

TALKING IN THE RANKS: GENDER AND MILITARY DISCOURSE

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By

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## **TALKING IN THE RANKS: GENDER AND MILITARY DISCOURSE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This interactional sociolinguistic study of military discourse applies the techniques of discourse analysis to the audio-recorded interactions of six Air Force officers. For cross-gender comparison, a male and female Wing Commander, Squadron Commander and Flight Commander were recorded. Literature regarding masculinity theory, language and power, gender indexing, politeness, the study of narrative, and language and ideology was reviewed. Data analysis focuses on the use of "ma'am" and "sir", institutional narrative, and language and ideology. Though not conclusive, findings imply that civilians were more likely to offer "sir" to male military superiors than to offer "ma'am" to female military superiors, and that subordinates were more likely to show deference to male superiors by asking questions which were accompanied by rising intonation and tagged with "sir". Findings also indicate that military women tell narratives and respond to narratives in ways which reinforce the hierarchy and masculinity of the institution, but consistent with the literature their motivation for telling such narratives, or responding in institutional ways, is community-oriented. Lastly, an examination of the links between the military's ideology and language use shows that the hierarchy of the institution also fosters bonds of solidarity so close as to

draw feminine enactments of nurture from military males, though these enactments are inconspicuous in the military's definitively masculine environment.

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## Preface

In the 30 years since the 1975 publication of Lakoff's *Language and Woman's Place* language and gender has been thriving field of study. Researchers have widely expanded the field of research in order to take into consideration the importance of a range of factors which, taken together with gender and gender identity, influence one's conversational interactions. These factors include social norms, age, institutional affiliation, geographic region, and social class, among many others. In addition, the implications of power, particularly in terms of social ranking of male over female, complicated the analysis of language and gender data.

As an active duty Air Force officer of 21 years and a researcher interested in language and gender I speculated that the military's rank system would level the gender-relevant power issues and lead to some interesting findings regarding language and gender. Add to the power dynamics the unquestionably masculine nature of the military environment and still more interesting findings were destined to emerge.

In order to explore the impact of a clear hierarchy on the conversational styles of military women and men, I solicited six volunteer informants to audio record their interactions for a duty day or part of it. All informants were Air Force officers: three women and three men, parallel in rank and job status. The six informants provided thirty hours of recorded material.

As I listened to these recordings, particularly in light of Judith Butler's theory of performativity of gender, it seemed to me that my informants were not "performing"

gender so much as they were “performing” the institution, and gendered enactments, if present, were implicit in those performances. The immediate assumption is that “performing” a masculine institution means that women and men both must “perform” masculinity. However, I don’t believe that to be the case in these data, though I do see gendered elements in the discourse. Further, to make the assumption that military membership is entirely about performing the masculine aspects of the military might drown out the presence of what has been generally associated with the feminine, such as care and concern for the troops.

In this interactional sociolinguistic study of gender and military discourse I chose to use a framework that would allow me to look at the gendered nature of interactions while taking into account the masculine nature of the institution and the tasks being performed by my informants. That framework is the community of practice framework which originated with Lave and Wenger (1991) and which Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) proposed as a tool for the study language and gender. The community of practice framework shifts the focus to the practices around a larger mutual endeavor in which people engage. The language and gender analyst then examines how gender manifests, or not, in those practices. By changing the focus of examination, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet shift attention, “toward the processes through which [gender difference and power each feed] the other to produce the concrete complexities of language as used by real people engaged in social practice”

(1992:462). In other words, the question becomes: How is language used to conduct work, and if gender matters, how so?

This study applies interactional sociolinguistics and the community of practice framework to military discourse; more specifically, the day-to-day discourse of Air Force officers in interaction. Chapter One examines the context of the military as a community for linguistic study. The review of the literature in this chapter includes an overview of the power dynamic in language and gender research, including the simultaneity of power and solidarity, and perspectives from masculinity theory, which show the consonance between characteristics of masculinity and military institutional characteristics. In Chapter Two conduct a microanalysis of gender indexing in military usage of the address forms “ma’am” and “sir”. In isolating and examining the environments in which “ma’am” and “sir” occur, I found that differences in their use potentially flag greater deference for male officers than for female. Chapter Three explores institutional narrative and what it reveals about institutional and personal identity in the institutional environment. I propose that institutional narrative, and responses to narrative in the institutional environment, can be categorized according to whether they perpetuate or reinforce the institution’s ideals, traditions, or hierarchy, or whether they’re personal narratives in which the institution is salient in some way. I also found that military women perpetuate institutional ideals and traditions, including masculine ones, through narrative, but that their motivation for telling or responding to narratives is community-building and inclusion. In Chapter Four, using the assumption

that institutional ideologies can be found in day-to-day language use and are instrumental in understanding discourse as used by members of the military, I explore institutional ideologies as they reveal themselves in these data -- particularly ideologies of hierarchy and its cousin, masculinity. I found that the solidarity stemming from military members' respect for their hierarchy is so close as to be interpreted as feminine nurturance, though the nurture is inconspicuous in the overwhelmingly masculine atmosphere of the military. Arising from this study is a unique look at language and gender in military environments, and more specifically Air Force environments. As a step in analysis of intersections of language, gender and the military, this study is not finished, rather it has only just begun.

## Acknowledgements

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This work is dedicated to the ZZs, who spent a lot of extra time with Nana so  
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## Transcription Conventions

Each line of transcription contains a single intonation unit.

|                          |                                                                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| .                        | Period shows falling tone in the preceding element.                          |
| ?                        | Question mark shows rising tone in the preceding element.                    |
| ,                        | Comma indicates a continuing intonation, drawling out the preceding element. |
| <i>stress</i>            | Italics show heavy stress.                                                   |
| wh- what                 | A single dash indicates a cutoff with a glottal stop                         |
| "Sir"                    | Double quotes mark speech set off by a shift in the speaker's voice          |
| [and then]<br>[so then-] | Square brackets on successive lines mark overlapping talk                    |
| but=<br>=what            | Equals signs on successive lines shows latching between turns                |
| (2.0)                    | Numbers in parentheses indicate timed pauses                                 |
| <laughter>               | carrot brackets enclose editorial comments and untranscribable elements      |

## **Chapter 1 – Background**

### **Introduction and Chapter Overview**

Interactional sociolinguistics focuses on “communicative practice as the everyday-world site where societal and interactive forces merge” (Gumperz 2001), that is, interaction and the discourse that creates and accompanies it. Such sites of communicative practice are, of course, innumerable, as are the social, contextual, and interpersonal influences of interactants. Yet, researchers examining everything from individual interactions to broad categories of interaction have discerned consistencies and generalities which reveal patterns of interactional usage in the midst of what seems like chaotic variety. Some categories of interaction include discourse in institutions (Agar 1985, Linde 2001, Schegloff 1992), in the workplace (Drew and Heritage 1992, Tannen 1994b), and between genders (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 1995, Coates 1996, 2003, Tannen 1990, 1993, 1994a, 1996, 2003). This study -- an interactional sociolinguistic analysis of gender and military discourse -- makes a contribution to the body of linguistic knowledge in these realms. By examining military discourse at the word-level, in interactional excerpts, and as used in narrative, I will analyze points at which language, gender and the military intersect. This study will examine conversational practices in the day-to-day business of military members and how, in the course of such language use, gender identities are constructed or conveyed.

This chapter of the study provides theoretical and contextual background important to the study of intersections of language, gender and the military which the data analysis in later chapters will demonstrate. I begin with a review of the major influences in the study of language and gender as well as an examination of current issues in the field. I then look at the military as a context for linguistic study to include relevant considerations from masculinity theory, which are key to the study of language and gender in the military environment. In addition to the study of masculinity theory and the light it sheds on the construction of gender in the military, the subsequent discussion of changes in the military's policies regarding the sexes are also important to understanding the social context of the data to be analyzed. The chapter concludes with an introduction to the framework for study, that being the community of practice framework developed by Lave and Wenger and adapted to the study of language and gender by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992). Following discussion of the framework, I will review the method used to collect the data for the study, and an introduction to the subjects whose interactions are examined.

### **Language, Gender and Power**

The study of language and gender has, from the start, been inextricable from considerations of power in social context and in interaction. In *Language and Woman's Place*, the text largely credited as the impetus for the study of language and gender, Lakoff (1975) raises questions as to how the English language semantically,

syntactically, and prosodically assists in relegating women in America to a class subordinate to men. Key in Lakoff's observations regarding language and the sexes are social divisions which align women with the domestic sphere and men with the world of paid work and influence, and thereby social power. Lakoff addresses the gendered nature of power, pointing out that "the notion of 'power' for a man is different from that of 'power' for a woman" (Lakoff 1975: 30). For example, Lakoff asserts, a man gains recognition for what he does, whereas a woman gains recognition by virtue of the men with whom she is associated. This early view of language as a facilitator of male dominance was taken up by other researchers (Thorne and Henley 1975, Spender 1980) and became what is known as the *dominance* model of language and gender. While one might argue that Lakoff's work is dated by a generation, gender difference and power are clearly still at issue today. Lakoff has often revisited the role of power in language (Lakoff 1990, 2000) recently examining the effect of women's entrance into, and speaking power in, institutions traditionally driven by male politics (Lakoff 2003). Lakoff (2003) concludes that change has come, and is coming, despite dissension among those who don't want to give up the male "politics as usual" (176).

Among her closing thoughts in *Language and Woman's Place*, Lakoff (1975) raises the notion that the differences between men's and women's conversation should perhaps be regarded as matters of communicative style, without judgment as to which is "better" (74). This concept has since been explored in depth, most notably by Tannen (1990, 1994, 1996). Other researchers, inspired by Gumperz (1982), have explored

interactional contrasts between men and women from the standpoint that their differences in talk were comparable to cross-cultural differences in language use (Maltz and Borker 1982, Scollon and Scollon 1995). This cross-cultural perspective has come to be known, and widely referred to, as the *difference* approach. As will be discussed shortly, however, the terms *difference* and *dominance*, imply a dichotomy, or at least an exclusivity, which doesn't exist.

The value of a cross-cultural perspective lies in the realization that, as with communication across societal cultures, the perspectives to be considered are many and varied. In discourse analytic work in a professional setting, for example, Tannen (1996) examines the nexus of framing (the alignments interactants take to one another) and Goffman's (1977) concept of sex-class (as in 'the class of women' and 'the class of men'). Tannen bases her analysis on Goffman's prescient work on the relevance of sex-class to interaction. In "The Arrangement Between the Sexes" Goffman points out that the interactional field is where "**sex-class** makes itself felt" (emphasis mine) for it is in the organization of face-to-face interaction that, "understandings about sex-based dominance can be employed as a means of deciding who decides, who leads, and who follows. Again, these scenes do not so much allow for the expression of natural differences between the sexes as for the production of that difference itself" (324). This production of gender difference is at the core of current gender and language studies, in which linguists examine not only expressions of gender identity, but ways in which those expressions create and sustain gender differences.

Of course, sex-based dominance in Goffman's view presumes a mixed-sex environment in which the masculine sex-class dominates. Few will argue that in the broader American society the masculine sex-class continues to dominate. But, does that mean, then, that in an all-female dynamic, the one who dominates is playing out a masculine sex-class role? Or does an interaction involving women in an environment dominated by the masculine sex-class, e.g., the military, mean that women are producing and reproducing the sex-class difference by virtue of their participation in the masculine institution? As this study will show, the answer to this question is many-sided and, even in the military, context dependent.

Tannen (1994a) gives warning, however, that dominance and difference are not exclusive of one another, as may be implied by the "dominance, difference" framework. On the contrary, she states, "the cultural difference framework provides a model for explaining how dominance can be created in face-to-face interaction" (Tannen 1994a: 10). Therefore, viewing gender in interaction from the perspective of the difference model does not mean that hierarchy, or dominance, cannot be seen as an influence; rather, viewing from the perspective of the difference model should make clearer the ways in which dominance or hierarchy is made manifest in the interaction at hand.

Still, it is the difference approach which has most influenced current trends in the study of language and gender – trends which recognize that studies of gender and language must move away from dichotomous notions of difference and into more complex analyses of the influence, and instantiation, of gender in interaction. Holmes

and Meyerhoff (2003) identify those trends as the search for solid theoretical approaches to gender and language, gender and relational discourse, language across the spectrum of gender (as with queer linguistics), deeper consideration of “norms” in gender and language, and gender and discourse in institutional settings as well as the gendering of the institutions themselves. McElhinny (2003b) notes the long and still current influence of practice-based or activity-based approaches which address the problems inherent in “the notion of gender as an attribute” (27). In other words, practice or activity based approaches “[change] the research question from what the differences are between men’s and women’s speech . . . to when, whether, and how men’s and women’s speech are done in similar and different ways” (McElhinny 2003b: 29). Tannen (1996) alludes to a framework for analysis similar to the practice approach when she borrows Bateson’s concept of looking at phenomena, namely language and gender, out of “the corner of the eye” – allowing the relationship between gender and language to emerge, “when some other aspect of the world,” perhaps an activity or practice, “is the object of direct focus” (201). As McElhinny (2003b) points out, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet’s work regarding gender as it is constructed in communities of practice -- a framework which will be discussed at length later in this chapter -- is related to a longer history of practice based approaches.

In both the difference and dominance approaches introduced above, and in the more recent focus on practice, the question of power is still central. In the introduction to a collection of work regarding language and power Kramarae, Schulz and O’Barr

(1984) note a wide range of definitions of power as applied to the study of language. Some, they state, offer autonomous definitions of power, while still others point out that power doesn't mean there has to be a winner and a loser, rather that acts of nurture and interdependence are sometimes acts of strength and power. The latter observation is readily apparent in the study of language and gender in the military environment where superiors, male and female, are expected to care for and mentor subordinates thereby demonstrating "nurture and interdependence" within a clearly dichotomous power dynamic.

Kramarae et al (1984) also inject Foucault's analysis that power is internal to all relationships and developed through interaction, thus rendering close analysis of conversational interaction an important step in delineating the balance of power in any interpersonal dynamic – a point which is key in the analysis of interactions within the military, where the relative rank (as indicated by insignia, e.g., Staff Sergeant, Master Sergeant, Lieutenant, Major, etc.) of interactants is an important contextual influence. Also important to the context of military interactions are individuals' job positions. Two individuals may wear the same rank, e.g., Colonel, but one may be superior to the other in terms of job position. For example, in the recordings collected for this study, several interactions occur between Group Commanders who are Colonels and their Wing Commanders who are Colonels; yet, the Groups are the smaller units which comprise the Wing and the Group Commanders are therefore subordinate to the Wing Commander even though they both wear the eagle shaped insignia denoting the same

rank: Colonel. This circumstance is somewhat comparable to two physicians, both MDs, yet one is a pediatric resident and one is an attending pediatrician.

These hierarchical considerations are but demonstrations of Foucault's conception of disciplinary power. McHoul and Grace (1993) explore Foucault's philosophies which consider the historical relevance of social mechanisms to power as exercised between the government and individuals in an age, post-sovereignty, when power is a mutually negotiated endeavor, coming from below as well as above. They explain that one element of Foucault's disciplinary power is the spatial distribution of individuals, as exemplified by "a network of relations of rank (officers separated from other ranks, as in a military barracks). By these procedures, one 'knows one's place' in the general economy of space associated with disciplinary power" (69). Such a perspective could help interpret a subordinate's complicity in interaction, whether or not such complicity seemed in the best interests of the subordinate, as in the case of obeying an order to go into combat or harm's way.

Despite the Foucauldian philosophy that power, particularly in modern society, is much more complicated than "one-up and one-down," the notion of power sometimes implies a zero sum game in which one individual has power and the other does not. Brown and Gilman (1960) virtually define it as such, stating, "Power is a relationship between at least two persons, and it is nonreciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behavior" (255). In his discussion of deference, as it relates to maintenance of face, Goffman (1967) extends this relationship beyond the individual

to what the individual may symbolize or represent. A foundation of Goffman's rich exploration of human interaction is the concept of "face" or "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (5). The "line" to which Goffman refers is a "pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself" (5). Goffman goes on to point out that the line is often a result of institutionalized norms. So, in interaction, deference between interactants is often a function of deference to one or the other's "category" or representational significance. In the case of the military, an interactant displaying ritual respect through deferential behavior may be showing respect for both the individual superior and the superior's representation within the organization. Or, the subordinate may have little respect for the superordinate as an individual, but may show deference to that superordinate out of respect for the office, or rank, represented. Power within an interaction, then, does not simply operate at the level of the individual interactants, but may be further influenced by the norms of the institution common to both individuals.

Tannen's exploration of power and solidarity, brings to light the fact that the concept of power is not as dichotomous and simple as a one-up, one-down split, though it still may bear that component (Tannen 1994a). Rather, power and solidarity necessarily coexist and entail each other. In other words, solidarity (or closeness) also entails power, "in that the requirement of similarity and closeness limits freedom and independence. At the same time, any show of power entails solidarity by involving

participants in relation to each other” (Tannen 1994a: 22-23). Tannen labels this seemingly paradoxical relationship in which power and solidarity coexist and entail one another the polysemy of power and solidarity. Further, Tannen points out that power and solidarity are not only polysemous, but also ambiguous. That is, one does not always know if an interactional move, such as an overlap in speaking, is an assertion of power or a show of solidarity.

The polysemy of power and solidarity is evidenced in the military, for example, where by virtue of the solidarity of shared membership in a hierarchical institution a person of lower rank recognizes a person of higher rank and affords the normal customs and courtesies, despite the lower ranking person’s lack of power in relation to the higher ranking. Because of the solidarity of group membership inherent in the military status of these two, differently-ranked interactants, the power relationship and solidary kinship are simultaneously recognized with, for example, the rendering of a salute. Now imagine the same higher ranking person in civilian clothes in a line at the grocery store, for example. Without the trappings and solidarity of the institution of the military, despite high rank the same person is just another customer. Note, however, that the higher ranking person has entered a new power and solidarity dynamic: customer and service provider.

Tannen’s assertion that power and solidarity are polysemous provides a sociolinguistic perspective consistent with the Foucauldian philosophy, noted earlier, that power comes from below as well as above, and that the relationship in which one

has institutional power over another is discursively created through interaction. Power and solidarity play off of one another in a dialectic relationship which is inherent in any institution which abides by a hierarchy, and quite particularly an organization like the military. Volumes of work have been devoted to the relationships between military members, particularly as regards relationships in combat. Writing after World War II, and delineating between the hierarchical categories of "officers" and "men", i.e., enlisted members, S.L.A. Marshall observes that, "It is not mere coincidence that in those line companies which achieved phenomenal success in combat during the late war, one found always the closest of working relationships between officers and men" (163).

With this juxtaposition of power and solidarity taken together with the observation that males still retain social dominance, however, lies the temptation to delineate masculine styles as more powerful and female styles as more solidary and less powerful. However appealing this dichotomy may appear in its usefulness for analysis, Tannen's (1994) discussion of power and solidarity shows that we must heed a much more complicated dynamic when trying to examine the role or influence of gender in interactions which are subject to elements of power. She observes that, "The potential ambiguity of linguistic strategies to mark both power and solidarity in face-to-face interaction has made mischief in language and gender research, wherein it is tempting to assume that whatever women do results from, or creates, their powerlessness and whatever men do results from, or creates, their dominance" (Tannen 1994: 31).

Analysis of the construction, role and dialectic of power and solidarity in discourse is therefore an integral aspect in the study of language and gender, but a factor which is not as easily dissected as one may suspect.

So, in three decades of language and gender research, the problem of power and its many manifestations in interaction has remained a point of major interest for discourse analysis. The uniqueness of this study of gender and discourse in a military environment is the relatively unambiguous delineation of power in the military hierarchy. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet point to the need for such studies when they note that researchers should shift attention “toward the processes through which [gender difference and power each feed] the other to produce the concrete complexities of language as used by real people engaged in social practice” (1992: 462). In the military power is objectively measured by a combination of rank and position in the hierarchy. One question, then, regards what characteristics of military conversational interaction are affected if women’s social subordinacy to men is mitigated by their participation in a system of rank and hierarchy created by men, and which, therefore, men must respect and abide by. Or, more simply, what do we find when we examine interactional points at which language, gender and the military intersect? More generally, as Eckert (1993:33) states, “Gender differences in interaction must be studied within the context of the situations in which they are observed, with an understanding of the significance of those situations to men and women in that cultural group”. In the case of this study, a military setting and military situations are common elements in the context of the

interactions observed. In analyzing conversational interaction as a practice typical of, or fundamental to, the military as a community of practice, what remains is to study ways in which gender manifests itself in the interaction, if at all.

This study of interaction in a military setting contributes to other efforts to analyze intersections of language, gender and power by researchers who have explored language and gender within specific speech communities, therefore within that speech community's power framework. Tannen has devoted a great deal of work to the interplay between gender and conversational style in the workplace (1994b, 1996), and Scollon and Scollon (1995) examine the relevance of gender within the corporate arena, noting that men's and women's different interpretive frames are a factor in professional miscommunication, "to the frustration and loss of everyone involved in them" (229). Ainsworth-Vaughn (1998) considered the medical community in which the power and prestige position of physician is largely male with the patient as subordinate. In an analysis of 12 encounters involving four female and four male physicians, for instance, she found that male physicians were roughly four times more likely than female physicians to exert power in discourse by unilaterally changing a topic in interaction with patients. Hamilton (1992) brought attention to the importance of age to language and gender considerations. Others have explored the legal community examining the dynamics of lawyers and juries (Lakoff 1990). In the related field of communications, researchers noted a decade ago the, "growing concern about whether interactional outcomes are gender related or power related" and have examined, "how gender and

power interact in language, organizations, and personal constructs” (Perry, Turner and Sterk 1992: 2). These studies highlight the role of socially constructed norms and institutional expectations – such as those in the military -- in analyses of language, gender, and power.

### **The American Military as a Context for Study**

The American military is an institution as old as the United States itself. The Army, Navy and Marine Corps officially date to 1775. The military is notable not just for its long history, but also for the number of people impacted by military service. According to the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, the 2000 census indicates that there are well over 26 million veterans living in the United States and Puerto Rico. Today, more than 1.3 million people serve on active duty and the total expense to the nation’s budget is approaching 400 billion dollars per year. By understanding the nation’s investment in the military in terms of both its financial burden to Americans and the number of citizens who serve or have served, one can see why the military is generally widely studied by historians, sociologists, economists, national security specialists, and various other scholars and researchers. However, there is a glaring lack of linguistic research in the military environment.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the large number of people, who serve or have served flags the significant social influence military service brings to personal, regional and national identities. As indicated above, there are 26 million living veterans

of the U.S. military and, significantly, 96% of the 26 million are male. As a more finite example of the importance of military service to American identity, consider the fact that in the build-up to the 2004 presidential election much was made of the military service records of candidates George W. Bush and John Kerry. These candidates' military records are measured against the national memory of Vietnam and subsequent wars. Indeed, in generations which came of age during periods in which compulsory military service was enacted (the first peacetime draft being enacted in 1940 and the most recent draft ending in 1973) time in service was a formative experience for American men. Linguistically, however, the military experience, and particularly women's military experience, has gone relatively unexamined. Later in this chapter I will review work on discourse in the military. For the moment I shall say that one of the aims of this study is, in the spirit of the work of Erving Goffman, to begin to closely examine the underlying assumptions of even the seemingly mundane social constructs of military discourse.

Whether the compulsory service of previous generations, or voluntary service as has been in place since 1973, military service draws young people from all over the country, from different backgrounds, speech communities and social classes, and links them through the training, experience, and language norms of the military environment. So, given the social diversity of military recruits and trainees, one could argue that any group of military members is hardly a homogeneous enough population for linguistic study. However, veterans and military members, no matter what their sex, age or

income, are linked to one another through their acquisition of the military's culture and norms of language use – norms acquired during various forms of military training and experience.

We may begin to explain this linkage between veterans using theories of intertextuality. While this is not the primary framework for this study, given that I examine intersections of language, gender and the military, intertextuality is, at this point, a helpful tool in considering the origins and perpetuation of military discourse. The concept of intertextuality may also help us understand the impact of military service on American culture.

Fairclough (1992) explores the concept of intertextuality, pointing out that the term “intertextuality” was introduced by Julia Kristeva in her response to western interpretations of the work of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin. As Kristeva states, “Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva 1986: 37). Intertextuality, then, refers to the shaping of texts and utterances by prior texts and utterances. As Fairclough notes, “The concept of intertextuality points to the productivity of texts, to how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions to generate new ones” (103). Becker (1995), in response to his studies of the Burmese language, incorporated the concept of “prior text” in the process he calls “linguaging.” “Linguaging both shapes and is shaped by context,” states Becker, “*Linguaging* is shaping old texts into new contexts” (9). Far from esoteric, the notion of prior text, or intertextuality, is a key condition of

all military training and operations. Military members are trained, for example, through classroom discourse, “hands-on” instruction, and by written texts such as technical orders, operating instructions and checklists. When military members engage in the actions assigned to them, it is as a result of years of dialogic and intertextual formation of their own understanding of their duties, obligations, and interactions.

Even despite the differences between the individual services – Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force -- the similarities in training and customs are enough to provide clear intertextual references over time. In all services, for example, new recruits learn “basic responses” such as “yes, sir”, “no, sir”, “no excuse, sir” and, “I do not understand the question, sir.” Some will be more familiar with these customary responses than others due to their upbringing or the region in which they were raised. As I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter Two, people from the south are accustomed to the use of “ma’am” and “sir” in interaction. In addition, recruits learn marching songs which often take the form of narratives, and both basic and specialized military terminology. Further, soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen (a term which, though lexically gendered male, pragmatically includes women) are stationed in a fixed number of locations around the world. Veterans may therefore have served decades apart from one another, yet, military traditions, terminology and references to duty locations provide intertextual links across the generations.

The notion of intertextuality, then, sheds light on the wide influence of military discourse, especially when taken together with the work of other language philosophers

and researchers. For example, the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1991) is important here on at least two counts which I explain in more depth below: his concepts of “habitus” and “rites of institutions”.

Bourdieu revived the Aristotelian concept of the habitus, interpreted as the set of “dispositions which incline agents to act or react in certain ways,” and which are inculcated, starting with childhood, in various types of training and instruction to the point where responses become second nature (Thompson 1991: 12). The concept of habitus melds with intertextuality in that training and instruction are largely textual in form – whether spoken or written. The military, then, together with its attendant intertextually created social norms, strictures and mannerisms, is a common element of the habitus of over 26 million individuals who are inculcated in military training and instruction. Further, it is no small matter that, as indicated above, roughly 96% of those 26 million veterans are male.

Inasmuch as military service plays a role in the habitus of a large contingent of the American population, the military as an element of national identity is distinctly gendered. This “gendering” of national identity is intertextually reinforced through common conceptions and media representations of many professions including policing, firefighting, and medicine. The military’s masculine associations, however, seem to play a particularly influential role in the construction of American masculinity. Even currently, during the second war in Iraq, commentators refer to “bringing our boys home”, clearly framing the military as an endeavor of masculinity and youth and

rendering women's participation in it invisible. This invisibility exists despite Department of Defense figures which show that at the start of 2005 over 15,000 women were deployed in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, comprising nearly 10% of the forces deployed. Of the women who have served in those operations, as of February 26, 2005, 31 have been killed (of nearly 1500 total deaths) and 261 have been wounded in action (of over 11,000 total WIA). Further, in analyzing hostile actions, commentators commonly measure the dastardliness of attacks based upon the number of "women and children" who are harmed or killed. In such commentary, the women and children are presumed to be noncombatants or non-military. Still, this phrase, regardless of women's profession or position, relegates women to the same class as children; literally the protected, not the protector. Given this societal view, women's presence and participation in military action is, to many observers, dissonant with the identity constructed for women in their relegation to the same category as children. Opponents of women in the military or women in combat make much of their opinion that Americans don't want to see women "coming home in body bags" – such imagery plays upon the traditional notion that women, like children, should be protected, not protecting. During the current war in Iraq, there has been no such outcry despite the deaths of 31 women as of late February 2005. On the contrary, many argue that women's performance and the military's reliance upon women in the current conflict are reasons to reconsider some of the restrictions placed on women.

One reason military experience may be so influential in one's habitus is located in a second point explored by Bourdieu: rites of institutions. Bourdieu all but names the military in his discussion of rites of institutions, noting that much work has shown that "people's adherence to an institution is directly proportional to the severity and painfulness of the rites of initiation" creating a lasting imposition and even creating arbitrary cultural limits, "as expressed in fundamental oppositions like masculine/feminine" (Bourdieu 1991: 123). We will return to the problem of the expressions of masculine and feminine, but for now, clearly the arduousness of recruits' first military training experience creates a "lasting imposition" and "durable disposition" in those who experience it. Enduring these rites, and in some cases the bonding experience of combat, makes military service a very powerful and formative element of veterans' habitus. Bourdieu goes on to point out that external signs such as uniforms and rank insignia, and incorporated signs such as ways of speaking and personal bearing, also signify a social position assigned by the institution, i.e., institutional identity (Bourdieu 1991: 124). Indeed, as this study will show, enactment of institutional identity is, for many, at least as integral as the much more personal enactment of individual identity, including elements of gender.

### **The Military and Masculinity**

Recalling Bourdieu's (1991) assessment that rites of initiation into an institution act in creating arbitrary cultural oppositions like masculine and feminine, clearly

cultural construction of masculinity and femininity are key points in the social construction of the military as an American institution. Further, masculinity and femininity are important constructs in the discussion of language and gender. This section, then, will review literature regarding masculinity and gender theory, bringing to light the importance of the military in interdiscursively creating and sustaining American notions of masculinity.

One of the most conspicuous aspects of the military environment, and one which makes it interesting for study, is its inherently masculine identity. Ong (1981) succinctly states that, "A man must be willing to die for his country or for other causes. Of course, so must a woman, but somehow there is less point in a woman's being willing to do so" (99). Arguably the military is veritably synonymous with the definitive traits characteristic of masculine identity. Perhaps foremost in the line of reasoning is the notion that the military exists to fight an enemy. This is consistent with researchers' (Goffman 1977, Kimmel 2001, Connell 1995) observations that a key aspect of masculine identity is the willingness to fight or use violence, even though many men never actually engage in, nor intend to engage in, combat.

Many researchers (Goffman 1977, Ong 1981, Howard and Alamilla 2001, McGuffey and Rich 2001) have noted the role of fighting or contest in the development of men's personal identity starting from boyhood. Connell (1995) devotes a lengthy discussion to the historic role of armies and related bureaucratized institutionalizations of violence and the establishment of modern masculinity. Goffman argues that not only

are women not trained in fighting, "moreover [women] are encouraged to employ quite passive means of avoiding fights" (1977:328), furthering the argument that any institution devoted to fighting, like the military, is masculine, or at least not feminine.

Another element of the construction of masculine identity, and apparent in the military environment, is homosocial enactment in the search for other men's approval. According to Kimmel (2001) men feel a chronic sense of inadequacy and a fear of other men – particularly a fear of humiliation. Rubin (2001) asserts that performance in front of other men extends to the fear of job loss. Rubin points out that for women, many elements make up identity so loss of job or work does not equate to loss of self. A man's work is very much a part of his identity, masculinity and core self, as it indicates his ability to provide for himself and his family. An aspect of military culture which plays into this fear is its "up or out" promotion system. Performance is evaluated and documented regularly and military members compete for promotions. Generally speaking, failure to get promoted may result in one's removal from service meaning loss of face and loss of livelihood including a pension and significant medical and housing benefits. Given the environment, for a man to fail in the military is a metaphoric failure of manhood.

Since proof of manhood resides in other men's approval of a man's accomplishments, the military provides a perfect environment in which to seek and attain the approval of others. The military's system of earned promotions and decorations based on achievement and service provides for both enactment and display

for others' approval. When in dress uniform, the various insignia that symbolize one's experience and performance are apparent for all to see. What's more, the insignia inform the observer as to how close to the theater of combat a military member has come. Such a display is important since, following the line of reasoning presented above which contends that willingness to fight is foundational to the construction of masculinity, to be in a job which is closely involved in combat allows more vivid performance and presumption of masculinity.

The proximity to combat can be key to analysis of language and gender in a military environment due to restrictions placed upon women in the military. With some exceptions, namely service on combatant ships and aircraft, women are excluded from most jobs deemed too close to direct combat, such as duty in the infantry or in battle tanks. Combat-related restrictions have a heavy influence in the Marine Corps, in which 95% of jobs are deemed combat positions. Some restrictions, however, are not driven by proximity to combat, notably women's restriction from service aboard submarines. Women are restricted from submarine duty because the Navy has stated that modifying the ships in order to accommodate berthing and privacy concerns is cost prohibitive.

This restriction on women's participation is consistent with gender theorists' observation that formation of masculine identity requires distance from, or renunciation of, the feminine (Kimmel 2001, McGuffey and Rich 2001); or, as Ong (1981) relates, to prove his physical and psychological masculinity a male must, in effect, prove he is not

female. In the case of combat roles, women remain, by men's decree, distanced from that which is most masculine: hand-to-hand combat. As Goffman states, "A considerable amount of what persons who are men do in affirmation of their sense of identity requires their doing something that can be seen as what a woman by her nature could not do, or at least could not do well" (1977: 326). This notion is, I believe, at the heart of the resistance to women's participation in the military, and especially women's participation in "combat" roles. Brian Mitchell, former Army officer and author of *Women in the Military: Flirting with Disaster*, for example, argues that "The bottom line is that with the exception of the medical professions there is no real need for women in the military" (Mitchell 1998 xvii). He goes on to point out that the military's gender integration "threatens to leave the American military no more disciplined, no more efficient, no more fearsome, no more military than the United States Postal Service" (xvii). This belief is an important and problematic underpinning to intersections of the military, language and gender. If the military is definitively masculine, and masculinity requires denunciation of the feminine, then military identity requires denunciation of the feminine, leaving military women in a potentially paradoxical, or at least ambiguous, sphere of identity.

This ambiguity in military identity may extend as well to homosexual men in the military. Kimmel notes the tie of renunciation of the feminine to homophobia, also a requisite for masculine construction. In the military, in which the feminine is renounced in the form of combat restrictions, and in which some may argue the

feminine is masculinized via wear of “unisex” (meaning male-like) uniforms, the feminine is also renounced in the institution’s compulsory heterosexuality. Homosexuals are excluded from service and involuntarily discharged from the service if found out. Homosexual men are apparently constructed as feminized men; and, it may well be that lesbians are constructed as an inappropriate feminization of the masculine. In both the case of gay men and women, then, the masculine is feminized – a condition which is unacceptable in the hypermasculine environment of the military. The prohibition of gay women, however, produces its own double bind. Herbert (1998) used sociological survey techniques to examine women veterans’ opinions regarding gender in the military. She found that military women felt that enacting the masculinity of the military environment – often manifest in discourse – drew accusations of lesbianism. Enacting femininity, however, apparently does not solve this dilemma, as several of Herbert’s respondents felt that it was, “more important to be perceived as heterosexual than as feminine” (120).

The prohibition on homosexuality in the military makes the study of language and gender in the military slightly problematic. On a practical level, the need to enact heterosexuality would likely impact interactional style and choices. Thus, if the discourse analyst knows the sexual orientation of an interactant, this fact could be taken into consideration in conducting analysis. But, by regulation, military members may not be asked about their sexual orientation. Thus, in examining the intersection of discourse, gender and the military, the analyst must bear in mind a precarious balance of

enactments: compulsory heterosexuality, institutional masculinity, and, for women, sufficient femininity to be regarded as heterosexual but not so much as to seem “un-military”.

On a more theoretical level, a natural evolution in the study of language and gender has been the linguistic inquiry in queer theory and gender performance within the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) community. Hall (2003) describes “queer linguistics” as “a field that explicitly questions the assumption that gendered ways of talking are indexically derived from the sex of the speaker” (366) making queer theory of utility in examining, for instance, women’s construction of gender identity in a hypermasculine environment. In addition, Livia and Hall (1997a) point out the usefulness of queer linguistic theory for the study of homosocial environments, with which the military is rife despite the wide presence of women. In their recent work Cameron and Kulick (2003) observe that “queer linguistics” and much language and gender work is based on observations of, specifically, language and sexual identity. They explore a broadening of the scope to “language and sexuality” which “encompasses not only questions about how people enact sexuality and perform sexual identity in their talk, but also questions about how sexuality and sexual identity are represented linguistically in a variety of discourse genres” (12).

With few exceptions (Kiesling 1996, Coates 2003), the study of language and gender occurs in mixed-sex interaction, and largely with the contested assumption that females, as a group, and males, as a group, retain homogeneous traits. Inasmuch as a

homosexual identity may influence the gendering of one's style of communication, this point cannot be taken into consideration in analyzing military interactants. For fear of risk to their professional reputation and livelihood, participants cannot make known any sexual orientation outside the bounds of compulsory heterosexuality. Applied study of queer theory to military discourse may have to wait until the prohibition against gays in the military is lifted.

An important concept in queer theory, and equally important in applying gender theory to the intersection of language and gender in the military context, is Judith Butler's "performativity". Using as an example the performance of drag, Butler illustrates that the corporeality observers perceive is three dimensional, being composed of anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance. Butler's concept of performativity parallels Goffman's (1977) concept of sex-class referred to earlier. Recall Goffman's assertion that behaviors we normally associate with sex (referred to as anatomical sex by Butler) are actually traits associated with the class of men or women, i.e., Butler's gender performance. Goffman regards "gender identity", also an aspect of Butler's performativity, to be an individual's sense of self based upon her or his own judgments in terms of ideals of masculinity or femininity. "It seems that this source of self-identification" Goffman states, "is one of the most profound our society provides, perhaps even more so than age-grade, and never is its disturbance or change to be anticipated as an easy matter" (304).

Livia and Hall (1997a: 8) reflect upon the importance of language to Butler's notion of performativity, stating that, "if a performative speech act succeeds, it is because, 'that action echoes prior action, and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices' (Butler 1993:226-7)". In other words, sets of language practices acquire their association with enactment of gender through their repetition, making gender a discursive construction because, "[performed gender] calls itself into existence by virtue of its own felicitous pronunciation" (Livia & Hall 1997a: 11). As an example of the discursive construction of gender Livia and Hall, following Butler, point out the performance of drag as a deliberate misappropriation of gender attributes, queering both the performer and the gender paradigm.

In theory, one might argue that military women who must sometimes wear the masculinizing work uniforms of the military, such as flight suits or the camouflage "Battle Dress Uniform", perform a type of drag culture. Key, though, is the fact that the uniforms may be gendering, but aren't necessarily a deliberate misappropriation of gender attributes. Further, cursory observation shows that women often wear men's clothing, or clothing styled after men's fashions, while rarely is the opposite the case. Ong (1981) makes this observation, pointing out that, "Women regularly appropriate masculine accoutrements in many if not all cultures with no threat to their feminine identity" (71). Still, the fact that a style can be identified as a masculine one, appropriated by women, genders the style and therefore the wearer.

In the military, then, it appears that a set of masculine practices including willingness to fight, denigration of the feminine, homosocial enactment, rites of institution and even style of dress, have interdiscursively accumulated force of authority. In other words, for men in the military much of their masculine identity is established by virtue of their membership in what is a conspicuously masculine institution. In turn, as I will argue below, the masculinity of institutional participation provides a cover for the feminine enactments required by the institution – most notably the close relational connections the military both expects and fosters.

This notion that an environment as masculine as the military requires feminine enactments may seem odd, and it is arguably difficult to measure against definition. Whereas masculinity is defined by the traits outlined above – willingness to fight, homosocial enactment, and renunciation of the feminine – “femininity” seems less frequently defined. Despite prolific work in the field of gender theory, researchers readily talk about the spectrum of gender, gender categories, gender identification, and gender roles, yet they are reticent to define or delineate the traits of femininity. Consistent with linguistic observations that the masculine is unmarked and the feminine is marked, Lorber observes that in the social construction of gender in western society, “‘man’ is A, ‘wo-man’ is Not-A” (33). Much gender theory, then, operates on a “sense” of what the feminine is, based largely upon, referring back to Goffman, the activities associated with the female sex-class, namely relational activities involving nurture and caretaking.

