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# GI Jane Versus Sergeant Jane Doe: How Women's Images In War Movies Contribute To Conflicting Expectations Of Women In Combat

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GI Jane Versus Sergeant Jane Doe:  
How Women's Images in War Movies Contribute to  
Conflicting Expectations of Women in Combat

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the affiliated faculty of

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of New England

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Sawyer Marie L. Alberi  
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**Abstract**

Research on women's portrayal in media generally suggests that women continue to be sexualized and objectified as war trophies in the classic Hollywood warrior culture film. The age old question of whether life imitates art or vice versa is important to consider when examining the question of how this popular culture medium contributes to the conflicting expectations of today's women in combat roles. What is the reality of women's roles in the US Military compared to the roles portrayed by warrior film media? History tells us that women have been on the battlefield in one way or another since there has been battle. Whether in sanctioned medical or support roles or as women disguised as men so they could fight in combat, women were and are present in combat. In January 2016 women began the process of integrating into combat roles in the U.S. Military. The integration of women into combat roles represents a significant social and cultural change for the US Military. This study provides one perspective about how gender roles in media are seen and how these images contribute to the conflict between the lived experience of military women and broader cultural expectations. The findings can inform leaders within and outside of the U.S. military about women's capacity to serve competently in combat. This study used the Bechdel test and then documented gendered roles, the gender in the gendered roles, and the characterization of the roles in warrior culture film media. This data is then compared to information about women in events, times, or campaigns that are depicted in the films. Out of 11 films and TV episodes, only one film and one TV show passed the Bechdel test.

Every film reviewed had gendered roles, with some female gendered roles by portrayed by males until that male had an opportunity to go through his personal rite of manhood. The characterization of the female gendered roles reflected the stereotype that women needed protecting and were weak; women were depicted as prostitutes, snipers, as war trophies or experiencing sexual trauma. This study found that women may not have been in the specific units portrayed in these films, but they were present. Women are excluded from Warrior Culture Film Media and are not depicted as strong warriors. Women are not portrayed accurately when compared to real life in the military. The results will be used to inform leaders in the U.S. Military about how gender roles in media are portrayed and how these images contribute to the conflict between the lived experience of military women and how they appear in media. Images of warrior culture and the roles of men and women in that culture in popular media conflict with more equitable and evolving gender-neutral military staffing expectations.

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Doctor of Education

Transformative Leadership Education

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this work to my mother, who always valued education, and to all the women of strength who have served and gone before me: those who have been my mothers, my sisters, my mentors, my advisors, and my role models.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my wife who has supported and encouraged me unconditionally in this path.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

By exploring whether art imitates life or life imitates art, this qualitative study demonstrates how media reinforces conflicting images about women in combat roles in the United States (U.S.) Military. This approach highlights the cultural understanding of gender roles in the U.S. Military and will inform the conversation about the integration of women into combat roles by giving a unique perspective on the issues, problems, and barriers that military women have and will continue to face. While changes in policy now permit gay and transgender persons to serve, the U.S. Military nevertheless currently operates using gender as a binary system in which gender maps onto biological bodies: masculine to male and feminine to female. In traditional warrior culture themes, men are the protectors and women receive protection. Therefore, if women encroach in the domains in which masculinity is established for men, such as in combat roles, those women are seen as violating the normative gender roles in the U.S. military. This violation can give rise to conflicting expectations of women as they enter into previously all-male domains. Images of women in these domains establish narratives that will impact the way women will be greeted in real life as they assume combat roles in the U.S. Military.

### **Problem Statement**

Images in popular film media of warrior culture, and the roles of men and women within that culture, conflict with more equitable and evolving gender-neutral military staffing expectations. The problem of this conflict has existed for some time, but half of this conflict, the issue of women not being able to serve in combat roles, was addressed as the U.S. Military allowed women to serve in combat roles in January 2016. This historic social change, like any other historic social change, will take time and will be difficult to achieve without a full study of

the issues and barriers women will face as they take their place next to men in combat (Kotter, 2012). This research contributes a unique and specific perspective to the overall study of these issues and barriers facing women in the U.S. Military today.

Research on women's portrayal in media more generally suggests that women continue to be sexualized and objectified as war trophies in the classic Hollywood warrior culture film (Rhode, 1995; Garofolo, 2000). Film portrayals of the stereotypic male as warrior and stereotypic female roles as damsels in need of rescuing, or even as sexualized war trophies, may influence how current and developing policy regarding gender roles and women in the U.S. Military will be interpreted, implemented, and enforced. This problem has existed since women started to serve in the U.S. Military, but it will soon be officially addressed in part. In January 2016 (GAO 1998; Jelinek, 2011), by regulation, gender will no longer exclude women from combat roles, and women will be able to reach their full potential as members of the U.S. Military.

The U.S. Military is an organization based on a chain of command in which its members follow orders and obey regulations. The orders surrounding the integration of women into combat roles will be lawful and socially just. However, individual leaders, both men and women, both officers and enlisted, will implement and enforce these new rules based on their own interpretation and personal experiences (Mead, 1934). Implementing this new regulation will reflect not only the organizational change but also the influences of those leaders interpreting, implementing, and enforcing that change.

Debating the nature of the complex cycle of media reflecting societal roles or media influencing societal roles may never have resolution, but the discussion itself may prove valuable as part of the larger conversation the U.S. Military is currently having regarding the integration of women into combat roles.

