration into combat (i.e. unnatural role for females, not aggressive enough, male protectionism, cohesion and discipline, public opinion)?
• Do you believe that limits to integration impact on women’s opportunity for promotion, financial reward, prestige, and travel?

• Where do you stand on women’s integration into peacekeeping?

• Do you think that stereotypical qualities of women i.e. selflessness, compassion, gentleness, cooperation, passiveness etc could be employed to enhance peacekeeping operations?

• Do you think the beliefs and opinions of civilians impact on you as ADF personnel (in what way)?

• Does the women’s movement/feminism have any relevance in your life? (How? Why not?)
Appendix B

The purpose of this minute is to inform you of research on women in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) being conducted by a PhD student from the University of Western Sydney.

As you would be aware, the issues surrounding the employment of women in the ADF are constantly under review. Whilst the ADF conducts research in this area, the roles that women perform are also scrutinised by a number of researchers and commentators.

Recent publications, such as Soldiers of the Queen: Women in the Australian Army by Janette Bomford and Women in Uniform: Pathways and Perceptions edited by Kathryn Spurling and Elizabeth Greenhalgh, have illustrated the magnitude of the contribution by women as well as highlighting their frustrations. This research is a useful addition to that conducted in-house.

It is important to note that there is not any obligation for you to participate and furthermore, that the ADF, whilst interested in the final report, has no entitlement to any of the information you may provide during the course of the research.

The research is to be conducted under the rules and regulations of the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee as well as Commonwealth and State Privacy laws.

If you are interested in participating in this research please contact Donna Bridges as per the details over the page.

R. K. MCLENNAN
Air Commodore
Director General Career Management Policy

R1-1-C021
Tel: (02) 6265 4852; Fax: (02) 62651797
Email: roxley.mclennan@defence.gov.au

May 02
“The Gendered Battlefield”

Women

in the Australian Defence Force

Donna. V. Bridges

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

School of Applied Social and Human Sciences
University of Western Sydney

2005
I dedicate this thesis to my grandfathers:

Bill Bridges who died while serving in the British Air Force in WW2

Jack Bolger who served with the British Army in the Middle East in WW2
Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and generosity of the women from the Australian Defence Force who devoted their time and energy to provide me with their valuable contributions. To them I am endlessly grateful.

The Australian Defence Force showed interest in this research by providing practical assistance. Their openness to the project made the research processes and outcomes richer and more constructive. Special thanks go to John Matthieson and Lieutenant Colonel Linda Campbell, both worked closely with me and helped me immeasurably. Linda Campbell is owed untold gratitude for her consistent guidance, her advice, and tireless commitment to the project.

I also owe thanks to the intellectual community I am part of at the University of Western Sydney. Thanks must go first to my supervisors: Doctor Debbie Horsfall, for her faith in me always, her constancy and her vigilant and challenging supervision, Associate Professor Moira Carmody for her astute observations in theory and writing, and her support in my communications with the ADF. The support of Vivian Mulder in all my dealings with the University, and administration, is greatly appreciated. Postgraduate colleagues have been an inspiration, providing good advice and lots of encouragement. Special thanks go to Lesley Salmon and Susan Ambler who have been very good friends, inspiring work mates and who have helped me enjoy the process of thesis writing.

Some very special people have given me an extraordinary level of encouragement and assistance while I have worked on this research. These unique and affectionate friends have added their valuable contributions to the process of thesis writing. Firstly I would like to thank Tracey Willow who supported me in the decision to embark on this project and who has many times read what I have written, offering feedback and criticism. Her faith in me has always been an inspiration. Emily Coleing has offered kind and motivating words, home cooked meals, an incredible amount of her time and energy as well as a great deal of editorial assistance (and a fabulous sense of humour). My thanks go also to Margaret Buchanan. I couldn’t have finished this thesis without her strength, patience and energy. She has challenged me with her brilliant mind and particularly during the final writing phase of the thesis her sense of fun and her warmth have provided great relief.