This sense that close relational connections are a feminine trait can be argued from the perspective that available descriptions of the “feminine” distill to the importance of connection. However, as discussed earlier, the bonds males form while in military service, and particularly in combat, are likened to those of family ties. Tannen explores at length her observation that men’s conversational rituals largely focus on status while women’s conversational rituals focus on connection (Tannen 1990, 1994b). Or, as indicated by Thorne (2001), women do the work of caring in arrangements of both paid and unpaid labor, and this institutional arrangement is, “sustained by various ideologies and representations of gender, such as discourses of feminine nurturance and masculine detachment and autonomy” (7). This perceived femininity of nurturance and relationship figures heavily in my assertion that the military’s institutional masculinity provides masculine camouflage for feminine enactments.

Consistent with Thorne’s observation that women do the work of caring in the world of unpaid labor, e.g., the domestic sphere, research by Coltrane shows that conditions for “more equal domestic gender relations” are being achieved in some American families, indicating changes in gender distribution of household labor (Coltrane 2004: 205). However, even in such families, Coltrane found that most clothes care and house cleaning was still performed by mothers. Hochschild (1989), too, in an eight-year study which involved observation of working couples and surveys of many more found that, “women do two-thirds of the daily jobs at home, like cooking and

cleaning up” (8). Given the findings of Coltrane and Hochschild, we may label such tasks as being assigned to the sex-class of women. Interestingly, in the American military such tasks as housekeeping and grooming are important elements of the institution. Basic military training places great emphasis on dust-free cleanliness and picture-perfect tidiness – priorities which carry over to daily life on active duty. Yet, the presumption of masculinity validates even these aspects of the organization which may, by their connection to Coltrane’s and Hochschild’s findings regarding such work, be considered womanly.

### **Women’s Participation in the Military**

It is clear from the preceding discussion that the American military as a social construct and American notions of masculinity inform one another. Yet, women have a long history of participation in the American military. Interestingly, major changes in opportunities for women in the military came about commensurate with the era which inspired Lakoff’s publishing of *Language and Woman’s Place* – the mid 1970s. Though women served in large numbers during both world wars (35,000 in World War I and 350,000 in World War II), the Korean conflict (48,000), and during the war in Vietnam (estimates range from 7,500 to 11,000 in the theater of war), it was toward the end of the war in Vietnam, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, that sweeping changes initiated a larger, permanent female presence in the military. In 1967 the restriction limiting women to 2% of the armed services was lifted, as were restrictions on the rank

women could achieve. With the end of the draft in 1973, the services knew they would be unable to fill their ranks with volunteers without recruiting women in larger numbers. Women in the Navy and later the Air Force were permitted to attend pilot training, the Navy opened more sea duties, including ship command, to women, and the service academies (the US Military Academy at West Point, the Naval Academy at Annapolis, and the Air Force Academy) opened to women in 1976 following the lead of the Coast Guard Academy which opened to women in 1975. Gradually women gained greater parity (though still not equality) in the services. Today, a few of the women who were some of the first to take advantage of the new opportunities of the 1970s and 1980s are in high ranking leadership positions, though many have left the service because of limited opportunities.

Another major development in terms of women's parity in the military, and one I will explore in greater depth in Chapters Three and Four of this study, was the change in rules allowing women to engage in certain combat-related positions. During the 1990 to 1991 Persian Gulf War nearly 41,000 women performed with great effectiveness in the combat theater in all capacities which were open to them at the time. Examples of specialties served by women included intelligence, command center operations, vehicle maintenance and repair, cargo aircraft pilot and crew, helicopter maintenance and crew, civil engineering, supply, public affairs, civil affairs, security police, munitions and all specialties in the medical corps including flight doctors. American military women's participation in the first Gulf War provided clear evidence that many

restrictions on women's participation were either ill-founded or irrelevant in modern warfare. In 1991 military women and their advocates successfully lobbied Congress to change the guidelines regarding women's participation in combat-related jobs. This change opened 250,000 more positions, across the services, to women (Harrell and Miller 1997). Women now comprise approximately 15%, or 195,000, of the 1.3 million military members currently serving on active duty. This change in numbers will, over time, increase the percentage (from 4%) of women veterans within American society. Still, I doubt even the increase in the numbers of women who are active duty or veterans will change American concepts of the military and masculinity anytime soon.

## **The Problem, Framework and Method**

### Problem

To restate, the aim of this study is to examine intersections of language, gender and the military; that is, to analyze ways in which language as used in military communities constructs or communicates the gender identity of the language user or the gender identity of the institution of the military. Further, a review of the literature concerning language and gender makes clear that power is a key issue for consideration in the examination of the interplay between gender and language. While researchers agree upon the importance of power to the field of inquiry, they also agree that elements of power are not so easily teased out in linguistic data. Among the points at issue is Tannen's (1994A) observation, as noted earlier, that interactions based on power entail

solidarity and those based on solidarity entail power; further, the relationship between power and solidarity is ambiguous in that what may appear to be an act of power may be an act of solidarity, or vice versa. I believe that power in interactional context will always be nuanced, particularly by gender. However, this study provides the opportunity to examine interactions in which the hierarchical delineations of power are generally clear, creating a unique context for the study of gender in the power dynamic.

One reason that the role of power in interaction will always be nuanced lies in the reality that, even in the military where power is determined by rank and position, the extent to which men derive power from their membership in, to use Goffman's (1977) term, the male sex-class, is problematic. The military environment, while definitively masculine and dominated by men, also professes to have a relatively objective rank and power structure which applies also for women. In theory, at least, social factors such as sex and race are irrelevant to military rank, with the exception that women's exclusion from certain combatant jobs arguably disadvantages them in the power structure. The military is, then, a structured institution with a clear hierarchy in a masculine environment which closely enforces its rules regarding equal opportunity for the sexes. In short, this mix provides a potentially interesting milieu for the study of interactional points at which language, gender and the military intersect.

One might ask, at this point, what some considerations or outcomes of analysis in such an environment might be. For example, what impact does the masculine reality of the military environment have on interactants' construction of gender in military

interaction? Several possibilities exist. Women may perform masculinity in the perceived masculine environment as a method of forming a military identity. Or, women may exaggerate femininity in order to assert their femaleness and perform heterosexuality in such an overwhelmingly masculine environment. Another possibility is that women construct what they consider a less gendered, or gender neutral, identity as “officer”, “aircrew member”, or “commander” – positions which are gender neutral in that they are not morphologically marked, though they may be symbolically and ideologically linked to the masculine norms of the institution. Likewise, men may perform masculinity to varying degrees in order to assert their membership in the masculine organization. Yet another possibility is that the military’s masculine institutional identity provides cover, as it were, for men’s use of feminine conversational rituals, language strategies and relational actions.

Despite the relevance of power in military interaction, the institution of the American military has been subject to little linguistic inquiry. The most current work is that being done by Catherine Hicks Kennard (in progress). She has audio recorded female and male Marine Corps drill instructors, collecting samples of both “drill instructor” and “non-drill-instructor” speech. A phonetician, she became interested in how female drill instructors, who compose a small minority of drill instructors, negotiate the unique tone, inflection and volume of the stereotypical Marine Corps drill instructor. She has found that in order to make up for the difference in volume and amplitude between the male voice and the female voice, the women manipulate the

duration of their vowels when using their drill instructor voice. She also observed that male drill instructors often issue instructions in a tone and manner which makes the instructions unintelligible, while the female drill instructors instructions were intelligible. In interview data, she learned that the male drill instructors intentionally issue unintelligible instructions so as to confuse recruits. The male drill instructors expressed that confusing the recruits from time to time helps the drill instructors maintain their authoritative position and soften the will of recruits, making them more malleable trainees. The female drill instructors, however, felt that issuing unintelligible commands lacked utility in terms of developing Marine Corps recruits. In short, the male drill instructors used their drill instructor voices to reinforce the superior/subordinate structure, whereas the female drill instructors used their drill instructor voices to make clear to the recruits what was expected of them as members of the Marine Corps.

In her 1994 dissertation, *Choice and Change: Constructions of Gender in the Discourse of American Military Women*, Drake uses social constructionist, communication, and feminist theories, together with ethnographic interview techniques, to explore military women's construction of identity in a traditionally male occupation. In her analysis of 19 recorded interviews with military women Drake explored the symbolism and imagery which helped the military women construct their social identities, finding that "the focus in (sic) the ideal or desired vision of gendered social roles is on the psychological instead of the physical character of individuals" (184).

She goes on to point out that her participants convey that in the imagined ideal world “femininity implies strength as well as sensitivity, control as well as compassion” (184). Interestingly, and consistent with the findings of language and gender scholars who observe that women’s conversational rituals tend to center upon a sense of community (e.g. Tannen 1990, 1993), Drake observes in her data that “The successful military woman ... resolves her quest for power by dismissing the military pyramid of domination as false and creating a power structure based on empowerment among co-workers” (183).

Like Drake’s work, the work of Carol Cohn (1987, 1990) conducts referential analysis of data collected using ethnographic techniques. Cohn, a visiting scholar at a defense studies center at the time of her work, approached immersion in the “world of defense intellectuals” (1990:33) as a feminist driven to gain a better understanding of a nuclear situation she perceived to be “dangerous and irrational” (1987:17). Cohn came to the conclusion that “learning the defense language is a transformative rather than an additive process. When you choose to learn it you are not simply adding new information and vocabulary; you are entering into a particular mode of thinking about nuclear weapons, military and political power, and about the relationship between human ends and technological means” (50). At the nexus of defense dialect and academic inquiry, Cohn has clearly identified an example of Becker’s (1995:9) process of languaging, referenced earlier, wherein the language of the military “both shapes and is shaped by context...shaping old texts into new contexts”.

Despite the small sample of linguistic studies of military discourse, some comparison can be made to other institutional contexts -- medical, legal, corporate, academic, etc. -- in which discourse has been studied. Such institutions are, just like the military, organized into hierarchies. Often, however, these hierarchies are perpetuated largely by institutional assumptions and norms and not necessarily codified by regulation or legal code. For example, one could organize nurse practitioners, physicians, specialists, registered nurses, residents, medical students, and physicians' assistants according to a hierarchy of degree status or experience, but such a ranking would not necessarily be subject to the same sorts of gradations or enforcement incumbent upon the military's rank structure. Or, within a corporation, while a person may be considered subordinate to another in terms of the organizational arrangements, newcomers, even at the highest levels, must prove themselves worthy of respect or skepticism, as the case may be.

The military environment is unique in that, for the most part, subordinacy or superordinacy are prescribed according to rank and/or position, which are clearly indicated by symbols such as insignia, and one is expected to comply with commensurate elements of decorum. Individuals achieve rank by virtue of schooling, job progression, evaluation, testing, and other criteria. Achievement of rank is not completely objective, but the structure whereby rank and position are attained is clearly delineated. In addition, there are consequences for insubordination, that is, failure to respect a superior's rank and position. Such violations are subject to punishment under

military code. The respect is not, however, simply rendered from subordinate to superior. Officers as superiors, for example, respect the rank the enlisted members have achieved, as it indicates their expertise in a skill and years of experience.

The military, then, is a unique environment for the study of the relationships among language, gender and power because of the clear delineation of the power structure – a delineation in which a female is often the higher ranking interactant. So, in much discourse analysis, while one may largely find it necessary to infer the nature of power relationships between conversants, such relationships are foundational to military discourse and generally quite clear.

Still, while the element of power may be more clearly perceived in military interaction, as with other language and gender research its role in the gender identity or gender performance of the interactants is likely not so clear. Both power and its gendering, then, are aspects for analysis as I examine the intersection of language, gender and the military.

### Methodology and Framework

At the opening of this chapter, I pointed out that I have chosen to conduct this study using the methodology of interactional sociolinguistics. Schiffrin (1994) notes the wide range of disciplines which have influenced interactional sociolinguistics, given that interactional sociolinguistic analysts must bear in mind culture, society and language in conducting their analyses. Specifically, Schiffrin discusses the foundational

and complementary contributions of linguistic anthropologist John Gumperz and sociologist Erving Goffman.

Gumperz, in examining regional and social language differences, expounded upon the anthropological assumptions that “the meaning, structure, and use of language is socially and culturally relative” (98) such that, even among speakers of the same language, various aspects of language and behavior provide presuppositions which are necessary to the accurate interpretation of what is said. These presuppositions, or “contextualization cues,” may be based upon shared background knowledge necessary for the proper inferencing, or they may be inherent in features of language like intonation, lexical choice, syntactic structure, speech rhythm or phonetics, all of which affect “the expressive quality of a message but not its basic meaning” (Gumperz 1982: 16). In short, in using language in interaction with one another, individuals are all the while signalling both their personal identities and group memberships based on the language used and the presuppositions undergirding the making of meaning.

Schiffrin goes on to explore Goffman’s contributions to interactional sociolinguistics and the ways Gumperz’s anthropological and linguistic perspectives and Goffman’s sociological approaches complement one another. As a sociologist, Goffman wrote extensively regarding the form and meaning of interpersonal interactions, elucidating the rules and expectations which social and cultural norms impose upon interactions between human beings – some of which I have already applied in this study. Schiffrin explains that Goffman’s “elaborated view” of the social

surround and the presuppositions which foreground interpersonal communications complement Gumperz's examination of the contextualization cues used by interactants to contextualize the presuppositions and intentions at work at a given moment in the interaction (104).

Given the importance of Gumperz's focus on the role of context in making meaning, and Goffman's focus on the role social norms and structures play in making oneself understood, I believe that interactional sociolinguistics is the fitting methodology for analysis of military discourse and the implications of gender therein. First, in interactional sociolinguistics understanding of the context of interaction is critical to the analysis of that interaction. As noted in the preface, I am a participant observer in the military, and therefore have some insight as to the specialized language and meanings – the contextualization cues – at work in the military culture. Second, interactional sociolinguistics uses naturally occurring interaction as its basis for analysis, as does this study. The interaction may be, for example, the give and take of conversation or it may be in the form of narratives which occur during the course of interaction (Tannen 1984). In the case of the data analyzed here, the interactions are those which occur in the day-to-day work of the institution of the military.

On a broad level, then, presupposed in interactional sociolinguistics is that the social and contextual construction of meaning is at the heart of making oneself understood within a cultural context. Still, to say that meaning is socially constructed cuts a broad swath inasmuch as the socially constructed elements of one's identity

include regional identity, gender identity, class, institutional affiliation, and so on. Yet in interactional sociolinguistics the analyst must discern those many elements. So, a current concern among sociolinguists and other students of language and gender is the search for a framework which allows for consideration of the many social influences which impact both gender identity and its expression in interaction, and what that expression means within large organizations or institutions. Such a framework would provide a perspective for all aspects of gendered language production in given social contexts, including habitus, institutional identity, intertextual and interdiscursive influences, and hierarchy and power norms. Some would argue that a practice-based approach, as introduced earlier, and specifically the community of practice approach is just such a framework.

The community of practice framework was originally an approach to the study of learning and cognition (Lave and Wenger 1991), and is now largely applied in the field of management, and specifically knowledge management and organizational learning behaviors (Wenger, McDermott, Snyder 2002). Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1992) extrapolated the notion of community of practice to the study of language and gender, arguing that such a framework is useful in examining a practice or activity and the many influences upon it, thereby giving a broader context for the interpretation of the relevance of gender. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet “encourage a view of the interaction of gender and language that roots each in the everyday social practices of particular local communities and sees them as jointly constructed in those practices”

(462). With the exceptions noted earlier, most gender and language study to date has made gender, or more often the sexes (women in particular), the focal point for study. However, while gender may influence an interaction examined under the rubric of “language and gender”, there may be other influences with as great, or greater, bearing upon the interaction, such as institutional identity and norms.

The community of practice approach encourages the analyst to remove the spotlight from gender and shine it upon the endeavor or activity which is common to the community, while asking how gender bears upon the practice or mutual endeavor, if at all. By definition, a community of practice is “an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992:464). Those practices may, of course, include gendered ways of doing things, speaking or behaving.

Like the sociolinguistic concept of speech community, which has variationist implications, communities of practice may be layered one upon the other, and any individual will be a participant in many, often overlapping, communities of practice. The concept of the community of practice goes beyond the notion of speech community in that it examines how language forms membership in that community and how members use language to maintain membership in, and sustain, the specific endeavors of the community of practice. Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) point out that the community of practice approach, then, involves microanalysis, as often encouraged by

variationists and social constructionists, together with an ethnographic view of discourse in context which can identify significant or representative social interactions, shared goals and shared practices.

Holmes and Meyerhoff identify the appeal of the community of practice approach for the sociolinguist pointing out that it provides definitions for examining the interplay between becoming a member of a community of practice and appropriating its discourse. This concept is relevant to the study of discourse in the larger (e.g. service or duty specialty) and smaller (e.g. individual units or portions thereof) communities of practice within the larger military. Mutual engagement, ways of talking, values and power relations are all keys to membership in the various military communities of practice, as becomes clear in this study's analysis of Air Force discourse. This framework is easily informed, then, by notions of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, in that it is through such reference and repetition that the discourse of a community of practice is learned and appropriated.

Like any framework, however, the community of practice framework is not without its drawbacks. Scollon (2001) points out that efforts to label individuals as members of specific groups implies that groups are clearly bounded, when in fact there is no "ideal" group member or practitioner. Instead, even in a workplace in which a common practice appears characteristic, the workplace is likely to be organized according to, "diversity of practice linked to some common overall purpose" (Scollon: 145). Because there is no true delineation between communities of practice, on a day-

to-day basis, Scollon points out, we express “multiple and often conflicting memberships” in various communities (144). For example, in these data one cannot necessarily clearly distinguish whether a speaker’s primary enactment in an interaction is as an officer, as a pilot, as a man or woman, as a parent, or as a Midwesterner. Each of these roles or attributes may affect one’s interactions. So, to say that an individual is speaking strictly as a man in the infantry or as an enlisted woman trained to perform aircraft maintenance is to draw an overly simplistic boundary around that person’s practices or activities. Despite these drawbacks, which I readily acknowledge, I found the framework to be helpful as I attempted to sort through potentially gendered aspects of language used to conduct the work or perpetuate the identity of the community which seemed most salient in the context of the interactions I analyzed.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992: 462) point to the need for studies such as this one – studies situated within communities of practice, calling for researchers to shift attention, “toward the processes through which [gender difference and power each feed] the other to produce the concrete complexities of language as used by real people engaged in social practice”. The primary focus of analysis is language as it bears on people’s participation in a specific practice; then, if gender is relevant to the practice at issue, it comes to the fore.

Like Tannen’s (1994) assessment of the polysemy of power and solidarity, in which power and solidarity coexist and mutually entail each other, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet propose a polysemy of difference and dominance, as it were, in

gender identity. "Not only are difference and dominance both involved in gender," they state, "but they are also jointly constructed and prove ultimately inseparable" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 462). One key is to see how those constructions occur within communities of practice as social context. As Schilling-Estes (2002) points out, the community of practice approach allows room for examination of reified structures, institutional ideologies and notions regarding gender-appropriate behavior, speaker agency and social structure.

Wenger (1998) describes the dimensions which make practice the source of a community's coherence: 1) mutual engagement in actions which have negotiated meaning; 2) negotiation of a joint enterprise (e.g. a mission statement) including mutual accountability for actions in pursuit of that joint enterprise; and, 3) shared repertoire, to include routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, actions and symbols used to express identity as members (73-83). Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999:176) summarize other elements of the shared repertoire of a community of practice, all with linguistic implications, and all of which appear in these data:

- Sustained mutual relationships
- Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
- The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
- Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
- Quick setup of a problem to be discussed

- Substantial overlap in participants' descriptions of who belongs
- Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise
- Mutually defining identities
- The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
- Specific tools, representations, and other artifacts
- Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
- Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones
- Certain styles recognized as displaying membership
- Shared discourse that reflects a certain perspective on the world

While the community of practice framework is not so much a theoretical perspective as an analytical tool, delineating elements such as those listed above facilitates analysis of the importance of language practices in establishing and maintaining an institutional identity, like that of the military.

In this study, then, because of the close ties between the social structure of the military and language use within it, my primary approach for analysis will stem from interactional sociolinguistics. Informing my analysis will be the concepts inherent in the community of practice framework, the backdrop of masculinity theory and the findings of language and gender research. Using these tools of analysis, Chapter Two will explore the use of “ma’am” and “sir” in the conversational data. The prolific use of

such address forms is unique to the military and, as indicated in the above list of characteristics delineated by Holmes and Meyerhoff, is a feature of “shared discourse that reflects a certain perspective on the world”. The honorifics are indicators of “mutually defining identities” in that the use of “ma’am” or “sir” clearly marks a mutually agreed upon superior/subordinate relationship. In addition to being markers of relative status, “ma’am” and “sir” are, of course, also clearly marked for gender. Chapter Three will go on to examine conversational narratives. In their analysis it becomes clear that the narratives function as tools for perpetuating institutional ideals, hierarchy and lore, and thus shared identity within the community of practice in which the narratives are told. It appears that while males and females both convey narratives which instill institutional norms or values, gender may affect the manner in which the narrative is expressed and the motivation of its telling. That is, whereas men’s stories conform to, for example, the “narrative of achievement” structure identified by Coates (2003), women may tell the same or similar stories. Analysis of women’s stories, however, indicates that the narratives are sometimes used to help create a sense of membership in a community, consistent with the findings of Johnstone (1993). And in Chapter Four I will explore the concept of language and ideology. After examining the use of “ma’am” and “sir” in the military environment, and the importance of narrative in perpetuating the institution, it becomes clear that the institution is inextricable from the ideologies inherent in it. Most conspicuous are the ideology of hierarchy,

manifestations of masculinity which are tied to hierarchy, and a solidary environment which is a product of the military's hierarchical ideology.

### Method and Informants

The data for this study were collected by having volunteers at several Air Force bases wear, for the period of one duty day or a portion thereof, a digital taping device which audio-recorded their interactions. Six volunteers participated in this study -- all Air Force officers. Subjects from a single service (rather than a mix of Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines) and all from the social class of officers were used to provide some consistency within the data with respect to common institutional assumptions and terminology. Given my interest in analyzing the role of gender in military interaction, and for the purposes of comparison, a male and female officer of the same relative rank and/or position wore tape recorders. In order to protect the identities of participants, pseudonyms are used for all interactants cited in this study. The subject's sex is indicated by the last letter in their pseudonym -- "f" for a female and "m" for a male. So, Colonel Acuff, Major Cardiff and Major Eichendorf are female, and Colonel Bellam, Lieutenant Colonel Drum and Major Fromm are their male counterparts, respectively. In addition, contiguous letters (A & B, C & D, and E & F) indicate paired subjects -- Acuff and Bellam are the female and male Wing Commanders, respectively, Cardiff and Drum are the female and male Squadron Commanders, and Eichendorf and Fromm are the female and male Flight Commanders.

Colonel Acuff and Colonel Bellam are both Wing Commanders. As such, they are essentially the "mayors" of their bases, which equate to towns of a population of roughly 10,000 to 15,000. Their responsibilities, however, are much more wide-ranging than those of a mayor. As Wing Commanders they oversee all facilities and housing on the base, including all the organizations that support their base's military mission. So, where Colonels Acuff and Bellam frequently interact with individuals who wear the same military rank -- the rank of colonel -- as Wing Commanders they out-rank, in terms of job posting, most colonels with whom they interact by virtue of their position. In academia this would be roughly comparable to the relationship between a professor and the dean, wherein both have earned the same level of recognition, a PhD, but one "outranks" the other in the university hierarchy.

Colonel Acuff, an American midwesterner, recorded three hours and thirty six minutes of her day, nearly two hours and twenty-two minutes of which were interaction. The balance of the time was spent working at her computer or out of range of the audio recorder, as she had apparently left it sitting on a conference table during a portion of her day. She turned her audio recorder off during transit times and during a later portion of her day in which she was involved in meetings involving classified information, which precluded her wearing the tape recorder. Her interactions involved two lengthy meetings with civilians, one being a civilian who works for the Air Force on a daily basis, and the other being a community leader who is much less familiar with the Air Force. Her other meetings involved one-on-one meetings with subordinate

officers, and a small-group meeting to discuss an upcoming air show at the Air Force base. One of the meetings with a subordinate involved giving him personal career counseling. The other meeting with a subordinate involved coordinating briefings to be given to large groups of military personnel stationed at the base regarding promotion opportunities and requirements, but ended with a discussion regarding the subordinate's back problems and their effect on her ability to exercise.

Colonel Bellam, who is from Tennessee, engaged in two hours and ten minutes of interaction during the course of seven and one-half hours of taping. He spent a great deal of time working on his computer in his office. He also chose not to record his lunch at home with his wife, nor portions of two meetings during the day. Of those two meetings he did not record, one involved sensitive personal information regarding an Air Force officer and the other involved classified information. He had many short interactions with his immediate staff, particularly his Executive Officer – a Captain. He also recorded ten phone calls, totaling nearly twenty-five minutes, during which only his side of the conversation was heard. His counterpart, Colonel Acuff, had recorded no phone calls. Among Colonel Bellam's meetings was one with the military lawyers in order to discuss a financial planning company's marketing to military members, a Wing staff meeting, a meeting regarding a dinner function called a "Dining-Out", and a meeting with a protocol officer regarding a funeral in which Colonel Bellam would participate at Arlington National Cemetery.

Major Cardiff and Lieutenant Colonel Drum, female and male, respectively, are both squadron commanders. Though the Major is one rank below the Lieutenant Colonel, they both have the same relative position in the Wing structure: squadron commander. This difference in rank between squadron commanders is not unusual – major and lieutenant colonel are the typical ranks for the position. Organizationally, they are two levels below the Wing Commander – the squadron commanders would report to a group commander, who would report to the Wing Commander. A Squadron commander is the leader and highest ranking person of a unit which may include 100-300 people of all ranks who are focused on a particular area of expertise. A Medical Group, for example, is made up of several medical squadrons, and the Mission Support Group includes a variety of squadrons which perform different functions to support the Wing's mission. Examples of mission support squadrons include those which have the missions of providing personnel administration, vehicle maintenance, communications, and civil engineering.

Major Cardiff, who was raised in the northeastern United States, attended enlisted basic training and served a short amount of enlisted time before attending officer training. Of the three hours and sixteen minutes she recorded, two hours and eight minutes were spent in interaction and twenty-one minutes were spent on the phone. She turned off her tape recorder when she attended a meeting in which sensitive information relevant to an exercise (a test of a unit's or a base's response to a problem or crisis) was being discussed. She did not tape any time in vehicles and, assuming she

engaged in some sort of lunch activity, that was not recorded either. Her interactions ranged from personal and work-oriented discussion in small groups in her office, to moving about outdoors and in a large vehicle maintenance area, to a staff meeting. Two of the small group interactions included discussions regarding the medical status of one of the unit's enlisted members who was in the hospital awaiting surgery, and counseling of another young enlisted member regarding pay issues.

Lieutenant Colonel Drum was raised in California and moved to Texas in his mid-teens. His recording time totaled five hours and forty-seven minutes, nearly all of which (five hours and twenty-two minutes) contains interaction of some sort. Like Major Cardiff, Lieutenant Colonel Drum moved about during his day and attended four lengthy meetings which totaled two hours and thirty-nine minutes. During the meetings he spoke occasionally, but mostly listened. This means that the time he moved about and interacted with small groups or individuals was roughly equal to that of his counterpart Major Cardiff. In addition to meetings with small groups in his office, part of Lieutenant Colonel Drum's day was spent interacting with a group of enlisted members who were practicing assembly of a portable structure, and part was spent conducting a dry-run (practice version) of a tour of the Air Force base in preparation for a distinguished visitor.

Major Eichendorf and Major Fromm, female and male respectively, are Flight Commanders, but also pilots who fly a type of combat aircraft. Managerially, they work one level below the squadron commander, as squadrons are composed of smaller

groups called "flights". As flight commanders, in addition to their flying duties they conduct administrative and managerial functions, such as writing evaluations, or scheduling the people in their charge for training or deployment.

Major Eichendorf, a "military brat" as children of military members are called, is from the central east coast. She had the longest total recording (seven hours) and the longest total interaction time (five hours and fifty-seven minutes). Almost thirty-six minutes was time spent on the phone. During her day, Major Eichendorf engaged in several personal one-on-one and small group conversations, mostly with her peers, including thirty-six minutes at lunch time. Her longer interactions include an hour in a flight simulator, an hour and twenty minutes in a discussion during which her superior gives her career counseling, and several conversations, totaling one hour and twenty-five minutes, regarding scheduling issues in the squadron.

Major Fromm, who is from the midwest, had parents who were both from the south. He recorded an hour and forty-seven minutes of interaction out of two hours total recorded time. Other than a staff meeting, most of his interactions were one-on-one or small group interactions with his peers during which he conducted the business of scheduling individual members' participation in a flying exercise and handled other administrative and scheduling matters. He did not seem to turn his tape recorder off at any time and he basically filled a single tape.

The levels of organization in which interactants were studied are therefore, in descending order, wing, squadron, and flight. The ranks of the subjects are, in

descending order, colonel, lieutenant colonel (sometimes conventionally addressed using the shortened form “colonel” as a matter of convenience), and major. Those with whom the subjects interact include most officer and enlisted ranks, as well as civilians. The subjects, their relative positions, ranks and commensurate insignia are indicated in Table 1, which lists all officer ranks from second lieutenant (the rank assigned most new officers) up to colonel (the highest ranking of the subjects in the study). Above the rank of colonel are the general officers (Brigadier General, Major General, etc.) which are sometimes referred to in these data and whose relative ranking is explained in the analysis. See Appendix 1 for a listing of officer ranks and Appendix 2 for enlisted ranks.

The audio recordings were supplemented with a follow-up interview guided by an interview form (at appendix 3) which provided relevant demographic data and explored individuals’ personal discourse strategies and the influence of training and/or experience upon those strategies. In my analysis, I rarely referred to background information, relying instead on what was displayed in the discourse itself. Portions of the recordings relevant to the areas of inquiry, specifically those portions containing occurrences of “ma’am” and “sir”, conversational narratives and indications of institutional or language ideology, were transcribed for further analysis.

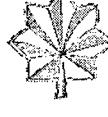
| Position                                                             | Rank                              | Insignia                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wing Commander<br>(Colonel Acuff and<br>Colonel Bellam)              | Colonel                           |                                                                                                         |
| Squadron Commander<br>(Lieutenant Colonel<br>Drum and Major Cardiff) | Lieutenant Colonel<br>Or<br>Major |  (Silver)<br> (Gold) |
| Flight Commander<br>(Major Eichendorf and<br>Major Fromm)            | Major<br>Or<br>Captain            |  (Gold)<br>         |
|                                                                      | First Lieutenant                  |  (Silver)                                                                                             |
|                                                                      | Second Lieutenant                 |  (Gold)                                                                                               |

Table 1. – Job and rank of informants – highest to lowest

In this chapter I have examined the literature regarding the connections between language, gender and power, and I have provided an overview of the military context, its role in the formation of American masculine identity, and a short history of women's participation in the American military. I have also introduced the central question of this study – the ways in which language, gender and the military intersect – and the method with which I have approached this question. The table above, which shows the

positions and ranks of the study's primary informants, illustrates the fact that the military operates with its own language, in a sense. The next chapter explores this notion further, specifically in terms of the use of "ma'am" and "sir".

## **Chapter 2 – Gender and Language Intersect: Military Use of “Ma’am” and “Sir”**

### **Introduction and Overview**

Most who come into contact with the military agree that the military speaks its “own language”. Learning the “language” of the military starts with one’s first moments in the service, when seasoned service members begin to imprint upon new trainees the standard interpretive framework of the military’s language practices. Johnstone (1990:16) has observed that, “In order for a group of people to function as a community, they must share norms for interaction. Among these norms are conventions governing language use: what to say, how to say it, and when.” Ironically, new recruits and officer trainees learn “what to say, how to say it, and when,” by having language taken away from them. New trainees may only speak to a trainer or superior when spoken to and failure to comply with this restriction may result in the trainee suffering the trainer’s wrath, or perhaps some physical punishment involving push-ups or running. When new trainees are allowed to speak they may only reply with a few given responses, including “yes, ma’am/sir”, “no ma’am/sir”, “no excuse ma’am/sir”, and “I do not understand the question, ma’am/sir”. In adapting to this, the first of the military culture’s constraints upon their interactions, trainees begin their lexical indoctrination to military jargon, semantic initiation into their subordinate place in the power structure, and arguably semantic and morphological division of superiors into male and female.

These first responses form the basis for interactional norms throughout one’s military career, linked intertextually to the first moments in the service. But when

training is complete and the “recruit” becomes a service member, the use of “ma’am” and “sir” becomes a matter of conversational style. There are no specific rules for the use of “ma’am” and “sir” other than that it should be used, at least occasionally. And, unlike in basic training where trainees will use “ma’am” and “sir” to address enlisted trainers, the address forms are not rendered to enlisted members, nor between enlisted members, in the active duty military.

Still, one of the many features that distinguishes military from civilian conversational interaction is the relatively frequent use of “ma’am” and “sir” in the military. “Ma’am” and “sir” seem innocuous enough as address forms. But Ochs (1992) reminds us that English has relatively few referential indices that directly denote gender, as do “ma’am” and “sir”; and, as important, that, “Mundane, prosaic, and altogether unsensational though they may appear to be, conversational practices are primary resources for the realization of **gender hierarchy**” (336) (emphasis mine). My question is, then, do “ma’am” and “sir” as indices of gender **in a hierarchy** tell us anything about the “gender hierarchy” itself?

To answer this question, I conduct an analysis on a microanalytic scale by examining how speakers use “ma’am” and “sir” in day-to-day talk in a military context. Since use of the honorifics is not rule-bound, do the styles in which they are used tell us anything about whether female and male superiors are equally respected? The literature I review in this chapter points to the likelihood that “ma’am”, which indexes the feminine, does not carry the weight of “sir”, which indexes the masculine. The

judgment as to which carries more weight requires, of course, a scale. Unique to this study is the fact that military members' use of "ma'am" and "sir" also denotes a clearly delineated superior/subordinate relationship and therefore functions as a marker of hierarchy -- a scale -- in addition to indexing gender. Again, however, "ma'am" and "sir" mark only the superior/subordinate relationship between officer as superior and enlisted members as subordinates, or between two officers, one of which is senior to the other and will therefore be addressed by the junior officer using the honorifics. Studying gender dynamics in an entirely enlisted environment would likely involve analysis of largely referential meaning in discourse. In this study all the primary informants are officers, providing me with a basis for comparing the ways in which "ma'am" and "sir" are used.

There is no existing literature regarding the use of "ma'am" and "sir" in the military environment, so the related literature I introduce here, and will discuss at greater length in this chapter, includes work on politeness and work on honorifics in Asian languages. Since military training directs upward use of "ma'am" and "sir" in a manner reminiscent of the formal V forms of Indo-European languages, in order to foreground analysis of these data I will review Brown and Gilman's (1972) classic work on the pronouns of power and solidarity. In addition, I will show that there are some interesting parallels between the use of "ma'am" and "sir" as honorifics in American military usage, and the use of honorifics in Asian languages. Research specifically exploring semantic and pragmatic implications of "ma'am" and "sir" as used in English

discourse is sparse, though Johnstone (1991) has examined their use in the reproduction of southern dialect in fiction. My analysis of the use of “ma’am” and “sir” in the military context contributes to work on address forms, compares Asian use of honorifics to “ma’am” and “sir” as honorifics, and establishes a basis for comparison of “ma’am” and “sir” in other military settings, or in American usage outside the military.

Following a review of relevant literature, I identify the common environments for “ma’am” and “sir” in military usage. First I discuss the observation that the address forms most often tag answers in the affirmative. That is, whether the response is a “yes” to a “yes or no” question, a “yes sir” in response to a direct or indirect request, or a “yes ma’am” as a back-channel response during interaction, post-“yes” was the most common environment. Then I consider the parallel case of “ma’am” and “sir” as tags to an answer in the negative, though “no” responses were significantly less frequent in these data. Next is a discussion of the general occurrence of “ma’am” or “sir” in sentence-initial environments, sometimes in exclamatory form as a greeting. The analysis shows that in “yes ma’am/sir” environments there appears to be somewhat greater deference to males of high rank, but the results here are inconclusive and need further study. Post-“no” and in sentence-initial environments there is little to no difference in the use of “ma’am” and “sir” to superiors, therefore no conspicuous gender implications in their usage.

“Ma’am” or “sir” may also tag an utterance in sentence-final position, sometimes upwardly intoned to mark a question. In the course of analyzing the

sentence-final environment, I discovered that subordinates rarely asked questions of female superiors which were phrased as questions, question-intoned **and** tagged with “ma’am” at the end or marked with “ma’am” sentence-initially. The same was not the case with male superiors. While more research is needed, I deduce this difference in the use of questioning to be an indicator that male superiors do receive greater deference than female superiors of the same rank.

Finally, I examine the use of “sir” in constructed dialogue. Curiously, there were no occurrences of “ma’am” in constructed dialogue. I find that use of “sir” in constructed dialogue reflects the institution’s hierarchy while maintaining solidarity by portraying subordinates as properly respectful of superiors. And, while there isn’t sufficient evidence in these data to state it unequivocally, the fact that there were no occurrences of “ma’am” in constructed dialogue might also indicate lower regard for “ma’am” than for “sir”. This argument is supported by the fact that in the only self-reference made by a female in constructed dialogue the speaker chose a non-gendered reference and referred to herself as “Colonel” and not “ma’am”.

Since use of the pronouns “ma’am” and “sir” can be argued to be the definitive nexus of language, gender and the military, and given their specificity to military members, again, the community of practice framework is helpful to this analysis. Importantly, consistent with some of the characteristics of language in a community of practice as summarized by Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999:176), though “ma’am” and “sir” are in common English usage their pervasive use in the military as a community of

practice shows “shared ways of doing things, mutually defined identities” in the hierarchical arrangement, a “style of speaking” which displays membership, may be regarded as “jargon,” and certainly their use reveals “shared discourse that reflects a certain perspective on the world”. While there’s no denying that each occurrence of “ma’am” or “sir” genders one interactant, this analysis considers the fact that the address forms are as much markers of “mutually defined identities” in the power structure as they are indices of gender.

## **Relevant Literature**

### Language Socialization

A basic tenet of interactional sociolinguistics is that meaning in discourse is socially constructed, constantly being reinvented through interaction. Without question language use within a military context is one example of a social construct in which the military at large -- comprised of all active duty service members -- is made up of what are innumerable groups of people engaged in the mutual endeavor of defending the nation, during which emerge ways of working and talking, as well as common values, beliefs and power relations. Ochs (1992) has observed that making social meaning in any community requires a process whereby speakers are, “socialized to interpret [social meanings] and can without conscious control orchestrate messages” to convey desired meaning (Ochs 1992:338). Whatever the specific military community, after a short period of indoctrination and months or years of service, military members are able to

convey both lexical or referential meaning, as well as other levels of meaning in their discourse.

This language socialization, which all new military members undergo, can be compared to children's acquisition of conversational practice which Ochs (1992) points out "includes both socialization through language and socialization to use language" (346). Military members are socialized through interactions with trainers which are quite nearly one-way interactions downward from trainer to subordinate, similar to downward interactions from parent to child. And during the course of military members' socialization through the language of training, they learn the norms for the use of "ma'am" and "sir". Further, as Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1999) point out, communities of practice to which people belong in early life stages are formative for speech style. Since young people can enlist or enter officer training programs as early as the age of 17, socialization to the use of "ma'am" and "sir" can indeed occur at a formative stage of adolescence and early adulthood. As a result, language and the social context of the military training environment mutually constitute an individual's personal and social identity as a military member – an aspect of personal identity which generally remains influential well beyond the term of one's enlistment or commission.

### Gender Indexing

Ochs (1992) reminds us that sociological and anthropological studies assume that language varies systematically across social contexts, and that such meaning is

*indexed* across linguistic structures in systematic ways. For example, meaning may be indexed by phonological variation or intonation depending upon class, ethnicity, or social distance between speakers. Gender, likewise, may be indexed. Brown (1993:145) points out that gender indexing is context dependent and mostly indirect as it is indicated by "other connections between gender and habitual uses of language," like interactional goals and strategies, instead of being directly indexed in language structure. In analyzing points at which gender is relevant to institutional language, then, one may examine gender associations which are clearly indexed, as is the case with "ma'am" and "sir", or gendering which is more subtly indexed in, say, an interaction's association with feminine rituals of relation and community or its association with masculine rituals involving contest or hierarchy.