## **Purpose of Study**

The integration of women into combat roles is a recent change in a series of integration efforts occurring over many decades for the U.S. Military, and it introduces new, specific concerns regarding women in combat and cultural assumptions about what to expect of women combatants and the expectations of both genders in a warrior culture like that of the U.S. Military. Decisions about integration policies occur at the federal level by legislators and at organizational levels throughout the military. Transformative leaders, that is, leaders who are looking for innovative ways to greet and enable change, will need accurate, research-based information from all perspectives of this issue to address the challenges surrounding a smooth and successful transformation of U.S. Military women into combat roles. As the role of women is changing in the U.S. Military (Brown, 2012), there is a desperate need for transformative leadership within every facet of our society, but most importantly in the U.S. Military. As the landscape of combat is changing, the combat roles of women in the U.S. Military are changing (GAO 1998; Jelinek, 2011); thus, the demands on leaders in the U.S. Military as well as the United States' culture and society will also change.

This research explored and examined the differences and disconnects between gender roles present in warrior culture film media and actual roles of women in the U.S. Military. This study provides one perspective on how portrayals of women in warrior film media may influence perceptions of women by decision makers at all levels. The results will be used to inform leaders in the U.S. Military about how gender roles in media are seen and how these images contribute to the conflict between the lived experience of military women and broader cultural expectations, within and outside of the military, about women's capacity to serve competently in combat. The process of informing the U.S. Military is beyond this study, but the results of this study could

potentially be used in a future study, in a curriculum, or in other educational processes that make sense for specific U.S. Military leadership levels.

It is important to study how modern media, specifically warrior culture films, create categories of inclusion and exclusion through gender role portrayal in film (Chetty, 2004) and how those film gender roles may or may not reflect the current reality of women's roles in the military (Alfonso, 2008; Segal, 2008). It is important to study media specifically because media is a representation of the social world (Crouteau, Hoynes, & Milan, 2012), and media can influence behavior (Anderson et al., 2003; Dal Cin, Gibson, Zanna, Shumate, & Fongl, 2007). For the purpose of this study, is how people interpret, implement, and enforce regulations will be driven by and reflected in their behaviors. The focus of this research is war movies in particular, as the warrior culture of the military is powerfully expressed in this popular media. Just as favorite films can be affiliated by race, age, or gender (Chambers, 2013; Fischhoff, Antonio, & Lewis, 1998), U.S. Military members are drawn to films that depict their own culture and society.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were designed to explore and examine the portrayal of women in warrior culture film media: How are gender roles portrayed in warrior film media? How are women portrayed in these gender roles in warrior film media? Does the portrayal of gender in warrior film media reflect reality? If not, what conflicts are being created about expectations of modern women in combat? And last, how do images of warrior culture and the roles of men and women in that culture in popular media conflict with more equitable and evolving gender-neutral military staffing expectations? In contemplating these questions and conducting research, more questions may arise about the many ways gendered roles in warrior film media influence the integration of women into historically male roles in the military. For example, what and how are

warrior culture themes portrayed in warrior film media, and do these themes contribute to the conflicting expectations of modern women in combat roles? These questions may elicit information about the role of combat as a rite of manhood (Bernstein & Junger, 2013); as a duty of the warrior ethos, in particular the assertion that “I will never leave a fallen comrade”; or the military as one context for the expression of brotherhood (Army Soldiers Creed, 2003).

### **Conceptual Framework**

This research will help inform leaders in the U.S. Military about what gender roles are seen in warrior culture film media, how gender roles in warrior culture film media are seen, and how the interpretation and intent of these warrior culture gender roles contribute to the conflict between the lived experience of military women and images portrayed in warrior culture films.

Content analysis has been used in many different types of qualitative research as a method to make valid inferences about the information (Weber, 1990). This analysis can be used in many types of research, for example, to gather overall health information of patients, compare media and communication, or to garner patterns of culture in groups or societies. Weber (1990) further explained that the “inferences are about the sender(s) of the message, the messages itself, or the audience of the message” (p. 1). This researcher used content analysis to examine the film communication of culture warrior. By using content analysis to explore narratives of both women in the U.S. Military and in warrior culture film media, the researcher constructed a framework that explored the beliefs and theories that surround the message of gender roles in warrior culture. Content analysis has two objectives: to develop categories or themes, and to describe meaning in those themes (Cho & Lee, 2014). As part of content analysis, this study’s framework employed both film theory and gender theory to examine warrior culture, gendered roles, mythical themes, and societal expectations of warrior culture film media. As themes of

brotherhood, courage, and rites of passage litter modern warrior culture films, it is appropriate to examine this art form in an authentic contemporary way to address the modern challenge of gender inequality.

This study analyzed the warrior film media established in Chapter Three using film theory from Andrew Sarris (1962), John Berger (1977), and Laura Mulvey (1975), each of whom focused on different ways of seeing film. This study analyzed scenes, focusing on framing devices and the portrayal of gender. For each scene, trends and themes were documented, and the way in which gender is seen and intended to be seen was analyzed. To discover themes, trends, and patterns of how women in combat are visually represented in warrior culture film media, this study documented what the audience “sees” as women in combat. John Berger noted that “when we ‘see’ a landscape, we situate ourselves in it” (1977, p. 11), which is critical to understanding what happens to soldiers when they watch warrior culture film; that is, they put themselves into the situation.