Other friends and family have been interested and supportive for all the years I have been working on this research. Thanks to Chris Wolfe, Veronica Stevenson, Cath Dunn, Deborah Dare, Sharon Payne, Lana O’Sullivan, Erin Thomas and Anita Thompson. My family has been a wonderfully encouraging and an enduring support during my years study; special thanks go to my parents Johanna and Graeme Cuttriss, my sisters Michele Pownall and Cindy Fairfax, my grandmother Johanna Bolger, and my little brothers Grant, Ben, Simon and Tim (for keeping me in book vouchers for all those years). My family is proud of my achievements and their pride has sustained me. This endeavour is as much theirs as it is mine.
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

..................................................
(Signature)
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Summary

‘The Gendered Battlefield: Women in the Australian Defence Force’

This thesis seeks to understand and critically discuss gender inequalities in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) as a barrier to full integration. This is achieved through an exploration of current literature, policy and legal documents, and from the point of view of a sample of ADF women. The purpose of this thesis is to determine whether constructions of gender devalue, exclude and therefore oppress women in the ADF and to determine whether constructions of gender legitimise the subordinate position of female personnel within the ADF. The study locates the ‘voices’, the experiences, and opinions of a group of female ADF personnel in order to hear from the ‘central’ players.

The thesis contributes to current debates by: providing a platform for female members of the ADF to relate their experiences and opinions, thereby, giving a voluntary voice to women who are often not heard from in the debates; providing a feminist perspective - which in the Australian context is scant, as Australian feminisms have been reluctant to approach this controversial area; providing a critical perspective that is complementary to in-house research, through conducting the research from a position outside the ADF.

The aims of the research are to explore the culture of the ADF, with the purpose of illustrating the underlying causes of barriers to full integration. It aims to understand where unequal treatment arises from, how inequity manifests, how this impacts on women, and how ADF resources are ultimately misused by the excluding of women from certain employments.

Multiple methods were employed at all stages of the research. Thirty women were interviewed in in-depth semi-structured interviews. Analysis of relevant literature, documents and policy, media, and historical evidence was conducted. Content analysis of themes arising from the literature and from the emergent interviews’ themes was integral in shaping this thesis.
Original thesis questions arose from literature and were further impacted upon by ADF policy, reports and media reviews. Questions changed again during and after interviewing as the women led me in new directions. Coming from a pacifist position I originally wanted to know why women would want to join the ADF, this question was easily answered through the beginning phases of the research. The questions became more complex and grew into this thesis through my interaction with women.

Through the research fieldwork I was led in the direction of focusing on the gendered nature of Defence culture. Government and ADF policy on combat exclusions I found to be a barrier to integration that impact upon career progression in the ADF. The research further revealed a disturbing realisation that Australian women continue to be denied full citizenship rights and responsibilities due to the inequities of restrictions on military service. The research led to the finding that women are excluded from roles in the ADF based on the mythology that women’s service is inferior to that of males. Military debates concerning women’s integration revolve around this mythology. Issues presented in the arguments for cohesion, physical strength, and protectionism are military myths that seek to continue to exclude from positions of leadership, prestige and power in the ADF. Women’s current and potential roles in combat and peacekeeping are presented in the thesis as ultimate case studies revealing how women are denied equal employment rights in the ADF.
## Abbreviations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>AAMWS</td>
<td>Australian Army Medical Women’s Service</td>
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<td>AANS</td>
<td>Australian Army Nursing Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADF</td>
<td>Australian Defence Force</td>
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<td>ADFA</td>
<td>Australian Defence Force Academy</td>
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<td>ADHREC</td>
<td>Australian Defence Human Research Ethics Committee</td>
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<td>AFWV</td>
<td>Australian Federation of Women Voters</td>
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<td>ANZAC</td>
<td>Australian and New Zealand Army Corps</td>
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<td>CDF</td>
<td>Canadian Defence Force</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<td>DCO</td>
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<td>Defence Equity Organisation</td>
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<td>DSPPR</td>
<td>Directorate of Strategic Planning Personnel and Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSWANSR</td>
<td>New South Wales Army Nursing Service Reserve</td>
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<td>P.O.W.</td>
<td>Prisoner of War</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAAF</td>
<td>Royal Australian Air Force</td>
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<td>Royal Australian Naval Nursing Service</td>
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<td>Royal Military College</td>
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<td>RSL</td>
<td>Returned &amp; Services League</td>
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