Researchers have expressed the finding that feminine interactional goals and strategies are indexed by their origin in powerlessness, and therefore result in less freedom to use forceful, aggressive speech (O'Barr & Atkins 1980, Deuchar 1989, James 1996). Despite any number of interactional strategies which may be considered feminine, Ochs (1992) calls to our attention the fact that, in English, there are relatively few referential indices which directly denote gender. In common use, these referential indices are primarily "he", "she", "Mr.", "Mrs.", "ma'am" and "sir". In addition, though fading from American English, are marked nouns. "Actor", for example, increasingly appears as a non-gendered form of the noun, though the term "actress", gendered feminine, can readily be found. In other cases, new terms replace gendered

ones, such as “server” instead of “waiter” or “waitress” and “flight attendant” instead of “steward” or “stewardess”.

Such gender indexing, or marking, in English begs the question as to whether a feminine index carries the same prestige as its masculine equivalent. As noted in Chapter One, Lakoff (1975), Goffman (1977), and others have argued that a feminine referential index, such as “ma’am”, connotes a lower social position, or even frivolousness (Tannen 1994). Much language and gender literature points out that the dynamics of interaction produce and reproduce male power. In the dynamics of military interaction “ma’am” differentiates gender, but simultaneously signals a power dynamic in which the female addressed as “ma’am” is a superior. So, in the case of this study, does “ma’am”, for example, carry equivalent authority to “sir”, which theoretically signals the same power dynamic? This study examines conversational use of “ma’am” and “sir” given that it is a “practice within communities of practice” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464). Analysis of the practice will, hopefully, help to “provide a deeper understanding of how gender and language may interact and how those interactions may matter” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464).

In the military “ma’am” and “sir”, given the specifics of the environments in which they occur, are most often markers of power and hierarchy. It is possible, though I have no evidence of it in these data, that “ma’am” or “sir” may be rendered with a subversive or disagreeable undertone. That is to say, a subordinate may reply to a request or order by stating, “yes, sir”, with an intonation which may indicate reluctance

to obey the order, much like a “yes, mother” or “yes, dear” with rising intonation on the word “yes” and a lower pitched “mother” or “dear”. Or, a subordinate may reply with a firm “yes, ma’am” and ignore the request or order at the risk of being caught or found out.

While I have not ruled out the nearly unanimous observation made by so many linguists that “ma’am” as an indicator of respect does not carry the same weight or prestige as “sir” when used as a mark of respect, which I discuss further below, given these data it’s difficult to make the case that, across the board, “ma’am” carries less power than “sir” when fulfilling its pragmatic role in a military context. That is, “ma’am” and “sir” may be equally powerful when used. But what if they are not used equally? There are indications that “ma’am” may be rendered less frequently than “sir”. This could indicate that “ma’am” is pragmatically less powerful than “sir”, or it could indicate that speakers are less familiar, or less comfortable, with the notion of a female as superior. Based on the literature, other gender-related influences may be at work. Specifically, it’s possible that in interactions in which males are speaking to males the subordinate is comfortable with the masculine hierarchical construct which signals the upward use of “sir”. And, given an American social construct in which males have long been in positions of power, particularly in the military, females as well may be accustomed to a social construct in which upward use of “sir” is common. Upward use of “ma’am” by males could be less familiar, but relatively easy to adapt to given the (masculine) hierarchical framework which requires it. Upward use of “ma’am” by

females, however, is potentially unfamiliar on two levels: the still-novel situation of women in very high-ranking positions in which women are accustomed to seeing men, and women's ritual conversational style which is community-oriented rather than hierarchy-oriented.

#### "Ma'am" and "Sir" – Denotation and Connotation

As mentioned above, many will argue that "sir" and "ma'am" do not carry equal connotations of authority even though they may be regarded a matched pair – male and female equivalents of polite address. Substantiating the assertion of inequality are the definitions of "sir" and "ma'am" in the Oxford English Dictionary. Applicable definitions of "sir" include "a person of rank or importance" and "a respectful term of address to a superior or, in later use, an equal" (OED On-line), the latter being consistent with American Southern usage, as I will discuss. The applicable definition of "ma'am" is shown as coming from "Madam" and "*Formerly* (italics mine) the ordinary respectful form of address to a woman (originally only to a married woman) of equal or superior rank or station" (OED On-line). The OED definition of "ma'am" goes on to say that, "In British and Australian English its use is now largely confined to the addressing of a female member of royalty or a female superior officer in the armed forces or the police force". By denotation, then, "sir" is widely applicable in reference to a "person of rank or importance" and accepted as "a respectful term of address to a superior," whereas "ma'am" as a term of address (note that it isn't specified to be a

“respectful term of address” just a term used in the “addressing of a female”) applies narrowly to “a female superior officer in the armed forces or the police.” This would leave one to believe that “sir” does indeed carry with it more “importance” and respect, than does “ma’am” which was at best *“formerly”* a respectful form.

Support for the observation, mentioned earlier, that a feminine referential index implies a lower social position comes from the fact that “ma’am” is the shortened form of “madam”. Hamp (1995: 90) argues that “sir” and “ma’am” can hardly be considered a matched pair, in part because the term “madam” has undergone a semantic, “transfer to values that are ranked low in the relevant society”; namely, speakers of American English commonly refer to the female manager of a brothel as a “madam”, whose matched pair is not “sir” but “pimp”. Hill (1986) examines discrimination that arises in forms of address, noting that in service encounters men are addressed as “sir” whereas women may be addressed as “dear” or “hon”. Johnstone (1991) found that in literary southern white dialect, men and women alike use “sir” and “ma’am” to elders, but that, “Social superiority of the addressee is indicated with ‘sir’ and title plus first name” (467) leaving us to infer that social superiority is rarely marked with “ma’am” and title plus first name.

Romaine (2001) observes that femininity is marked in the public sphere and masculinity is marked in the private sphere. We can infer from her findings that in the sphere of work, such as the institution of the military, the feminine “ma’am” is marked by contrast to the masculine “sir” which would be regarded as the norm; therefore

“ma’am” potentially carries less authority. Interestingly, in contrast to the gender indexed terms “ma’am” and “sir”, a long list of terms lexically unmarked for gender are available for use in reference to the status of military members. These include terms like soldier, sailor, marine, commander, skipper, and flight lead, as well as rank names such as colonel, captain and sergeant. There are, however, gender marked terms such as corpsman and airman, intended to include women though lexically marked masculine.

It’s possible that the combination of non-gendered titles such as rank, as well as the visibility inherent in the gender-indexed “ma’am” may actually work to the benefit of women in the military. Hellinger (1984) has examined the social implications of morphologically unmarked occupational titles in Swedish, Norwegian, Italian, French and German. She found that the use of non-gendered titles, in concert with strategies making women’s professional participation more visible, has led to better prospects for acceptance of women across the workplace. Such may be the case for women in the military where titles do not distinguish their sex, but the use of the address form “ma’am” gives visibility to their professional participation.

In American usage “ma’am” and “sir” are not widely examined in the literature. Johnstone (1991, 1992) has examined “sir” and “ma’am” in Harry Crews’s novel *Body* as representations of rural southern U.S. white males. She found that “sir” and “ma’am” were but two of many terms of address used frequently by the southern characters in the book to both identify the addressee and express the social relationship between characters. Notably, Johnstone points out Crews’s faithfulness to southern

tradition whereby, “younger people inevitably answer older people’s yes/no questions with ‘Yes, sir, I did,’ ‘No sir, I’m not,’ or ‘No, ma’am’ (467). Further, Johnstone found that men in the novel use address terms more often than do women.

### Honorifics and Politeness

The literature on honorifics, and more tangentially politeness, is applicable to conversational use of “ma’am” and “sir”. Not surprisingly, most of the literature examining honorifics pertains to their usage in Asian languages. Typical of such work is Usami (2000) who notes that Japanese honorifics are largely a stylistic choice for the speaker, are used more frequently by females than by males, and reflect the age/power relationships between speakers. Hijirida and Sohn (1986) looked cross-culturally to find that while Japanese and Korean societies are highly influenced by power and group solidarity and are therefore more hierarchical and collectivist, American English reflects American egalitarianism and individualism by placing greater importance in intimacy. In an interesting contrast, this study shows that military discourse has characteristics consistent with both American egalitarianism and the attention to power and group solidarity such as Watanabe has reported for Japanese.

Consistent with other work on honorifics in Japanese, Watanabe (1993) points out that avoidance of confrontation, particularly with superiors, is of the utmost importance so as not to disrupt group harmony. Confrontation, states Watanabe, “is considered almost prohibited when it is against the superior in the social hierarchy

because it causes the superior's loss of face" (180). Tannen (1994) calls attention to Watanabe's observation that the Japanese speakers who participated in the group discussions she observed considered themselves united by the hierarchy of their group – a notion inconsistent with American individualism but consistent with American military culture. That is, in the interest of unit camaraderie and cohesiveness the members of a unit are bound by their unit's mission and hierarchy. Interactions in this study, highlighted in Chapters Three and Four, show that unit members may disagree with decisions made by their leadership, but they still abide by institutional norms and obey their superiors regardless of personal opinion. Thus, the hierarchy is a point of coherence no matter one's individual opinion. To that end, use of "ma'am" and "sir" are obligatory in a military environment and are rendered to officers of superior rank, whether the interaction is between officer and enlisted, several officers, or a group comprised of both officers and enlisted members. While this study identifies environments in which "ma'am" and "sir" occur, their use is not rule-bound; rather, their use is almost entirely subjective. However, their complete absence in interactions between an officer and a person of subordinate rank could be considered an act of insubordination -- an offense which is punishable under military code of law.

Comparison of American military use of "ma'am" and "sir" to the use of honorifics in Asian languages is one cross-cultural consideration. In another form of cross-cultural interpretation we may make a comparison with languages which signal a social hierarchy, if not a power hierarchy, in pronoun usage. Specifically, perhaps use

of “ma’am” and “sir” can be compared to the semantic distinction between polite/formal and intimate/casual pronoun usage. It is this distinction which Brown and Gilman address in their 1960 essay, “The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity.”

In their landmark article Brown and Gilman (1960) provide both diachronic and synchronic analyses of Indo-European forms of the pronoun “you”. By analyzing the use of the formal or polite (V) and informal or familiar (T) forms of “you” in French, Spanish, German and Italian, Brown and Gilman explore nuances of pronoun usage which signal power and solidarity in speech. They observe that power and solidarity are, “two dimensions fundamental to the analysis of all social life” (252). Power, the authors point out, is a nonreciprocal relationship in that as a semantic indication of the power relation, “the superior says T and receives V” (255).

Brown and Gilman go on to point out that the trend in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was toward the solidary semantic, so that dyads previously considered superior/subordinate, such as employer/employee, transitioned from an upward V and downward T, to mutual V, while other dyads, such as that between an elder and younger sibling, became mutual users of the T form. The differentiation between polite and familiar forms is less familiar to speakers of English, a language which lost such a distinction with the demise of “thou”. The lack of T and V forms in English, however, does not negate the presence of power and solidarity indicators in interaction in English. For example, in English, norms of address such as familiar use of first name as compared to title and proper name are indicators of relative societal position. Given that “ma’am” and “sir” as used

in the military indicate a superior/subordinate power dynamic, I equate their use to the use of title or title and proper name, i.e., the V form.

Interestingly enough, Brown and Gilman reference the “army” as an institutionalized base of power illustrating the point by noting the relationship between “soldier and officer” (256) in which the officer is asymmetrically superior to the soldier. Brown and Gilman point out that their evidence, “consistently indicates that in the past century the solidarity semantic has gained supremacy” across a variety of domains, including between “officer and soldier” (260). Specifically they note that prior to the nineteenth century an officer could use either the T or V form with a soldier whereas the soldier would use the formal V form when addressing the officer, but that later practice was mutual use of the V form between officer and soldier. They cite as evidence the fact that between World War II and the publication of their article in 1960, the French Army adopted guidance instructing officers to use the polite V form when speaking to enlisted men (261).

The data in this study show a dynamic which more closely resembles the nineteenth century semantic. Where today’s American officer may use either the T or V form with an enlisted member, i.e., first name or rank/title, the enlisted member will always use a V form, i.e., “ma’am” or “sir”, to an officer. Further, the French Army had ostensibly made this change to make the officer/enlisted relationship more solidary. However, the data analyzed in this study will show that despite the strict address forms of the American military, which are essentially the 19<sup>th</sup> century norms Brown and

Gilman denote, superiors and subordinates in the military are solidary. This notion that an upward V and downward V or T in the American military creates solidarity interestingly echoes the findings, discussed earlier, that in Japanese usage hierarchy and solidarity are symbiotic.

Because Brown and Gilman surveyed only male subjects in gathering data regarding use of T and V forms in French, German, and Italian, we must look to more current work to explore the relevance of parallel address forms, particularly address forms marked for gender, in English. Ochs (1992) applies the notion of indexicality to help account for the inherently social construction of written and spoken linguistic forms, to include their social history, social presence, and social future. She examines ways in which meaning, such as the difference between polite and familiar forms, is systematically indexed in language. That is, across languages, linguistic structures index a great variety of types of meaning. For example, Brown and Gilman's work elucidates the semantic indexing of power and solidarity through the invocation of T and V forms. Again, gender too may be semantically indexed using "he", "she", "Mr.", "Mrs.", "ma'am" or "sir". The T and V form dynamic (use of "ma'am" and "sir") in the military is clearly a matter of initiation and training, which may be argued to be intertextually and interdiscursively achieved.

Recall from Chapter One that Kristeva brings us the notion of intertextuality via her study of interpretations of Bakhtin for western audiences, and that "intertextuality" refers to the fact that utterances or texts are connected to, or are a response to, prior

utterances or texts. Thus, the most basic recounting of information is a textual response to a previously encountered text. For example, when a student is quizzed regarding a reading assignment, the question asked is an intertextual recounting of the text which was read. And the student probably read the text because another text in the form of a syllabus or even verbal instruction required the student to do so. This intertextual scenario is also the basic element of military training. New trainees may only reply to a question with the spoken text “yes ma’am” or “no ma’am” because that’s what their training has allowed. In more advanced training, such as the launching of a missile, training is composed of frequent and repetitious exposure to the relevant texts, such as checklists and equipment operating instructions, to the extent that intertextual knowledge of the equipment operation is deeply imprinted upon the practitioner. The purpose of such training is to take the thought process out of the response, so that a reaction is rapid, decisive and unquestioning.

In discussing intertextuality, Fairclough (1992) notes the importance of a commensurate consideration of the relations of power and how they shape social structures so as to create textual traditions and textual practices. In the case of military training and intertextuality within the institution of the military, power is clearly at issue at a number of levels. When trainees take an oath of enlistment or commissioning and submit to the authority above them, they are clearly submitting to a power structure which has tremendous influence upon the texts they will be exposed to, and the intertextual responses expected of them. Such responses often take the form of

‘manifest intertextuality’, where “other texts are overtly drawn upon within a text” (117-18). With time, such responses may be more a matter of ‘interdiscursivity’ which is the manifestation of a discourse type. Intertextuality and interdiscursivity play key roles in the analysis of pragmatic usage of “ma’am” and “sir” in the military context in that the style of the usage of “ma’am” and “sir” that military members employ on a day to day basis may be a result of their early impressions as to how and when “ma’am” and “sir” are to be used, whether as strictly a military enactment, or as a result of regional difference in politeness norms..

## **Data Analysis – Identifying Environments**

### Overview

Preliminary considerations pointed to the question of quantitative study – literally counting the instances of “ma’am” and “sir”. Perhaps this would begin to answer the question, raised in the review of relevant literature, as to whether “sir” carries more authority and respect than does “ma’am”. As can be seen in Table 2 the quantitative values are clearly of interest. However, it was also obvious that while “ma’am” and “sir” occur in predictable environments, the frequency and placement of their use was largely a matter of the personal style of the speaker or the context of the interaction. In addition, my corpus contains many interactions between civilians and military members. While civilians who work closely with the military on a daily basis

are not obliged, as are military members, to use “ma’am” and “sir”, they sometimes do; though not necessarily with usage as consistent as individual military members.

| Pseudonym<br>(Interaction<br>Time) | Yes<br>Ma’am | Yes<br>Sir | No<br>Ma’am | No<br>Sir | Ma’am<br>Sent.<br>Initial | Sir<br>Sent.<br>Initial | Ma’am<br>Sent.<br>Final | Sir<br>Sent.<br>Final | Ma’am<br>Other | Sir<br>Other |
|------------------------------------|--------------|------------|-------------|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>Acuff</b><br>(2:21:39)          | 73           | n/a        | 6           | n/a       | 5                         | n/a                     | 3                       | n/a                   | 7              | n/a          |
| <b>Bellam</b><br>(2:10:04)         | n/a          | 56         | n/a         | 4         | n/a                       | 16                      | n/a                     | 32                    | n/a            | 20           |
| <b>Cardiff</b><br>(2:08:05)        | 18           | n/a        | 2           | n/a       | 6                         | n/a                     | 10                      | n/a                   | 14             | n/a          |
| <b>Drum</b><br>(5:22:33)           | n/a          | 12         | n/a         | 2         | n/a                       | 18                      | n/a                     | 20                    | n/a            | 20           |
| <b>Eichendorf</b><br>(5:57:07)     | 0            | n/a        | 0           | n/a       | 0                         | n/a                     | 0                       | n/a                   | 1              | n/a          |
| <b>Fromm</b><br>(1:46:56)          | n/a          | 0          | n/a         | 0         | n/a                       | 1                       | n/a                     | 0                     | n/a            | 0            |

Table 2 – Occurrences of “ma’am” and “sir” with primary informant as addressee and superior

Upon tabulating occurrences of “ma’am” and “sir” it became apparent that both occurred in the following environments: together with “yes” or “no”, in sentence-initial position and sentence-final position, together with a greeting or salutation, and sometimes mid-sentence between clauses. Table 2 isolates those responses which were addressed to the primary informant. Any exceptions to this dynamic, in which the primary informant (Acuff, Bellam, Cardiff, Drum, Eichendorf or Fromm) is the superior who is addressed with “ma’am” or “sir”, will be discussed individually in the analysis. In Table 2 Lines A, B, C, D, E and F represent my primary informants – those who

wore the audio recorders. As a reminder, the informants' letter identifiers, A, B, C, D, E and F, correspond with the first letter of the pseudonyms used in this analysis and the informant's sex is indicated by an "m" or "f" (male and female respectively) in the last letter of their pseudonym. The total time that informant spent in interaction with others, as opposed to working alone at the computer or traveling silently in a car, appears in parentheses below the letter identifier.

As can be seen in the tabulations, "ma'am" and "sir" occurred most commonly (91 times and 68 times respectively) in combination with the affirmative "yes". "Ma'am" and "Sir" occurred much less often with the negation "no". Both also occur in sentence-initial and sentence-final positions. The honorifics "ma'am" and "sir" often occur in the context of an adjacency pair or precontextualized response, such as a salutation; and on occasion, "ma'am" and "sir" occur mid-sentence, between two clauses. The latter two types of occurrences are counted under "Other" in the table above. Since the interactants are undifferentiated in the table, it's not obvious how many utterances of an upward "ma'am" or "sir" can be attributed to a single subordinate, so this information is addressed as applicable in my analysis. For example, of the 73 instances of "yes ma'am" addressed to Colonel Acuff, 61 of them come from the same person and can be largely attributed to his personal style. I will address this further below.

One factor to keep in mind is that the number of "ma'ams" and "sirs" may depend on the number of persons each informant comes into contact with (more if

they're "out and about" or in a large staff meeting, fewer if their recordings occur primarily in their office settings). Note also that few instances of "ma'am" and "sir" occur in Major Eichendorf's and Major Fromm's recordings. This is due to a substantial difference in the officer/enlisted ratio in their type of unit; that is, because their flying unit is comprised almost entirely of pilots, and because all Air Force pilots are officers, their ranks do not vary widely. The superior/subordinate dynamics are therefore much different in Eichendorf's and Fromm's units. The Wing Commanders and Squadron Commanders come into contact with a wide array of officers, enlisted and civilians in the course of their day because their jobs are much more supervisory in nature. Majors Eichendorf and Fromm, however, mostly come into contact with other pilots, many of whom are of the same rank and therefore don't warrant a "ma'am" or "sir". Therefore, "ma'am" and "sir" are not prevalent in such units. This helps to illustrate the variation in smaller communities of practice, in their case a unit which flies a particular type of aircraft, within the larger Air Force community of practice.

#### Yes Ma'am, Yes Sir, No Ma'am, No Sir

The numbers clearly show that the most frequent pairing occurred when "ma'am" or "sir" followed "yes". Typical examples of "yes, ma'am", which exists in the same environment as "yes, sir", occur in this interaction in which Major Cardiff, the female squadron commander, addresses her enlisted male subordinate, a sergeant (Sgt),

during a meeting in her office, asking him to send courtesy copies ("CC") of e-mail to additional addressees:

1. Sgt Mill: Okay I'll send that CC to you
2. and I should get a call back shortly.
3. Maj Cardiff: Okay terrific.
4. Can you also CC- is this classified?
5. None of this obviously-
6. Can you also CC
7. Mr. Sutton and Carol Jones in TSI
8. Sgt Mill: **Yes ma'am**
9. Maj Cardiff: mmhmm
10. Perfect
11. Thank you.
12. Oh and go ahead and courtesy copy Maj. Alderman-
13. anything you courtesy copy me make sure you courtesy  
copy Maj. Alderman as well
14. Sgt Mill : **Yes ma'am**
15. Maj Cardiff: Awesome.
16. Thank you.

In this brief scenario we see the most common environment for the "ma'am" or "sir" address form: a "yes" or "no" response to a question or a "yes" indicating understanding, and presumably impending compliance with a request or order. The latter form has an interesting parallel in the Navy. A sailor colleague once explained to me that the Navy term "aye-aye" is shorthand for, "I hear the order, I understand the order, and I will obey the order." In 1-16 above we see a female superior, Major Cardiff, and a male subordinate, Sergeant Mill. "Sergeant" here is a generic term used for anyone with the rank of, in increasing order, Staff Sergeant, Technical Sergeant,

Master Sergeant and Senior Master Sergeant – all of which are senior enlisted personnel (see chart at appendix II). The highest ranking enlisted member is a Chief Master Sergeant and is called “Chief”; for another military member to address a Chief as “Sergeant” is considered an egregious faux pas. But all Sergeants and Chiefs still rank well below Major Cardiff, who is an officer. “Ma’am” signals a power differential, of course, in which the one addressed with the honorific, “ma’am”, is the superior; in this case Major Cardiff is the superior.

Interestingly, the affirmative “yes sir/ma’am” occurred much more frequently than did the negative “no sir/ma’am”. Note in Table 2, for example, that Colonel Acuff received “yes ma’am” 73 times and “no ma’am” only 6 times while Colonel Bellam received “yes sir” 56 times and “no sir” only 4 times. As I discuss below, there are a number of reasons this seems to be the case: the speaker’s assumptions when confirming previously known information, the desire to please superiors, and the use of “yes ma’am/sir” as a backchannel device.

One reason “yes sir/ma’am” appear often is because they are a response to prior discourse. That is, if “yes ma’am/sir” is given as a response to a yes/no question, that question is often phrased so as to confirm information the speaker may already have. Such is the case in the following example in which the female superior, Colonel Acuff, is speaking with two administrative assistants and confirming the day of a particular series of meetings:

17. Col Acuff: K?  
18. Do um w- what dáy am I supposed to see them.  
19. Is it the Tuesday of that week?  
20. Major Sofa: **Yes Ma'am.** <sub>z</sub>  
21. Miss Lad: **Yeah.** <sub>z</sub>  
22. Major Sofa: Twenty-first.

Here the higher ranking female, Colonel Acuff, has a level of awareness of her schedule for the week in question, which increases the probability that the answer will be “yes”. This interaction also presents a stark example of the likely response pattern expected of a military rather than a civilian interactant. Major Sofa, another female military member, replies in line 20 with “Yes Ma’am”; the civilian interactant, Miss Lad, nearly simultaneously responds in line 21 with “yeah” – leaving off the honorific.

The wide presence of civilians as interactants in these data raises an interesting issue regarding the use of “ma’am” and “sir”. Some civilians use “ma’am” and “sir”, particularly when addressing those who far outrank them in the organizational structure which is referred to as the “chain of command”. Civilians are not, however, obliged to use “ma’am” and “sir” in the way military people are, though neither is their use of “ma’am” and “sir” considered improper. Given the context, the use of “ma’am/sir” must present something of a quandary for civilians. Its use is so peculiar to the military that civilians may feel that they are inappropriately signaling their membership in it if they use the honorifics. Or, on the contrary, in the context of their workplace as a community of practice within the Air Force they might feel it’s simply appropriate to show the same sorts of deference military people show. Still another possibility is that

by using it on occasion, but not as widely as military members, they might be signaling their close working relationship with the military without trying to claim full membership in it. In the following interaction, Colonel Acuff's female civilian administrative assistant is checking to see if the Colonel is prepared to go to a scheduled function, flagging her question with a sentence-initial "ma'am":

23. Marie: **Ma'am** are you about ready:-  
24. Are you going to go over about nine?  
25. Or not.  
26. Col Acuff: N: no: I mean-  
27. Marie: Oh OK [I didn't know  
28. Col Acuff: [They're not gonna be:  
29. When's the Chief gonna show up.  
30. Marie: That's a good question.  
31. I can conference on the cell phone.  
32. Col Acuff: I don't think there's- there's n- not an official pre-reception is there?  
33. Marie: **No.**  
34. This was just your prep time.  
35. That we had on your sche[dule.  
36. Col Acuff: [Right.

In this case, Marie opens the interaction (an environment I will examine more closely later in this chapter) with "ma'am". But given another environment in which a military member would likely answer "no ma'am" in line 33, she opts not to use "ma'am".

Elsewhere in these data Marie opens an interaction with a non-gender-specific option, Colonel Acuff's rank:

37. Marie: <from a distance> **Colonel?**

38. Marie: <from closer> I know you have to- you said you want to be: at the  
[commuter train] at five o'clock right?  
39. Col Acuff: Yea:h  
40. Marie: OK.

We see in these excerpts an example of the “boundaries” (Wenger 1998) of communities of practice, and the reality of an individual’s place in some communities, and not others, while still others overlap. In this case, the administrative assistant is part of the community of practice in that she engages in the mutual endeavor of doing her job in support of the Wing Commander, Colonel Acuff, and has done so for commanders who preceded Colonel Acuff, thus providing local continuity over time. But she has not been initiated into the Air Force through basic training, nor does she wear the symbols (in the form of uniforms and insignia) of the Air Force as a community of practice. Her use of the address form “ma’am” in some of its common environments, but not others, shows that she straddles the boundaries between communities of practice.

I have argued that one reason “Yes ma’am” and “yes sir” occur frequently is because they are a response to prior discourse. The superior may be confirming prior knowledge, which begs a “yes”, i.e., “yes ma’am”, response. Another reason “yes” occurred more frequently than “no” in the observed environments is because “yes ma’am/sir” are often responses to directives. If a directive has been issued by a superior to a subordinate, “no, ma’am/sir” is generally an inappropriate response as it is a breach of the hierarchical expectations. In the following excerpt we see a case in which the



signaled by the discourse marker “well”. In this particular case, as the two are discussing a third party’s failure to work the “action items” the Lieutenant, a young officer ranking well below the Lieutenant Colonel, does not lose face because of the negative response as would be the case if the “action items” were his direct responsibility and not that of the third party. Still, he seems to dislike giving Lt Col Drum the answer he knows Lt Col Drum doesn’t want to hear. This is apparent as he hedges again in line 52 in reply to Lt Col Drum’s question as to whether the labor is divided between the third party and the units of the interactants, (“Now do they have action items? Or just us”) to the point where the answer to the question, “Now do they have action items?” is “no”, but the Lieutenant hedges first with “um”, then with another hedge, “I think”, and pads the answer even further with a qualifier “majority”, then stutters the word “just” in line 52: “um, I think it’s majority just, just us.” Immediately, Lt Col Drum makes his disapproval of the situation known in line 53: “Ya see? That’s bogus.”

In one more example of a subordinate’s hesitation to answer in the negative we see, interestingly enough, that a ranking person does not need to direct that something be accomplished for subordinates to take it as an order to do so. Subordinates need only infer from the superiors’ illocutionary acts (the words) that perlocutionary acts (an action) are expected. Here the male Wing Commander, Colonel Bellam, is discussing the script for a formal dinner function, called a “Dining Out”. The meeting is being held in Colonel Bellam’s office with the dinner organizers. Major Light is a female

Major who, according to the tradition of the event will be serving as “Madam Vice”, a context specific term for “emcee” (a male would be called “Mr. Vice”). During the Dining-Out Colonel Bellam presides as the “President of the Mess” so the term “Vice” is short for “Vice President of the Mess”.

55. Col Bellam: OK then we go through the toasts  
56. And tell the Group Commanders they can embellish these if they want.  
57. For instance Colonel Field who is proposing a toast to the Chief of  
Staff of the United States,  
58. of the United States, Air Force,  
59. right?  
60. Maj Light: Mm-hmm  
61. Col Bellam: **You probably made that change already.**  
62. Maj Light: **Ah no Sir**  
63. Col Bellam: [<laughs>  
64. Col Match: [<laughs><sub>z</sub>  
65. Maj Light: **But it is now!**  
66. Col Bellam: OK.

Again, we see the participation marker (“Ah”) preceding “no Sir”, indicating a hesitation on the part of Major Light, perhaps because she perceives that “no” isn’t the answer Colonel Bellam expects here.

It is unclear in the interaction, but perhaps the group had discussed this change at an earlier meeting, hence Colonel Bellam’s comment at line 61 to Major Light, “You probably made that change already”. However, this comment may also have arisen from the fact that Colonel Bellam had inflected his comment regarding the toasts as a question in line 59 (“right?”) and Major Light responded with a back channel response

in line 60 (Mm-hmm) that implied that, as in line 56, the group commanders had been told they could embellish the toasts. Colonel Bellam's phrasing in line 61 ("You probably made that change already") is a non-face-threatening way of confirming that Major Light has made, or will make, the change. Clearly, though, Colonel Bellam doesn't have to issue a directive that the change be made since Major Light has inferred the direction and, though the change hadn't been made, she intones with emphasis in line 65, "But it is now!" Discussion in Chapter Four will reflect further upon this phenomenon whereby subordinates either jump to the task even if the task is only implied, or are eager to go beyond that which is asked of them.

In the excerpt above, Major Light utters a very common backchannel response: "Mmhmm" (line 60). We saw a similar case of the backchannel in the first excerpt we examined in this chapter in which Major Cardiff utters "mmhmm" in response to Sergeant Mill's "yes ma'am". A backchannel response indicates to the speaker that the listener is engaged in the interaction. The following example demonstrates the use of "yes ma'am" as a backchannel or minimal response. Colonel Acuff, the female Wing Commander, is counseling a male, Colonel Irish, who is subordinate in the chain of command, but who is of the same rank. They are discussing his prospects for a promotion from his position as a Group Commander to a position as a Wing Commander. This job promotion to Wing Commander occurs as a result of consideration by a "Command Selection Board" or "CSB" which reviews every

candidate's job records and performance appraisals. "DP" refers to the office of the Deputy for Personnel, roughly equivalent to a human resources division.

67. Col Acuff: Right.
68. And in fact uh that's kind of what they di:d.
69. They- .. your náme is not gonna come out on the CSB list,
70. but truly you- they didn't, consider you 'cause
71. DP has already figured out if this- if this Ops group's gonna turn  
over,
72. [next year or not.
73. Col Irish: [yes Ma'am.
74. Col Acuff: And if it- if it wás,
75. they'd know yóu've gotta go someplace,
76. and if it wásn't they know you need to stay.
77. And the bottom line is for people: like yourself who had júst  
taken command,
78. it would be the very unusual pérsón,
79. that would come out on that li:st.
80. Whether they're competitive or not,
81. the fact is they're too young.
82. Col Irish Yes Ma'am it's too early. <sub>z</sub>
83. Col Acuff: Exactly. <sub>z</sub>
84. Col Irish: Yes Ma'am. <sub>z</sub>
85. Col Acuff: And so .. that's,
86. That's why: you're not on the list.
87. Hów your record would have compared we don't actually  
kno:w.
88. Because .. timing-wise you just <sub>z</sub> /?/ right.
89. Col Irish: Wasn't /?/
90. Col Acuff: U:m but that- when you compéte and then you see your name  
not on it,
91. you have the natural reaction.
92. But- so that will be why your name won't be on the list when it  
comes  
out.
93. Col Irish: Yes Ma'am.

Note that in this short exchange, Colonel Irish replies with “yes ma’am” in lines 72, 83, 84, and 93. In none of those cases is the response an answer to a yes/no question or acknowledgment of a request. With each occurrence of “yes, ma’am” Col Irish is “channeling back” to Colonel Acuff that he’s hearing the information and understanding it. His involvement is further indicated by his slightly re-worded repetition in 82, in which he recounts Colonel Acuff’s “they’re too young” in line 81 with “it’s too early” in line 82.

Colonel Irish incorporates “yes, ma’am” as a relatively frequent backchannel, or minimal response, throughout his interactions with Colonel Acuff. The short exchange above comes from a much longer interaction, bounded by Colonel Irish’s visit to Colonel Acuff’s office. In the 28-minute interaction, and nearly 1000 lines of transcript, Colonel Irish uses “ma’am” 48 times – one occurrence was a “no ma’am” in response to a question, one occurrence was in the first part of a response pair (“Thank you, ma’am”), 5 occurrences were a “yes, ma’am” in response to a yes/no question, and 41 occurrences appeared to be a “yes, ma’am” given as back channel affirming that he is following along in the conversation.

Of the interactants in the entirety of these data, Colonel Irish used, by far, the most backchannel “yes ma’am/sir” responses of anyone. Colonel Irish proffered 61 of 73 instances of “yes, ma’am” addressed to Colonel Acuff throughout her interactions. He is a good case in point that the use of “ma’am” and “sir” is largely a matter of personal style. The use of “ma’am” and “sir” is expected in the military environment,

and when it occurs it is generally in predictable environments. But its use is not rule bound. "Ma'am" and "sir" do not occur, for example, with absolutely every utterance of the affirmative "yes". Colonel Irish's upbringing and personal background quite probably played a large part in his use of "ma'am". In a follow-up interview, Colonel Acuff confirmed that Colonel Irish was from the American south, and that in her interactions with Colonel Irish's family, his father and his sons all say "yes, ma'am" with great frequency. Colonel Irish's use of "ma'am" is consistent with Johnstone's (1991) observations regarding the frequent use of "ma'am" by southern male speakers.

The fact that Colonel Irish issued 61 of the 73 instances of "ma'am" addressed to Colonel Acuff is significant in that it implies that few people other than Colonel Irish paid deference to Colonel Acuff with "ma'am". One other interactant, Lieutenant Colonel Smith, accounts for 8 of the 12 remaining instances of "ma'am". Several possibilities should be considered at this point. One is that this is an indication that female superordinates receive fewer "ma'ams" than male superordinates. Another possibility is that the number of "ma'ams" Colonel Acuff received has to do with the nature of her interactions on that particular duty day.

In Colonel Acuff's recordings, other than computer work her day was largely comprised of 5 lengthy meetings: one in which she primarily interacted with the civilian Ms. Lad, one with Colonel Irish alone, one in which Colonel Irish participated via teleconference, a meeting with Lieutenant Colonel Smith, and a lunch with the civilian Mr. Richards (an excerpt of which will be analyzed in Chapter Three). Notable,

however, are the meetings with the civilians: Ms. Lad and Mr. Richards. During those meetings, neither referred to Colonel Acuff as "ma'am" at any point. The only "ma'ams" issued to Colonel Acuff by a civilian were two instances uttered by her administrative assistant, Marie. In her meeting with Mr. Richards the fact that he did not use "ma'am" is understandable since he is not only a civilian, but neither does he work for the Air Force in any capacity. He is a local businessman. Ms. Lad, however, is a civilian working for the Air Force so one might expect that she'd use "ma'am" if only once or twice. Another point to consider is that Colonel Bellam came into contact with a somewhat wider array of people during the course of his duty day, and was referred to as "sir" by civilians on 9 occasions. No civilians referred to Major Cardiff as "ma'am, though she seemed to come into contact with very few civilians during her duty day. Her counterpart, Lieutenant Colonel Drum, received "sir" from civilians on 5 occasions. However, he had two meetings with groups of civilians.

What is implied in those numbers is that it is possible that civilians have greater deference for high ranking male officers than for high ranking female officers. This would be consistent with the common social construct, addressed in Chapter One, of male as military leader. Again, though lower deference for female officers by civilians is implied, more research is needed to ground such a finding.

Also interesting to consider in the examples above is that "yes ma'am/sir" is often the response to an indirect request. This runs contrary, of course, to the stereotyped notion that military personnel bark out directive style orders. In lines 6 and

7 above Major Cardiff's request to "CC Mr. Sutton and Carol Jones", for example, is softened with the modal "can". Clearly, though, when issued from a superior even an indirect request is taken as an order. This circumstance is illustrated in Tannen (1994) in the example of a man who, during his stint in the Navy, learned from a superior that indirectness is powerful when used by a military superior and that it is the "rigidity of the military hierarchy that makes the statement of a problem sufficient to trigger corrective action on the part of subordinates" (87). In the following example, typical of many indirect requests throughout these data, Colonel Bellam uses a modal ("can") in the request for information he issues to his assistant, Capt Wall:

94. Col Bellam: **Can you- Perry can you give a call** to the mission support group to see if  
 95. we had any .. kind of uh .. effect or damages from the high winds  
 96. and .. storm last night?  
 97. And **check to sight-** see if that weather warning has expired  
 98. Capt Wall: /?/  
 99. Col Bellam: You know that high winds are expected here today don't you.  
                   [1:20 of keyboard tapping and other movement sounds]  
                   [<coughs>]  
                   [<laughs>]  
                   [1:00 of tapping]  
 100. Capt Wall: **Yes sir** we're under a wind advisory for the rest of the day.  
 101. They said later in the day they'll diminish,  
 102. Twenty-five to thirty knots OK.

In line 94, the male Colonel Bellam, like the female Major Cardiff in the earlier excerpt, uses the modal and question intonation in his request for information, asking, "Can you give a call" to check on the wind advisory, thus making the request less direct than the pointed alternative: "call the support group." Feasibly, one could respond "no, I'm too

busy to call right now”, but, of course, such a response is inappropriate given the power dynamic at work. But, on the other hand, because of the power dynamic at work in the military environment, direct requests are not face threatening acts, as might be the case in other workplace settings. Note that the indirect request in line 94 (“can you give a call”) is followed by a direct request to, “Check to see if that weather warning has expired” in line 97. This passage illustrates the facility with which military subordinates and superiors navigate interactions in an environment with consistent interactional norms based upon the hierarchy. This passage also illustrates that considerations of direct and indirect requests are worth a brief discussion, which I will present here.

This question of indirect vs. direct requests is often raised as an indicator of feminine or masculine interaction, respectively (Lakoff 1975, Brown and Levinson 1987, Scollon and Scollon 1995). Tannen (1994) has noted that indirectness cannot be generalized as either masculine or feminine. The generalization arises from the presumption that indirectness indicates a position of powerlessness and that women’s lower social position makes them inherently powerless, therefore more likely to be indirect (Lakoff 1975). The evidence in these data are consistent with Tannen’s conclusion that one cannot categorize directness as powerful (masculine) and indirectness as powerless (feminine). The basis for Tannen’s observation is the fact that persons who have authority to use indirect requests, and have them acted upon as though they were clear directives, are powerful, not powerless, persons. As the analysis

in this chapter shows, it is the powerful interactant who receives a “yes ma’am/sir” response to an indirect request. Brown and Levinson (1987) point out that indirect speech acts are not powerless because they are so common in English as to be conventionalized and idiomatic requests for action, rather than requests for information.

In their interdiscursive view of culture Scollon and Scollon (1995) point out that in some cases women use indirect approaches where men would use direct approaches, and in other cases women expect a direct statement where men are expressing themselves indirectly, as dictated by the applicable interpretive framework. The interpretive framework that arises from the hierarchy within the military allows for different rules based on the power structure rather than masculinity or femininity. That is, whether male or female, one’s rank and position communicates that even indirect requests are taken as orders. This dynamic also indicates that subordinates must carefully phrase requests to superiors, as the use of indirect requests may indicate an insubordinate presumption of authority.