To address the second objective of content analysis, the researcher employed both film and gender theories. The researcher reviewed the theory by Andrew Sarris (circa 1960s) regarding the directors of these warrior culture films. While working at Columbia University, Sarris developed a theory that places the intent and delivery of films in the hands of the directors. The third and ultimate premise in Sarris’ work on the Auteur theory (1962) expressed that “the Auteur theory is concerned with interior meaning, the ultimate glory of the cinema as art” (p. 55). Sarris went on to identify the similarities of that interior meaning with what is known as “*mise-en-scène*,” the French term for what is “in the frame.” By using the work of Sarris, along with gender theory, the researcher began to address how the directors intended women in these

warrior films to be portrayed. While the true intent of the scene may never be known, understanding how the scene can be or has been viewed is valuable.

By using gender theory, this study reviewed what gender roles are portrayed within warrior culture films, and how women are portrayed in these gendered roles. The binary gender roles under which the military operates are important to understand. However, it is the interaction of these gender roles within the warrior culture themes that allow for personal sexual, and therefore gendered, identity. This identity either enforces or deconstructs gender stereotypes, which creates a culture of inclusion and exclusion for women in the U.S. Military in combat roles. Butler (1990) questioned this binary definition as ineffective as a means for today's society to create gender role construction. In fact, Butler (1990) argues that the binary gender roles seen in warrior culture are reproductions preformed from what is seen, perhaps in warrior culture film media, which perpetuate the cycle of art and life.

To understand the interconnectedness, the study examined how expectations of gender roles in general are affected by societal experiences and vice versa. Ridgeway and Correll (2004) took up the task of examining gender and social relations (2004), understanding that our society can influence gender role expectations. This perspective is important to understanding what the gender roles in the warrior culture scenes mean to socialized gender roles in society.

This study produced an awareness of warrior culture themes and meaning analysis that will inform the stakeholders about the possible role these images play in shaping general beliefs about the potential of women moving into combat roles. Below is a pattern (Scott-Samuel, 2013) that represents how this issue can be circular and lead to its own recurrence if not understood and used to move forward rather than spin in place. Butler (1990) recognized this pattern, and it could be central to the argument that conflict has been a male's domain for thousands of years. The aim of

this researcher is to bring the reader back full circle to the presented issues in a manner that will help clarify the importance of this study and provide inspiration to interrupt the cycle of masculine hegemony by understanding media's role in the reproduction of patriarchy and how that leads to gender inequality in the U.S. Military.

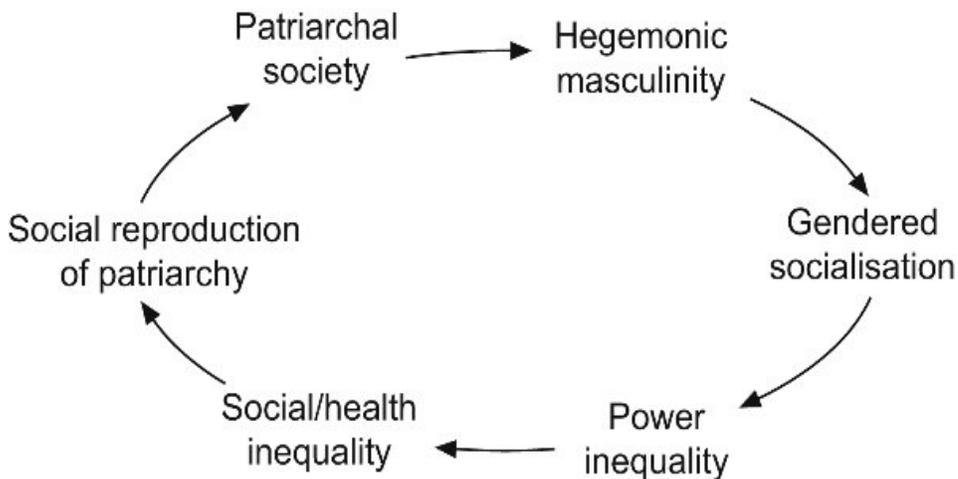


Figure 1. The Pattern of Hegemonic Masculinity by Alex Scott-Samuel (2013)

### **Researcher Bias and Limitations**

Integrating women into combat roles will inherently change the nature of the warrior culture that has been established and sustained in the U.S. Military. As a woman who has served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, and a veteran of over 20 years of service, the researcher has seen the roles open to women and men during combat both evolve and, at the same time, not change. For example, while there may actually be more women on the battlefield in roles such as a medic or mechanic in combat, actual combat positions, that is, the job listing in the “combat arms” unit, still exclude women. The researcher has been witness to and part of this dynamic change in roles and expectations in all of her adult life and career. These experiences serve as one source of information about the changing U.S. Military and the emergence of women in both more visible leadership roles and combat roles. As a woman who

has been both an officer and an enlisted soldier, the researcher has a unique perspective about the issues surrounding the role and treatment of women in the U.S. Military; this experience also represents the researcher's personal bias.