If it were true that women are inclined to use more indirect approaches, then the military gives them a comfortable environment in which to use an indirect approach while having their directives followed by virtue of their powerful place in a hierarchical structure. In discussing such strategies with an American female naval officer, she indicated to me that if she must use a direct order, she considers herself as having failed in all other communicative options open to her. The relevance of the interpretive framework to the strategy of directness is a concept consistent with that put forward by

Brown and Levinson (1986) that inasmuch as factors of power account for the differences between men's and women's speech, the differences are "epiphenomenal – neither the social underpinnings (the [power] differential) nor the linguistic manifestations are specific to gender" (31). Rather, it is again the context or framework of the interaction which makes directness or indirectness salient.

In the American military, as in other organizations with a hierarchical structure, the power of the higher ranking person, whether male or female, allows indirectness to be taken directly. The use of "yes ma'am/sir" in reply to an indirect request semantically marks the interactant's interpretation that the request is understood and signals to the superior that it will be carried out. So, ironically, if directness is indeed a masculine trait, it is the highly masculine environment of the military which teaches men how to use indirectness effectively. And, if indirectness is a feminine trait, then women are naturally equipped for at least one communicative element in the military environment. Thus, when direct orders are given by a superior to subordinates in the military work environment, their appropriateness is taken as the norm with no loss of face. In the business environment the issuance of a direct order may be considered rude, especially between individuals who rank closely in the organizational hierarchy. Because of the military's clear hierarchy, however, military members understand that both indirect and direct orders are norms of the military's institutional interpretive framework. In both cases, it is power that is at issue, not necessarily gender.

In this section I examined the environments for “yes ma’am/sir” and “no ma’am/sir”. Specifically, I found that “yes ma’am/sir” are much more prevalent than “no ma’am/sir” and probably for the following reasons: 1) a yes/no question is often based upon prior discourse and phrased so as to confirm known or previously known information; 2) “yes ma’am/sir” is often uttered by a subordinate in response to a superior’s directive and “no ma’am/sir” would be an inappropriate response to a superior; and 3) “yes ma’am/sir” often functions as a backchannel device indicating understanding as the superior speaks. Though it appears in these data that a male senior officer may receive “yes sir” more often than a female senior officer receives “yes ma’am”, from both military members and civilians, closer analysis of the volume of the recordings and context of the interactions shows that more decisive research is needed to determine such a finding.

#### Sentence-initial Environments

While an answer in the affirmative is a common environment for “ma’am” or “sir”, an affirmative answer doesn’t always mean the honorific will be present. Some subordinates use them liberally as did Colonel Irish in the earlier example. Others use the address forms as honorific more sparingly. Generally, an honorific is used, as a minimum, within the first few utterances at the opening of an interaction, often in a greeting -- what Duranti (1997) has termed a near-boundary occurrence – and, later, near what the interactants take to be the closing of an interaction. This section will

examine the use of “ma’am” and “sir” in several sentence-initial positions. The relevant portions of Table 2 are reproduced below.

| Pseudonym<br>(Interaction<br>Time) | Ma’am<br>Sent.<br>Initial | Sir<br>Sent.<br>Initial |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
|                                    |                           |                         |
| <b>Acuff</b><br>(2:21:39)          | 5                         | n/a                     |
| <b>Bellam</b><br>(2:10:04)         | n/a                       | 16                      |
| <b>Cardiff</b><br>(2:08:05)        | 6                         | n/a                     |
| <b>Drum</b><br>(5:22:33)           | n/a                       | 18                      |
| <b>Eichendorf</b><br>(5:57:07)     | 0                         | n/a                     |
| <b>Fromm</b><br>(1:46:56)          | n/a                       | 1                       |

Table 3 - Sentence-initial “Ma’am” and “Sir”

At first the tabulation of sentence-initial environments seemed to indicate a great disparity between the total number of times the female primary informants were addressed with “ma’am” (11) in sentence-initial position and the number of times male primary informants were addressed with “sir” (35) in sentence-initial positions in these data. However, closer consideration of the ways in which “ma’am” and “sir” are used at or near the beginning of an utterance reveals that the disparity in numbers may not be relevant. In order to come to this conclusion, I further delineated sentence-initial “ma’am” and “sir” as either; 1) the first word of an utterance and the opening of an interaction; 2) the first word of an utterance in an ongoing interaction; 3) as an element

of a greeting to a superior; or 4) as an element of a subordinate's reply to a superior's greeting.

Shortly I will address "ma'am" and "sir" as tags to a customary adjacency pair (e.g. "Good Morning, sir" together with its reply "Good Morning"). Here, though, I will address the three occasions in these data in which "ma'am" and "sir" occurred in exclamatory form performing the speech act of a greeting; or, as Goffman (1971) has labeled it, an "access ritual". In the following example as several people enter Colonel Bellam's office for a meeting, he notes he didn't expect to see one of them – a male, Colonel Smith, who is subordinate to Colonel Bellam in the chain of command, but of the same rank. As he enters, Colonel Smith replies with the exclamation "Sir!":

103. Col Bellam: Come on in folks!  
104. I didn't expect to see you Colonel!  
105. Col Smith : **Sir!**  
106. [/?/  
107. Col Bellam: [Thought you were out of pocket!  
108. Col Smith: I'm present, and accounted for!

Here, "sir" as exclamation (Sir!) fulfills the speech act of a greeting, albeit a contextualized V-form of the more T-like "Hello!", an even a less formal "Hey!", or even a familiar first name greeting "Bob!" This analysis is consistent with Goffman's observation that, "Presumably 'Hi' would not be appropriate coming from a subordinate to a very sacred official, even though the two parties enjoyed an environment in which contact between them was, and was known to be, frequent" (1971: 83). The formality

of the address form “sir” establishes a power dynamic context-specific to the gathering of these meeting participants in Colonel Bellam’s office.

The seeming informality of the simple syntax “Sir!” indicates a social solidarity and social proximity which is closer than would be indicated by a more formal greeting. In this one word speech act we see a concise example of the polysemy of power and solidarity outlined in Chapter One. In this interaction, Colonel Bellam opened with the formulaic but inclusive phrase, “come on in folks” and follows with the more formal salutation to the Colonel’s rank, saying, “I didn’t expect to see *yóu* Colonel!” It is interesting to note that throughout these data Colonel Bellam sometimes uses first name, and sometimes uses rank. Choosing to address someone by rank rather than first name is, of course, an interactional move. When others are present, as they are in this example, using rank could simply be a show of respect for the rank that person has earned, or it could indicate social distance for the sake of professionalism.

When the visiting colonel answers “Sir!” he is signaling his deference to Colonel Bellam’s superior position, but seems to indicate that the distance between them is not so great as to warrant a more formal form, such as “Good morning, sir”. As Bonvillain states, “Anglo-American greetings are used to create impressions, whether real or false, of social equality and camaraderie” (104). It is clear that Colonel Bellam is in a hierarchically superior position to the entering colonel and therefore warrants the honorific “sir”, but it is also clear that Colonel Smith’s greeting signals a level of solidarity with him as well.

Elsewhere in these data, the female Major Cardiff receives a similar greeting from a senior enlisted member with whom she works quite closely. They're discussing the disposition of a vehicle that had been in essence "issued" to the Security Police personnel, but had been damaged in an accident. "MEL" references the "Minimum Equipment Listing" which is considered, in this case, to be the minimum number of vehicles the security forces need to do their job. UDI references a "U-Drive It" vehicle, which basically comes from a motor pool ("Fleet" in the transcript) of spare vehicles kept in reserve by the transportation personnel.

109. Sgt Mill: [Ma'am!  
110. Maj Cardiff: [Sergeant Mill  
111. The, uh, vehicle accident... does that put security forces below  
their MEL?  
112. Sgt Mill: I need to check.  
113. I doubt it .  
114. They're gonna get a UDI off of us anyways.  
115. I gotta get with Fleet and find out

In their interactions throughout these data, Major Cardiff and Sergeant Mill reveal a close working relationship, marked both by numerous work interactions and personal exchanges regarding, for example, off-duty activities. Whereas Colonel Irish in previous excerpts uses "ma'am" profusely, this sergeant uses it more sparingly. One might be inclined to deduce that he has a lack of regard for the Major because he uses fewer honorifics in his interactions with the Major. However, just as with Colonel Irish's frequent use of "ma'am", the sergeant's less frequent use could just as easily be a

stylistic matter. Quantitative analysis for the purpose of comparing cross-sex and same-sex dyadic styles of address form usage is possible, but would require more audio data of, for example, Colonel Irish speaking to a male superior and the sergeant speaking to a male major.

In both the preceding examples, males used exclamatory greetings. In the following excerpt, a female officer visits a superordinate officer in his office, using the same exclamatory address form. Upon arriving at his office, the opening exchange is:

116. Maj Eichendorf: **Sir!**

117. Lt Col Moon: Hey come on in.

The exclamatory opening exchange is consistent with those discussed above in that the address form indicates both Lieutenant Colonel Moon's superior rank and position, and the fact that the relationship is marked by solidarity despite the hierarchical difference. This solidarity is revealed both in Lieutenant Colonel Moon's informal response, "Hey come on in", and in the interaction which ensues after the greeting. This greeting opens a counseling session in which Major Eichendorf is mentored by Lieutenant Colonel Moon regarding Major Eichendorf's career potential and progression. Her use of the exclamatory "Sir!" in 116 indicates usage consistent with that of the two males above, but it appears relevant more to the power dynamics of the institution than gender. However, three examples are too few from which to generalize one way or another.

The exclamatory version of the address forms “ma’am” and “sir” as greetings is one environment in which the honorific is used to open an interaction. It is also used, of course, in more commonly expected adjacency pairs of greeting and salutation. Such greetings took a variety of forms with various levels of formality and informality. Examples of greetings initiated by subordinates include “Good morning ma’am,” “Hello ma’am,” “How you doing ma’am,” “Morning sir,” “Hey sir,” and “Hey Sir how you doing?”. Male superiors initiated ten greetings and responded to seven greetings that were initiated by subordinates. Female superiors initiated three greetings and responded to two which were initiated by subordinates.

The following excerpt is an example of a greeting initiated by a superior. Here, Lieutenant Colonel Drum walks into “Doug’s” work area and initiates the greeting and thus, as the superior, receives “sir” in the response. It’s not clear in the recording or transcript to what he is referring when he says, “Did you find the names for, the rest of these /?/”:

118. Lt Col Drum: **What’s up Doug?**

119. Sgt Douglas: **Oh not much Sir.**

120. Lt Col Drum: Did you find the names for, the rest of these [/?/

121. Sgt Douglas: [I:’m gettin em from the  
Chief

122. Lt Col Drum: OK<sub>z</sub>

123. Sgt Douglas: He’s been gone<sub>z</sub> the last couple days.

124. Lt Col Drum: OK.

In the following interaction, Lieutenant Colonel Drum, still moving about, walks into an area where several subordinates are present. Here we see two different subordinates initiating greetings, therefore “sir” appears in the greeting itself:

125. Sgt McAfee: **Morning Sir!**

126. Lt Col Drum: **Hey!**

0:01

127. Shirt: **Sir** good mor[n]ing.

128. Lt Col Drum: [Shirt how are you doing?

129. Shirt: I’m doing very good.

What I intend to illustrate with the preceding examples is that because of the informants’ movements, they will greet and be greeted based on the actions during the course of their day. This, together with the shorter total recording time between Colonel Acuff and Major Cardiff, and their counterparts Colonel Bellam and Lieutenant Colonel Drum, helps to account for the seeming disparity between the smaller number of “ma’ams” than “sirs” used in sentence-initial environments or near the beginning of interactions as greetings. Thus, in accounting for differences between the higher number of “sirs” than “ma’ams” in sentence-initial environments in general, I essentially set aside sentence-initial uses of “ma’am” and “sir” which act as greetings, and uses of “ma’am” and “sir” in greeting adjacency pairs.

Excluding greetings, now left for consideration in sentence-initial environments are non-greeting sentence-initial “ma’ams” and “sirs” intended for opening an interaction, e.g., “**Ma’am**, Lieutenant Guzman is sending you an e-mail” and “**Sir**

Lieutenant Jones is here when you're ready". Such openers often arise from the superior's staff or close associates, with whom the superior is in contact regularly during the course of the day. In comparing the number of non-greeting sentence-initial "ma'ams" and "sirs" offered to the female and male Wing Commander, five and eleven respectively, the number seems lopsided in favor of the male Wing Commander. However, as I discuss will now discuss in more detail, the male Wing Commander's tally includes six non-greeting sentence-initial "sirs" offered during a staff meeting.

During a staff meeting, various commanders and administrators gather in a meeting with the Wing Commander and, in sequence, report their units' activities. Customarily, the new speaker in the sequence starts with "sir" (or "ma'am" as applicable). For example, in Colonel Bellam's staff meeting, when it came time for the commander in charge of personnel issues to speak, she starts by reporting the total number of people under Colonel Bellam's command who are deployed in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The term "AEF Nine", where AEF is the acronym for Air Expeditionary Force, refers to a category of people assigned to the group "AEF Nine" which is in a cycle of deployment. She states, "**Sir** we have a hundred-and-four members deployed. We're actually down one. Our final.. member [from AEF Nine] has returned". Had Colonel Acuff also held a staff meeting during the course of her recorded duty day, the same series of sentence-initial non-greeting "ma'ams" would likely have been found. Eliminating the staff meeting sentence-initial "sirs", the

number of opening “ma’ams” and “sirs” offered the male and female Wing Commander is equal: five and five.

Sentence-initial “ma’ams” and “sirs” may also occur at the opening of sentences but during ongoing interaction. In the following interaction, for example, Colonel Bellam has been discussing with a military protocol officer, Lieutenant Jones, his role during a military funeral ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery:

130. Col Bellam: All right u:m do you know anything about the rest of the family that’s going to be there?  
131. I imagine obviously the sister will be the:re.  
132. Lt Jones: **Sir** I’m not sure yet  
133. I’ve put a call into Father McGi:ll and he’s kind of hard to track down sometimes  
134. So, once I talk- I’m hoping he’ll know so:me but I th- I uh don’t know

Again, use of sentence-initial “sir” is not required in line 132, “Sir I’m not sure yet”, since there are no rules for its use, but since there are no rules, neither is it incorrect here. That is, especially in lengthy interactions the junior interactant generally just interjects the honorific periodically. In my corpus, this variety of sentence-initial “ma’am” or “sir” – in which it occurs sentence-initially at some point in an ongoing interaction -- does not vary greatly between males and females. The female Wing Commander received no such sentence-initial “ma’ams”, the male Wing Commander received three such “sirs”; the male Squadron Commander also received three such sentence-initial “sirs”, whereas the female Squadron Commander received two such

“ma’ams”. So, while these data do not rule out the possibility that female officers receive fewer sentence-initial “ma’ams”, they don’t confirm a gender disparity either.

In sum, in the findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis of sentence- initial “ma’am” and “sir” thus far there were no significant differences between the numbers of the two which were offered. Still, we might consider the pragmatic function of sentence-initial honorifics, especially when interactants are participating within the framework of any sort of meeting, whether an office meeting or a staff meeting in a conference room. Again, we can consider this a point of deference to authority. The deference is not just to the authority of the higher ranking person, but to the fact that the speaker will take the floor. More specifically, the speaker will take the floor which, by default, belongs to the superior, because she or he is ultimately the person whom everyone in a staff meeting or in a subordinate office works for.

This idea that the interactant wants to take not just the floor, but the superior’s floor, is borne out by several considerations. First is the fact that the exchanges in which the sentence-initial “ma’am” or “sir” take place are, by virtue of my data collection method, either in the superior’s office or work location, or within the framework of meetings convened by the superior. Edelsky (1993) gives lengthy consideration to the notion of turns and floor, deducing that “floor” is a term of the language of meetings rather than conversations, and that it involves a space or chamber occupied by participants in which all have a right to be heard. A superior’s office or conference room, then, is not just a location for a floor, but a marker of the superior’s

power in the hierarchy and a semiotic or contextualization cue to reinforce the hierarchical elements of the exchange. Also consistent with the notion that this is the superior's floor is Edelsky's additional observation that it is possible to have the floor even though one is not talking, as when one must reference some written material during a turn while others wait quietly. That is the case during Colonel Bellam's staff meeting during which Powerpoint Slides are projected, and only upon cue from Colonel Bellam are the slides advanced. Operating from the assumption that a turn at speaking means taking a moment from the superior's ownership of the floor, interactants open with the honorific "ma'am" or "sir" in order to show deference to the superior. One such case is in the example above in which the personnel officer reports, "**Sir** we have a hundred-and-four members deployed. We're actually down one. Our final.. member [from AEF Nine] has returned". At that point, the Powerpoint slides had apparently advanced to the information which it was her duty to report, so she takes the floor to make her report by giving the deferent, "Sir".

In this section I have analyzed a variety of sentence-initial environments and found that many considerations, including the tasks and movement in a superior's duty day, help account for the disparities between male informants and female informants in the number of sentence-initial "ma'ams" and "sirs". I will move on now to analysis of sentence-final environments, in which a gender difference seems to emerge.

### Sentence-Final Environments

| Pseudonym<br>(Rec. Time)       | Ma'am<br>Sent.<br>Final | Sir<br>Sent.<br>Final |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
|                                |                         |                       |
| <b>Acuff</b><br>(2:21:39)      | 3                       | n/a                   |
| <b>Bellam</b><br>(2:10:04)     | n/a                     | 32                    |
| <b>Cardiff</b><br>(2:08:05)    | 10                      | n/a                   |
| <b>Drum</b><br>(5:22:33)       | n/a                     | 20                    |
| <b>Eichendorf</b><br>(5:57:07) | 0                       | n/a                   |
| <b>Fromm</b><br>(1:46:56)      | n/a                     | 0                     |

Table 4. Sentence Final “Ma’am” and “Sir”

Like the comparison between the lopsided use of “ma’am” and “sir” in sentence-initial environments, particularly in the tabulations of Colonels Acuff and Bellam, we see in the table above (which reproduces the results from Table 2 regarding sentence final “ma’am” and “sir”) the thirty-two sentence-final “sirs” far outnumber the three sentence-final “ma’ams”. So, as with the analysis of the sentence-initial honorifics, further breakdown of some sort is necessary.

In reviewing the sentence-final usage of “ma’am” and “sir” in Colonel Acuff’s and Colonel Bellam’s data, one thing that became obvious was that sentence-final “sir” was often proffered with the rising intonation of a question. For example, the following excerpts come from the meeting regarding the “Dining-Out” referenced earlier in this



141. Chief: Who do you have on the demo team **Sir**?  
 142. Col Bellam: I don't know.  
 143. I need to find out who from the Ops group is coming.  
 144. Might .. might I suggest,  
 145. remember last year when we got ..  
 0:02  
 146. Do a team.  
 147. Of two.

In this example, Chief formulates a fairly straightforward “wh”-question and tags it with “sir” and rising intonation: “Who do you have on the demo team Sir?”

By contrast, in Colonel Acuff's transcripts there were no comparable instances of interrogatives accompanied by sentence-final “ma'am” with rising intonation. This implied that perhaps question-intoned utterances addressed to Colonel Acuff appeared together with sentence-initial “ma'am”, as that is a perfectly viable option to using sentence-final “ma'am” to tag a question. Perhaps subordinates tended to open questions to female officers with “ma'am” and tag questions to male officers with “sir”. I then examined my corpus for all instances of sentence-initial “ma'am” and “sir” including stand-alone instances (“Ma'am?” and “Sir?”), and sentence-final “ma'am” and “sir”, in order to isolate those which are both phrased as questions and question intoned. I found that among all female officers -- Colonel Acuff, Major Cardiff and Major Eichendorf -- Colonel Acuff alone received one rising intonation question tagged with “ma'am” and one rising intonation “Ma'am?”. Among all male officers -- Colonel

Bellam, Major Drum and Major Fromm – there were fourteen instances of rising intonation questions tagged with “sir” and six instances of rising intonation “Sir?”

Do these numbers imply, then, that no one asks questions of the female officers, and people need to ask lots of questions of the male officers? I examined Colonel Acuff’s and Colonel Bellam’s transcripts in order to determine how many rising-intonation questions they were asked, by subordinate military personnel, which were marked **neither** sentence-initially **nor** sentence-finally by “ma’am” or “sir”. I found sixteen rising-intonation questions posed to Colonel Acuff by military members which weren’t marked with “ma’am”. I found twelve rising intonation questions posed to Colonel Bellam by military members which weren’t marked with “sir”; however, in one case “Sir” was uttered in the sentence immediately preceding the question and in six cases, questions were asked by Colonel Bellam’s executive officer who is in frequent one-on-one contact with the Colonel throughout the course of his day and therefore isn’t necessarily expected to use “sir” to mark every interaction. For purposes of comparison, one of the rising intonation questions posed to Colonel Acuff and unaccompanied by “ma’am” was uttered by her executive officer.

Another issue to consider for the purpose of analysis would be the intent or function of the questions asked. In physician/patient relationships, for example, a patient asking a question can be claiming power by seeking information which the physician had not volunteered. Of the nine rising intonation questions asked of Colonel Bellam, three were questions asked jokingly. In this case, the sentence-final tag “sir”

may be marking that the sarcasm was being uttered respectfully – in other words, that the subordinates were laughing with their superior. This ability to joke with one another in the workplace indicates closeness and camaraderie. One consideration in comparing this manner of joking from Colonel Bellam's subordinates to the lack thereof in Colonel Acuff's data may be the fact that Colonel Acuff had only been in her command for about three months. So, her subordinates may still have been trying to determine whether she was the kind of person who enjoyed a working environment which included joking. Or, having only been in command for three months, perhaps Colonel Acuff's subordinates had not yet built a kinship with her that made them feel free to do so.

Of the remaining questions asked of Colonel Bellam and tagged with "sir", all were questions asked to facilitate his schedule or activities, or to confirm or clarify information he had raised. For example, Colonel Bellam asked his administrative assistant to place a phone call to one of his superiors. Apparently in response to a question asked by the administrative assistant at the other end of the phone call, Colonel Bellam's assistant asked, "Subject sir?" As another example, Colonel Bellam had invited his staff members to attend an award ceremony in which he was to be an honoree. One member of the staff asked, for clarification, "What day is that sir?" No questions asked of Colonel Bellam seemed to be claiming power either in their intonation or prosody, or in that they raised new topics of conversation.

Based on my analysis, whereas the lopsided use of sentence-initial “ma’am” and “sir” can be accounted for and dismissed as relatively unremarkable, the lopsidedness of the occurrences of “ma’am” and “sir” in the sentence-final position is more difficult to dismiss. Analysis of the sentence-final environment brings to light both the fact that sentence-final “sir” is used much more often than sentence-final “ma’am”, and the fact that the male colonel received many more rising intonation questions tagged with “sir”.

Given “ma’am” and “sir” as a point where language, gender and the military intersect, it is the lack of sentence-final “ma’am”, particularly as a tag to interrogatives which are marked by rising intonation, that is most differentiated in these data. This raises the issue of the role of questions in deference and perhaps power. Pragmatically, interrogatives are simply requests for information. And, where researchers have been interested in, for example, declarative sentences which end in rising intonation, little has been said about interactional roles of questions in a hierarchical environment. In her work examining audiotaped meetings in a university setting, Edelsky (1993:220) notes that in her study, as in others, “women took the role of questioners”; but, she further points out that being the questioner isn’t particularly, “an indicator of either control or equality”. My findings imply, however, that there may be issues of power or control in both the intent of the questions asked, and who the questions are asked of. In the context of these data, in which subordinates ask questions of superiors, implicit in the question asked by the subordinate is the fact that the subordinate will, and desires to, carry out the wishes of the superior, thus deferring to the superior’s authority. The

question is, then, whether the fact that more such questions are asked of male commanders and flagged with the respectful “sir” implies that, in general, more deference is paid to the male officer than the female. I believe more focused research is required to provide a decisive answer to this question given that the total number of instances in these data may not be enough to generalize. However, these data do raise a question as to whether the use of sentence-final “sir” as a tag to rising-intoned interrogatives indicates a greater deference to the male officer than the female.

### In Constructed Dialogue

I’d like to give mention to two interesting occurrences of “sir” which were found in stretches of talk during which speakers either recount their own interactions for another audience, or create a hypothetical interaction with another participant. Tannen calls such utterances “constructed dialogue” (Tannen 1989). That is to say that even if actual speech were re-enacted verbatim, accurate even in pauses and inflection, the fact that such speech is being repeated in a new context, with new listeners, gives it a meaning which is layered upon the meaning originally conveyed in interaction. By offering listeners an opportunity to enter a mini-drama, as it were, through the playing of parts, a speaker heightens the level of involvement by offering not just a description, but a participatory framework. This makes the construction of the dialogue, Tannen clarifies, an emotive experience, not simply a matter of passing on information.

In this section I will examine the three stretches of talk in these data in which officers construct a dialogue that reports interactions with subordinates. Particular to these instances of constructed dialogue is the fact that in the “story world” of the constructed dialogue the superiors (the tellers) voice the manner in which they are addressed by subordinates. Though a sample size of three is much too small to generalize from, these examples may imply that men are more comfortable than are women in referring back to themselves by using the honorific. If that assertion is true it could support the theory that “ma’am” does not carry prestige equal to “sir”, or it could imply that women consciously or subconsciously refer to themselves using non-gendered terms so as to diminish their femaleness in the masculine environment.

The following excerpt is essentially a side-conversation which occurs during the lengthy meeting regarding the “Dining-Out” referenced at other points in this chapter. One of the participants in the event, who is not present in the meeting but who had been referred to earlier in the conversation, is a student at the First Term Airman Course, or FTAC, on the base. The course is meant to help young enlisted members who are in their first Air Force assignment adjust to their new job and their first duty location. Colonel Bellam had visited FTAC the day before the “Dining-Out” meeting took place and had spoken with the students in the course. The Chief had also, at some earlier point, visited FTAC to speak to the students. On Colonel Bellam’s visit, he asked the airmen (a generic term referring to male and female members of the Air Force) about the Chief’s talk – the same Chief he’s talking to below:

148. Col Bellam: Yeah I asked 'em, gee Chief yeah I asked you-  
 149. I asked them yesterday what they remembered from the Chief's talk,  
 150. [you know  
 151. Maj Light: [<slight laughter><sub>z</sub>  
 152. Chief: What they remembered<sub>z</sub>  
 153. Col Bellam: What was the Chief's theme?  
 154. Chief: Uh-huh.  
 155. They said that he had no [theme.  
 156. Col Bellam: [And I got kind of a blank stare [and  
 157. all: [ <laugh>  
 158. Col Bellam: Then somebody spoke up and he said=  
 159. =he said "Well s- Sir he was trying to emphasize that ..u:m=  
 160. =that we need to internalize the lessons we learned in basic training  
 161. I said "Aa:h that's, that sounds<sub>z</sub> sounds like a good  
 theme  
 162. Maj Light: Pretty good! <sub>z</sub>  
 163. Col Match: <laughs>

Notice that Colonel Bellam, in re-creating the speech of the young airman in line 159, "he said, 'Well s-Sir he was trying to emphasize that..u:m'", repeats the address form "Sir". So, in his story Colonel Bellam gives voice to the young enlisted member and in doing so Colonel Bellam refers to himself as "sir".

A similar instance occurs in the following excerpt. Here, Lieutenant Colonel Drum has met up with a public affairs representative, Christine. They're walking toward a vehicle in which they'll be driving around the base in order to "dry run" the route they'll take to give a Distinguished Visitor (DV) a tour of the base. The vehicle is a new truck which was just "issued" to Lieutenant Colonel Drum's unit. It's a large pick-up truck which also apparently seats at least four people (which is how many

eventually appear in the interactions in the truck). In this excerpt Lieutenant Colonel Drum re-creates the speech of his subordinates, conveying that the people who work for him would have been hesitant to take this large, brand new vehicle and get it dirty. Lieutenant Colonel Drum had earlier referred to the new vehicle in front of Christine while they were in an office setting, so his first line, "You see why the guys in the shop didn't want it?" references prior discourse:

164. Lt Col Drum: You see why the guys in the shop didn't want it?  
165. Christine: Yeah.  
166. Lt Col Drum: <laughing> They're like "Sir?"  
169. We get mud in that thing you're gonna be all over us."

Again, in constructing the dialogue of the "guys in the shop", Lieutenant Colonel Drum is essentially referring to himself in repeating the address form "sir". The term "like" in line 166 conveys the fact that Lieutenant Colonel Drum is re-creating, paraphrasing, or even inventing the dialogue.

In the two excerpts above, as Tannen (1989) notes, constructing dialogue is not a matter of reporting what has transpired, rather the speaker is actively creating a different speech act, referring back to the reported event to make some connection to what is going on in the moment. In the story above Colonel Bellam is making the connection between the young enlisted members he had spoken to, and the Chief, also present in the interaction, who had spoken to the same group. In the excerpt involving Lieutenant Colonel Drum he is commenting to another individual as they actually

approach the vehicle referred to in the constructed dialogue. The question, though, is what to make of the inclusion, in the constructed dialogue, of “sir”.

It may be that the “sirs” reported in constructed dialogue were an accurate recounting of the form of addressed that was used. And, for Colonel Bellam and Lieutenant Colonel Drum perhaps referring back to themselves as “sir” is a bit less cumbersome than referring back to themselves as “Colonel Bellam” or “Colonel Drum” or, in either case by rank alone or “Colonel”, which would be the only other options of address available to the subordinate interactants. To leave off the honorific or proper address form might construct the subordinate interactants as addressing their superior inappropriately or, at worst, with insubordination. Or, more likely, to leave out the honorific may reflect badly on the superior as it would imply too close a relationship with subordinates, particularly if the language of the constructed dialogue is as informal as it is in the dialogue Lieutenant Colonel Drum has constructed.

In the examples above, we must make the assumption that Colonel Bellam and Lieutenant Colonel Drum, respectively, are voicing the way they’d expect to be addressed, since we have no way of knowing exactly how the events portrayed in the constructed dialogue actually transpired. Their choice of address form in the constructed dialogue, then, reinforces not only the nature of their relationships with subordinates, but the norm of using the address form “sir”. Using the norms of communication in a community of practice, as Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999: 176) point out, displays membership and reinforces the “shared discourse that reflects a

certain perspective on the world". In this case, Colonel Bellam's and Lieutenant Colonel Drum's perspectives are displayed to those for whom the dialogue is being constructed. The use of "sir" here displays how the address form would both be expected somewhere in an interaction between subordinates and a male superordinate, and specifically somewhere near the beginning of the interaction as was argued earlier in this chapter. By opening their constructed dialogue with "sir", even in referencing themselves, Colonel Bellam and Lieutenant Colonel Drum are performing two functions. First, they're saving face for the participants who are not present – re-creating the interactive behavior that would be expected of the subordinates. Second, they're reinforcing both the clear hierarchy that exists within the power and rank structure of the military, and their place within it.

I did not find any instances of "ma'am" in constructed dialogue. Its absence may argue the possibility that "ma'am" is the marked case of "sir" and therefore less forceful. Consider, however, the following excerpt in which a female officer does refer back to herself, but does so using her rank and name, not "ma'am". Here a personnel officer is speaking with Colonel Acuff. The two are discussing briefings they will provide to base personnel regarding promotion rates and opportunities. Whereas Air Force officers are expected to earn a master's degree during their first eight years on active duty, in this excerpt, Lieutenant Colonel Smith is relaying, in constructed dialogue, an understanding by some lieutenants that they don't have to earn their master's degree anymore.

172. Lt Col Smith: There- there's a myth out there right now with the lieutenants and  
 when I have my mentoring sessions with /?personnel/  
 173. one of the first things they asked me was,  
 174. "So: .. so **Colonel Smith** <whispering slightly> I don't have to  
 get my Máster's anymo:re. "  
 175. And I said "Well↑  
 176. if I were you I still would."

The focus of this excerpt, then, is the constructed dialogue in line 174 in which Lieutenant Colonel Smith refers back to herself using rank and last name, "So:.. so Colonel Smith," instead of "ma'am". Use of "ma'am" would have been the construction equivalent to that portrayed in Colonel Bellam's and Lieutenant Colonel Drum's constructed dialogues. While I cannot make generalizations from one example, it is simply interesting to observe that rather than selecting the gendered reference, "ma'am", Lieutenant Colonel Smith elected to identify herself in constructed dialogue with rank and last name.

In the example above, Lieutenant Colonel Smith constructs a dialogue in which she has at least three options with which to refer to herself: "ma'am", "Colonel Smith", or no address term at all. She chooses to use a non-gendered term. As I will discuss in Chapter Four, the system of ranks and titles affords women the opportunity to refer to themselves in non-gendered ways. Another example of such non-gendered reference occurs in Chapter Three in which, during the course of a narrative, Major Cardiff, the squadron commander, refers to herself as such when, in facetious reply to a comment

from a subordinate she states, "I'm sorry. Are you forgetting I'm the commander here?"

The examples above illustrate ways forms of address can be used in constructed dialogue to create a superior's identity. Though the examples are too few from which to generalize, they do raise the possibility that constructed dialogue is an environment in which individuals can use forms of address to convey a gendered (e.g., "sir") or non-gendered (e.g., "Colonel," "Commander") identity. Or, arguably, the titles "Colonel" and "Commander" invoke masculine images which women use to convey their authority in the masculine environment of the military.

### **Discussion and Summary**

This chapter has provided a close examination of the environments in which the honorific address forms "ma'am" and "sir" occur in military discourse. Those environments may be categorized as follows: as a tag to "yes" or "no", sentence-initially as an opener or as a greeting, sentence-finally, in mid-sentence between clauses, or within an adjacency pair such as a greeting or farewell. This portion of my study therefore provides both a semantic analysis of the military use of "ma'am" and "sir" which does not yet appear in the literature, and an analysis of the function of the linguistic variables "ma'am" and "sir" from an institutional perspective.

Perhaps more importantly, though, the analysis also adds to the study of language and gender in that the terms "ma'am" and "sir" specifically signal the

intersection of language, gender and hierarchy or power. As indicated in the review of literature in Chapter One, the issue of power has been tightly interwoven with the study of language and gender. This analysis of “ma’am” and “sir” therefore begins to consider both how gender is jointly constructed within the military’s hierarchical and masculine environment and how that gender differentiation, rendered from subordinate to superior, marks a power relationship which dilutes or negates the gender difference.

From the perspective of power dynamics, nearly every utterance of “ma’am” or “sir” is a marker of a power difference in which the interactant addressed as “ma’am” or “sir” is dominant, and the interactant using the address form is subordinate.

Participation in this linguistic social norm reinforces the power structure of the military. From the perspective of studies in language and gender it is difficult to get around the reality that each utterance of “sir” by a male is an indication of gender sameness and each utterance of “sir” by a female is an indication of gender difference. Further, each utterance of “ma’am” by a male is an indication of gender difference and each utterance of “ma’am” by a female is an indication of gender sameness. As Goffman (1977) points out, this may be no small matter. “Among all the means by which differentiation along sex-class lines is fostered in modern society,” Goffman states, “one stands out as having a special and an especially powerful influence: I refer to our *identification system*, this involving two related matters, our means of discovering ‘who’ it is that has come into our ken, that is, our placement practices, and our means of labeling what it is we have thus placed” (318) (*italics in original*). Thus, the use of “ma’am” or “sir”

places participants in their sex-class at the same time that they are placed in their hierarchical ranking.

Analysis of “ma’am” and “sir” in the environments delineated largely shows little difference between the regard shown for female officers and for male officers, so it may be that the hierarchical system of the military affords power to females which they might not otherwise be afforded. However, this analysis did find two circumstances in which this might not be the case: in civilians’ regard for female officers as compared to male officers, and in the use of honorific address forms as tags to rising-intonation questions. These data showed that female officers received “ma’am” in interactions with civilians much less frequently than male officers received “sir” in interaction with civilians. And in observing the rising intonation of sentence-final “sir” in interrogatives, upon further investigation I found that questions asked of male officers were tagged with “sir” whereas interrogatives with rising intonation addressed to female officers were not tagged with “ma’am”. If interrogatives can be considered a means of deferring to authority then clearly more research is needed to interpret this trend, which seems to imply greater deference for male superiors than for female superiors.

## **Chapter 3 – Narrative and Gendering of Institutional Identity**

### **Introduction and Chapter Overview**

Recent work in discourse analysis considers the role of narrative in creating and reinforcing our connections with the institutions with which we affiliate. Such narratives occurred with regularity in the 30 hours of recordings I collected from Air Force officers who volunteered to wear an audiotape recorder for the course of a duty day or portion thereof. Consistent with the literature, narratives were used in the Air Force's institutional environment in order to facilitate work and perpetuate the institution's self-representation.

As I listened to the narratives occurring in my recordings, however, it seemed to me that even finer categorical distinctions for institutional narrative may be appropriate. For example, if we set out to find narratives which facilitate work (such as stories which help communicate the usefulness of a specific process or procedure) or narratives which perpetuate an institution's self-representation (such as stories which glamorize or idolize an institution's founding or founders) we will certainly find them. However, in looking for such narratives we may overlook, for example, narratives which appear to be personal but are tied to the institutional context in subtle ways. Personal narratives which are even subtly tied to the institutional context may indicate strategies individuals use to negotiate their relationships with other members of the institution or the institution itself. And, in looking for narratives in these data which perpetuate the institution's self-representation, it became obvious that some narratives perpetuated the

institution's ideals, while others perpetuated traditions which are unofficial but important to group solidarity.

In this chapter I will provide an overview of the sociolinguistic study of narrative – a review which will basically move from the role of narrative in personal identity, to the role of narrative in forming one's identity as a family or group member, to the role of narrative in the institutional environment. After establishing that institutional narratives have been determined to facilitate work and perpetuate an institution's sense of itself, I will propose that this perspective be expanded to include at least four categories: narratives which perpetuate institutional ideals, narrative and the institutional hierarchy, narrative and institutional tradition, and personal narratives in an institutional setting. I will illustrate these categories through analysis of nine conversational narratives found in my recorded data. I selected these nine either because of their usefulness as examples of the categories I've delineated, or uniqueness of and interest in the subject matter of the interaction, or both. The analysis will show that, indeed, gender influences a narrative's telling and/or its reception. I conclude that the narratives women and men tell perpetuate the masculinity of the institution of the military; however, analysis of the women's institutional narratives, consistent with existing literature, serves to perpetuate the sense of community, whereas the men's institutional narratives generally act to perpetuate masculine notions of contest and hierarchy.

## The Study of Narrative

### Overview of the Study of Narrative in Interaction

Stories are a major influence in our earliest experiences with language. The songs and lullabies we sing to our children often tell a story, and the storybooks we read to them convey classic folktales enjoyed by youngsters and adults alike. It was such folktales which provided the basis for early work on narrative analysis by Propp ([1928] 1968). Propp delineated remarkably consistent canonical structures in folktales, sequenced according to actions or “functions”. In a similar vein, Labov and Waletzky ([1967] 1997) analyzed naturally occurring narrative, as compared to folktales, and, like Propp, found great consistency in the structure of the elicited narratives they examined. Labov and Waletzky examined narrative units “as defined by the fact that they recapitulate experience in the same order as the original events” (13). They were able to determine that narratives are structured according to narrative functions. Those functions consist of an *orientation*, which “orients the listener in respect to person, place, time, and behavioral situation” (27), the *complicating action*, consisting of narrative clauses which comprise a “series of events” (27), *evaluation* which “reveals the attitude of the narrator towards the narrative by emphasizing the relative importance of some narrative units as compared to others” (32), a *resolution* which is “that portion of the narrative sequence that follows the evaluation” (35), and a *coda*, or, “a functional device for returning the verbal perspective to the present moment” (35).

Using the structure delineated by Labov and Waletzky, Schiffrin (1981) applied quantitative analysis on the premise that, as “a naturally bound unit of discourse with a regular internal structure” oral narrative is useful for studying “both formal and functional aspects of variation” in a “controlled and systematic way” (45). Using structure as a tool of analysis she discovered, for example, that tense-switching in narrative, particularly as indicated by the direction of a tense-switch, separates events in narrative and serves as an evaluative device allowing “the narrator to present events as if they were occurring at that moment, so that the audience can hear for itself what happened, and can interpret for itself the significance of those events for the experience” (59).