However, the researcher has no personal conflict of interest in this study. As a retired military member, she will not gain or lose rank or military privilege based on the results and conclusions of this study. The researcher has no financial disclosures to make. The biggest limitation is the potential that personal experiences could bias the analysis and therefore the conclusions. The researcher is fully cognizant of potential bias and applied theories of analysis rigorously to mitigate such bias. The researcher conducted a thorough literature review and utilized an objective research method to remain as dispassionate as possible during analysis of media images.

As a limitation, one social concern this study did not address directly is sexual violence. As long as there has been a military, there has been sexual violence. The issue of whether or not sexual violence is depicted as a possible outcome of greater combat role integration must be examined as part of the cultural problem that is, in fact, a real barrier. With the recent trial of Brigadier General Sinclair and the release of the documentary *The Invisible War*, (Ziering 2012) sexual violence has come under scrutiny with renewed urgency that has not been seen since the Tail Hook scandal with Navy Aviators in 1991. The press coverage *The Invisible War* received coincides with the lifted ban of women in combat roles and has inextricably linked these two issues. The fact that a form of film media influenced the decisive change in policy regarding sexual violence is, in itself, worthy of review, and is telling of the power and influence of the media. The influence of these documentaries helps demonstrate that while much of the informational and advocacy aspects of media may be working to help women in this process, the entertainment

aspect of film media is a separate issue. Sexual assault in the U.S. Military is an important concern that deserves more scrutiny. This study could not address the issue fully but did examine the sexual objectification of women visually; women as war trophies as part of the warrior culture; and, as a barrier or the justification for men's opposition to women in combat (i.e., if there are women present, they will be more likely to be sexually assaulted). Any further research into the relationship of sexual assault to the presence of women in combat roles as a reason to exclude women in combat roles is beyond the scope of this study.

Another limitation of this study is that there is no reference to race or ethnicity in the analysis. While most of the women in this study are white and middle class, there is no data specifically collected regarding the inclusion or exclusion of race or ethnicity. Race and ethnicity are beyond the scope of this study and any future research should consider this factor.

This study also focuses solely on the U.S. Military. While other military entities have women serving in them, the popular and local cultures are vastly different, and any type of inference to other militaries around the world would be ill advised. Lastly, the researcher sought to discover how a scene in a film is seen, or how it is intended to be seen. However, there is also the chance that the directors could have been blind (Mulvey, 1975) to what is visually in the frame, as it may not be vital to the story and therefore not intended to be seen. This director's blind spot could be viewed by the researcher as a data point of interest that may add limiting variation to this study's results.

### **Significance**

This study produced substantial documentation enabling the researcher to craft and lead a more informed discussion about the possible role these images play in shaping general beliefs about women moving into combat roles. Such an analysis provides information about where

gender stereotypes come from and contributes to a more systematic effort to disrupt stereotypes that limit both men and women from fully engaging in different roles (Chetty, 2004; Furia & Bielby, 2009). A deeper understanding of the power of media to influence beliefs about women in the military will strengthen learning about professional socialization of young women and men who will be tomorrow's leaders in a gender-diverse and non-traditional environment such as the U.S. Military. This study contributes to the discussion and study of women integrating into combat roles by focusing on warrior culture, the gendered roles and associated themes portrayed in warrior culture film, the portrayal of women in warrior film media, and how these issues pertain to implementation of new regulations regarding women in combat positions in the U.S. Military.

Because the role of women in the U.S. Military is changing significantly (GAO 1998, Jelinek, 2011), this study is of value to those implementing policies and procedures regarding women and their transition into combat roles in the U.S. Military as well as those who are interested in feminist theory in general. Changing the role of women in the U.S. Military by opening membership in combat positions is an exciting event that represents one more step in transforming military culture throughout history. This specific change also reflects patterns of women's changing roles in the larger society, that is, both in the U.S. Military and society at large.

### **Stakeholders**

Given the social change of women integrating into combat positions in January 2016, the stakeholders interested in this study are in the U.S. Military at large, women in the military in particular, as well as military leaders. There may be value in this inquiry to the population at large, perhaps to those who study gender issues. One assumption in this research is that the analysis reveals many more social aspects of the influence of media, specifically film.

## **Conclusion**

Warrior culture is a fascinating phenomenon with many facets. It is historically valid and has been a treasured part of many societies since conflicts began to be documented. However, the modern battlefield is dynamic and presents technological and geographic challenges that demand a change in the way the U.S. Military conducts combat. This change will be represented by how U.S. combat units are constructed and utilized. Part of this construction will be the gender-diverse and skill-diverse roles that military members take as part of a team. The U.S. Military has the opportunity to lead the way in the challenge to fully integrate women throughout the military. Transformative leadership will need information from different perspectives and academic research to successfully interpret, implement, and execute its part of the process. This study adds a perspective to the conversation about women's roles in combat and gender roles in general.

The benefit of this study may not be quantification of the degree to which media influences beliefs, nor will it produce the sole, so-called remedy that will make the integration of women into combat roles easy or smooth. Understanding the influence of media will not directly create more equity or make women's entry into combat roles easy or without any degree of difficulty or conflict. The explicit portrayal of gender roles in warrior films is one piece of a larger puzzle. This endeavor adds a perspective to U.S. Military leaders' understanding of that puzzle: the issues and barriers that U.S. Military women face. This study was completed to help women making this historic transition.

Each person has a personal role to play in providing information for military leadership in an effort to help inform and suggest cultural change. Furia and Bielby (2009) looked closely at the statistical data regarding women's roles on film. The research in this study is an examination of the role of film media in influencing perceptions of women's potential to be full members of the

combat ranks of the U.S. Military. This information may influence the process of helping the integration of women into combat positions. The results may support a future project of creating a curriculum for military leaders that will address gender roles in the U.S. Military and how warrior film media may influence leadership beliefs and actions. By creating a curriculum that uses the popular mediums of warrior film to create awareness of the issues of warrior culture, gender roles, and women's roles in combat, U.S. Military members could be engaged beyond this research process in a conversation that may eventually help the military navigate the change on which it has embarked. Change is a slow process for the U.S. Military. Therefore, it is expected that this change, and the discussions surrounding it, will occur over the next several years, if not decades.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Does life imitate art? Does art imitate life? The answer to this longstanding social question is relevant only in certain contexts. The context of this study is a comparison of the modern art of warrior culture film media versus real life for women in the U.S. Military. Current research indicates that currently, the dilemmas around women in combat are complex. There are still many soldiers who do not believe that women are strong enough for combat roles, that women will distract men from their jobs, that sexual assault will increase as women take on combat positions, and lastly, that women will disrupt unit morale and cohesion in previously all-male units (Gregg, 2013).

Beliefs about the negative outcomes caused by women participating fully in the military create an unequal gender environment that reinforces habits of ongoing gender inequity in the U.S. Military. This is primarily evident for military women as professionals. While these women are theoretically matched with men of equal productiveness, by virtue of the lack of opportunity to build an operational (combat role) résumé, they are not seen as matched in terms of experience and therefore are unable to compete for promotion or advancement (Lorber, 2010 and Segal, 2008).

The issue of gender roles in this life and art context is a part of the greater discussion about gender inequity in the U.S. Military. A review of the race integration in the U.S. Military demonstrates that the pattern of change for this organization is historically slow and painful. As women in the U.S. Military integrate into combat roles, discussion and study from all perspectives will help decrease the difficulty of this transition. This literature review informed this study and methodically explored and documented the art and life roles of women in the U.S. Military.

## **Selected Review of the Literature**

The literature review examined four major areas: film and film influence, warrior culture themes in film media, women's role in the U.S. Military (historical, modern, and fictional), and gender theory. These major topics guides the reader through the necessary background to understand how film is seen, how film can affect us, how differently women in the U.S. Military are depicted in warrior film media versus their real lives, and how warrior film media can influence gender inequity in the U.S. Military.

The modern version of art that was studied is film media, specifically warrior culture film media. Therefore, the next two sections of the literature review examine film, to include the study of film, and warrior culture in film. In the film section the researcher explored current and historical literature on film and film study to explore ways of seeing film. The second section focused on warrior culture film, the themes of warrior culture, and how those themes are depicted in warrior culture film media. This section enabled the researcher to establish a list films and film clips that represent warrior culture themes that were used for this study.

The next part of the literature review describes historical and contemporary women's roles in U.S. Military generally, and in combat more specifically. This review is important in order to compare what is commonly called "art," that is, the film depiction of women in the U.S. Military, and what may be called "life," the real world history and participation of women in the U.S. Military.

Last, the researcher reviews the gender theory and social inequity that will offer insight to this study. The researcher will apply gender theory to the film analysis in order to address the issues in the problem statement regarding the barriers, issues, and problems of gender inequity that women are facing as they fully integrate into combat positions in the U.S. Military.

Art and media, specifically film media, have been used in education as teaching tools for a long time. The carefully scripted storylines can provide good examples of lessons to provide students with a visually entertaining way to learn (Atherton, 2013; Lenahan, 2009; Romano, 2014). Watching movies more than once, and in some cases several times, can result in many hours of passive learning about the stated topic, as well as secondary or less explicit information. These hours of exposure represent extraordinary amounts of time on task that influence viewers' beliefs about a topic and society in general. Is it really any wonder, then, that film media can have such an impact on perceptions, beliefs, and, in some cases, behavior? Viewers only need to look at other behaviors, such as smoking or violence in films, to see how images can influence behavior (Anderson, et al. 2003, Soneji, Lewis, Tanski, & Sargent, 2012).

Just as a tennis player might be interested in entertainment about tennis, or an athlete might enjoy a good sports event, soldiers are interested in movies about their social group, the warrior culture. Many U.S. Military members enjoy watching films about war and warrior culture. Along with other forms of physical recreation, movie theaters are also present on 60 of the larger bases (AAFES) in the continental U.S. Film preference are reflected in the research of media marketing both historically in the U.S. by Fischhoff, (1998) and more recently by Holbrook and Redondo, in a smaller study in Spain (2010) and one in Canada (Chambers, 2013).

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, offers basic definitions for the vocabulary in this study. Warrior is defined as “a person who fights in battles and is known for having courage and skill.” This is a fairly straightforward definition. However, for the purposes of this study, those who train to fight in battle will be included in the definition of warrior. This definition will cover those in the study who are in the military and have trained to fight in battle; however, they may not have actually fought in a battle.

The definition of “culture” is closely aligned with the definition of “mind-set.” The difference for this study is that while both culture and mind-set are defined by “the set of opinions, a way of thinking or behaving, or beliefs,” a mind-set applies to a person, as opposed to the culture of a society or group. Thus, the warrior culture has, as its member, a warrior who lives with a presumed sense of community within its society. Warrior culture will be further refined in the warrior culture section of chapter two.