Also of particular interest is the distinction between elicited narratives, like the stories Labov and Waletzky (1967) sparked by asking informants whether their lives had ever been in danger, and narratives which occur naturally in the course of conversation. When a conversation gives rise to a narrative, all parties to the conversation are assuming its relevance to the conversation at hand, are aware that they are ceding significant conversational time to the teller, and often actively take part in the telling of the story itself, particularly if it’s a story in which they were a participant or which they’ve heard before. For these reasons and others, the referential and evaluative elements of conversational narrative have become quite important to linguists, anthropologists, and education theorists, among others – a wide and varying

array of scholars – who, as I will review, have examined the role of narratives and stories in shaping individual, family or group, and institutional identities.

### Narrative and Personal Identity

Polanyi (1981) examines a narrative told between friends in order to examine both the structure of narrative, and to explore how a story's subject and "tellability" reflect the teller's personal identity and cultural surround. Schiffrin, (1996), too, examined the importance of narrative in displays of personal identity by analyzing stories told by Jewish-American women. Schiffrin found that "our transformation of experience into stories, and the way we carry it out, is thus a way to show our interlocutors the salience of particular aspects of our identities" (199). The detail and imagery we convey in our stories also sheds light on and constructs our personal identity. As I will review in greater length below, Johnstone (1993) found that women use more details than do men in telling their stories. And Tannen (1989) examines several stories which illustrate the importance of the use of detail and imagery in creating a sense of involvement for the listener. Thus, the narratives we choose to tell, the audience to which we choose to tell them, the occasion of the telling, the detail we incorporate, and the representation of ourselves or the characters in our stories are all clues to our perception of ourselves, and others.

### Narrative and Group Identity

While work like Polanyi's and Schiffrin's explores the role of narrative in conveying our personal identities, other work examines how narratives we tell, and re-tell, create our sense of identity as members of families or other groups. Norrick (1997) and Ochs and Taylor (1995) examine the role of storytelling in creating a family identity. Norrick explores the importance of spontaneously recalling, repeating, and even mutually constructing stories in enhancing and reinforcing a family's identity; he examined, for instance, the phenomena of "twice told tales" (203). Intrigued by repetition in discourse, Norrick addressed the question of repetition of narratives and co-narration of repeated narratives, such as those told and re-told within the family unit. Norrick argues that within families, and other groups, familiar stories are retold in order to foster group rapport, are sometimes co-narrated and thereby ratify group membership, and that, in their retelling, stories portray shared values. Ochs and Taylor also examined the telling of stories within a family unit and discovered that, in addition to reinforcing a family's identity, certain narrative practices may "instantiate gender-relevant narrator and family-role identities of women and men as mother and father, wife and husband, in white middle class families in the United States" (98). Thus, Ochs and Taylor found that stories told by family members to other family members contribute to their sense of belonging not only to the family, but also to their role within the family unit as they perceive it according to their social surround.

Other work on narrative moves into still larger spheres. In analyzing the interactions of Midwesterners, Johnstone (1993) examined fifty-eight spontaneous narratives of the personal experiences of American Midwesterners and found that “women’s personal experience stories... do in fact tend to revolve around joint action by communities of people, whereas men’s stories tend to be about acting alone” (67). Johnstone also found that “women’s stories include more details about people than do men’s, more reported talk, and different ways of talking about talk” (67). Using Midwesterners as a group, then, Johnstone was able to move us toward more general observations regarding narrative that is characteristic of women and men. Of particular relevance in this study is the interplay between individual and group identity, or as Johnstone (2001) has pointed out, the way in which, “narrative is how we make sense of ourselves as individuals and as members of groups” (640). She elaborates upon the importance of narrative to group identity, stating that “shared stories, as well as shared ways of telling stories and shared uses for stories” make groups coherent (641). Johnstone’s findings, then, mesh with those of Norrick, referenced earlier: familiar stories are retold in order to foster group rapport, are sometimes co-narrated and thereby ratify group membership, and in their telling and retelling stories portray shared values.

### Narrative and Institutional Identity

Moving beyond families and groups, Linde (2001) found while conducting an ethnographic study of an American insurance company that narratives are used in

institutional settings both to facilitate work and to reproduce and maintain the institution's self representation. She illustrates this point through her examination of the way in which the story of an insurance company's founding is repeated across time and tellers in order to reinforce its institutional identity. An institutional identity as portrayed in institutional narrative can, of course, wield a great deal of influence upon individuals' behavior and their sense of identity. In their survey of studies conducted by researchers in organizational communication, Putnam and Fairhurst (2001) conclude that, in organizations, "stories function ideologically to represent the interests of dominant groups, instantiate values, reify structures, and reproduce power" (110). Thus stories, or narratives, wittingly or unwittingly become tools of institutional power structures or hierarchy, ideology, and values.

Linde also examines the work that narratives do in creating and sustaining group and institutional membership, hence group or institutional identity, or that aspect of an individual's personal identity. As Linde points out, "institutional constraints have a strong shaping effect on the narratives told within them, and reciprocally, narratives have a strong part in the creation and reproduction of institutions" (518). She goes on to distinguish two approaches to the study of narrative in institutions. She notes that one can examine how narrative is used in conducting the daily work of an institution, or, one can examine ways in which narrative is used as a tool of institutional memory whereby institutional identity is reproduced through narrative.

Whereas Linde examines largely referential content in the narratives, Barton extends the analysis to include institutional sanctioning or non-sanctioning of the narrative outside of the story world. Barton (2000) found that the institutional setting can constrain the narratives told within that setting and that, in medical institutional settings for example, certain narrators are not sanctioned to tell certain stories. Barton studied the interactions between parents of children with disabilities, medical staff and support groups. In the medical arena, sanctioned narratives are invited and non-sanctioned narratives are deflected through conventional means. In the support groups, the line between sanctioned and non-sanctioned narratives is blurred. Unlike the medical staff, the support group personnel haven't established conventions for deflecting non-sanctioned narratives.

Barton raises questions for further theoretical work including the ways narratives achieve purposes in institutional discourse. Narratives are a significant means by which institutional power and authority are wielded in the control of discourse. Barton's research "suggests that authority in institutional discourse is not a monolithic dimension of the context, with official representatives always accorded narrative rights asymmetrically. Authority is interactively constructed" with narratives playing a crucial role (370). This interactive construction of narrative rights is reminiscent of the Foucaultian assertion raised in Kramarae et al (1984), and discussed in Chapter One, that power comes from below as well as above. The interactive construction of authority in narratives themselves and in narrative-telling rights is also

demonstrative of Tannen's (1994a) observations regarding the "polysemy" of power and solidarity. Recall from the discussion of the polysemy of power and solidarity in Chapter One that, as Tannen proposes, power and solidarity do not only coexist and entail one another, but are also ambiguous in that one does not always know if an interactional move, such as an overlap in speaking, or in this case the telling of an institutional narrative, is an assertion of power or a show of solidarity.

As we consider the topic of narrative in the context of an institution we can also look to Chafe (1990) for a helpful perspective. He asserts that an important factor driving the creation of narrative is the individual tendency to reject the unfamiliar. In other words, as he states, "Narratives that entirely fit expectations are not really narratives at all" (83). Furthermore, Chafe notes that these expectations are often developed according to "schemas" which he defines as prepackaged or structured expectations. Obviously, these schemas derive from a variety of sources, including, arguably, institutions. We can infer from this that in an institutional setting, and institutional context, narratives will either conform to a schema in their telling, or relate circumstances in which an institutional schema or expectation has been violated in some way. Further, following Barton's notion that certain narratives are sanctioned within institutional settings and others are not, we can also infer that reactions to narratives in institutional settings will also support institutional norms and expectations.

Following Linde (2001), narratives, then, are used to do the work of an institution, as when workers use stories to communicate procedures to other workers;

or, narratives are used to perpetuate the ideals or structure of an institution, as when the story of a company's founding and its founder's ideals is relayed in institutional settings. An area that seems open for study, however, is the way in which narratives and their telling form and convey individuals' identities, including gender identities, in the institutional context.

### Institutional Narrative and Gender

Above I cited Ochs and Taylor (1995) who found that the telling of stories within a family not only reinforced their solidarity as a family, but also reinforced gender-relevant roles and identities within the family. We must ask ourselves, then, whether the telling of stories within an institution might, in some way, reinforce gender-relevant roles and identities. Holmes (1998), for example, examined gender-associated features of New Zealander Maori speech in narratives, specifically -in' vs. -ing, multiple negation and uninflected forms of the copula *be* as masculine norms, and use of diminutives (*little*), attenuators (*just, so*), pragmatic particles (*sort of, you know*), adverb particles (*swimming away*) and repetition of phrases and syntactic patterns as feminine. She found that those features were used to construct gender identities along a scale of masculinity-femininity according to context. Further, she found that gender, as one aspect of identity, is more or less salient in different contexts. If, then, the institutional context is gendered masculine, as is the American military, does the

context tip the balance of the gender-identity "scale" toward the masculine for both men and women? And, will examination of narrative demonstrate this?

This question also follows from McElhinny's (1998) work on the interactions of male and female police officers in Pennsylvania. McElhinny found that female officers adjusted their affect in order to accommodate the masculine nature of the workplace and the physical and emotional demands of policing. Whereas most work on gender identity had been conducted at the level of the individual, McElhinny proposed that institutions can be gendered just as individuals are gendered. This is an extension of the observation that men's and women's work realms have long been divided and that, "cultural norms and interpretations of gender dictate who is understood as best suited for different sorts of employment" (309). McElhinny notes that points of interest include understanding ways women have integrated themselves into masculine workplaces, how the workplaces adapt to the new demographics, and how women adapt their conversational styles and interactions in workplaces still considered non-feminine, as is the military. In other words, as women enter masculine workplaces, they must adopt and adapt institutional and interactional norms. Given the usefulness and prevalence of narratives in institutional interaction, the question which naturally follows is whether, when we examine narratives' functions within an institution, gender differences become apparent.

## Summary

A review of the literature regarding narrative analysis, then, shows a wealth of research foundational to the study of narrative. Propp ([1928] 1968) and Labov and Waletzky ([1967] 1997) brought insight into the structure of stories and spoken narrative. Following upon Labov and Waletzky's groundbreaking research, Schiffrin (1981, 1984, 1996) explored narratives through application of both quantitative techniques -- determining the role of tense change in narratives -- and qualitative techniques --examining ways in which personal identity is conveyed in the telling of narrative. Further research in the field by Johnstone (1993, 2001), Linde (2001), Norrick (1997, 200), Ochs and Taylor (1995), Tannen (1989), and many others, has given us insight into the importance of narrative in conveying a sense of self, in establishing a sense of family, group, or institutional identity, and in performing practical functions within groups and institutions. Of interest in the work of Ochs and Taylor (1995), Holmes (1998) and McElhinny (1995, 1997, 1998) is the question of gender identity and narrative -- a point of interest I explore in this chapter as I examine the role of narrative in the institutional environment of the military, and consider ways gender is manifest in narratives' reception or telling.

## **Four Categories of Narrative**

Johnstone (2001) draws attention to the extensiveness of cross-disciplinary interest in narrative, noting that "discourse analysts have much to learn from theories

about systems and society developed by others” (644). Theories of organizational communication, mentioned above, are one such arena. And, it is in this spirit of learning in which I return to the community of practice framework as one tool in this analysis. Initially conceived as a theory about learning as a social process, the framework clarifies that practices which distinguish a community of practice have a history of mutual engagement, a negotiated enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger 1998). The latter, which is characterized by discourses which renegotiate meaning, recall events, and invent or redefine terms, is also influenced by the telling and retelling of stories.

Both the telling of stories, or narrative, and group members’ responses to those stories, play very important roles in the ways in which a group or institution becomes part of an individual’s identity. Borrowing Wenger’s definition of individual identity I shall here regard it as, “a layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other” (151). A share of those layers of identity occurs in, or pertains to the common practice of the group. Narratives, as an identifiable and bounded unit in conversational discourse, can help us identify this interplay between experiences and their social interpretation, particularly as pertains to membership in a group. This focus on experience and social interpretation, however, implies that it is the referential content of the narrative which helps form identity. From the discourse analytic perspective, also at issue are the occasioning of the narrative, the

schema that determines its structure, response to the narrative, and potentially the gender implications of its telling or content.

Narratives in the smaller Air Force communities I examine here play a role in the formation of individual and institutional identity at a number of levels. I will expand Linde's (2001) approach to narrative, which asserts that narrative is used in conducting the daily work of an institution or as a tool of institutional memory whereby institutional identity is reproduced. I will delineate four types of narrative which occurred within these data, all of which reveal aspects of an individual's sense of personal identity as they operate on behalf of, or within, the institution.

**Narrative and Institutional Ideals.** First, a "layer" of institutional identity resides in narratives which instruct new members of a group, or reinforce for long-time members of the community the ideals, mission or values of the group. This may include an institutionally-motivated affirmation or rejection of a narrative which occurs in the environment of the community of practice.

**Narrative and Personal Identity.** Second, given that members generally understand their "place" in an institution based upon its organizational structure, stories or narratives relevant to the structure or hierarchy of the group, particularly those which somehow flag one's place in it, would comprise another intersection of group and individual identity. This type of narrative category is particularly relevant to the hierarchical context of the military, yet also relevant in any organization or group with a formal or informal hierarchy. Again, the referential content of the narrative may or may

not explicitly invoke the hierarchical structure, but the manner in which the narrative is received or responded to may reinforce the hierarchical expectations.

**Narrative and Group Identity.** Third, yet another “layer” of identity is formed by stories or narratives which perpetuate the traditions or mystique of communities which are characterized by a common endeavor; that is, stories important to an institutional identity, yet not part of the organization’s or institution’s official goals or mission.

**Personal Narrative in an Institutional Setting.** And fourth, there occur in the data personal narratives which are told as one engages within the institutional environment. Such narratives may easily be dismissed as irrelevant to institutional identity. Yet, when told within an institutional setting, the teller of a personal narrative may be working to construct an individual identity, perhaps in order to maintain a sense of self in a pervasively institutional environment. This may be argued in that, even seemingly personal narratives are generally tied to the workaday context in some way; at least inasmuch as such narratives’ topicality generally arises from, or is tied to, stimuli in the immediate work environment.

Beyond these four categories, and undergirding the stories representative of each category, is the question this study asks: how, if at all, do language, gender and the military intersect in the narratives I examine and in interactants’ responses to them. Again, the goal is to look at the function of narrative in the institution and determine whether gender is a salient factor in the narratives, either referentially or in their telling.

## **Narrative and Institutional Ideals**

Most organizations, corporate, academic, non-profit or military, have a formal or informal statement of their mission or vision. Such statements are an expression of the ideals or values which an organization or business aspires to uphold. All Air Force members, for example, abide by a statement of Core Values as follows: "Integrity first, Service before self, Excellence in all we do". While not specifically a vision or mission statement, this statement of Core Values still expresses ideals intended to guide Air Force members' actions and remind them of the high standards of the institution. All Air Force members, enlisted and officer, also swear an oath which, among other things, affirms commitment to defense of the Constitution and obedience to superiors. In addition, each individual military unit will have a mission statement specific to its given task, whether that task is combat-related or to provide administrative support to the members of a military community. As noted in Chapter One, in the military these ideals are conveyed in initial training and reinforced intertextually through such mechanisms as narrative.

As with any narrative, the referential content of a narrative of institutional ideals is a conspicuous element of analysis. In fact, it was the referential content of the nine narratives I analyze in this chapter which drew me to them. Having broadly observed, across my collection of recordings, the four categories of institutional narrative I propose herein, I chose narratives which seemed illustrative of those categories. As is commonly the case, however, careful examination of the narrative context and

environment reveals additional layers of consideration – such as the gender of the speaker and the listeners. Let's take into account the following narrative, for example. In this excerpt, the female Major Cardiff commands the unit responsible for all vehicles used for official Air Force business. She and two enlisted males, who are subordinate in rank to Major Cardiff, are walking outside. The group is on its way to inspect a Chevy Blazer (a tall Sport Utility type vehicle) which had overturned in an accident that morning. The topic of the Blazer sparks a narrative by SSgt Dale. In this excerpt, the narrative itself does not convey institutional values. However, the occasion of its telling and the speaker's persistence in telling it spark replies from outside the story world by Major Cardiff, a superior, who feels it necessary to reinforce institutional values. "Shirt", too, is an authority figure in the narrative. "Shirt" is the nickname given to the person in the position of "First Sergeant" in any unit, hence it appears in my data as a referent to several different individuals in several different units. First Sergeants were at some point given the nickname "First Shirt" apparently due to backing of the /t/ in "first", leaving a word final fricative /s/ ("firs") which has apparently assimilated with the word initial /sh/ in "shirt". Eventually, "First Shirt" just became "Shirt" and, across units, is understood to be the "First Sergeant", or, highest ranking enlisted person in the unit. The "Shirt" is the overseer of all enlisted matters in the unit, as well as an advisor to the Commander, or Major Cardiff in this case.

"Two Wheel Turn"

1. SSgt Dale: Did you see the Blazer?

2. Shirt: The one that flipped?  
 3. SSgt Dale: /?/  
 4. Shirt: Was it out here?  
 5. Let me take a look [out here.  
 6. SSgt Dale: [Yeah.  
 7. Major: Outside?  
 8. SSgt Dale: You haven't seen it yet?  
 9. TSgt Smith: I- I saw the pictures but I didn't see the actual-  
 10. Shirt: Now last time I seen it it was laying on its side.  
 11. TSgt Smith: Yeah that's w- that's the pictures I saw  
 12. Major: O:kay.  
 13. SSgt Dale: Which ain't hard to do to these Blazers.  
 14. I almost flipped mine on the side,  
 15. goin'- you know that turn  
 16. Major: But you were-  
 17. but you were- [perfectly safe  
 18. SSgt Dale: [You know that turn,  
 19. onto Belvoir right out here?  
 20. The one-sixty-one turn?  
 21. TSgt Smith: Mm-hmm  
 22. SSgt Dale: Yeah [I took that-  
 23. Shirt: I thought you weren't supposed to be goin=  
 24. [=ninety miles and hour /?/  
 25. SSgt Dale: [I took that- I took that turn real fast and I think I had my  
 Blazer up on two wheels /?/  
 26. Major: I'm sorry.  
 27. Are you forgetting, I'm the commander here?  
 28. I-  
 29. Check to make sure I'm here people @@@  
 30. SSgt Dale: Well that was a lo:ng ti- that was a long time ago Ma'am,  
 31. that was like [before you-  
 32. Shirt: [@@  
 33. TSgt Smith: Yeah that's [a pain.  
 34. Major: [That was well out [side of the:=  
 35. Shirt: I would be surprised if they don't [tow him.  
 36. Major: =[la:w- of limitations  
 37. Shirt: O:h [yeah.  
 38. SSgt Dale: [Well I wanted to roll my Blazer that way I  
 could get my insurance money and buy a new truck

Both referentially and evaluatively much is at work here; specifically, I will discuss in detail the Major's reinforcement of institutional values, and the gender implications of the story's content and the Major's reaction to it.

Referentially, the institutional value at stake in this narrative is the expectation that military members uphold high standards of behavior to include close attention to matters of safety in both their personal and professional lives, and adherence to state and federal law. As the group walks out to inspect the vehicle, which they later remark upon as a total loss, SSgt Dale observes in lines 13-14 that flipping a Blazer "ain't hard to do" stating "I almost flipped mine on its side" providing the *abstract* of the narrative -- a brief summary of the tale to come. Major Cardiff, as the senior military representative present and commander of the unit, replies in lines 16-17, "but you were, but you were perfectly safe." Her use of the term "but" marks a contrastive state, specifically the contrast between being "perfectly safe" and the driving illustrated in SSgt Dale's story. In so doing, she reinforces the expectation of physically safe behavior in the lives of military members, specifically orienting her remark to SSgt Dale's circumstance by using the pronoun "you".

Undaunted, SSgt Dale continues with elements of the *orientation* or context of his story stating "you know that turn going on Belvoir out here to 161". Shirt then mocks SSgt Dale's action saying, "I thought you weren't supposed to be goin' 90 miles an hour". Norrick (1993) follows Tannen's (1986) model of the paradox of power and solidarity when he points out that mocking is a method of identifying and enforcing

group norms, even as it signals solidarity. In other words, interactants must feel sufficient closeness, or solidarity, in order to joke with or mock one another without offense being taken. In this case, Shirt's mocking of SSgt Dale enforces group norms – don't speed – while also signaling kinship with him. However, one might also interpret that Shirt, as a male respondent to SSgt Dale's story, at least secondarily provides added bravado to the story by offering the exaggerated speed limit of "90 miles an hour".

SSgt Dale continues his story in line 25 saying, "I took that- I took that turn real fast and, I think I had my Blazer on two wheels." As the circumstance of a vehicle being on "two wheels" clearly indicates either a violation of speed laws, or at least a dangerous situation, referentially Major Cardiff again reinforces institutional expectations of safety and compliance with the law stating, "I'm sorry. Are you forgetting I'm the commander here?" in lines 26-29. In the recording, the intonation in this statement as well as Major Cardiff's laughs following her remark, suggest sarcasm. This frame of playfulness is read by Shirt as well, as he chuckles in response to her remark. So, given the play frame, she maybe indicating that she feels, either as an officer or as a female, left out of their banter. It is also possible, however, that the play frame indicates that she is simply using mockery as a way of reinforcing institutional norms in a solidary way.

Taken literally, Major Cardiff's question, "Are you forgetting that I'm the commander here" is a yes/no question. At this point, SSgt Dale, as respondent to the question, initiates the first of two attempts to downplay the speeding incident and

disarm criticism of his actions saying: “**Well** that was a long time ago ma’am back before you –“ in line 30 and the presumably facetious remark in line 38: “**Well** I wanted to roll my Blazer that way I could get my insurance money and buy a new truck”. SSgt Dale has marked both of his responses with sentence initial *well*. Schifffrin (1987) points out that respondents who “do not take the ideational options offered by the form of a prior question”, in this case “yes” or “no”, “*well* is frequently used to mark the answer” (107).

Following Schifffrin, in this case *well* defers SSgt Dale’s answer from the ideational core of the yes/no response; so, SSgt Dale, as respondent, is requesting that the listener, Major Cardiff, suspend her expectation that he will actually answer “yes” or “no” to her question. For SSgt Dale to answer “no [I’m not forgetting you’re the commander here]” may imply insubordinacy. And, as indicated in Chapter Two, “no”, or more specifically “no ma’am”, is a relatively rare response to a question, particularly when it’s perceived to be the undesired response. For SSgt Dale to say “yes, [I’m forgetting you’re the commander here]” is obviously an inappropriate response.

As respondent, and having forestalled either “yes” or “no” with sentence initial *well*, SSgt Dale inserts a mid-sentence “ma’am” (“Well that was a long time ago **ma’am**”) to mark Major Cardiff’s position as superior and show that, no, he isn’t forgetting she’s the commander. It also, however, marks Major Cardiff as female and consciously or subconsciously flags her difference in the context of the telling of SSgt Dale’s story of achievement. This occurrence of “ma’am” seems significant in that,

within the bounds of the interaction involving the inspection of the Blazer, which comprises 127 lines of transcription, “ma’am” only appears twice: in this instance in line 30 and eight lines later and therefore in close proximity in time to this passage.

Having used *ma’am* and thereby marked that he hasn’t lost track of the superior-subordinate relationship, SSgt Dale goes on to say, in line 38: “**Well** I wanted to roll my Blazer that way I could get my insurance money and buy a new truck”. This second instance of *well* may be interpreted to arise from another condition under which Schifffrin proposes *well* might be used: an inaccurate assumption by the questioner. It may be that SSgt Dale, understanding Major Cardiff’s implication of violation of the law and therefore recklessness, seeks to refute the “inaccurate assumption” by offering a (facetious) reason for his actions: he wanted to roll his Blazer for the insurance money. I’d like to suggest, however, that the inaccurate assumption SSgt Dale signals is not necessarily the assumption of recklessness, but perhaps the assumption that he was serious; in other words, perhaps SSgt Dale seeks to refute Maj Cardiff’s (feminine) assumption that his remarks are to be taken literally, rather than as a (masculine) ritual story of “man vs. machine”. In either case, assuming that SSgt Dale’s comment that he “wanted to roll [his] Blazer” is indeed sarcastic, like Shirt’s mocking discussed above, SSgt Dale’s sarcasm signals a relationship of solidarity, in which all parties present are close enough so as to be able to joke with one another.

We may ask, at this point, why SSgt Dale felt at ease in occasioning a narrative which potentially undercut the institutional expectation of compliance with the law.

Perhaps the most obvious indication is the solidarity of the work environment as evidenced by the laughing, mocking and sarcasm that is a regular part of the interactions in this group. It's also possible that SSgt Dale doesn't regard a speeding infraction as a serious violation of the law, or that in saying that he "took that turn real fast" he isn't really admitting a speed violation, just that he entered the turn at a speed which was too fast for the tightness of the turn. Unless she, too, is mocking SSgt Dale (which is quite possible), as did Shirt, it is Major Cardiff who interprets that SSgt Dale was potentially in violation of speed laws.

Of course, we cannot know exactly why SSgt Dale felt that this narrative was appropriate; however, its topicality may be relevant in examining whether gender influences this scenario. SSgt Dale may perceive that the narrative he has told does not seem inappropriate in a masculine environment such as the military. In fact, its appropriateness seems to align with Johnstone's (1993) observation that male speakers' stories tend to be about "contest" -- in this case SSgt Dale is pitted against a dangerous situation, but overcomes it -- a victory. Similarly, Coates (2003) identified the tendency for males to tell stories which are of the form she calls "Narrative of Achievement." In her study, which analyzed talk in all-male groups, Coates notes the importance of narrative to the construction of masculine identity -- identity revealed in both the content and the performance of a narrative. In the "Narrative of Achievement" I examine here, the achievement is literally "man vs. machine". Coates points out, however, that a narrative of achievement can also mark a contest of blunders; in other words, the

context might be verbal sparring to show that one participant's mess-up was worse than that of another participant.

The sight of a crushed Blazer provides the requisite topicality to the context at hand. SSgt Dale then basically boasts that he, too, almost rolled a Blazer. Many might interpret such an action to be an act of negligence, in which the driver has underestimated his speed or the tightness of a turn, nearly causing him to roll the vehicle over with potentially harmful consequences to himself. However, SSgt Dale implies the vehicle is at fault, having commented that rolling a vehicle onto its side, "ain't hard to do to these Blazers". By maintaining control of a vehicle which is easily rolled SSgt Dale makes himself appear skillful – a "win" over potential danger and therefore an achievement. In the masculine context of the military and among other men this is a perfectly appropriate story to tell. The female commander, however, may not see the story as a ritual performance the way the other male participant does. The other male participant even helps SSgt Dale co-construct the exaggeration by adding the evaluation that, he wasn't "supposed to be goin' 90 miles and hour" (lines 23-24). If Major Cardiff recognizes the ritual nature of the narrative, she could be argued to be mocking SSgt Dale, and thereby enforcing group norms from a frame of solidarity; if Major Cardiff doesn't recognize the ritual nature of the narrative, she could be argued to be referentially enforcing the proper standards consistent with her institutional role as commander and superior. Either way, institutional values and ideals are reinforced.

The influence of Major Cardiff's gender is clearly also a factor in her response in lines 26-27 : "I'm sorry. Are you forgetting I'm the commander here?" Perhaps most interesting is the "apology" which opens Major Cardiff's reply: "**I'm sorry**. Are you forgetting, I'm the commander here?" This isn't, of course, a literal apology. This gender-marked use of "I'm sorry" clearly indicates a response disapproving of SSgt Dale's actions. Tannen (2001: 98) points out that "women, on average, say 'I'm sorry' more frequently than men do", if it is part of their conversational style. She also points out that when not truly an apology, "I'm sorry" may mark the fact that the coming response isn't what the listener expected to hear. So, whereas SSgt Dale may expect a response which supports his initial assertion, based upon the evidence he has given from his own experience, that flipping a Blazer on its side, "ain't hard to do", instead he receives a form of mild chastisement from his superior. Major Cardiff's response, then, may not be "fully consonant" with the response SSgt Dale may have expected.

Another view of Major Cardiff's use of "I'm sorry" follows from the discussion of politeness in Chapter Two and might interpret this "apology" as serving a face-saving function. As Deuchar (1988) notes in her challenge to studies which assert sociological bases for women's use of standard speech, Brown and Levinson's models of politeness and face add much to interpretations of such apologies. Deuchar points out that "The apology is a politeness strategy which has the effect of paying attention to the addressee's negative face" (30). Given that "negative face" is the desire not to be imposed upon, the implication of Major Cardiff's remark could be that she doesn't want

to subvert the point of SSgt Dale's story, but she must assert her role as commander and therefore as gatekeeper and enforcer of standards. Her attention to SSgt Dale's negative face shows that perhaps she understands the importance of such boasting among men, or at least in the masculine environment of the military. Still, she feels obliged as commander to uphold high standards of behavior.

To sum up, in the story "Two Wheel Turn" we see a male interactant, whose gender identity is likely tied to the masculine institution of the military, expressing a narrative of derring-do – a trait one may argue is desirable in a (masculine) profession like the military. Outside of the story world, however, SSgt Dale's superior affixes an interpretation to the events in the story which requires her -- whether mockingly or seriously -- to assert her role as gatekeeper or enforcer of institutional ideals. Thus, *Two Wheel Turn* is a narrative in which the end result is attention to institutional values and ideals. However, gender may come into play in determining whether Major Cardiff was mocking or serious – if mocking, her primary motivator may be solidarity with her subordinates; if serious, her primary motivator may be lack of understanding of the masculine ritual nature of SSgt Dale's narrative. Gender may also have been a factor in SSgt Dale's decision regarding his narrative's tellability. In this case, the story's tellability under the masculine model, in which the teller is the protagonist and some sort of contest or achievement is displayed, may also have been a gender-related factor. Also up for consideration is whether the narrative's tellability as a masculine narrative

“trumped”, in a sense, the fact that the narrative exhibited potential non-conformity to institutional ideals and values.

The next narrative, “Chief’s Theme”, appeared in Chapter Two. In it the male Colonel Bellam and others (all of whom are subordinate to Colonel Bellam) are engaged in a meeting regarding planning for a formal military dinner function called a “Dining-Out”. Shortly prior to this portion of the conversation, reference was made to a special course of training, called the First Term Airman Course or “FTAC”. FTAC is designed for enlisted members who are serving in their first duty location. The Chief, who has earned the highest enlisted rank, had gone over to speak to these new airmen (again, a term which includes females and males though it is gendered male). Colonel Bellam visited the new airmen at a point following the Chief’s visit and asked them what the Chief had talked about. The following scenario reports that exchange. Col Bellam’s narrative-like report stems from a reference to FTAC which occurred 60 lines earlier in the transcript when the group began discussing the role of a particular “Dining-Out” participant, Airman Martinez, who was attending FTAC. As Colonel Bellam begins his narrative, he establishes the tellability of his story and orients his listeners saying in line 2, “I asked them yesterday...”; “them” being the FTAC attendees and “yesterday” being when the interaction occurred. He then relays, in temporal order, his actions during his visit to FTAC. Like the narrative “Two Wheel Turn”, this one receives intermittent evaluation from outside the story world by the participants at the meeting.

“Chief’s Theme”

1. Col Bellam: Yeah I asked ‘em, gee Chief yeah I asked you-
2. I asked them yesterday what they remembered from the Chief’s talk,
3. [you know
4. MSgt: [<slight laughter><sub>z</sub>
5. Shirt: What they remembered<sub>z</sub>
6. Col Bellam: What was the Chief’s theme?
7. Chief: Uh-huh.
8. They said that he had no [theme.
9. Col Bellam: [And I got kind of a blank stare [and
10. All: [<laugh>
11. Col Bellam: Then somebody spoke up and he said=
12. =he said “Well s- Sir he was trying to emphasize that .. u:m=
13. =that we need to internalize the lessons we learned in basic training and  
tech school and just carry them into this course and, into the squadron.”
14. Col Bellam: I said “Aa:h that’s, that sounds<sub>z</sub> sounds like a good theme”
15. MSgt: Pretty good!<sub>z</sub>
16. Capt: <laughs>
17. Chief: That’s what I talk about at the end
18. Col Bellam: <clears throat>

Recall from the discussion in Chapter Two that such constructed dialogue is less about those in the narrative than it is about those present for its representation. More specifically, such constructed dialogue instantiates “an active, creative, transforming move which expresses the relationship not between the quoted party and the topic of talk but rather the quoting party and the audience to whom the quotation is delivered” (Tannen 1989:109). With that in mind, this narrative, told using constructed dialogue, serves several ends.

The general subject of FTAC having come up shortly before this exchange provided the topicality of Colonel Bellam’s story. We see him formulating his abstract

in line 1: “Yeah I asked ‘em, gee Chief yeah I asked you- I asked them yesterday what they remembered from the Chief’s talk, you know”. Given that the subject of the Colonel’s inquiry in the story, the Chief, is present, Colonel Bellam, is relaying this narrative as a show of solidarity with him and, secondarily, with the others present. Following Schifffrin’s (1987) work with discourse markers, in this case, “you” in the discourse marker “you know”, reflects second person pronoun reference to the Chief, given that Colonel Bellam is directing his remarks to the Chief as reflected in “Yeah I asked ‘em, gee Chief yeah—“. We also know that “you know” is the singular second person pronoun in that Colonel Bellam has already signaled a shared information state between himself and the Chief – the fact of their both having spoken at FTAC. The Chief appears to appreciate this solidarity move and responds in kind both by participating in the construction of the narrative and with humor. In line 5 Chief shows involvement by echoing Colonel Bellam’s phrase from line 1: “What they remembered”. Then, still formulating his narrative, Colonel Bellam phrases the question as it would have been posed to the airmen in FTAC: “What was the Chief’s theme?” In a reciprocal show of involvement and solidarity, Chief offers the self-deprecating remark in line 8, “They said that he had no theme”. Here humor, as discussed above, signals solidarity in the interaction.

In developing the complicating action of his story, Colonel Bellam offers the detail that he “got kind of a blank stare”. Interestingly, this observation could be derisive toward the Chief as it would imply that his talk was unremarkable, or it could

be derisive of the airmen as it would imply that they aren't paying attention to their training. It does, however, establish a representation of the young airmen in the story as naïve or inexperienced or unsophisticated in that they're poorly equipped to respond to a relatively simple question.

When the resolution of the story appears, it is in the form of constructed dialogue. Colonel Bellam says: "Then somebody spoke up and he said==he said 'Well s- Sir he was trying to emphasize that .. u:m==that we need to internalize the lessons we learned in basic training and tech school and just carry them into this course and, into the squadron'". He then offers up as a coda, still in constructed dialogue, his own evaluation of that topic: I said "Aa:h that's, that sounds-- sounds like a good theme".

As Tannen (1989) points out, and as was discussed in Chapter Two, there is little likelihood that the constructed dialogue is a perfectly accurate recounting of the words spoken in the exchange. So, the content of the dialogue is at best a paraphrase of events, tailored to the immediate audience. Via constructed dialogue, Colonel Bellam has re-recreated his approval of a theme of institutional value; that is, military members must carry forward all that they learn in training, to include basic training (new recruits' initial training) and "tech school"(short for "technical school"), which equates to trade school for special skills, e.g., administration, law enforcement, or equipment repair. However, Colonel Bellam's approval of this theme seems to operate on at least three levels. As relayed in constructed dialogue, the theme Colonel Bellam expressed apparently paraphrases what the Chief actually said, given the Chief's confirmation in

line 17: "That's what I talk about at the end". So, referentially, institutional ideals are upheld. The value of those institutional ideals are reinforced in at least two other ways: Colonel Bellam deemed the story worth telling, both as a solidarity move with the Chief, as introduced above, but also because it reinforces for those present the institutional value of carrying forward what we learn; and, Colonel Bellam's re-telling models a theme which is, in general, "tellable" within the institution. The theme of the story itself is consistent with the argument, presented in Chapter One, that when military members form their own understanding of their duties and obligations it is as a result of their intertextual formation, through various forms of training and experience, of those duties.

In "Chief's Theme", then, we see that use of a narrative functions on several levels to reinforce institutional values. In its telling, Colonel Bellam reinforces the solidarity of group membership of all those present. Referentially, the narrative relays the institutional ideal that Air Force members should carry forward all that is learned in training. The institutional ideal is reinforced as a theme which the Colonel generally endorses, as a theme the Colonel deems repeatable to subordinates, and as a model that such institutional ideals should be reinforced from time to time within the institution. Lastly, this narrative also serves as an example to show that gender-relevant characteristics do not always become apparent in analyzing an institutional narrative, as none are apparent here.

Both “Two Wheel Turn” and “Chief’s Theme” reflect ways institutional values, in particular, are reinforced. In “Two Wheel Turn” the female superior, Major Cardiff, mocks SSgt Dale as a show of solidarity while reminding him of the expectations the institution places on his behavior. Her response is clearly in accord with her institutional role as a superordinate, but it is also gender-marked by her use of “I’m sorry”. In “Chief’s Theme” Colonel Bellam reinforces not just the values of the institution, but the value placed on reinforcing those values when the opportunity arises. Together these examples show the importance of narrative in the communication of institutional values as a specific subset of institutional identity. “Two Wheel Turn” also shows that gender can influence the style in which an institutional value is communicated.

### **Narrative and Hierarchy**

In the institutional context, hierarchy may be salient in narrative in a number of ways. A story may, for instance, place its characters in the military hierarchy through the use of “sir” or “ma’am” in constructed dialogue, as examined in Chapter Two. Or, the hierarchy may be invoked in narrative in which characters’ ranks or positions are specified. Since one might go so far as to argue that institutions are, by their very nature, hierarchical, the narratives are likely to reflect that. It is, after all, difficult to identify institutions which are so egalitarian as to have no hierarchy whatsoever. In “Chief’s Theme”, for example, in addition to the interdiscursive reinforcement of the

institutional values as shown by the expectation that new members, "need to internalize the lessons ... learned in basic training and tech school and just carry them into this course and, into the squadron" (line 13), the institutional hierarchy is also clearly reinforced. When Colonel Bellam, for instance, makes the humorous remark in line 9 that his question about the Chief's theme met with a "blank stare" on the part of the young airmen, he reinforces the experiential differences inherent in rank. As all in attendance at the meeting at hand are either officers or senior enlisted members, this differentiation between new members and more experienced ones serves as a measure of solidarity in the narratives he creates. The solidarity derives from the image of new Air Force members -- still wide-eyed -- learning what it means to become "airmen". And, in addition to the hierarchical differences communicated by the great differences in rank, the hierarchy is reinforced by the fact that the Chief and the Colonel are in a position to be purveyors of knowledge to the newest members of the Air Force as guest speakers at FTAC. A similar phenomenon occurs in "Two Wheel Turn" when Major Cardiff makes manifest her position in the hierarchy, and that superordinacy is acknowledged by SSgt Dale in his use of the politeness marker "ma'am".

In her analysis of talk at work, Tannen (1994b) examines what seems to be casual conversation between work colleagues and finds that even in conversation which appears to be personal, professional differences become visible. In one interaction, two men engage in casual talk about their workplace computers. A hierarchical dynamic arises, however, when one of the speakers basically positions himself as a superior by

virtue of having the power to resolve the other's computer issues. In another interaction involving three women Tannen shows that even small-talk regarding one woman's attire demonstrates status differentials in that it is the high-status female who controls the frame of the interaction. Tannen uses these scenarios to illustrate the fact that status and connection are present simultaneously and are interrelated in very complex ways. In these data, the complex interrelationship between status and connection is illustrated in, for example, "Chief's Theme". Those present chuckle knowingly as regards the "blank stare" Colonel Bellam received from the airmen in FTAC, as all who are present to hear the narrative have attained a status which places them well superior to those airmen. However, all can only chuckle knowingly because they'd all experienced the same or similar training much earlier in their careers – thus providing a common basis of experience which instills a sense of solidarity among those attending the meeting, but also between those attending the meeting and the new airmen who are now members of the larger institution of the Air Force.