For this study, “gender roles” are identified as roles that specific genders portray or embody. Although gender identity may be present in this study, the role that gender identity plays in gender policy is a subject of possible future studies. Therefore, traditional gender roles will be used, that is, the binary roles assumed appropriate for men and women. These roles will be further defined as they are recognized and as to how they fit traditional stereotypical gender roles (Kerr and Holden, 1996).

### **Film and Film Influence**

This section of the literature review examined the way that women are portrayed in film, the film scholars who are interested in women in these roles and what they see. There are a few different ways to analyze film. There are quantitative methods, for example, where events in films are counted. The most famous quantitative examination comes from comic book author Alison Bechdel, who, in 1985, posited three questions that, when answered; quickly identify how fully women’s lives are portrayed in a narrative. These questions have become known as the Bechdel Test. The first asks if there are at least two named women characters with lines. The second is whether or not these two women talk to each other. And lastly, do they talk about anything other than men? It may seem that this examination is meant only for comedy; however,

the point made with this test is valid: women in film, specifically warrior culture film, are rarely represented as agents in their own right. That is, if they are in the film at all.

Another quantitative method used to examine women in film was by Furia and Bielby (2009), who looked at war films and counted the number of women present in all of the films, and compared that to a record of women in those wars. Their findings re-enforced the exclusion that women in the U.S. Military are experiencing today. This study begins in a similar fashion, and uses both film and gender theory to analyze the divergence that is present in the data.

Chetty (2004) conducted a qualitative analysis of film through a feminist lens by examining different film posters of war films. This analysis looked closely at the gender roles of men and women as the reviewed film posters imply that “if men do not go to war, they are not real men” (p. 36) and that women need protection. The concept is important because it alludes to a warrior theme of protecting the weak and helpless.

Film is different from other storytelling in that it is a highly visual art form. This visual storytelling can be fascinating and can create significant emotional experience. Laura Mulvey (1975) wrote about this visual pleasure experience and social structure. Mulvey (1975) uses psychoanalysis to explore how the fascination of film is reinforced by pre-existing patterns in society. The dominant pattern is that women are the image, and men are the “bearer of the look” (p. 9). This concept will be important as the researcher employs gender theory to analyze and to understand what is being seen. The researcher relies on Mulvey as a key contributor to the concept of seeing and what is seen along with Berger (1972), who identified ways of seeing. These two scholars developed methods for understanding the visual experience.

The researcher utilized the ways of seeing and a gender lens for this research along with Sarris (1962) who developed the Auteur theory in film, and thereby delineated the role of author

of a film to the director, the person who directs the audience's gaze. Understanding intent would be easier if a single person could be pinpointed as the creator of that intent. Wayne Booth (2002) wonders if there is an "implied" author of the story in film. Booth (2002) suggests that critics of film should search for a center, a "production committee" (p. 130), rather than a single person. Andrew Sarris, whose additional work on the French concept of the "Auteur" theory that the director is responsible for the story, understood that the director has to work with the story writer, screen writer, and the actors at the very least to create the final product. The director usually has the decision-making power, and even though he or she has a team to work with, the director can influence how the intent of the story is revealed. It is uncertain if anyone could get an articulated intent from any director of these films and trust that information as good data. Therefore, the researcher has chosen to analyze the film scenes through film theory with input from gender theory in order to determine the meaning of the warrior culture films.

All of these different analyses have influenced this study. While each is valid in its own right, this study brings a different perspective of both the presence of women in war films compared to actual events, and how portrayals of the gender roles may influence the exclusion of women in combat roles.

### **Warrior Culture and Warrior Culture Themes**

Warrior culture is defined by a set of values or themes. The warrior culture themes that were examined are the rite of manhood, that is, the moment when a boy becomes a man; the mandate of: never leave a fallen comrade; the brotherhood that forms in wartime; and lastly, the concept that goes back to how the U.S. Military defines gender as binary, with the male protecting the female. The researcher reviewed how these themes came into focus for the U.S. Military by

reviewing traditional hero works from the *Poetic Edda*, Classic Greek and Roman literature, and more currently Shakespeare and modern U.S. Military culture such as the warrior ethos.

### **Rite of manhood.**

Usually this rite is the moment when a boy becomes a man, and it involves an act of courage or even killing another person. During war the opportunity to show courage and/or have to kill another human is not only available, but usually in a manner that is viewed as heroic. This is different from killing another person in the act of murder or even self-defense. In John Steinbeck's 1938 book *Flight*, the main character kills and then is forced to flee, creating the moment of manhood, but this event is not necessarily viewed as warrior-like or heroic. The film *Courage Under Fire* has the plot of investigating the courage of a woman pilot who was killed in the line of duty in the Gulf War. The storyline explores the issue of her gender in regard to her ability to have courage and cry at the same time.

### **Never leave a fallen comrade.**

Part of the warrior ethos established by the U.S. Army is to never leave a fallen comrade. This is often the plot of warrior culture films, or the catalyst of the characters' dilemma as in *Black Hawk Down*. The comrade used for the plot of this warrior theme may not even necessarily be a comrade, but rather someone either of value or a U.S. citizen such as in the film *Tears of the Sun*. This theme is so strong that the escape of the warriors was delayed for hours while the dead body of the comrade was extricated in *Black Hawk Down* and the team that retrieved the U.S. citizen in *Tears of the Sun* suffered significant losses of nearly the entire team to complete the mission.

### **Brotherhood.**

Another warrior culture theme prevalent in film is the theme of brotherhood. This theme also is apparent as a storyline, as evidenced in the Home Box Office (HBO) series *Band of Brothers*, as well as the film *Saving Private Ryan*. This theme is strong in the documentary by Sebastian Junger, *Restrepo*, which chronicles a forward operating base in Afghanistan. Junger recognizes this theme as well in his Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED) talk about why he thinks veterans want to go back to war. The inherent concern with this theme is in the language itself: By definition, brotherhood does not include women, however when defined by Junger, brotherhood had no specific gender attached to it.

### **Males protect females.**

The last warrior culture theme addressed in the study is also damaging to the inclusion of women in combat: the duty of the warrior male to protect the weaker female, who presumably is unable to protect herself. While there are a few films that try to dispel this myth, such as *GI Jane*, it is still evident within the film that Demi Moore plays a character who is extraordinary and beyond the norms for her gender. It is also evident in the script that her achievements come as a surprise of the rest of the cast in the film.

The review of these themes informed this study as they guided the researcher to identify the warrior culture film scenes of the greatest influence and emotional impact for viewers.

### **Women and their role in the U.S. Military**

This section of the literature review explored and reviewed women's roles, both historical and fictional, in the U.S. Military and on the battlefield. Women have been a part of the U.S. Military both historically and fictionally. Not only have women been involved in the military and on the battlefield throughout history, for example, in the Civil War (Blanton & Cook, 2002), but

women have also been discriminated against in the U.S. Military (Enloe, 2013). This is evident throughout the tales of U.S. Military history as women who hid their gender were exposed when wounded, or even as they gave birth (Blanton & Cooke, 2002). America has been at war over the last decade and, during that time women, have repeatedly proven their value, effectiveness, and potential. Since 2012, over 160,000 women have served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Middle East (Adams-Ender, et.al, 2013).

Although women have been present on the battlefields in one form or another, in medical or support roles, or as soldiers, documentation is limited. Many women who served as soldiers before World War I served disguised as men. These women's identities were only documented as they were revealed, usually due to capture or injury. Once discovered, wide ranges of consequences were awarded. In some cases, women were punished for the crime of impersonating a man and sent to prison. In others, the women were merely set free and told to go home. If the women were injured, some doctors kept the confidence of the women soldiers and when healed, they return to their units to fight (Blanton, 2002). Over 2,000,000 women have served in the U.S. military since the Revolutionary War (Vaught, 1994). These women have paved the way for gender and sex equality; among them are extraordinary leaders as well. The researcher has chosen particular women to review because of their significant contributions to the progress and pursuit of gender and sexual equality on the battlefield and in society, and because of their presence in warrior film media. The specific women that were studied for this section are as follows:

Joan of Arc: Teenager and savior of France as the Maiden of Lorraine during the Hundred Years War;

Sarah Emma Edmonds: civil war soldier;

Claudia J. Kennedy: the first women promoted to three-star general in the U.S. Army;

Lara Croft: Video game tomb raider, adventurer, and film character;

Xena: Warrior Princess; and

Ellen Ripley: Futuristic soldier and alien conqueror.

The review of these women's experiences exposed narratives consistent with warrior culture. All these women were either disguised as men, acted as men, (and once discovered, were treated poorly), or were acceptable heroes only if dressed in scantily clad costumes. Nearly all were under the threat of sexual violence.

### **Gender Theory**

Gender criticism emerged from the feminist movement as a way to “examine... how sexual identity influences the creation and reception of literary works” (Kennedy & Gioia, 1995, p. 1793). The focus of this theory is the presumption that patriarchal attitudes have consciously or unconsciously presented themselves in Western literature. This concept is reinforced by the circular masculine hegemony (Scott-Samuel, 2013) that is in need of disruption.

The first part of gender criticism involves what is known as “seeing,” the importance of which cannot be overstated. Berger (1977) explained that humans not only see before they have words, but also that in seeing, people “establish our place in the surrounding world” (p. 7) It is this concept of how viewers see film media, and put themselves in that media that establishes part of the gender inequity present today. It is as simple as: Seeing what Xena the Warrior Princess looks like, viewers see a woman being accepted as a warrior and a beautiful woman. Viewers also see that she has far fewer clothes covering her body than any male against whom she fights.

Seeing is an important concept in film and it provides a lens through which the narrative is told. Bem (1993) describes the concept of andro-centrism as more useful than the concept of the patriarchy in that andro-centrism, “goes beyond telling *who* is in power to tell *how* their power is culturally and psychologically reproduced.” (p. 42) The narrative of gender is told by the director of the film, and reproduces their power by both exclusion and by placing women in demeaning roles.

The research focused on the particular issue of gender inequity of gendered roles in combat positions. For example, ironically, in a 2003 study, Baslow and Runbeheld found that women or feminized genders are more likely to listen to problems and create intimacy, while males are not. It would seem that brotherhood is based on a certain intimacy, but that intimacy may be seen as feminine. This finding contrasts with Boyce and Herd’s (2003) argument about the relationship between gender roles, which connect the male gender to successful military leadership, which requires good listening skills. Specifically in the context of the U.S. Military, a review of the latest issue of the role of women in combat positions will exemplify this concept. Alfonso (2008) specifically examines these roles and discusses their effect and implications on the modern dynamic battlefield, of which women must be a part for success.