One could argue that the interplay between narrative and status in an interaction can be a reflection of elements of social class. Such is the case in interactions between officer and enlisted in the military – "officer" and "enlisted" being clear distinctions of social class. Johnstone (2001) points out that there's little work on narrative and social class except to say that, "class is inevitably intertwined with other ways people position themselves socially and are positioned by others" (642). This notion that social

positioning is mutually constructed is reminiscent of the simultaneous presence of status and connection noted in the discussion of Tannen above.

In the following story a male civilian, Mike Richards, and a female Colonel, Colonel Acuff, have met to discuss planning of a community air show and possible military participation in that air show. The two are meeting over lunch at the request, or behest, of one of Colonel Acuff's superiors, General Foot. The two are engaging in small talk, but working their way toward discussing the community air show. At this point, Mr. Richards is telling a story about how he has come to be acquainted with General Foot, who spurred the meeting; or who, given that General Foot ranks well above Colonel Acuff, may be said to have instructed Colonel Acuff to have the meeting. In this excerpt, Colonel Acuff shows engagement by providing mostly backchannel utterances, also known as "encouragers" or "minimal responses", while the civilian tells the story. The two are interacting within the trappings of the institution, as they are conducting a lunch meeting at the Officers' Club on the Air Force base. In line 136, when Richards refers to "anything with that little blue flag with four stars on it" he is making reference to the invitation he had apparently received on the formal stationery used by General officers, on which appears a solid blue flag bearing the number of white stars on it commensurate with their rank: one star for Brigadier General, two stars for Major General, three stars for Lieutenant General, and four stars for General, the highest military rank achievable.

1. Richards: And that's where we met.  
2. And-  
0:02  
3. Acuff: At Laura's house?  
4. Richards: At [Laura's house.  
5. Acuff: [It was a /?personal/\_z  
6. Richards: Right.  
7. And u:h .. you know spoke to General Foot, briefly,  
8. Acuff: Mm-hmm  
9. Richards: Really didn't know what his position was or [anything like that 'cause=  
10. Acuff: [Mm-hmm  
11. Richards: =we were kinda talking social stuff not job stuff.  
12. Acuff: Mm:-hmm mm-hmm.  
13. Richards: And then we received an invitation.  
14. To come over for a dinner: and a- and a tour of the .. one of the  
command centers and,  
15. and I thought,  
16. you know we'd get over here and there'd be two or three hundred people  
here.  
17. It was six couples.  
18. Acuff: Hmm!  
19. Richards: That's where I met General Brill: and .. and Gary Harrier and um  
you know Heidi and .. you-know Lisa and all those folks.  
20. Acuff: Mm-hmm mm-hmm.  
21. Richards: And @@  
22. But this is-  
0:02  
23. I mean ih ih things had just leaped a whole order of magnitude in my  
estimation as far as what was going on over there.  
24. Acuff: Mm-hmm mm-hmm.  
25. Richards: So when we got home I said .. to Mavis,  
26. "If we ever get anything with that little blue flag with four [stars on it?"  
27. Acuff: [@@@  
28. Richards: @@\_z @@  
29. Acuff: "Gotta go."  
30. Richards: "We gotta go."  
31. So u:h this is about our third trip over /?here/\_z  
32. Acuff: That's neat!  
33. Richards: Yea:h.

What makes this story particularly interesting is that it is a narrative which affirms the prestige of the executive ranks of the military – the General officers – but which is told by a civilian (who, elsewhere in the interaction, remarked that he had served in the Army for a short while as a young man). At its surface, and referentially, this narrative relays a story about the relative social class of General officers who, based more upon the requirements and fringe benefits of their positions than upon their salaries, are able to host a variety of guests for various functions, and in an impressive fashion. Mr. Richards relays how impressed he was with that which he perceived to be under the General's purview when, after telling of a tour of a command center, he states in line 23: "I mean ih ih things had just léaped a whole órder of magnitude in my estimation as far as what was going on over there".

These perceptions of the military as relayed by a non-military member provide important reflections upon the gendered nature of the military as an institution. Recall from Chapter One that key in Lakoff's (1975) early observations regarding language and the sexes are social divisions which align women with the domestic sphere and men with the world of paid work and influence, and thereby social power. It is clear that the General officers present in Mr. Richards' story – General Foot, General Brill and Gary Harrier – have attained social power. More importantly, they are men who have attained social power within the institution of the American military which, as I argued in Chapter One, is veritably synonymous with the definitive traits characteristic of

American masculine identity. By way of contrast, all the spouses in Mr. Richards' story are referred to by first name – Laura, Heidi, Lisa, and Mavis. They seem to have no identity or social role other than that which is in the “domestic sphere”, i.e., partnership with those who have full names and titles in his discourse. While some may be inclined to attribute such a delineation as a generational distinction, there may be much more to it. As Kiesling (2004) discusses, the study of masculinity, as opposed to the study of men, affords examination of “A collection of traits that a culture tends to associate with *men*” – traits which describe an ideal masculinity which no individual man can actually achieve. Kiesling further argues that a study of masculinity, rather than of men, “allows for the study of institutions that are not necessarily made up exclusively of men but may be described as masculine” (229-30). Mr. Richards' narrative, “Four Stars”, demonstrates the association of social power with the highest ranking persons in a masculine institution – specifically, high ranking *male* officers in a masculine institution.

Though Richards is having lunch with a very high ranking person who is most likely the highest ranking woman on the base, it is his association with the even higher ranking military individuals, all male, which is dramatized in the narrative he tells. Following Kiesling's line of thought, in Mr. Richards' story, the men who have attained the highest military rank, and its trappings, represent, “a powerful ideal of masculinity that is not always or completely experienced by individual men” (232). Richards, who is only exposed to this “powerful ideal of masculinity” at its margins -- as an invitee to

a social event -- is notably impressed by the ideal of masculinity he has witnessed. Colonel Acuff understands what it means to be impressed by rank. Richards indicates the high point of his story via constructed dialogue with his wife, Mavis ("If we ever get anything with that little blue flag with four stars on it?"). Colonel Acuff, who could not have been privy to how Mavis would have replied to such a statement, signals her understanding of his point by filling in the reply, "Gotta go!", which Richards echoes in concurrence in line 30 "We gotta go." In this narrative, social power relations are exhibited both in Mr. Richards' regard for the Generals' social ranking in a masculine institution and the symbolic distance from that power of the women in the story, as signaled by their lack of title or individual identity. Colonel Acuff, too, has her own understanding of the power relations at work, which she signals in her response to Richards' story. However, herein lies the critical difference: for Richards, it may be argued that power relations are likely a construct of social norms and masculinity; for Colonel Acuff, the power relations may be an institutional construct with little or no connection to gender identity.

In "Four Stars", then, the institutional hierarchy is acknowledged and honored from outside the institution by Mr. Richards, and Colonel Acuff is complicit in that construction of the institution given her acceptance and reinforcement of his story. In the following excerpt a male and female flight commander, Major Black and Major Eichendorf, respectively, reinforce the hierarchy of the institution from within it. They are engaged in "troubles talk" --commiserating over decisions made by their superiors

regarding the aircrews' schedules and the tasks, or jobs, assigned to individual officers. Major Black has been advocating for desirable schedules and positions for his peers and subordinates, yet he and his superiors apparently disagree on some points. In the excerpt, Major Black voices his obligation to follow orders (the metaphor for which is to "salute smartly") despite his disagreement with the leadership's decisions. This particular recording picks up immediately at line 1 of "Salute Smartly", however the context becomes clearer in later portions of the recorded discussion.

#### "Salute Smartly"

1. Black: What I want you to understand is u:h there are certain things that I have been sort of going back and forward that I'm just getting face shots over and losing?
2. Eichendorf: OK
3. Black: U:h .. and- but at the end of it I may disagree wholeheartedly with the management but at the end of the day **they're the bosses and, what they say=**
4. Eichendorf: Sure
5. Black: **=goes and I'm gonna salute smartly and make it [happen kinda thing.**
6. Eichendorf: [Sure.

In line 1 of "Salute Smartly" Major Black refers to the fact that he's been "going back and forward" meaning he's been mediating between his peers and their superiors, and he's getting "face shots" (as in "slaps in the face") as he does so. It is unclear whether the "face shots" are coming from the superiors, or subordinates, or both. While in a different workplace within the Air Force it would be unthinkable to take a "face shot" from a subordinate, it's less unthinkable in this combat aviation community. Flying

units are comprised mostly of pilots, and a few support staff. Being mostly pilots, all are officers within one or two ranks of each other. So, while there remains substantial rank difference between a Lieutenant (the lowest two officer ranks) and Lieutenant Colonel (who has 18 or more years in service), the bulk of pilots in this unit are captains with a few majors. Thus, being of the same ranks and ages, the hierarchical differences in such a unit are not as evident as in the units in which Major Cardiff and Lieutenant Colonel Drum operate. Interestingly, Major Black specifies that in addition to the fact that he's getting "face shots", he's also "losing" (line 1). Implying that taking a "face shot" would be more acceptable if there were a "win" involved.

Particularly in conjunction with Major Black's invocation of the "win/lose" metaphor, we see in this exchange a masculine display which is consistent with literature that attests to men's hierarchical view of the world (Tannen 1990; Kiesling 1996, 1997). This hierarchical view of the world is a gender ideology which is consistent with hierarchy as an ideology, perhaps the prevailing ideology, in the military. The male Major Black points out to the female Major Eichendorf in lines 3 and 5, "they're the bosses and what they say goes and I'm gonna salute smartly and make it happen". However, he's not willing to completely sacrifice his own identity and autonomy, stating in line 3, "I may disagree wholeheartedly with the management, but at the end of the day they're the bosses". This statement may also, of course, be a solidarity move – illustrating in a form of "troubles talk" that Major Black tried to speak up for his people, but "lost". The following excerpt occurs just a few seconds later in

the same discussion. Again, Major Black asserts the position that he doesn't agree with "management" (lines 3 above and 12 below), but "their decision goes" (line 16).

7. Black: I don't understand the disconnect,  
8. u:m and I've said so much,  
9. and a:h .. but the answer hasn't changed.  
10. So there are certain things,  
11. I just want you to understand  
12. **That's just a couple examples whe:re .. u:m .. my opinion and the  
management's don't necessarily agree,  
13. and that's fine,  
14. we're not always gonna agree,**  
15. Eichendorf: [Uh-huh  
16. **Black: [But their decision goes, kinda thing.**  
17. But I want you to know that I am trying to advocate Y'ALL,  
18. Eichendorf: Yeah  
19. Black: u:h and maybe not getting where I'd want to be .. um .. so.  
20. Eichendorf: Well I appreciate it.  
21. The one thing I think ah I'm not speaking for myself I'm just saying in  
general,  
23. u:m .. A lot of people don't see consistency they don't understand  
what's going on.  
24. Black: Yeah and I agree.

Having stated his obligation to his superiors, however, Major Black quickly moves to connect to his peers and subordinates, saying, "But I want you to know that I am trying to advocate Y'ALL" (line 17) while acknowledging in line 19, "maybe not getting where I'd want to be."

Interestingly, in both 1-6 and 7-23 Major Black exhibits consistent hesitation when he asserts that he disagrees with management, marked by continuation pauses such as "uh" and false starts such as "and- but" ("U:h .. and- but at the end of it I may

disagree”; “.. **u:m** .. my opinion and the management’s don’t necessarily agree”).

Major Black begins with “and” (“**and- but** at the end of it I may disagree”) which indicates continuation of his talk, then quickly signals the contrast between his opinion and that of his superiors by marking the contrast with “but”. His hesitations (“U:h” and “u:m”) may indicate reticence to expressing his disagreement with his superiors, or they may mark the fact that he “lost” the argument. However, Major Black is fluent when reciting the fact that he is obliged to do as his superiors tell him, saying in 3-5 “they’re the bosses and what they say goes and I’m gonna salute smartly and make it happen kinda thing” and in 14 and 16 “we’re not always gonna agree, but their decision goes, kinda thing.”

The speaker, Major Black, is in a quandary: he must show respect for the hierarchy yet also show solidarity with his peers and subordinates by pointing out that he stood up for their interests. However, the fact that he makes his case on behalf of his peers and subordinates and doesn’t get his way, i.e., loses the argument, (“**u:h** and **maybe** not getting where I’d want to be .. **um** .. so”) causes him to lose face, a point we might infer from the marks of hesitation, “uh” and “um” and the hedge, “maybe”. This looks like a lose-lose situation in that Major Black has acknowledged that he doesn’t agree with his superiors, and must at the same time acknowledge that he wasn’t able to win his point for his peers and subordinates. It is, however, the requirement that he must “salute smartly” and see to it that “their decision goes” that allows him to argue that the situation is beyond his control and thereby save face. The entire interaction,

then, supports the ideology which requires obedience to the hierarchy, even if one disagrees with superiors' decisions. In "Salute Smartly" Major Black is talking to a peer and acknowledges he must serve his superiors, even though he doesn't agree with them.

"Four Stars" and "Salute Smartly" both demonstrate the salience of hierarchy in institutional narrative. In hierarchical organizations, such as the military, invocations of rank discursively reinforce the importance of the superior/subordinate dynamic. Interestingly, the hierarchical dynamic drives the use of "ma'am" and "sir" I explored in Chapter One. The hierarchical structure also mirrors the ritual competitiveness linguists have identified in the interactions of boys and men. It is, therefore, one of the aspects of the military which genders the institution masculine. Specifically, in "Four Stars" we see the esteem a male civilian attaches to high military rank and in "Salute Smartly" we see a military male expressing his obligation to be obedient to the hierarchy despite his disagreement with superiors.

### **Narrative and Tradition**

Recalling Linde's (2001) observation that narrative is used in conducting the daily work of an institution or as a tool of institutional memory and reproduction, this study differentiates between those aspects of an institution which are official and those which are unofficial. Official goals are stated, for example, in vision or mission statements, policy statements, or professional oaths. Aspects of institutional identity which are unofficial are largely matters of tradition or code – often orchestrated to

perpetuate a group's mystique or image, whether it is one of bravado or humility. In this study, I will address narratives which are unofficial, but sanctioned. That is, the narratives of tradition and mystique I examine do not perpetuate actions or attitudes which would not be sanctioned by the institution. While I do not address them in this study as none appear in my data, narratives which are institutionally unofficial and perpetuate actions or attitudes which are not only not sanctioned but are also punishable according to an institution's policies are worthy of study. I am thinking here of narratives which may perpetuate "traditions" rooted in bias which, though not officially condoned, may go unchecked if the narratives persist.

In the narratives collected in these data the stories perpetuating mystique and tradition were, perhaps understandably, most often associated with the combat community. Below, I will examine three such narratives. The first narrative occurs outside the community of combat aviation but within the community of Air Force aviation, showing the ways in which communities of practice leak across boundaries and influence one another. The second and third are narratives told by a female combat aviator within the combat aviation community.

In "Fighter Guys" the female Colonel Acuff, who is the male Colonel Irish's supervisor, is discussing with Colonel Irish the possibility of his being selected to be a Wing Commander (a promotion for Colonel Irish into the same position as Colonel Acuff, but at a different location). Colonel Acuff has spoken to an individual who is familiar with the process of selection for Wing Command and is relaying the contents of

that discussion to Colonel Irish. So, there are actually two narratives at work: Colonel Acuff's story about her discussion regarding Colonel Irish's promotability, and Colonel Irish's narrative regarding his experience at Lakenheath which affirms cultural norms. ACC, or Air Combat Command, is the large organizational element under which all combat-related units are organized. AMC, or Air Mobility Command, is the large organizational element under which most non-combat-related air missions, such as cargo transport and ISR, or Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, aircraft are organized. An "A-10" is an attack aircraft with the close-air-support mission of attacking enemy tanks, equipment, and troops which are at the front lines, close to friendly tanks, equipment and troops. An "F-16" is an attack aircraft with a similar air-to-ground mission, though it attacks equipment and targets anywhere, including far behind enemy lines. An "F-15" is an air-to-air fighter so it basically engages in "dogfights", which are close quarters, one-on-one fights between two fighter aircraft. Though dogfights rarely, if ever, occur anymore, these fighter pilots are generally regarded as, or at least regard themselves as, the most elite fighter pilots. The fact that they regard themselves as elite, though they almost never engage in a real fight, is consistent with masculine identity construction. As discussed in Chapter One, construction of masculine identity only requires demonstration of the willingness to fight, and the expectation that one won't actually have to.

#### "Fighter Guys"

1. Acuff: Now because of your ACC background,

2. I said "What's the chance of him being an ISR .. Wing Commander."  
 3. You know and- that ACC would, grab you: and .. and  
 4. Irish: Put me /?/ <sub>z</sub>  
 5. Acuff: Yeah.  
 6. The fact that you don't have experience in the weapon system .. isn't ..  
 that significant at least in the AMC culture.  
 7. Now ACC's a little different.  
 8. They .. you know uh you would never see a: an A-10 guy come take an  
 F-16 wing.  
 9. Irish: That's just- it would be a- it would be a real anomaly. <sub>z</sub>  
 10. Acuff: Yea:h.  
 11. Irish: It was- though I was at Lakenheath General Martin- Speedy Martin,  
 12. came to Lakenheath  
 13. an F-15 guy,  
 14. an air-to-air guy that came to take over an air-to-ground Wing  
 and it was- <sub>z</sub>  
 15. Acuff: Oh interesting.  
 16. Irish: It was heresy.  
 17. It didn't last very long:  
 18. For different reasons.  
 19. But uh, oh it was- truly that was an earth-shattering event.  
 20. Acuff: The culture I don't think is quite the same in the ISR community.  
 21. 'Cause what goes for the fighter commander doesn't necessarily go-  
 22. [You know<sub>z</sub> 'cause [yóu've had .. fighter guys in essence come into the=  
 23. Irish: [/?/ [Yes Ma'am.  
 24. Acuff: =ISR community late in life and- so d- so there's that possibility but um  
 25. He said that .. really ACC is a more competitive world if you will,  
 26. than AMC .. Wing Command.

Broadly speaking, in "Fighter Guys" the female Colonel Acuff begins a narrative about a discussion, but then reinforces through evaluation from outside the story world the "competitive" and organizational norms of combat aviation units as communities of practice within the Air Force. In her evaluation she reifies the institutional distinctions between non-combat (AMC) communities and the combat (ACC) community when she points out to Colonel Irish, "The fact that you don't have experience in the weapon

system .. isn't .. that significant at least in the AMC culture" in line 6. In lines 7 and 8, then, she points out the rivalries between the combat aircraft communities by differentiating between the A-10 (close-air-support) community and the F-16 (air-to-ground) community saying, "Now ACC's a little different. They .. you know uh you would néver see a: an A-10 guy come take an F-16 wing". The male Colonel Irish follows suit with a narrative that perpetuates the institutional distinction not just between combat and non-combat communities, but even among different "fighter" communities.

Colonel Acuff, in advocating for Colonel Irish, had inquired about the possibility that he would be considered for command of a unit other than a combat unit, in this case an "Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance", or "ISR", unit. The reason is that the ISR community is less "competitive" for earning command and promotions. This evaluation differentiates between the combatants and the non-combatants. Colonel Irish reinforces the institutional distinction between combat units when he relays the story about his experience at Lakenheath, a U.S. Air Force base in England, where he witnessed, "an air-to-air guy that came to take over an air-to-ground Wing" (line 14). He adds the evaluation in line 16 that such a violation of the institutional tradition was "heresy". Obviously, such an assignment was not against official Air Force policy, or it wouldn't have happened. Rather, the distinctions in the combat community are a matter of mystique and tradition, thus perpetuating a bias

against non-combatant personnel as commanders regardless of the leadership potential or capabilities they have demonstrated.

Interestingly, though she's well aware of the institutional distinctions between combat and non-combat communities, Colonel Acuff returns to her recounting of her discussion regarding Colonel Irish's career to attribute the nature of Air Combat Command's (ACC's) competitiveness to the words of the third, and unnamed party in this discussion:

25.           He said that .. réally ACC is a more competitive world if you will,  
26.           than AMC .. Wing Command.

Here, Colonel Acuff distances herself from the competitive world of "Air Combat Command" by attributing that judgment to the person with whom she spoke.

This scenario is also an illustration of the fact that the narratives supervisors relay to subordinates reinforce the institutional biases of the promotion and command selection systems. Clearly, reinforcing bias is not Colonel Acuff's intent. She has inquired as to the best way to support her subordinate, Colonel Irish, in his desire to be selected for Wing Command – an extremely important measure of success and capability. Colonel Acuff's motivation in relaying the narrative regarding the selection process is to see to the best interests of her subordinate; or, as Johnstone (1993) might argue, her motivation is community-oriented. The stock Colonel Acuff puts in the narrative she relays, however, has the practical effect of reinforcing the "mystique" of the fighter jet community and its preferential treatment. Ironically, Colonel Acuff perpetuates the very system which kept her from having command of a combat wing

(thereby limiting her upward potential), because as a female, Colonel Acuff would not have been eligible to fly combat aircraft early in her career. This restriction is signaled by the repeated use of the term “guy” by both Acuff and Irish (“A-10 guy” in line 8, “F-15 guy” in line 13, “air-to-air guy” in line 14 and “fighter guys” in line 22) in this short excerpt, which, in the context of their discussion, refers specifically to males. Women may now fly combat aircraft, but the first to fly fighter aircraft have not yet risen to the rank and longevity which would make them eligible for the high level of Wing Command.

In “Fighter Guys”, then, we see an example of a narrative which is doing “work” for a member of the institution. That is, Colonel Acuff literally uses narrative to give career guidance to Colonel Irish. In so doing, Colonel Irish and Colonel Acuff mutually construct narrative which perpetuates a “line of succession” which is clearly traditional and which maintains the mystique of the fighter-jet community – a community which, at the levels of leadership they are discussing, remains all-male.

In the next story, “Gear Check”, the female Major Eichendorf, a combat aircraft pilot, and male Lieutenant Brown have been discussing incidents of landing gear failure due to mechanical error. They then turn to a narrative comparing the more excusable circumstance of mechanical failure to a pilot’s embarrassing and inexcusable failure to put the landing gear down before landing. Lieutenant Brown, who has not yet attended Air Force Undergraduate Pilot Training, or “UPT”, has relayed a narrative regarding a landing gear failure he witnessed at a local non-military airport. Major Eichendorf

comments that he now has a story to tell when he goes to UPT. She then relays a landing gear story based upon her own experience at UPT and the experience of a "buddy". The RSU is the "Runway Supervisory Unit".

"Gear Check"

1. Eichendorf: But you know for somebody that just forgets to put the gear down .. @
2. N- now you'll have a story for when you go to pilot training↑ and they have people in the RSU,
3. they have this- people in this little shack in between the runways↑
4. And they always check for gear.
5. Brown: R- that's what Ryan was saying.
6. [/?/ and they'll make you /?/,
7. Eichendorf: [Yeah
8. Brown: on the radio too,
9. "Gear down and locked"?
10. Eichendorf: [Yeah.
11. Brown: [Something like that?
12. Eichendorf: "Gear down and locked" and then- 'cause I had to sit out there a couple times
13. And you have to go out there and look,
14. and every time- final you have to check the configuration.
15. And there's some guys that forget to put the gear down.
16. Brown: <exhales as laughter>
17. Eichendorf: And ah .. yeah.
18. Brown: <softly> @
19. Eichendorf: It was funny- funny story I'll tell ya.
20. Um .. one of my buddies was out there.
21. A:nd I guess there was some Turkish↑ uh students in the class.
22. So: he brought one of his Turkish counterparts in case there was a language barrier or something like that.
23. So these guys were going out to do solo.
24. So you're out there and they're flying solo,
25. and uh he was coming in for his first landing.
26. And so he comes off the perch,
27. and then ah he comes in and,
28. my buddy looks and realizes "Hey he doesn't have his gear down."
29. Brown: Mm-hmm.

30. Eichendorf: So he said u:m you know.  
 31. I don't know what the call sign was but "Pass on one, gear check."  
 32. And he go:es <imitating accent> "Roger!"  
 33. Pass on one gear down!  
 34. You know "touch and go."  
 35. [Like that.  
 36. Brown: [Yeah.  
 37. /?Yeah/ [?/.  
 38. Eichendorf: He's looking and he's like .. you know "Gear check."  
 39. And you know he's coming i:n you know how- you know final's not  
 that long,  
 40. and uh he goes <imitating accent> "Roger!"  
 41. Pass on one gear down."  
 42. And he's like .. "Pass on one, gear check!"  
 43. You know he didn't know what to do!  
 44. And he's looking at his- y- you know the- the other Turkish guy he  
 goes,  
 45. "You know t- uh- he's not putting his gear down!"  
 46. You know what do I need to say?" or something like that.  
 47. So the gu@y guy just reaches over takes the the: uh the: uh radio and  
 he says,  
 48. <imitating accent> "Achmed!"  
 49. Put your fucking gear down!"  
 50. Brown: @@@  
 51. Eichendorf: @@@  
 52. /?He goes/ <sing-song> ka-goonk!  
 53. @ And he looks over the gear comes do:wn @@  
 54. Brown: @@ O:h boy!@  
 55. Eichendorf: @@@  
 56. Brown: @@ What do I say? @@  
 57. Eichendorf: @@ Yeah right! @@  
 58. Brown: @@ O:h wow @@  
 59. Eichendorf: @ But that's a true story!  
 60. I was just like oh my goodness.  
 61. Brown: @  
 62. Eichendorf: That was kinda funny.

In this colorful narrative we see Major Eichendorf connecting to Lieutenant Brown in several respects, including the use of detail, incorporation of "you know" as a marker of

the information state of talk within the participation framework, and constructed dialogue.

In her narrative, Major Eichendorf incorporates elements of detail which give even someone from outside the aviation community a clear image of the events at hand. The same details give her listener, Lieutenant Brown, a sense of involvement. She describes the “RSU” as “this little shack in between the runways” (line 3) in which sit people who “always check for gear” (line 4) – in this case a clear reference to landing gear, since that had been the subject of talk. She then connects this activity to herself (“‘cause I had to sit out there a couple times”) and to her listener, (“And **you** have to go out there and look, and every time- final **you** have to check the configuration”). As the story progresses, Major Eichendorf continues to involve her listener in the information state of talk, in this case the complicating action, by connecting him to the participation framework with frequent use of the marker, “you know”. As she approaches the resolution of the story, “you know” appears ten times in the space of eighteen lines:

28. my buddy looks and realizes “Hey he doesn’t have his gear down.”  
29. Brown: Mm-hmm.  
30. Eichendorf: So he said u:m **you know**.  
31. I don’t know what the call sign was but “Pass on one, gear check.”  
32. And he go:es <imitating accent> “Roger!  
33. Pass on one gear down!  
34. **You know** “touch and go.”  
35. [Like that.  
36. Brown: [Yeah.  
37. /?/Yeah /?/.  
38. Eichendorf: He’s looking and he’s like .. **you know** “Gear check.”  
39. And **you know** he’s coming i:n **you know** how- **you know** final’s not

- that long,  
40. and uh he goes <imitating accent> "Roger!  
41. Pass on one gear down."  
42. And he's like .. "Pass on one, gear check!"  
43. **You know** he didn't know what to do!  
44. And he's looking at his- y- **you know** the- the other Turkish guy he goes,  
45. "**You know** t- uh- he's not putting his gear down!  
46. **You know** what do I need to say?" or something like that.

The constructed dialogue Major Eichendorf incorporates further involves the listener with its sense of urgency and re-creation of the event which, recall, she's relaying second-hand, and adds additional detail such as the imitation of middle eastern accents. Major Eichendorf's attention to detail, use of constructed dialogue, and creation of a sense of involvement in the story's telling are all consistent with Johnstone's (1993) finding that "women's stories include more details about people than do men's, more reported talk, and different ways of talking about talk" (67).

The topicality of Major Eichendorf's story is tied to the notion of landing gear failure. Note, however, that it is also a lesson to an aspiring pilot as to what constitutes a recountable story. Major Eichendorf affirms that the lieutenant's own story about a pilot's failure to lower the gear for landing is worthy of re-telling, saying in line 2, "N-now you'll have a story for when you go to pilot training". And, she goes on to tell a narrative about landing gear noting in line 19, as she provides the abstract to the narrative, that it's a "funny" story she is about to relay, thereby indicating that humor is one criteria for a tellable story.

As Wenger (1998) points out in his discussion of the uses of narrative within communities of practice, “old-timers deliver the past and offer the future, in the form of narratives and participation both. Each has a story to tell. In addition, the practice itself gives life to these stories, and the possibility of mutual engagement offers a way to enter these stories through one’s own experience” (156). In “Gear Check” Major Eichendorf, the “old-timer” in this case, offers the lieutenant the opportunity for mutual engagement in the pilots’ community of practice by affirming the worthiness of his narrative and providing him with another considered worthy of the community.

The characteristics of the story Major Eichendorf tells are consistent with the norms Coates (2003) identified in talk in all-male groups. First, not only is the story world populated by males, Major Eichendorf is relaying to a male a story told to her by a male friend. In addition, the humor in the story turns upon a taboo term when the speaker in the story world says in lines 47-49, “So the gu@y guy just reaches over takes the the: uh the: uh radio and he says, <imitating accent> “Achmed! Put your fucking gear down!” Interestingly, Coates found that in her corpus of all-male, mixed-sex, and all-female interactions, use of taboo terms differed markedly among the three categories. In particular, forms of the word *fuck* were six times more likely to appear in all-male interaction than in mixed-sex interaction. Coates goes on to point out that swearing and taboo language among men is meant to demonstrate toughness and manhood. Major Eichendorf’s identity is removed, in a sense, from use of the word since she is relaying “verisimilitude of direct speech” (Coates 2003: 46) in what was, in

the story world, an all-male conversation. However, women's lower likelihood of using variations of the word *fuck* may make the story even funnier coming from a woman.

It is no surprise that the story worlds Major Eichendorf knows are male story worlds. Although women made up 19.9% of the Air Force's 365,000 members in 2004, of the Air Force's 13,754 pilots only 562 of them were women; and, just a portion of the 562 female pilots are combat pilots. So, whether or not Major Eichendorf perceives the taboo language in the story as conveying a gender identity for herself, she passes along to a male pilot a "tellable" story which, in its use of the taboo term, will help him perpetuate both his own masculinity and the mystique of the flying community.

In the third story I examine in this discussion of the role of narrative in the perpetuation and maintenance of the traditions and mystique of a community of practice, Major Eichendorf relays a story based on her experience flying cargo aircraft in Bosnia during the war in the Balkans. She is speaking with a male of the same rank, Major Wesson. They have discussed the fact that some pilots, though well-trained and experienced, never get coveted combat flying time because of aircraft scheduling and largely the "luck of the draw". Some pilots, however, end up flying in combat almost immediately upon graduating from their flying training. "MQT" is the acronym for Mission Qualification Training, or, the training a pilot requires in order to fly a particular type of aircraft. Major Eichendorf relays the following story about a pilot whose first mission after completing MQT (i.e. after "getting checked out" in line 120) involved some harrowing circumstances.

"Bosnia"

1. Eichendorf: Oh
2.           It's just amazing.
3.           I had a guy um .. ih- he did MQT?
4.           Fifty hours in the jet?
5.   Wesson: Mm-hmm.
6. Eichendorf: Took him to Bosnia.
7.   Wesson: Yeah.
8. Eichendorf: His first flight after he- getting checked out was in Bosnia.
9.           He had a compound emergency,
10.   Wesson: <softly> @
11. Eichendorf: rada:r,
12.   Wesson: [@
13. Eichendorf: [lost the rada:r,
14.           we lost an engi:ne,
15.           leaking fuel,
16.           he fiddled with the switches 'cause he was all nervous,
17.           we had a h- stuck hot mike,
18.           then ah we had a rapid de-compression,
19.           the lock on the
20.   Wesson: So this was you.
21. Eichendorf: Oh yeah I'm flying and he's over here going <gasps>
22.   Wesson:                       Yeah.                       Yeah
23. Eichendorf: And a:h, he no kidding panicked so bad?
24.           I had the en- the navigator who's a great-Chuck.
25.           I'll never- Chuck Smith I'll never forget him.
26.           He- I looked at him and he, knew exactly what I was thinking 'cause I  
              had a great crew.
27.           And he looked over his shoulder and I said "OK.
28.           Fly this altitude,
29.           fly this air speed,
30.           and fly this [heading."
31.   Wesson:                       [Yeah.
32. Eichendorf: And then Chuck backed him up and I said "Chuck, you have the  
              radios."
33.           I said.
34.           I told my co-pilot "I don't want you to talk on the radio,
35.           you just do those three things."
36.           He was like @@
37.   Wesson: @@
38. Eichendorf: @@@

39. It was so funny!  
40. That's all he could handle.

The contents of this story fit a well-known narrative template known to most Air Force members, and certainly well-known among all aviation communities, the “There I Was...” story. As a narrative type that has clearly been intertextually perpetuated, one may argue that such narratives fit the narrative template, but, reciprocally, that the template shapes the narrative’s telling, or both. A recent article on an aviation-centered worldwide web site defined the “There I Was” story this way: “Anyone who has been in aviation for any length of time has heard his or her share of 'There I Was' stories. They are most often about a superior display of airmanship in the face of insurmountable odds. Most are apocryphal. They all include an element of *Žlan* (sic) [*élan*] on the part of the intrepid aviator” (Koch). Consistent with Johnstone’s findings regarding the tendency for men’s narratives to relay themselves in the role of protagonist in a story of contest, “There I was” stories almost always relay some dangerous situation which the (male) pilot overcomes. Interestingly, though the content of Major Eichendorf’s story qualifies as a “There I was” story, that is not how she has framed it. Rather, she is telling the story of a co-pilot who joined her aircrew fresh out of flying training, only to find himself overwhelmed with a mission in which several things have gone wrong at once.

Major Eichendorf starts her story by transferring the role of protagonist to the co-pilot about whom she speaks, saying in lines 3-9, “I had **a guy** um .. ih- **he** did

MQT? Fifty hours in the jet? Took **him** to Bosnia. . . . **His** first flight after **he-** getting checked out was in Bosnia. **He** had a compound emergency.” When Major Eichendorf injects herself into the scenario, she is not a lone individual in the face of multiple malfunctions, rather she is part of “we”: “**we** lost an engine” (line 14); “**we** had a h-stuck hot mike” (line 17); and, “**we** had a rapid de-compression” (line 18). Perhaps because this does not fit the schema with which the male Major Wesson is familiar, i.e., the teller as protagonist in a narrative of achievement or contest, he must state for clarification in line 20, “So this was you.” At this point Major Eichendorf shifts into a frame recognizable to the male listener: the “There I was” frame. Having switched frames, she says in (line 21), “Oh yeah **I’m** flying.” As she goes on, she signals high points in the narrative using constructed dialogue in lines 27 to 35 relaying, “I said ‘OK. Fly this altitude, fly this air speed, and fly this heading’. . . . And then Chuck backed him up and I said ‘Chuck, you have the radios,’ I said, I told my co-pilot ‘I don’t want you to talk on the radio, you just do those three things’.” Within the constructed dialogue, Major Eichendorf is the aircraft commander who keeps a cool head and decisively delegates tasks under difficult conditions. Still, again consistent with Johnstone’s (1993) findings, she attributes the effort to the “community”, paying compliments to her navigator, Chuck, and her “great crew” (lines 24-26).

We see, then, in “Fighter Guys”, “Landing Gear” and “Bosnia” narratives and narrative forms which are used to perpetuate the traditional roles of pilots and flying narratives in the Air Force. The narratives recount the rivalry between types of fighter

pilots and the requirements for the tellability of flying “war stories” in the community of practice in which flying is the mutual endeavor. So, whereas these narratives have important functions in perpetuating traditions of the institution, like career progression and humorous events, in some cases they may wittingly or unwittingly perpetuate bias against members due to non-combatant status and, in the case of very senior ranks and positions, due to sex. That is, given the preferential treatment of combat pilots as demonstrated in the narratives, it will be awhile before women combat pilots, like Major Eichendorf, will be senior enough to rise to the highest ranks of the military.

### **Personal Narrative in an Institutional Setting**

Much work regarding institutional narrative defines the category by differentiating institutional participation from, say, personal interaction. Drew and Heritage (1992:4) note that interaction is institutional in that participants’ “institutional or professional identities are somehow made relevant to the work activities in which they are engaged”. They go on to delineate the characteristics of institutional talk, noting that institutional interaction involves: an orientation by at least one of the participants to some core goal, task or identity (or set of them) associated with the institution in question, special and particular constraints on what contributions are allowable to the business at hand, and, association with inferential frameworks and procedures that are particular to specific institutional contexts (22). However, to differentiate between narratives of personal identity and narratives of institutional

identity implies a clear dichotomy. Common sense dictates that, assuming an eight-hour work day, those in institutional work environments do not spend a third of their working lives clearly separating their personal life from their work life. It is normal, then, to assume overlaps between institutional and personal identity in community members' interactions. It may be that in addition to institutional narratives which reinforce institutional ideals, traditions, and hierarchy, there exist narratives told in an institutional environment, in which the narratives' connections to the institution are less obvious or not conspicuously invoked, but still perhaps formative of personal and professional identity.

Distinguishing between institutional and personal identities is largely a subjective determination because of the difficulty in making a delineation between the personal the professional. This may be even more difficult when, as is the case here, the researcher is not present when the samples were recorded. The following excerpt, for example, does not fit the definition of "institutional narrative" provided above by Drew and Heritage in that it is not oriented toward an institutional goal or task, is not subject to a constraint on the interaction, nor does it seem to fit an institutional inferential framework. However, Major Eichendorf and Major Wesson would not be interacting were they not in the work environment, which they invoke in the narrative's coda. Further, even though I was not present for the recording, I know that they are on an Air Force base (with its order, familiarity and symbolism), wearing their flight uniforms (important symbols of their membership in their community of practice) and

they're walking to their cars to drive to the flight simulator to fly a "mission" as a crew of two. As they walk to their cars, Major Wesson here continues a narrative regarding what he had done while "on-line" at home on his personal computer the night before the interaction. Having already remarked on the purchase of airline tickets and a National Guard Almanac, next in his list of purchases are some lollipops he purchased for his wife, Bonnie, who is experiencing morning sickness.

"Lollipops"

1. Eichendorf: So:z
2. Wesson: I- I did that.
3. I ordered Bonnie some of these .. lollipops,
4. don't ask me why.
5. Eichendorf: For-
6. Wesson: We:'re- uh morning sickness.
7. I don't know what they have in them but they're supposed to be all the traditional nausea remedies.
8. Eichendorf: Oh!
9. Wesson: Like a:h they had mint and I- I haven't heard that one so much.
10. But they got ginger and they've got uh-
11. Eichendorf: Ginger's good.
12. That's good for [her.
13. Wesson: [Lavender.
14. Eichendorf: Lavender's good for um relaxing.
15. Wesson: Yeah.
16. That's probably [what it is.
17. Eichendorf: [It's like a- a scent for um relaxing.
18. Wesson: But they got it in a lollipop.
19. So I said "OK!"
20. Eichendorf: Lavender, in a lollipop.
21. Wesson: I know I'm- I'm curious to [see how it turns out.
22. Eichendorf: [I'm curious.
23. Wesson: But I ordered her a bunch of those 'cause [she's /?/
24. Eichendorf: [Can I buy one from ya? @
25. Wesson: I'll just give you one.
26. Eichendorf: @ You should just pass them out at work.

27. Wesson: I know.
28.               <raised pitch> "Here!
29.               Lavender lollipop!"
30. Eichendorf: "Sir relax."
31. Wesson: @@
32. Eichendorf: "Lavender"
33. Wesson: <very low pitch> "Chill."
34. Eichendorf: Yeah ch- @

The narrative turns on Major Wesson's report that he "ordered Bonnie some of these .. lollipops" (line 3). Interestingly, regarding the purchase of the lollipops, he remarks in line 4, "don't ask me why." With the comment, "don't ask me why", Major Wesson almost seems to be distancing himself from his action – perhaps because it isn't a topic he'd likely raise, or feel as comfortable raising, were the other interactant a male. He receives positive indications from Major Eichendorf who, simply by responding with "For-" in line 5 and "Oh!" in line 8, indicating understanding and perhaps enthusiasm regarding the news of Major Wesson's impending fatherhood, shows her interest in the topic. Then, despite Major Wesson's disclaimer ("don't ask me why"), the remainder of the discussion is all about "why" the lollipops were worth a try – as traditional remedies for nausea. Further indication of Major Eichendorf's involvement in the topic is demonstrated when she affirms in lines 11 and 12, in response to Major Wesson's mention that one of the lollipops has Ginger in it: "Ginger's good. That's good for her". Together the interactants work together to construct the narrative, using evaluation portions of the narrative to discuss the merits of such remedies as mint (line 9), ginger (lines 10 and 11) and lavender (lines 13-20). At the narrative's resolution, Major

Wesson finally seems to acknowledge “why” he bought the remedies, saying, “But they got it in a lollipop. So I said, “OK!” At the narrative’s coda Major Wesson returns the discussion to the present moment saying, “I know I’m- I’m curious to see how it turns out”.

In line 26 the two re-connect, via “troubles talk” of sorts, to their community of practice – namely their local working environment. Tying to the topic of “relaxing scents” which Major Eichendorf introduced in line 17, she refers to the lavender lollipops with a chuckle in line 26 suggesting that Major Wesson “should just pass them out at work”. Whereas Wesson constructs imperative dialogue in lines 28 and 29 to make imaginary offers of relaxing lavender lollipops at work (“Here! Lavender lollipop!”), Eichendorf makes a similar imaginary offer but clearly to a superior, saying “Sir relax. Lavender” in lines 30 and 32. Her remark implies stressed people at work, and specifically superiors. The image of a lollipop being offered to a superior is a comical one, given that a lollipop is something that is usually reserved for children. And the “upward” offer of lavender lollipops may be motivated by an interest in solidarity among those at Majors Eichendorf’s and Wesson’s level and below. Or, Major Eichendorf may be adding “sir” as a politeness marker to mitigate a potentially insubordinate remark.

The narrative “Lollipops”, then, would certainly be considered a very personal one, as it represents a husband who is trying to help his wife solve the problem of morning sickness. This is hardly an institutional topic. Yet, mutual involvement in the

story and its tie back to the circumstances of work invokes the institutional environment and, through joking, evaluates the working conditions to be stressful. A personal narrative, then, becomes a mechanism for solidarity between Major Eichendorf and Major Wesson as colleagues in the institutional environment.

The next narrative takes place in Major Cardiff's office. Staff Sergeant (SSgt) Jones and Master Sergeant (MSgt) Mill, both males, are chatting while Major Cardiff searches her computer network for information regarding promotions. Because she is engaged with the computer system, Major Cardiff participates in the exchange, but is slightly less attentive to it than are SSgt Jones and MSgt Mill.

#### "Craft Fair"

1. SSgt Jones: Did you- did you get uh- check out the Oktoberfest Saturday?
  2. MSgt Mill: No.
  3. SSgt Jones: No?
  4. MSgt Mill: I went to Springfield to that craft fair out there.
  5. And I came home and went to-
  6. Maj Cardiff: Craft Fair?!
  7. SSgt Jones: It's time to- it's time [to get goin' /?/
  8. Maj Cardiff: [Craft Fair?!
  9. SSgt Jones: It's time to go to the desert when you're [hitting the craft fair.
  10. MSgt Mill: [My friend- my  
friend wanted to go the craft fair so we went to the craft fair.
- 0:06 <keyboard strokes>
11. Yep.
  12. It was actually pretty decent.
  13. SSgt Jones: See some things that you liked there?
  14. MSgt Mill: Things I could make.
  15. SSgt Jones: Really?
  16. MSgt Mill: I wouldn- I wouldn't buy half those things.
  17. I'd make it before I'd buy it.
  18. I used to feel bad /?/

19. If I saw something that I liked,  
 20. take a picture of it,  
 21. SSgt Jones: Copy it?  
 22. Oh! absolutely.  
 23. SSgt Jones: Geez.  
 24. MSgt Mill: Twenty bucks versus almost two hundred dollars?  
 25. Or a hundred and fifty [dollars?  
 26. Maj Cardiff: [<softly> Yeah.  
 27. There's- there's some expensive stuff.  
 28. MSgt Mill: Still paying on the bills from the divorce.  
 29. Refinanced my truck,  
 30. I paid off-  
 31. That's actually gonna save me about a thousand dollars,  
 in interest.  
 32. Maj Cardiff: Mmhmm  
 33. MSgt Mill: I have a total of eight thousand dollars left,  
 34. out of thirty two thousand dollars worth of debt.  
 35. And it hasn't been two years yet.  
 36. I almost paid it down.  
 37. SSgt Jones: Yeah you don't want to be involved in that again.  
 38. MSgt Mill: No.  
 39. I will never trust-  
 40. SSgt Jones: @@ [@@@@@ <throughout>  
 41. MSgt Mill: [The two women in my life that I trust are my mother  
 and the blessed virgin Mary.  
 42. SSgt Jones: @@  
 43. MSgt Mill: And that's it!  
 44. SSgt Jones: @@  
 45. Maj Cardiff: O:h.  
 46. I don't know why this uh system doesn't want to let me in  
 today.  
 47. Havin' a hard time here.

This fascinating exchange presents clear examples of both boasting and troubles  
 talk. The excerpt opens with SSgt Jones' inquiry as to whether MSgt Jones  
 went to the local Oktoberfest held that weekend. MSgt Jones has interpreted  
 this to be a general inquiry into his weekend activities. He responds in line 4

that he went to a “craft fair”. Major Cardiff responds twice, in lines 6 and 8 with the facetiously intoned: “Craft fair?!” SSgt Jones co-constructs the reaction by remarking in line 9 that, “It’s time to go the desert when you’re hitting the craft fair”, the “desert” being a metaphor for a Middle East deployment. The two seem to be belittling the craft fair as an activity inappropriate to MSgt Mill, presumably owing to either his personality or his masculinity. Unfazed, MSgt Mill states in line 10, referring to the woman he is dating, “My friend- my friend wanted to go the craft fair so we went to the craft fair”. Such a response places responsibility for his craft fair attendance upon his female friend. Still, MSgt Mill quickly transforms the narrative into one of boasting, or achievement, stating that he saw things he’d make, but wouldn’t buy – attesting to his own craftsmanship and ingenuity. His achievement extends to his frugality when he refers to the potential cost savings of making things himself: “Twenty bucks versus almost two hundred dollars? Or a hundred and fifty dollars?” (lines 24-25).

With the subject of money and finances on the floor, MSgt Mill turns the dialogue to one of “troubles talk” as he is “Still paying on the bills from the divorce” (line 28). As MSgt Mill recounts that he has refinanced his truck to save money, Maj Cardiff replies with only a minimal response (“Mmhmm”) while SSgt Jones gives validation to MSgt Mill’s troubles, saying “Yeah you don’t want to be involved in that again” (line 37). This brings MSgt Mill to his

comment in line 41 and 43 that, “The two women in my life that I trust are my mother and the blessed virgin Mary. And that’s it”. While this may appear to be an odd thing for MSgt Mill to say in front of his female commander, Major Cardiff, she appears to have no reaction at all. She is likely absorbed in her work on the computer, or has become quite accustomed to such remarks in her environment and perhaps even from MSgt Mill in particular – or maybe both aspects, and others, are at play.

One would look at this transcript and certainly regard this conversation to be a very personal one – hardly an institutional narrative. However, the entire interaction is mediated and backgrounded by the fact that four minutes prior to this exchange, MSgt Mill had asked whether Major Cardiff, as the commander, had learned of the results of a promotion board which was evaluating enlisted members for promotion to the grade of staff sergeant. Throughout this exchange, she is engaged in an institutional function, searching the official network for the information MSgt Mill has requested. In the transcript, the only indications of this activity are short periods in which keyboard strokes can be heard, and her comment at the close of the excerpt when she remarks “I don’t know why this uh system doesn’t want to let me in today. Havin’ a hard time here.”

The content of the exchange in “Craft Fair” will likely not be regarded as contributing to the participants’ institutional identities. Clearly, though,

personal identity is in negotiation within this institutional environment. When Major Cardiff teases MSgt Mill for his craft fair participation, she may be reflecting her understanding of either MSgt Mill as an individual whom she does not perceive as the “craft fair type”, or she may be reflecting her own construct of military men’s masculinity in which men do not attend craft fairs. SSgt Jones responds with a remark referentially tied to the institution and its masculine mission when he states that, “It’s time to go to the desert when you’re hitting the craft fair” (line 9), referring to deployment to the Middle East.

In both “Lollipops” and “Craft Fair” we see examples of negotiation of personal identity in the institutional environment. Clearly gender is at play in the negotiation of the topics – Major Wesson dismisses the topic of the lollipops in advance, marking his introduction of the topic with, “don’t ask me why”. Then, when unthreatened by a female interactant, he continues his discussion. MSgt Mill, on the other hand, dismisses his topic after the fact by attributing his craft fair attendance to his female friend. When gendered by topic or by interactional norms, both stories clearly help the tellers negotiate a personal identity, while tying to the people or gender norms of the institution that surrounds them.

## **Conclusion**

Sociolinguistic literature has shown growing interest in the role of narratives in negotiating our sense of self and our sense of belonging in institutions. This study contributes to that literature through close analysis of narratives occurring in the military environment. Study in the military arena is unique and important in that it is an institution with special rites of membership, yet it has broad influence in both American society and American constructions of masculinity.

This study expands upon previous studies by delineating four categories of narrative in the institutional environment: 1) narratives which communicate or reinforce institutional ideals; 2) narratives which support the institutional hierarchy; 3) narratives that perpetuate institutional traditions and mystique; and, 4) personal narratives individuals use to negotiate a personal identity within an institutional environment. And many narratives, of course, straddle more than one of these categories at a time.

This study also contributes to the literature on language and gender in the sense that researchers have studied both gender and narrative and institutional narrative, but little has been done in the study of the influence of gender in institutional narrative. In focusing upon the work that narratives do in and for an institution, my analysis shows that the narratives told in the institutional environment, and the responses to them, are not free from gender influence. Particularly intriguing in these stories is the observation that in perpetuating the mystique and tradition of the military, male and female alike perpetuate masculine ideals. An important distinction to keep in mind, however, is the

body of work which demonstrates that, from childhood, boys and girls develop different ritualized speaking behaviors. In the long run, the ritualized interactional behaviors to which boys are acculturated conform to norms of masculine identity formation, namely: display of the willingness to fight, denunciation of the feminine, and homosocial enactment for other men's approval. The ritualized interactional behaviors to which girls are acculturated are by-and-large aimed at maintaining sense of community and belonging. Female and male military members alike, then, tell the same stories and perpetuate the same mystique and cultural norms, but perhaps intrinsically for different motivations. Men perpetuate masculine ideals as a result of their ritualized conversational norms, whereas women perpetuate the sense of community that arises from common tradition and group membership in a community which happens to be characterized by masculine identity. In perpetuating existing institutional traditions and a community-oriented sense of membership, women are reinforcing schema and norms established by men, therefore conforming to ideals of American masculinity. These observations are consistent with the proposition made by McElhinny (1998, 2003) who, in her analysis of the discourse of male and female police officers, introduced the notion that we must regard certain institutions as, themselves, gendered. The question, however, is, how do gendered institutions get and stay that way? My analysis shows that the interactional norms of an institution perpetuate its gendering in the discourse of women and men alike.

## **Chapter 4 – Ideology in Institutions – Ideology in Language**

### **Chapter Overview**

So far in this study I have reviewed literature examining language, gender and power and provided an overview of the military context in which this study takes place. To explore the question of language, gender and power in the military I have looked at the specific environments for use of “ma’am” and “sir” – the intersection of language, gender and hierarchy -- and found that in some environments there appears to be no great difference in how “ma’am” and “sir” are used and to what extent, indicating that women’s participation in the military has afforded them status and power. Other environments, namely interactions with civilians and rising-intonation interrogatives, leave open the question as to whether more deference is afforded to male officers and suggest that perhaps there is greater respect for high-ranking males than for high-ranking females. I also explored the use of narratives within the institutional environment and found that they can generally be attributed to one or more of four categories: narrative of institutional ideals, narrative of hierarchy, narrative of tradition or mystique, and personal narrative in an institutional setting. I found that women perpetuate the masculine norms of the military in the narratives they tell and in their responses to narratives. However, they seem largely unaware of that fact, since their motivation for using narrative and responding to narrative appears to be perpetuating the sense of community and membership in that community.

In my analyses and observations it's obvious that in addition to an ideology of masculinity, the military is also closely bound by its ideology of hierarchy. Many would argue – indeed as my Chapter One review of literature regarding masculinity theory shows – hierarchy is an inextricable component of masculinity. So, use of address forms and narratives which entrench hierarchy may also be said to entrench masculinity, and vice versa. Use of “ma’am” and “sir”, and the roles of narratives in the institutional context, then, reveal ways the military uses language to sustain its institutional ideology(ies).

This brings me to the broader question of ideology in language. Using additional data analysis, in this chapter I will examine the contributions of language to the institutional ideology. I question the military's masculine construct by contrasting its masculine ideals with less conspicuous feminine ones which are also present. The finding is that the overwhelmingly masculine nature of the military, which is reinforced even by female participants, allows for the manifestation of traits of nurture and community which may be considered feminine.

I will apply linguistic concepts of ideology by considering first the metalinguistic notion of language ideology, then focusing this concept upon the institutional ideologies portrayed in the use of language in the military communities represented in these data. I provide definitions of ideology and ideological complex and examine broader gender issues of the military environment which impact the gender ideology of the institution, specifically as regards women in combat. Then I examine

manifestations of ideology in conversational data and in the practice of the ideologies which are revealed in the language.

### **Language and Ideology**

I will introduce the relevance of language ideology by offering the following observations, shared with me by a military colleague and Air Force officer. When picking up her son, John, at daycare after work one day she noted a poster on which the daycare provider had written the children's responses to the question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Among the responses she saw that a child named Fiona had replied: "I want to be an Air Force daddy, just like my mommy." On another of his visits to the daycare center John, who was accustomed to being dropped off at daycare by his Air Force mother and seeing other children dropped off by their military mothers, once saw a military father dropping off his child for the day. John was quite confused that the father was wearing the camouflage work uniform, also called "BDUs" after the term "Battle Dress Uniform". John stated forthrightly, "He can't wear that. That's what mommies wear!"

Weaving through Fiona's and John's remarks are the varied threads of the ideologies inherent in their cultural surround. Little Fiona's comment implies a culture in which there are roles for mommy and for daddy, situations in which a mommy takes the role of a "daddy", and that there's a difference between an Air Force mommy or daddy, and other mommies and daddies. And, in John's understanding, not only is the

military populated by mommies, he has determined that mommies and daddies, or women and men, or girls and boys, wear different types of clothing, and that women wear BDUs so either men don't or they have to wear a different version. The roles and dress invoked here reflect the children's dialogic comprehension of the world, and ideologies, around them. Fiona's remark straddles a worldview in which the military is a masculine institution in which her mommy operates, whereas in John's worldview the military is populated by mommies who wear the camouflage uniform.

Though their interpretations are unique, we recognize that Fiona and John are being socialized into ideologies which will influence their interactions for the rest of their lives. Being "military brats", as children of military members have long been nicknamed, Fiona and John belong to a group which operates in both military and non-military discourse systems. An important aspect of a discourse system, as Scollon and Scollon (1995) point out, is an ideology. They go on to define ideology as "the worldview or governing philosophy of a group or a discourse system" (96) where the discourse system is also comprised of forms of discourse, socialization, and face systems. Given recent interest in language ideologies, it is this notion of ideology and its manifestation in talk that I will explore at greater length and correlate to the findings of this study.

In its broadest interpretation the study of language ideology refers to what Taylor (1990) calls a metalinguistic study of language, that is, discourse on language. This is the domain of language philosophers such as Saussure and Bakhtin and theories

regarding the “science” of language. But such theorizing, sociolinguists would argue, has its limits. Cameron (1990) argues that language theorists have observed linguistic representations that reinforce sexual division and inequality, such as marking of female-referring nouns, sexually pejorative terms for women, and generic use of masculine pronouns, and understand such representations to be a case of “‘language reflecting society’” and that such usage would change when society changed (89). However, Cameron argues, links between social practice and language are not so passive. She points out that feminists engaged the sexist ideology inherent in the language and actively advocated linguistic reforms, thereby changing the social reality of sexist language. “A Change in linguistic practice is not just a reflection of some more fundamental social change,” says Cameron, “it is, itself, a social change” (90).

Goffman (1977) describes a similar phenomenon in anthropological terms. He examined the idea that, “Wherever the male goes, apparently, he can carry a sexual division of labor with him” (315). Goffman clarifies that this sexual division of labor is a result of ‘institutional reflexivity’. By way of illustration, he presents a simple example regarding the ideology of sex segregation: toilet segregation is presented as a natural result of sex differences, when the reality is that the sex difference is produced by such segregation. Similarly, in the military, restricting women from “combat” is presented as a natural result of sex differences, when those sex differences are exactly produced by the attitude that women should, categorically, be restricted from combat. Interestingly, institutional reflexivity therefore creates sex differences in the military,

but the institutional commitment to hierarchy also demands that those sex differences be regarded as irrelevant in matters between a female of superior rank and her subordinates. Still, in that relationship, despite the fact that the female is of superior rank, as was discussed in Chapter Two, her sex difference is flagged with each utterance of “ma’am” by the subordinate.

Combat restrictions, then, reflexively create sex differences at the same time that other institutional roles call for formalized shows of respect for women of superior rank. I would offer up for consideration the possibility that this contradiction between limitations placed upon women and the institutional demand that women of rank receive the full respect of subordinates are dissonant. It seems inconsistent for the military as an institution to genuinely demand that women be treated equally in an environment which at once demands compliance with the hierarchy regardless of gender, while engaging in practices of ‘institutional reflexivity’, to use Goffman’s term, which create and sustain gender difference.

In this chapter I look at ways such gender differences are produced in language, to include how the language ideologies of institutions produce and reinforce the gender differences. This is the level of language ideology which this chapter explores: that is, “ideology” refers to a “level of social meaning with distinctive functions, orientations and content for a social class or group” (Hodge and Kress 1988: 3). To extend the definition, Hodge and Kress point out that ideology exists more particularly within an “ideological complex”, or, a system which “exists to sustain relationships of both power

and solidarity, and [represents] the social order as simultaneously serving the interests of both dominant and subordinate” (3). This expanded definition, including the broader ideological complex, particularly suits this analysis given its inclusion of relationships of power and solidarity, which, as was discussed in Chapter One, are integral to the military hierarchy and communication norms. In this definition of ideology, and commensurate ideological complex, Hodge and Kress touch on the fact that the social order must in some way suit the interests of the subordinate, as well as the superior, else the system would not flourish. This is a theme which has arisen in several variations throughout this study: recall Foucault’s assertions that power comes from below as well as above, and Tannen’s concept of the polysemy, and ambiguity, of expressions of power and solidarity. Hodge and Kress go on to say that, “Ideological complexes are constructed in order to constrain behaviour by structuring the versions of reality on which social action is based, in particular ways” (3). Such behavioral constraints were discussed in Chapters One and Two, which analyzed the requisite nature of, for example, the address forms “sir” and “ma’am”, and in Chapter Three which examined, for new and old members of the community alike, “tellable” and sanctioned narratives.

Implicit in the definitions of “ideology” and “ideological complex” as proposed by Hodge and Kress is the role that language plays in social meaning and orientation for a group. Relationships between language and social meaning, or ideology, are explicit in Gee’s (1996:viii) concept of “Discourses”, which are ways of “behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted

as instantiations of particular roles (or ‘types of people’) by specific *groups of people*” (italics in original). Gee’s notion of Discourse broadly encompasses language as well as other aspects of interaction, such as dress and behavior – aspects which, as young John brought to our attention, we must be conscious of in a military institutional environment which dictates standards of dress, orderliness and decorum. Gee’s (1996) argument that to appreciate language as used by groups, or types, of people requires attention to not just the language itself, but to the ways those people interact, think, behave, value and believe. This range of social context and social history, to include attitudes regarding gender, influences the group’s “Discourse”. Each Discourse, says Gee, incorporates theories about what it means to be a “normal” person within that group, and those underlying theories of membership and language use are what Gee calls “ideologies” (1996:ix).

Gee’s Discourse is also consistent with McElhinny’s (2003) point that to appreciate how language conveys the ideology of its social context means getting at how ideas and beliefs promote the interests of socially significant groups. McElhinny’s (2003) work builds upon her 1997 analysis of ideology as a power relationship which resides in the interpenetration between ordinary and institutional language, categories that she argues are considered dichotomous, but which, upon analysis, clearly inform and influence one another to create and sustain a system of “institutions” which disadvantage women, the poor, and minorities. Language ideologies, McElhinny (2003) points out, can be narrowly defined to elements of language structure or more

widely defined to include interactional norms within a social or power construct. In her analysis of language ideologies as manifest in police officers' narratives, McElhinny finds useful a definition of ideology which incorporates "specification of how ideas and beliefs promote the interests of socially significant groups" (258) and how the power of meaning within those ideas and beliefs is maintained.

Applying McElhinny's framework to my findings we do indeed see ideologies of the social context which promote the interests of socially significant groups. Namely, in serving the male majority of the military and its masculine associations, the most senior males and females are singled out with the use of an interactional norm, specifically the use of "ma'am" and "sir", which flags their sex, and by association their category of membership: those who are eligible for combat and those who are not. Similarly, whether conscious of it or not, women's narratives and response to narratives may convey masculine values, as do the narratives of tradition such as Major Eichendorf's story "Landing Gear", or at least support the official structure which differentiates males and females, as does Major Cardiff's "party-line" response to SSgt Dale's story of the "Two Wheel Turn".

Let us further consider, then, the practicality of applying ideas regarding ideology in language within the framework of the community of practice. In their elaboration of the framework's applicability to language and gender studies, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet point out that a community of practice, an aggregate of people united by mutual endeavor as well as shared beliefs, values and ways of talking, develops its

own trajectory, to include shared practices and its sense of itself (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999). Compare this to the definition proposed by Hodge and Kress above wherein “ideology” refers to “social meaning with distinctive functions, orientations and content for a social class or group” (Hodge and Kress 1988: 3). Certainly there appears to be significant overlap in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet’s description of the community of practice and definitions of group “ideology” and the criticality of language in conveying and perpetuating those ideologies.

Bergvall (1999) takes a different view, and calls for the community of practice approach to be augmented by parallel study of the ideological construction of gender which precedes membership in a community of practice. Bergvall argues that as a framework which arose from theories of learning, the community of practice framework is most applicable to studies of early acquisition of language ideologies, as in Eckert’s (1989) study of high school jocks and burnouts, who use specific language traits in order to construct and convey those identities. Bergvall goes on to suggest that the framework is less able to account for gender ascriptions which at later stages of life can be considered “pre-existing”; although, she acknowledges, even “pre-existing” gender ideologies are subject to regular refinement and challenge.

Following Eckert and McConnell-Ginet’s work, together with the evidence in these data, I believe that ideological considerations are so much a part of a community of practice that linguistic practices are discursively created and reinforced by the ideologies to which speakers ascribe by virtue of membership in that group. If

ideologies are, as Bergvall argues, closely tied to initiation into communities of practice early in life, then a new recruit's or officer trainee's rites of passage at the age of 17 or 18 can certainly be considered formative.

I agree with Bergvall that ideologies from outside of the community of practice under examination may run parallel to the community's own construction of gender ideology, informing the gender identity from the outside. The case in point is the fact that the gender identity military members construct for military women from within the military is highly influenced by the gender identities ascribed to men and women from outside the military. Bergvall (1999: 285) cites what Cameron calls " 'institutional coerciveness' ", or "gender construction beyond the bounds of local communities of practice" – what I will call "imposed gender norms". As I will discuss in detail below, in the case of the military, no matter what roles women in the military fulfill the societal "aversion", whether real or perceived, regarding women and combat, constructs men as combatants and women as "support personnel". Specifically, I will explore women's exclusion from certain combat roles, parent-child dynamics which are at play in the military, and the ideologies of hierarchy, solidarity and the "desire to please" which can be found in military practices.

#### Pervasive Backdrop – Combat Exclusion

Acker (2000) examined organizational structures and divisions of labor within organizations and determined that cultural gender divisions manifest themselves in the

workplace largely as matters tied to “production and reproduction” – that is, men “produce” and women, as child bearers, “reproduce”, and that this cultural concept of gender differences manifests itself in organizational environments. Given, as I discussed earlier, that organizations are gendered Acker believes that researchers need a theory which addresses gendering and organizations in order to examine gender segregation of work, gendered income and status inequality, the reality that cultural images of gender are invented and reproduced in organizations, and the production of individual identity as a result of organizational pressures. This section will address the interplay between at least two of the characteristics Acker lists: first, gender segregation of work, and second, its role in the cultural images of gender reproduced in the organization, in this case the military and masculine connections to “combat”.

One cannot address the connections between language ideology and gender in the military communities of practice without addressing the issue of women’s exclusion from certain combat positions. At issue is not whether women can or cannot perform the work of “combat” – a term which is not only a verb, a noun and an adjective, but also a metaphor for an image of maleness. At issue is how this exclusion directly or indirectly affects both the ideology of the military and ways in which gender is or is not enacted in aspects of military life. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) state, dichotomous sex-based categories can provide an easy way to sort a community into two non-overlapping groups. Two such non-overlapping sex-based groups are created by women’s categorical exclusion from jobs in the military which involve “direct

ground combat” which are jobs that meet the following criteria: the jobs cause individuals to 1) engage an enemy on the ground with individual or crew-served weapons; 2) be exposed to hostile fire; and, 3) have a high probability of direct physical contact with the personnel of a hostile force (Aspin 1994).

This definition of “direct ground combat” divides military women and men into two categories of specialties: those that women are allowed to perform and those that women are not allowed to perform. There are no jobs that men are not allowed to perform. Acker (2000) points out that such division of labor is one of many ways in which organizations become gendered. Historically and contemporarily women’s exclusion from jobs defined as “direct ground combat” has not kept women from being killed in combat. Women are not, therefore, excluded from jobs based on the level of danger inherent in them. Rather, women are excluded from some of the most masculine jobs; that is, jobs which most directly correlate with combat as a metaphorical and a masculine construct. The exclusion preserves within the military a realm for masculine identity – a realm which is important to males, whether or not they serve in the jobs from which women are excluded; whether or not, in fact, they serve in the military at all, as we saw in the narrative “Four Stars” in which the civilian, Mr. Richards, constructed the aura and stature of the male General officers. It’s possible that a combat exclusion remains in place not because men think that women cannot perform in combat roles, but because men fear that women are capable of filling combat roles,

thereby threatening not just military masculine identity but American masculine identity as well.

Women's exclusion from certain combat positions categorically prevents them from participating in an activity which defines the military's mission, even though women ascribe to and perpetuate the military's ideologies. These combat exclusions impose upon women gender norms which are perpetuated by an ideology which resides both within the military and outside of it. Important to recall here is the concept of ideological complex as defined by Hodge and Kress. As Hodge and Kress point out, an ideological complex both sustains relationships of power and solidarity and represents the social order as serving the interests of both dominant and subordinate, therefore we must conclude that despite imposed gender norms which afford women only partial membership in the American military, women, and egalitarian men, have reason to serve in the military.

Perhaps the answer to that question lies partly in the transformations, or social changes to use Cameron's term, which result from the continual interdiscursive construction and reconstruction of the various communities of practice within the military. For example, as more women become higher ranking, and the percentage of women in the military increases, military members are constantly renegotiating, and interdiscursively re-creating, gender norms and expectations. In these data, members of the Air Force are undergoing just such transformations of gendered experience.

Recall that among the informants in this study are a female wing commander, a female squadron commander and a female flight commander who is also a combat pilot. Earlier I specified that women are excluded from jobs involving “direct ground combat”, a definition which actually opened combat flying jobs to women. So while the Air Force has a relatively long history of female flight commanders and squadron commanders, it has a relatively short history of female wing commanders and combat pilots. They, and those with whom they interact, are transformed as they do their jobs and engage with other members of the military. I take as evidence for this assertion the “crossover” between gendered styles throughout these data. For example, women show their proficiency with narratives of tradition which perpetuate masculine norms, and men show their proficiency with language which conveys feminine inclusiveness or a sense of community. In such crossover, masculine gender identity is, I believe, “protected” by the imposed masculinity and heterosexuality of the military’s ideological complex, allowing men to participate in feminine interpersonal displays without reprisal. Further, some participants somehow see feminine identity, imposed by virtue of women’s partial membership in the organization, as unthreatened, allowing women to use masculine styles which, rather than threatening feminine identity, are virtually expected because of the masculinity imposed upon the institution as a whole.

This imposition of gender identity occurs at the interface of communities of practice as well, namely at the interface between military communities of practice and civilian ones. For example, the “iconic” soldier or sailor as depicted in the media, or

imagined by Americans, is arguably male – except perhaps in the minds of female military members or families, like Fiona's and John's, whose mothers or sisters or aunts are in the military. Television commentators can, in the 2004 and 2005 coverage of the Iraq war, be heard to refer to “our boys” or “the men” in Iraq. This illustrates a gender quandary for women in the military who want to be regarded as full members of their service, i.e., soldiers, sailors and airmen, not “women soldiers” or “female sailors”. Yet, strict use of a non-gendered reference like “soldier” renders military women invisible since the masculinized nature of the institution carries with it the assumption that all participants are male. Gendering the non-gendered terms female (e.g. “woman sailor”) highlights the reality, explicated earlier, that women are indeed only allocated partial membership in the military. The double bind lies in the fact that gendering the female military members differentiates them as unequal members in the armed forces; non-gendering the female military members renders their contributions invisible, reifying the masculine dynamic, which, in turn, continues to deny women full membership.

Perhaps because of this type of conundrum, some theorists have argued that to compete within a male-dominated institution women must coopt masculine styles – styles allegedly alien to women. This view arose early on in the study of language and gender as researchers attributed sexism in language to societal male dominance. As Crawford (1995) observed, some asserted that in order to overcome male dominance women would have to learn men's conversational styles and may even require

assertiveness training in order to compete in male-dominated environments. However, to jump to that sweeping conclusion may be to the neglect of much finer distinctions in the construction of gender identities.

Sociologists Howard and Alamilla (2001), for example, take a social constructionist perspective which asserts the role of social and cultural forces in assigning masculine and feminine schemas and role identities, often, they argue, to the neglect of similarities between women and men. Interaction, they point out, is crucial to the construction of gender identity, which is also shaped by cultural expectations, social hierarchies, and everyday gender behavior and display. One unique aspect of the military structure is that, with the exception of the Marine Corps which trains women and men separately, initial rites of passage are virtually the same for females and males. Notably, one aspect of social construction in the military involves imposed silence from the start of basic training. In their military socialization, then, male and female are both silenced, both subordinate, and then work their way up through the same structure from that point. From a gendered perspective, then, does that mean males are advantaged because they are accustomed to, as Goffman (1977) puts it, the contest or vying frame? Or are females at an advantage because they are accustomed to cooperative effort, as discussed in earlier reviews of literature, or because they are familiar with life in a culture which long subordinated women? These are nuances of gendered styles in gendered environments which bring into question broad generalizations regarding

language and gender, like the proposal that women need assertiveness training to use masculine styles to compete in the marketplace.

In the Air Force language ideologies, including the traditional gender dichotomy of male and female, are transformed because bodies are “inextricably part of cultural histories, affected by human inventions ranging from the purely symbolic to the technological” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992: 463). Due to the technological nature of modern warfare, many combat positions do not meet the three criteria which exclude women from “direct ground combat”. For example, women have been authorized to fly Army, Navy and Air Force combat aircraft in combat for just over a decade now. And though they’ve been authorized to fly combat aircraft for a decade, the nature of the pilot training and selection process is such that they have only flown certain types of combat aircraft for the first time as recently as the past few years. Further, due to changes in officer training restrictions which occurred between 20 and 30 years ago, women are now moving into senior positions of leadership, some of which had never been held by women. These are sites where surely we’ll see the sorts of transformations in gender ideology that can be attributed to changes in cultural history and technological advance.

#### Parent-Child Dynamics in Hierarchical Ideology

We see in this discussion so far that subordinates and superiors, and women and men, all co-construct the hierarchical ideology of the military. One interesting

manifestation of this co-construction is the desire on the part of subordinates to please superiors. Interestingly, this frames the interactants in something akin to a parent-child relationship. Evidence in these data, which I will explore in this chapter, speaks to this sense of closeness – and specifically a familial sense of closeness. In typical American dynamics superior/subordinate relationships are marked by power difference and solidarity is a key component of relationships of social equality. Recall, however, that in Chapter Two I asserted that the hierarchical dynamics of the American military are more closely akin to the group dynamics explored by Watanabe (1993) in which she observed that the Japanese who participated in the group discussions she monitored considered themselves united by the hierarchy of their group.

Tannen (1996) further explores these dynamics in relation to Bateson's (1972) concept of frame of interpretation, taken together with Goffman's notion of sex-class. The theoretical framework Tannen proposes includes multidimensional consideration of closeness and distance, and hierarchy and equality. Such a framework shows that status and connection are intertwined – at once ambiguous and polysemous (Tannen 1996), and proposes the following models with closeness and distance on the x-axis, and hierarchy and equality on the y-axis. Note in Figure 1, a reproduction of Tannen's (1996) American view of relationships, that Tannen's model produces four quadrants: hierarchy and closeness, hierarchy and distance, equality and closeness, and equality and distance. Americans, Tannen argues, "conceptualize relationships along an axis that runs from the upper right to the lower left: from hierarchical and distant to equal

and close” with business arrangements in the hierarchy-distance quadrant, and family and friends in the closeness-equality quadrant.

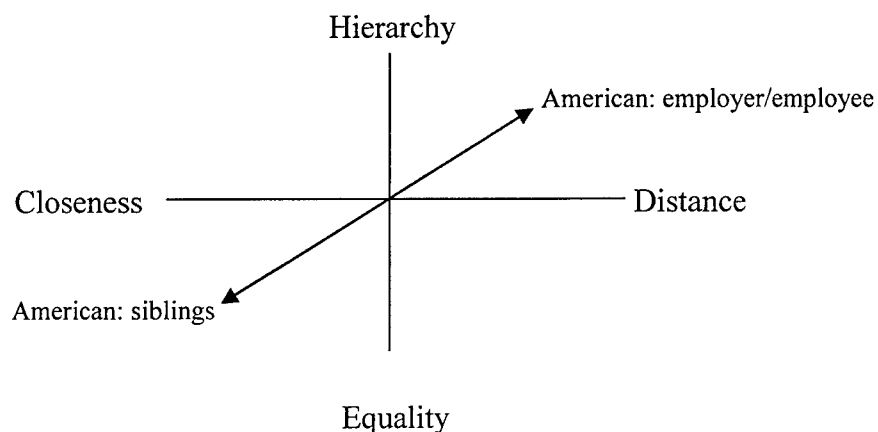


Figure 1. – American view of relationships (from Tannen 1996)

In cross-cultural comparison, however, as illustrated below Tannen finds that a Japanese mother and child relationship, for instance, is in the quadrant in which hierarchy and closeness co-exist -- a state of relationship which Tannen argues is not customary in American relationship dynamics.

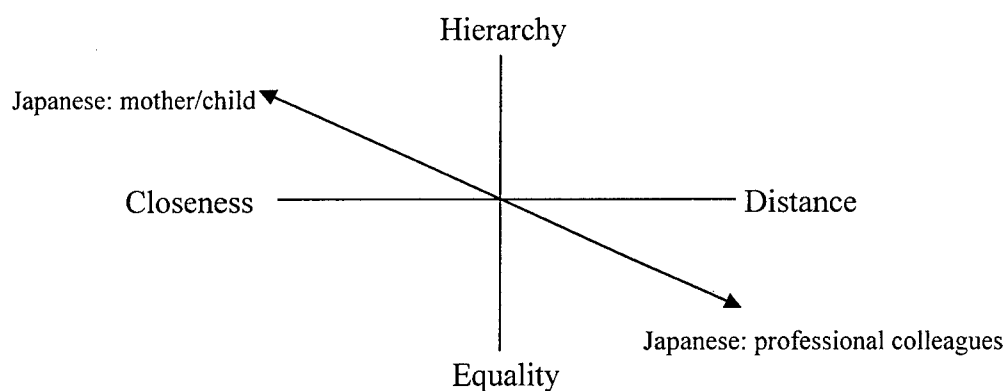


Figure 2. – Japanese view of relationships (from Tannen 1996)

Based upon the data I will analyze in this chapter, however, it is in the hierarchy-closeness quadrant that I would put the military interactions I recorded. In those excerpts, eagerness to please demonstrates closeness, again, akin to the parent/child constellation. However, the hierarchy is ever present in the form of the rank structure and uniform wear, and linguistically marked by “ma’am” and “sir” in these examples (and as explored in Chapter Two).

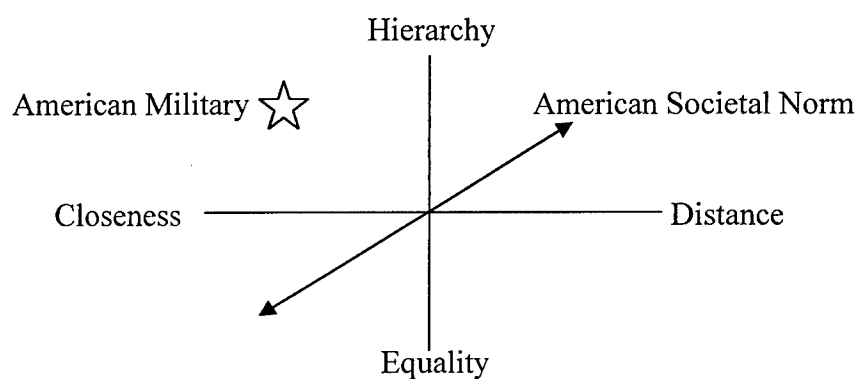


Figure 3. – American military superior/subordinate relationships

### Summary

This discussion of parent-child dynamics brings us back to Fiona’s and John’s observations regarding the roles of mommies and daddies. Fiona, who “Wants to be an Air Force daddy, just like my mommy” has an awareness that the military is something that, generally, a “daddy” does, but that her mommy does as well. She seems to have conveyed an ideology which makes the “daddy” the default Air Force member, though it’s her mommy who she knows to be in the Air Force. But she has also given voice to a specific category of membership which also flags membership in an ideology: Air

Force mommy or Air Force daddy. Meanwhile, from John's perspective, there are differences between what mommies and daddies wear – an ideology of gender differentiation, or imposed gender norms, which is more applicable in the world outside the Air Force than in. While Fiona and John do not allude to the ideology of hierarchy, my guess is that as far as they're concerned few out-rank mommy.

### **Ideology in Practice – Nurturing the Forces**

In earlier chapters analysis was limited to address forms and conversational narrative. Both implied larger ideologies – like hierarchy and tradition -- which guide the military, or the Air Force, as an institution. However, other types of interactions in these data give additional indications of the ideologies at work.

Recall that Chapter Two addressed, at length, the use of “ma’am” and “sir” in military discourse. I argued that while those address forms signal a superior and subordinate differential of power, the hierarchy itself is a point of solidarity in the military environment. However, “ma’am” and “sir” as gender indices also constantly differentiate members of the military community, specifically superiors in the military community, by their sex. I also argued that while analysis of the environments in which “ma’am” and “sir” occurred generally showed little difference in how the two are used, “sir” tags a rising intonation question more frequently than does “ma’am”; the implication being that this difference signals more deference to the male superior. The rationale that interrogatives may indicate deference on the part of the questioner dates

back to the foundations of language and gender studies, when Lakoff (1975 [2004]) asserted that, “Question intonation and tag questioning are [‘Deference: give options’] related devices as long as the speaker is not really uncertain about the truth of his assertion” (89).

In Chapter Three we examined several narratives which occurred in the institutional environment. I proposed that the narratives perpetuated institutional ideals, hierarchy, and traditions, and that personal narrative in an institutional environment may signal elements of personal identity with the institution as backdrop, to include gender identity. I found that while women perpetuated the ideals and traditions of the institution in their responses to, and telling of, narratives in the institutional environment, discourse analysis indicates that their motivation in doing so is to facilitate members’ sense of belonging to their community, group or institution.

The masculine ideology of the institution seems to be fortified by sex differentiation inherent in the use of “ma’am” and “sir”, and by women’s perpetuation of the institution via narrative and response to narrative. But, how do members of the institution balance these clearly masculine dynamics with the institution’s demands for a sense of community, inclusion and teamwork – traits which many would categorize as feminine – without diminishing the all-important sense of hierarchy?

The importance of the hierarchy to the military identity and ideological complex cannot be overstated. At the heart of the hierarchy is the notion that, in combat, subordinates must not question the orders of superiors. Superiors must be decisive, and

subordinates must act quickly and unquestioningly. Any hesitation on either's part could be a matter of life and death. The ideology, then, is that subordinates must trust superiors with their lives, and superiors are expected to be devoted to their subordinates and earn subordinates' respect. This section explores, then, manifestations of this attention to the hierarchy as displayed in conversational interaction in these data.

One manifestation of this respect for superiors is the desire to please them. As the following excerpts show, this trait applies across the Air Force, across gender, and even to civilians working with a military supervisor. This desire to please is made explicit in the following excerpt. Here, the female Major Cardiff is relying on her Lieutenant, the male Operations Officer, or "Ops O", to straighten out some confusion in airfield transportation with another unit, the OSS or Operational Support Squadron.

1. Lt Van: OK. I can maybe ask somebody in OSS and all that,
2. how their, airfield operation works,
3. that'll help me figure out <sub>z</sub>
4. Maj Cardiff: That would be: perfect.
5. This is- this is definitely an [Ops O issue here
6. Lt Van: [ y- @@@
7. Maj Cardiff: so::
8. Lt Van: OK
9. Maj Cardiff: Oh:: the joys of being an Ops O.
10. Makes me happy- I know @@@ look at-
11. Lt Van: Alright..<sub>z</sub> anything for you ma'am<sub>z</sub>
12. Maj Cardiff: Alright- hmm?
13. Lt Van: Anything for you.
14. Maj Cardiff: Hey, [there you go.
15. Lt Van: As [long as you're- if you're happy I'm happy.
16. Maj Cardiff: I'm happy.
17. MSgt Morris: Getting busier and busier. He's startin' to see the picture here now.

In line 11 Lieutenant Van indicates his willingness to do whatever is necessary, saying “anything for you” to Major Cardiff. Importantly, though, he marks his comment with “ma’am” which, as was discussed in Chapter 2, highlights the subordinate/superior dynamic, and the superior’s gender. His offer to do “anything for you” indicates a sense of closeness and loyalty. Whether the marker “ma’am” asserts that this closeness and loyalty is strictly of the professional kind, or whether the Lieutenant is being playful and marking his playfulness with “ma’am”, both indicate solidarity which arises from the hierarchical dynamic. In line 13, the lieutenant repeats “anything for you” in response to Major Cardiff’s question intoned “hmm?” so this is not a repetition for emphasis. However, he follows up “anything for you” with the formulaic, “if you’re happy, I’m happy” in line 15 – another version of “anything for you”. In addition, the phrase repeats the word “happy”, a repetition which, together with first person pronoun usage, creates involvement amongst the listeners and bonds the interactants to one another. Perhaps most importantly, however, in its semantic interpretation, when Lieutenant Van says to Major Cardiff, “If you’re happy, I’m happy”, that sets Major Cardiff up as the one with the power to evaluate the quality of work. In line 17 Master Sergeant Morris offers the evaluation that Lieutenant Van is, “startin’ to see the picture here now” indicating, from the Master Sergeant’s experienced point of view, that the young Lieutenant is learning that the Operations Officer job is a busy one. This may indicate that the Lieutenant had recently assumed the Operations Officer job and is in

the learning stages. As an enlisted person, his remark to the commander, Major Cardiff, regarding another officer, the Lieutenant, indicates solidarity between Master Sergeant Morris and Major Cardiff in which his evaluation of the Lieutenant is not taken as an act of insubordination.

The subordinate's eagerness to please often manifests itself in offers to go "above and beyond" the task requested. Again, this marks the superior's position of authority, regardless of gender. In the next excerpt, Colonel Acuff, the female wing commander, and Lieutenant Colonel Smith, a female personnel officer, are discussing plans for briefings and presentations to be given to base personnel regarding their evaluations, promotion cycles, and career progression.

18. Col Acuff: And um (:10)  
19. I'd like um.. all commanders to come in with a copy of their SURF↑  
20. Lt Col Smith: **Would you like me to just- you want me to- I can pull them from AMS and bring them and hand them out there↑**  
21. **Do you want to look at them prior to: possibly?**  
22. **O:r-**  
23. Col Acuff: Actually I want you to bring them all i:n↑<sub>z</sub>  
24. Lt Col Smith: OK  
25. Col Acuff: But I wanna ask them .. to come in with it,  
26. ['cause I want them to go in [and actually pull it out of the system. <sub>z</sub>  
27. Lt Col Smith: [Sure [OK OK  
28. **Do you want me to: um- what I'll do and it's what I did for the MSS candidates, for colonel-**  
29. **U:h I just went in the date of rank chart,**  
30. **and kinda wrote on there like-**  
31. **as lieutenant colonel I pulled up my date of rank and-**  
32. **So you would kno:w .. if you wanted to look at them what their IPZ look would be for colonel.**

33. **Or if it's a Major what their IPZ look w- ih- they may not even know.**
34. Col Acuff: Well see that's- that's something I'll come [wi:th,  
 35. Lt Col Smith: [OK  
 36. Col Acuff: and .. u:m that's something they need to- to know a:nd .. u:m (:02)  
 37. Lt Col Smith: 'Cause I- I get- they call- I get a lot of ca:lls on that.  
 38. And it's amázing .. what the AFPC Officer Promotion website can give you.  
 39. But if you don't- I think I take it for gráted<sub>z</sub> you know?  
 40. Col Acuff: Yeah  
 41. Lt Col Smith: Well that's in here, um on .. where to go for your date of rank- you know for pr- date for promotion consideration=  
 42. Col Acuff: =that takes you right [to the right place.  
 43. Lt Col Smith: [Yes Ma'am.

Essentially, Colonel Acuff had not asked Lieutenant Colonel Smith to do anything.

Colonel Acuff pointed out that she wanted commanders who attend the planned personnel briefing to bring with them their own personnel summary which shows job history, etc., (called the "SURF" for "Single Uniform Retrieval Format"). Lieutenant Colonel Smith quickly volunteers, in line 20, to retrieve all of the SURFs from the computer system and bring them to the meeting, saying, "Would you like me to just- you want me to- I can pull them from AMS and bring them and hand them out there". But before Colonel Acuff can answer, Lieutenant Colonel Smith goes even further by offering to give them to Colonel Acuff before the meeting so that she has time to look at them. Lieutenant Colonel Smith even leaves room to improve the offer that's on the table by uttering an open-ended "Or:" in line 22 which either she, or Colonel Acuff, could fill in. Colonel Acuff then points out (line 23) that she wants Lieutenant Colonel Smith to have all the SURFs with her ("Actually I want you to bring them all i:n"), but

she also wants the commanders (lines 25-26) to exercise retrieving their own SURFs from the personnel computer database (called "AMS" for "Assignment Management System"). This is indicated in lines 25-26 when Colonel Acuff says, "But I wanna ask them .. to come in with it 'cause I want them to go in and actually pull it out of the system."

In 27-33 Lieutenant Colonel Smith continues to volunteer herself for additional work, offering to look up each individual's scheduled promotion board, or "In the Promotion Zone" (IPZ) "look" and note it on the SURFs (in lines 32 and 33 "So you would know .. if you wanted to look at them what their IPZ look would be for colonel. Or if it's a Major what their IPZ look w- ih- they may not even know.")). The "promotion zone" is determined according to rank and date of rank, i.e., the date one's current rank was pinned on. Interestingly, in line 28 Lieutenant Colonel Smith is prepared to defer to the Colonel, starting with "Do you want me to-", then suddenly she just decides she'll take the initiative, saying "what I'll do".

In this female-female interaction, the female subordinate is eager to please the female superior. Note, however, that the interaction also serves as an opportunity for Lieutenant Colonel Smith to showcase her expertise to her Wing Commander. This is achieved not only by offering to do more than is asked of her, but by commenting on what she has done in line 28 ("what I'll do and it's what I did for the MSS candidates, for colonel") and what she knows (in lines 37 and 38: "I get a lot of calls on that. And it's amazing .. what the AFPC Officer Promotion website can give you").

Similar eagerness is exhibited in the following excerpt – eagerness that Lieutenant Colonel Drum comments on. Within the group it was earlier mentioned that it was fortunate that, during a high level teleconference involving lots of high-tech equipment, there was no power outage. Lieutenant Colonel Drum uses this to segue to the fact that his audio tape recorder is about to run out of battery power. A female civilian secretary, Ann, and male MSgt Simon are both anxious to help out.

44. Lt Col Drum: You know we were talking about no power outage?  
45. I'm about to have a power outage on this thing.  
46. Do you guys have double A batteries?  
47. Mr. Cameron: @@@@  
48. Lt Col Drum: They were supposed to give me enough juice for the whole day.  
49. MSgt Simon: Sir I tell you what!  
50. Ann: I'll have some in-<sub>z</sub>  
51. MSgt Simon: If we don't have any [here we can go get some  
over at /?/  
52. Ann: [I'll have some in 5 minutes.  
53. MSgt Simon: We can get some at /?/ for you.  
54. Lt Col Drum: OK.  
55. Deb: Five minutes look at her.<sub>z</sub>  
56. Lt Col Drum: I'll be there.  
57. Lt Col Drum: **Don't run out and IMPAC these things.**  
58. Deb: [<sub>softly</sub>] Oh god  
59. MSgt Simon: [@ @ @ @  
60. Lt Col Drum: **Hey I gotta be careful around this place.**  
61. **You guys jump <snaps fingers> <snaps fingers>**  
62. Deb: @@@@

In this excerpt we see that Master Sergeant Simon and Ann are jumping to the task, and can be argued to be doing so in a playful manner. Both are expressing the willingness to acquire the batteries and even seem to be engaged in a playful race to do so. Master

Sergeant Simon opens in line 49 with, "Sir I tell you what!" and follows that up in line 51 with, "If we don't have any here we can go get some" at the same time that Ann, in line 52, says, "I'll have some in 5 minutes". Deb adds the evaluation, "Five minutes look at her" in remarking about how quickly Ann's going to resolve the dilemma, and again marking the event with a playful tone. Lieutenant Colonel Drum has to say in line 57 "Don't run out and IMPAC these things", which is to say, he's telling them not to go to the store and charge them on the unit's government credit card (IMPAC) which allows military personnel to purchase petty cash type items for official office use. He sees that Master Sergeant Simon and Ann are ready to go to lengths to find him the batteries he needs and notes in lines 60 and 61, "Hey I gotta be careful around this place. You guys jump." Again this interaction expresses an ideology which encourages quick and responsive action in reply to requests, even indirect ones, from superiors. Often, this ideology means that subordinates go into action over mere suggestions or comments. This is what's implied when Lieutenant Colonel Drum points out, "You guys jump."

Some might argue that this eagerness to please is reminiscent of a child's eagerness to please a parent. Recall my assertion earlier in this chapter that the American military superior/subordinate relationship is much like a parent/child relationship. Another instance of this dynamic occurs in the following data. Here, SSgt Trainer, a member of Major Cardiff's unit, has temporarily been serving as an instructor at a leadership school on base. He has asked Major Cardiff if she'll be attending a

graduation ceremony, the last one he'll attend after serving as an instructor at the school, and if she will be the guest speaker, which she has done before. At the start of the conversation, they're confirming the date and time of the ceremony and she's "pulling up" her schedule on her computer.

63. SSgt Trainer: On the 17<sup>th</sup> of October at fourteen hundred.  
64. Maj Cardiff: Okay↓  
65. Let me pull that up and make sure I've got it in here,  
66. so I know to do a speech.  
67. SSgt Trainer: That [would be great  
68. Maj Cardiff: [I don't know after last time↑ you're-  
69. you still want me to do this [again?  
70. SSgt Trainer: [Yes ma'am!  
71. You're my-  
72. you're my unit commander↑,  
73. and I would really appreciate it if you did my last graduation.  
74. Maj Cardiff: No problem. No problem.

Here again, we see indications of closeness, marked by the address form "ma'am" so as to mark the subordinate/superior relationship despite that closeness.

In lines 68-69, having spoken at such a graduation ceremony before, Major Cardiff makes the self-deprecating remark, "I don't know after last time you're- you still want me to do this again?" Researchers have found that self-deprecating humor is a common form of humor for women in single-gender groups, but used less by women in mixed-gender groups (Ervin-Tripp and Lampert 1992). If this is truly the case, Major Cardiff's use of self-deprecating humor in a mixed-gender group perhaps demonstrates a level of comfort with both the mixed-sex environment, and the security of her position

as superordinate. Staff Sergeant Trainer takes her question quite literally and replies with an emphatic, “Yes, ma’am!” (line 70) and, again, showing the close ties within the group, states “you’re my unit commander” (lines 71-72) tying with the conjunction “and” (line 73) to the emotional significance of his request, as indicated by the emphasis he places on “really”: “ you’re my unit commander and I would really appreciate it if you did my last graduation.”

The family dynamic and the bond that forms over performing the mutual endeavor of a community of practice comes to the fore in the following exchange between Colonel Acuff and Colonel Irish. Colonel Acuff is counseling Colonel Irish regarding assignment possibilities. Colonel Irish has expressed his desire to deploy if the opportunity comes up, but Colonel Acuff has informed him that those opportunities are fewer than they had been. Colonel Irish starts by referencing the fact that he is on an “on-call” list for a future date.

75. Col Irish: I hope máybe I know that uh there’s a whole string of us that are on  
 76. The on-call list for next [March I guess time frame but,  
 77. Col Acuff: [Mm-hmm  
 78. Col Irish: If anything comes up in the interim o:r<sub>z</sub> there’s a way to máke that  
 happen=  
 79. Col Acuff: Yeah  
 80. Col Irish: =I w- I’ll gó in a heartbeat.  
 81. Col Acuff: Yeah that’s not a very híg probability.  
 82. Option. <sub>z</sub>  
 83. Col Irish: That’s what I’m thinking the on-call thing ‘cause [that would=  
 84. Col Acuff: [Yea:h  
 85. Col Irish: =[seem uh  
 86. Col Acuff: [That’s like go to war.  
 87. U:h

88. Ór if someone else breaks their le:g or you know kind of things.  
 89. So [I'm gonna be looking: .. for other .. [you know opportunities.  
 90. Col Irish: [<softly> Yes Ma'am [<softly> Opportunities.  
 91. And I appreciate it. <sub>z</sub>  
 92. Col Acuff: Yeah<sub>z</sub>  
 93. Col Irish: If it comes up I-  
 94. 'Cause I've already talked to Liz and she kno:ws and it's uh .. it's  
 something I want to do=  
 95. =It's the ríght thing to do.  
 96. Col Acuff: Mm-[hmm  
 97. Col Irish: [And I would feel so much .. clóser I think to all of my [folks  
 98. Col Acuff: [M-  
 hm  
 99. Col Irish: with the [opportunity so I- I would- [I want to go.  
 100. Col Acuff: [Mm-hmm [Yeah.  
 101. Col Irish: For sure.  
 102. Col Acuff: K. <sub>z</sub>  
 103. Col Irish: And a- áctually I look forward to it.  
 104. It would be great.  
 105. Col Acuff: K.

Colonel Irish indicates that if he gets a chance to deploy he'd "go in a heartbeat" (line 80) if the opportunity arises. Further, he points out in line 94 that he's already "talked to" his wife and "she knows" it's something he wants to do. Interestingly, Colonel Irish appears to be a husband who, on the one hand, discusses these things with his wife. In his wording, in which he talks to his wife and lets her know what he wants to do, he frames himself as the powerful head of household (cf. Ochs and Taylor 1995). To deploy, he says, is "the right thing to do" (line 95) even if it means leaving his family behind for awhile, with the motivation that, in his words, "I would feel so much .. clóser I think to all of my folks" (line 97). He is not only prepared to displace his own family

in order to become closer to his subordinates (i.e., “my folks”), “actually” he says, “I look forward to it” (line 103).

What I have asserted to be a family dynamic in military interaction could also arguably be considered a feminine dynamic. Earlier I argued that the American military’s superior/subordinate structure dwells in the “hierarchy/closeness” quadrant of Tannen’s (1996) multidimensional model of status and connection – the same quadrant in which Tannen categorizes the Japanese mother/child relationship. Taking Thorne’s (2001) assertion that the institutional arrangements of paid and unpaid labor sustain “various ideologies and representations of gender,” whereby, “discourses of feminine nurturance and masculine detachment and autonomy” sustain that women’s primary responsibility is for caring work, we have curious contrasts in the military data (7). In the military, where elements of economy and power are equalized in a system which pays according to rank (regardless of sex) and affords respect to rank and position (regardless of sex) we see systematic examples of masculine nurturance and feminine autonomy in military interactions.

Despite the examples I presented above, it is true that orders and directions are sometimes followed much more begrudgingly. Recall in Chapter Three the narrative “Salute Smartly” in which the male Major Black is conveying to the female Major Eichendorf his encounters with his superiors over job assignments and scheduling. Despite his disagreements with his superiors, he asserts that “they’re the bosses and what they say goes and I’m gonna salute smartly and make it happen”. The dynamics

are different in such a unit for a number of reasons. As pointed out earlier, women were authorized to fly in combat aircraft over a decade ago, but because of the training process have only moved into some air combat units as pilots in the past few years. Therefore the ratio of women to men is generally much smaller than in the types of units from which the data analyzed so far in this chapter was taken. Consequently, masculine stereotypes seem to have a much stronger foothold in units which have most recently gender integrated and which are most closely associated with the fighting roles in the military. In addition, the ratio of officers to enlisted is almost completely reversed. In other words, in the Wing, or in a combat support unit, there are very few officers and mostly enlisted members, i.e., fewer manager/supervisors than workers. Since the great majority of members of the air combat unit are officers within one or two ranks of each other, they are still subject to the hierarchy, but they are not as far apart in the hierarchy as, say, a Staff Sergeant and a Major. The dynamic at work in "Salute Smartly", then, is that nearly all of the members of the air combat unit are manager/supervisor level, though only a handful of them serve in those leadership roles. This compares to a business which has three or four managers per worker.

We have once again left the combat unit for the following excerpt. Lieutenant Colonel Drum, who is meeting with civilian contractors, makes light of the "us vs. them" dynamic which Major Black only subtly implied in "Salute Smartly". This interaction takes place at the start of a meeting with civilians who have completed a human resources survey of the unit's workload. Their job is to assess whether the

staffing in the unit is appropriate to the workload. The human resources personnel are notorious for cutting staffing in the units they visit. Lieutenant Colonel Drum and others have just entered the office where the meeting will take place, so the tongue-in-cheek comment arises as they're settling on the seating arrangements:

106. Lt Col Drum: Let's, let's pull up chairs, 'n-  
107. Is this a- an "us" or a "we/they"?  
108. I'm just kidding  
109. Jim: <Laughter>  
110. Lt Col Drum : You know, you guys on that side of the line, us on this side of the  
line, an-  
111. Jim: <Laughter> /?/ ;  
112. Lt Col Drum: And we arm wrestle for the difference.  
113. Jim: That's why we bring two, just in case, you know, they, they try to  
jump us, we-

One would think that, in the military, an adversarial frame is a customary one. But the institutional ideology is generally one of working together to accomplish the mission in the best possible way. However, though likely not intentional, as it is all civilians with whom Lieutenant Colonel Drum is interacting, his “us/them” or “we/they” dynamic may be revealing a sense of community as defined by “we” military members, contributing to the mission, and “they” civilians, who are likely to detract from our ability to do our mission by decreasing our staffing.

In a similar vein, the next excerpt follows a different meeting with civilian contractors who are examining long-term options for privatizing military housing. This excerpt highlights the institutional ideology of working together to accomplish the

mission, as compared to a contractor ideology of making money on a government contract, thereby highlighting, once again, the difference between military ideologies and what Lieutenant Colonel Drum perceives to be the civilian or contractor ideology – making money. Interestingly, it starts with both male officers, a superior and subordinate, in what might be considered a “troubles talk” frame over frustration with the way the meeting went:

114. Lt Ross: What do you think Sir?  
115. Lt Col Drum: Uh I was frustrated.  
116. Could you tell?  
117. Lt Ross: U:h .. I- I could tell.  
118. Lt Col Drum: Uh I mean my frustration was uh .. that-  
119. I don't know how much money these guys made.  
120. On this but .. they didn't give us a:h- they gave us what they  
wánted to give us,  
121. and they didn't give us- they didn't work with us.  
122. On- you know “Hey this one's marginally .. acceptable,  
123. why don't we, cut the middle between these two.”  
124. Lt Ross: See and we were pushing for that.

Clearly to Lieutenant Colonel Drum and Lt Ross, who want to find the best option for the government's cost, working together to find the right compromise is the valued work ethic. As Lieutenant Colonel Drum highlights in lines 120 and 121, his lament is that the contractor, “gave us what they wanted to give us, and they didn't give us- they didn't work with us.” A masculine interpretation of his complaint may be that he felt cheated – that they didn't have a “level playing field” in that the contractor took control of the situation. A feminine interpretation of his complaint could be the lack of

community effort or orientation in the work situation, literally, “they didn’t work **with** us.”

In the following and final excerpt we see several manifestations of the sense of family and community inherent in communications in the military environment. This is a continuation of the discussion, referenced in Chapter Two, in which Colonel Acuff, the female Wing Commander, is providing some career advice to Colonel Irish. Here, she points out the importance of Colonel Irish advocating for himself in order to get a job which shows the proper progression for his career. He points out that he would not do such a thing, because he can’t conceive of advocating on his own behalf, but he would be “extremely comfortable” in “working” jobs for his “people” (line 136). And, as Colonel Acuff’s subordinate Colonel Irish is anxious to know, as he indicates in lines 153 to 173, that he and his unit (the “Ops Group” or “Operations Group”) perform their work in a way that is supporting Colonel Acuff, “the best we can” (line 173).

125. Acuff: I would not at all be shy: about trying to get ón the phone with General  
Becker.  
126. U:m  
127. To get career advice or guidance for you if you didn’t feel like you ..  
128. wanted to be the guy who .. who is advocating for himself. <sub>z</sub>  
129. Irish: I really  
wouldn’t I-  
130. ‘Cause that would [make me véry uncomfortable.  
131. Acuff: [K.  
132. Irish: I mean I’m-  
133. Acuff: For you to make the call?  
134. Irish: Absolutely. <sub>z</sub>  
135. Acuff: [<softly> K.

136. Irish: [I'm extremely comfortable with just like you just described  
working it for my people↑
137. I'd do that in a heartbeat.
138. [And actually I háve done that several times but<sub>z</sub> not-
139. Acuff: [Mm-hmm Mm-hmm
140. Irish: Not for myself.
141. Acuff: K.
142. Irish: Just, feel like
143. Acuff: Well I would like you to think about that.
144. And, whether the time is no:w?
145. 'Cause this is- we're actually talking about ah- about a year and a half  
from now o:r
146. Irish: Yes Ma'am.
147. Acuff: [U:h
148. Irish: [Maybe a year from now we're still [/?/ next fall.
149. Acuff: [Year from now yeah.
150. So .. thát kind of thing.
151. Let's think about the timing and hé could be retired or- or still there.
152. Y- those guys never quite retire.
153. Irish: Well you've- to me- it's móre important to me than than that is:,
154. hopefully, between now and the:n,
155. you will have formed your ówn opinion.
156. Acuff: <softly> Mm-hmm
157. Irish: 'Cause I really would like some feedback from you to say ["OK Mikey=
158. Acuff: [Mm-hmm
159. Irish: =you're doing .. you're going fine.
160. You're doing great."
161. Irish: You know what I mean réally, z
162. Acuff: Yeah.
163. Oh I [/?/
164. Irish: ['Cause I- 'cause I don't-
165. I can't say ríght this minute that I have a goo:d .. feeling for ..
166. Am I supporting you the way that you would like [me to support you.
167. Acuff: [Mm-hmm
168. Irish: And- and that's obviously:
169. To me that's .. the grade.
170. Acuff: Mm-hmm<sub>z</sub>
171. Irish: The most important thing, z um is .. is the Ops group,
172. Acuff: Mm-hmm
173. Irish: supporting you: .. the best we can.

Colonel Irish has clearly been successful in the Air Force, as attested to by the rank and job position he has attained. However, here he diminishes his own importance through his reticence to make a phone call to a superior pointing out that it would make him "very uncomfortable" (line 130) to lobby on behalf of his own career advancement, though he has done it for his own subordinates, "several times" (line 138). In what some of the literature would regard as a feminine enactment of care for his subordinates, Colonel Irish downplays his own benefit and plays up the importance of supporting his "people" (line 136) which he'd do "in a heartbeat" (line 137). He goes on to state that, when the time comes, rather than phoning someone else on his own behalf, he'd prefer to know from Colonel Acuff that he's supporting her the way she'd expect, saying, in lines 153-155, "Well you've- to me- it's more important to me than than that is hopefully, between now and then you will have formed your own opinion". He goes on to express his desire to please his superior by posing as a rhetorical question, "Am I supporting you the way that you would like me to support you" (line 166) because to him that's, "the grade" (line 169). We see in his interactions a knowledge that his power comes from below as well as above, in that he wants to care for his subordinates as much as he wants to attend to the needs and desires of his superiors.

### **Conclusion -- Gender as Style and Gender as Cover-up**

Without question, the military is a masculine organization. It has constructed for itself, and maintains, an ideological complex, which, to quote Hodge and Kress

“exists to sustain relationships of both power and solidarity, and [represents] the social order as simultaneously serving the interests of both dominant and subordinate” (3). More specifically, the military ideological complex sustains relationships of power and solidarity between superior and subordinate in terms of military rank. But, as the findings of this study show, the military’s ideological complex also sustains relationships in terms of superior and subordinate in terms of social rank, that is, male as superior and female as subordinate. Women’s inequality in the military as a whole, as manifest in combat exclusions, sustains this notion of female, and femininity, as a subordinate social construct. “Ma’am” is not always equal to “sir”, and gender differences are often apparent either in narratives, or in the way they are received.

Still, the masculinity of the institutions and its interactions could not exist without its contrast: the feminine. Taken together, the excerpts above demonstrate interactional processes one would clearly consider collaborative, facilitative, process-oriented, and person-oriented – all characteristics which Holmes and Stubbe (2003) have noted that the literature presents as traits of “feminine” interactional style. These forms are clearly prevalent within the environment of the military, even though it is a masculine institution. Despite the controversy inherent in creating lists of gendered traits, Holmes and Stubbe point out that research on interaction at work has, in general confirmed such patterns. They go on to point out that in a workplace different interactions, e.g. meetings or small talk, are stereotypically masculine or feminine, depending upon the workplace norms. The preceding excerpts clearly demonstrate that

in an institution even as masculine as the military, interactions can be gendered feminine as easily as they can be gendered masculine.

Holmes and Stubbe found that the functions of interactions and status of participants were factors that influenced workplace interactional style. But could it be that we should look more deeply at the issues of identity which play into interactional style as implemented in a community of practice? One possibility is that posited earlier; namely, that men who interact within an overtly masculine organization, such as the military, do not feel the need to perform their masculine identity, as it is already well-established by membership in the military. They therefore don't feel bound by a masculine style, particularly if it isn't appropriate to the situation. Indeed, the cultural norm of the military being more closely akin to "hierarchy and closeness" than to the general American norm which is "hierarchy and distance", interactional practices which promote closeness will be critical in the military context.

My assertion that the closeness of the masculine military community, bound by hierarchy, requires feminine constructs is supported by the following passage, taken from a 1947 text written by a World War II commander (Marshall 1947:163). In it he must twice deny feminine traits – a denial which would be unnecessary, were the femininity of those traits not apparent:

One further fact which needs to be stressed about the character of those officers whose capacity could be measured in the efficiency of their companies – while they were scrupulous in their care of their men, they were not 'wet nurses.' They treated their subordinates as men; they did not regard them as adolescents and they did not employ the classroom manner in dealing with them individually or in the mass. That was an

important part of their hold upon men. The latter respect manliness, not maidenliness. They prize a commander the more if he looks and acts the part of a soldier, but the characteristic of a fine appearance will but betray him the sooner if he has no real kinship with men.

As this study shows, indeed it is the “manliness” which is pervasive. It is a “manliness” which maintains an ideological complex of male superiority through address forms and stories of heroism, through limitations upon women’s roles and clear institutional hierarchies. But it’s also a male superiority which relies on “maidenliness”, as Marshall put it, to provide the ties that bind.

## **Chapter 5 – Conclusion**

### **Language and Gender**

In the 30-year history of the study of language and gender, theory and application have branched incrementally like the reaches of a family tree. In Chapter One I reviewed literature regarding language and gender and showed that the study has progressed from an eye-opening review of differences between the “language” of women and men (Lakoff 1975), to observations that language served to preserve “domination” of one sex over another (Spender 1980), and on to a cross-cultural approach which observes that the ritual styles of talk which are observed among even the youngest girls and boys at play remain with them as women and men (Tannen 1990). Recent work is progressing down still other branches of interest, to include language as it constructs identities on the continuum of gender (Bucholtz and Hall 1995) and language and sexuality (Cameron and Kulick 2003).

My review also showed that from the point at which Lakoff (1975) provided the impetus for the study of language and gender, research in the field has been closely tied to notions of power and authority. Sociolinguists have investigated relationships between gender and language in a variety of communities and contexts in order to explore the role of power in language and gender. For example, language and gender has been studied in many institutional and organizational environments including medical, legal, law enforcement, academic and business settings. While all of those

settings have historically been marked by gender differentials in opportunity, pay, and power, one of the most metaphorically and demographically gender-differentiated institutions has remained unexamined in the sociolinguistic literature: the military.

In my review of masculinity theory in Chapter One I posited that the military is veritably synonymous with masculinity. This correlation provides yet another reason linguistic study in the military is an interesting venue for the study of language, gender and power. Masculinity theorists have determined that key components in the construction of masculinity include a display of the willingness to fight, homosocial enactment for other men's approval, and denunciation of the feminine. Those characteristics, taken together with the hierarchical nature of both the military structure and the ritually competitive nature of men's conversational styles, would seem to set the stage for linguistic construction of gender identity in the military. And while the power dynamics of the military hierarchy may assist enactment of masculinity, it is a hierarchy which sometimes dictates that a man's superior is a woman. Language constitutes the social construction as well as reflects it. Therefore, the institutional norms can be seen to advantage men because of the masculine construct of the military; but, they also necessarily advantage women based upon the rules of power set up by a system of hierarchy and rank.

## **The Study's Goal**

In this study, one of the first in-depth studies to conduct discourse analysis in a military setting, I was interested to begin the long process of applying language and gender research in a military environment. I wanted to add to the literature an additional perspective on the dynamics of power in language and gender studies. The strands of language, gender identity, social norms, and power structures have been so tightly interwoven that attempting to extricate one from the other for the purpose of research in language and gender has long proven difficult. But the military hierarchy provides a clear delineation of a speaker's place in the power structure, whether male or female, therefore perhaps a method of aligning gender-related findings with clear indications of power-related dynamics.

Wary that a predisposition to a certain finding can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, I set about this study with the intention of recording military women and men of comparable rank, in comparable settings. I wanted to see what sociolinguistic cues floated out of the data itself. This strategy was my primary motivation for using the community of practice framework which encourages a focus upon language as it is used by community members to accomplish a mutual endeavor as a way to conceptualize my approach to language and gender. Interactional sociolinguistic analysis of the language used to accomplish a task keeps the analyst from trying to find gender differences and allows the analyst to ask, in using language to accomplish the task, what difference does gender make if any? Using this technique these data showed that sometimes there

aren't conspicuous gender differences in how language is used in the pursuit of an institutional endeavor.

Using personal contacts, I solicited volunteers, all Air Force officers, at three different Air Force bases in the Eastern and Midwestern United States. The Air Force's system of ranks and duty titles made it relatively easy to find women and men who would be conducting similar tasks at similar levels of responsibility so that valid comparisons could be made. In all I collected nearly 30 hours of audiotape from six Air Force officers: a female and male Wing Commander, a female and male Squadron Commander, and a female and male Flight Commander. I also intentionally engaged with informants in both non-combat oriented jobs, and combat related jobs.

### **What "Ma'am" and "Sir" Tell Us**

As I listened to the recordings it quickly became apparent that two of the most gender-relevant linguistic variables in these data were also two of the most seemingly mundane lexical items in military usage: "ma'am" and "sir". As gender-indexed terms which are characteristic of interactions in the military, those simple address forms can be regarded as the definitive nexus of language, gender and the military. Given that the terms are used upward, from subordinate to superior, I based a portion of my review of the literature on work with politeness and honorifics. In addition, I reviewed literature regarding gender-indexed terms. Based upon the literature on gender-indexing, I would

have expected to find indications that “ma’am” as an address form carried less respect or power than “sir” as an address form

Since my review of the literature revealed that there is very little work regarding the use of “ma’am” and “sir”, the findings in Chapter Two contribute a baseline analysis of the environments in which “ma’am” and “sir” occur in military usage: together with “yes” or “no”, sentence-initially including in greeting, sentence-finally, sometimes mid-sentence between clauses, and as a tag in common adjacency pairs (e.g., “Thank you” to which is replied, “You’re welcome, ma’am”). Once identifying these general environments I catalogued all 412 instances of “ma’am” and “sir” in the recordings. I found that most disparities in numbers could be accounted for by virtue of the contexts in which the honorifics were used and by differences in the informants’ environments and total recording time.

Differences which I could not account for, however, included a seeming disparity in civilians’ use of “ma’am” and “sir” to military members, and a difference in the use of sentence-final “sir” as a tag to a question. Civilians, though not required to use “ma’am” and “sir” the way military members are, often use the honorifics when working with military members. My numbers seemed to show that civilians were more likely to use “sir” with male military superiors than they were likely to use “ma’am” with female military superiors. Though these data do not show this conclusively, they suggest that this could be the case – a case which calls for more research into this question. My numbers also seemed to show that male superiors were more likely to be

asked questions which were phrased as questions, contained rising-intonation, and were tagged with the address form “sir”. Asking questions can easily be regarded as a form of deference to superiors. Questions make it clear that the subordinate understands that the decision-making power lies with the superior. In addition, questions communicate to the superior the subordinate’s willingness to act on whatever decision is made by the superior. Metaphorically, this is an act of putting the ball in his court and not hers, as it were.

One interesting result of these findings regarding “ma’am” and “sir” is that they validate the argument I put forth in Chapters Three and Four, that the linguistic construction of the military as a masculine institution is performed across the boundaries of the institution. In short, these findings suggest that civilians construct the male as the model military officer by proffering more “sirs” to him, and military members construct the male military superior as deserving of greater deference through use of questions tagged with the respectful “sir”.

### **What Institutional Narratives Tell Us**

As I first listened to the recordings I collected I became interested in the role of conversational narratives in the institutional environment, largely because some of them were quite colorful. It quickly became apparent, though, that narratives were a frequent occurrence in the participants’ duty days. My review of research regarding the use of narrative in institutions revealed that this is an area of relatively recent interest in

sociolinguistics, though the use of narrative at work has been explored some in other fields such as organizational communication.

Though narratives had been found to both conduct the work of the institution and help form and convey an institution's identity, I found that finer distinctions were necessary to categorize the types of narratives in these data. More specifically, I found that narratives are used to convey an institution's values and ideals as well as help carry on its traditions. I also found that narratives often reinforce an institution's hierarchy, whether referentially or evaluatively, and that personal narratives in the institutional environment may carry important indications as to how one sustains a personal identity in the institutional surround.

Interestingly, in examining institutional narratives, gender distinctions were readily apparent. Those gender distinctions affirmed research which has found that women use more detail in narrative, create more dialogue in narrative, and generally tell narratives of community, whereas men construct narratives which relay a tale of achievement or contest. However, I found that where women's motivation to tell a story may be community-oriented, in the military environment the narrative she tells may, by virtue of its subject matter, serve to reinforce the masculine ideals of the institution.

### **Institution, Language and Ideology**

After analyzing the use of “ma’am” and “sir” and reflecting upon the institutional narratives I examined, it became apparent that institutional ideology was a pervasive influence in even the subtlest of linguistic cues. Specifically, the findings in these data often came back to the institution’s reliance upon the ideology of hierarchy. It’s important to keep in mind, though, that military hierarchy is also the key to military solidarity. Additional analysis of these data showed that the solidarity which springs from the military’s hierarchical structure results in superiors’ devotion to subordinates and their well-being, and subordinates’ desire to please their superiors. However, the masculinity associated with the military is deeply rooted in its hierarchical structure and ideology -- all reinforced through language.

### **Closing Thoughts**

With this study I open the door to considerations of power, gender dynamics and language and ideology in a community which has not yet been studied using the techniques of discourse analysis. And while some have criticized the utility of examining “outlying cases”, particularly in studies of gender or sexuality in language, the military community, though not studied, can hardly be considered an outlying case. On the contrary, American military identity is part of American identity in that it influences the American masculine construct and has affected 26 million veterans and their families, as well as those who may not be in the military but work with and near

the military on a regular basis. Also unique to this study and my analysis of “ma’am” and “sir” is an approach which does not necessarily examine how women and men use language, but how those in their community use language to address them as women and men. Further, that community – characterized by rigorous rites of membership, wear of uniforms which contextualize interactions, and mutual respect between superior and subordinate – is a community of paradoxes. While the hierarchical nature of the military as an institution may actually offer high-ranking women advantages of power that might be less attainable or less clear outside of the military, women’s exclusion from many combat-related jobs caps the heights to which women can rise. While women want to be known as “soldiers” and “sailors,” not “female soldiers” and “female sailors”, the non-gendering of women cloaks their wide and valuable contributions, since the American image of the prototypical soldier or sailor is most definitely male. And yet, while the military can be argued to be one of the most masculine of American institutions, analysis of the language used to communicate the institution’s ideologies reveals that either military men can be tremendously nurturing, or that that is how nurture is done in a masculine way.

There is much still to be said about gender and military discourse. Different services use language differently, as do different communities within the different services. But no matter their service or job specialty or rank, military women are caught in an interesting in-between state: they’re members of an institution which abides by a hierarchy which affords them power, yet by virtue of their sex-class they

cannot necessarily participate fully in that institution – whether due to combat restrictions, or, even if combat restrictions were removed, by virtue of the organization’s definitively masculine nature. However, it’s clear in these data that feminine nurturance of both colleagues and community is an important element of the solidary nature of hierarchical military communities. That seems to be an understanding that Fiona, who wants to be “An Air Force daddy, just like [her] mommy” already has.

# Appendix 1 – Officer Ranks

| Rank               | Insignia                                                                                      |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Colonel            |             |
| Lieutenant Colonel |  (Silver)   |
| Major              |  (Gold)     |
| Captain            |            |
| First Lieutenant   |  (Silver) |
| Second Lieutenant  |  (Gold)   |

## Appendix 2 – Enlisted Ranks

| Rank                                                                          | Insignia                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chief Master Sergeant<br>("Chief")                                            |    |
| Senior Master Sergeant<br>(With diamond denotes "First Sergeant" aka "Shirt") |    |
| Master Sergeant                                                               |    |
| Technical Sergeant                                                            |  |
| Staff Sergeant                                                                |  |
| Senior Airman                                                                 |  |
| Airman First Class                                                            |  |
| Airman                                                                        |  |

### Appendix 3 – Interview Form

Interactional Analysis of Military discourse

Lt Col Edith A. Disler, AFIT/CI, Georgetown University – Fall 2003

#### Background Information and Interview Form

1. Date \_\_\_\_\_
2. Informant: A B C D E F
3. Sex: M F
4. Hometown or region:
5. Rank/Position:
6. Years in Service:
7. Specialty Training:
8. How has your childhood upbringing influenced your communication style
9. How did your first Air Force training experience (basic training, OTS, ROTC, Air Force Academy, etc.) influence your communication style?
10. What aspect of military experience or training has had the greatest impact on your communication style?
11. How would you characterize the difference between the ways you communicate with superiors? Subordinates? Civilians?

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