Using gender theory and film theory analysis was appropriate to this study because it sheds light on the value of the interpretation of gender roles and themes and how they impact equality. This approach also addresses the assumption of the research that gender inequity exists in the U.S. Military. This is an important issue as emphasized by Cynthia Enloe (1999) who writes:

That we must take women’s experiences of militarization seriously in order to fully understand it. I imagine that if you were to not know how the military works, this might seem like a silly statement. Why should anything not be taken

seriously to understand it? And yet, in the military, women's issues are taken seriously idiosyncratically, depending on the impact to the institution. (p. xi)

Taking anything seriously takes time. Enloe (1999) goes on to declare, "If we devote meager attention and thought, we will, by our own inattention, perpetuate militarized officials' capacity to manipulate many women's hopes and fears and skills" (p. 9). A thorough study of women in the U.S. Military and the gender inequity that is present is worth the examination.

### **Conclusion**

The research on gendered roles in media, particularly in warrior films, informed the themes chosen for this study. The literature explores the concept and surrounding issues of women in combat roles in the U.S. Military and follows the path of academic research and historical significance, intertwined with popular culture and warrior culture, and viewed with a gender-critical lens. Following this path gives the reader a starting place from which to understand the reason for this study. This literature review enables a clearer understanding of the issues, problems and barriers surrounding women in combat as well as the need for this change to happen.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study is to examine the roles of warrior culture film media in influencing perceptions of women's potential to serve as competent and full members of the combat ranks of the U.S. Military through content analysis of warrior culture film media. The setting of warrior culture film media is appropriate because the goal of this study is to explore and understand the interconnectedness of the art of warrior culture film media and the life of women in the U.S. Military. The research questions for this study are: How are gender roles portrayed in warrior film media? How are women portrayed in these gender roles in warrior film media? Does the portrayal of gender in warrior film media reflect reality? If not, what conflicts are being created about expectations of modern women in combat? And last, how do images of warrior culture and the roles of men and women in that culture in popular media conflict with more equitable and evolving gender-neutral military staffing expectations?

This study focused on the media aspect of the differences between the art of gender roles in warrior culture and the life of women in warrior culture. A future study may focus on the actual life of women in the U.S. Military.

#### **Research Design**

The list of films reviewed was established using the criteria described in detail in the Data Collection Procedure section of this chapter. The researcher gained access to the film data by using various legal Internet media sources and DVDs. The researcher viewed the films and film clips in wide screen format in order to view the entire frame that is designed by the director and use directors' cut versions of the film where available. The films were analyzed for the Bechdel test and designated a pass or fail status. Subsequently, the films and film scenes were coded, both open and focused, using a qualitative content analysis.

To collect data on women's actual roles or actual life data in the U.S. Military and the gender role trends for conflict-era times of fictional historical films, the researcher mined available research, such as the Women's Research Education Institute (WREI) that researches the quantitative data on women in the U.S. Military, and other scholarly sources to obtain actual data needed to compare to the fictional historical films reviewed. This study then compared actual historical data about women in the U.S. Military with the gendered roles in warrior culture film. Gender theory was used to analyze film images of gender roles to assess the images' impact on expectations of women in the U.S. Military as they enter into combat roles.

### **Assumptions and Rationale for Design**

The research presented in Chapter Two regarding gender inequity is quantitative in nature. While quantitative content analysis is one approach to objectively examining inequity, this study focused on researching film from a film theory and gender theory perspective to gain additional perspectives about the possible link between media portrayal and military-based gender role bias. Examination and analysis of gender images in media may offer one perspective of the "why" as well the "how" of military gender inequity. In addition, it may yield new insights about integrating women into combat and help the researcher create a curriculum for U.S. Military leaders.

This examination revealed what warrior culture themes are portrayed in warrior culture film media, with a specific focus on how gender roles are presented within those themes. This study sought to reveal some of the issues and barriers women in the U.S. Military will encounter during implementation of the integration of women into combat roles to the military leaders at all levels. This information may influence the process of helping integrate women into combat positions by pointing to the importance of ways of seeing, both in art and in life.

### **Sample: Warrior Culture Films and Warrior Culture Themes in Film**

The sample films used for this research are in film media, specifically in warrior culture film media. A review of films popular with soldiers in the military gives a clearer picture of which films, and which film clips specifically, might be influencing soldiers in their day-to-day actions and beliefs. In order to determine which films to research more closely, a list was compiled of military films based on popularity, financial success, historical significance, and award success. The list of films was defined by the action in them and how gender roles are portrayed. That is, these films have characters (played by either men or women) who play a warrior or hero role with clearly defined gender roles. As well, these films are mostly warlike in nature.

The list started with war films that are most popular and have been most financially successful at the box office. Selecting modern or recent dates of release narrowed this list further. That is, the list included films from no earlier than 1980 to the present. While there are certainly some films prior to 1980 that arguably meet this study's criteria in many respects, films prior to 1980 were watched by a different generation, and may have had less influence on current military members than films released after 1980. The researcher also reviewed and added some hero-based, non-military films that portray warrior culture.

Some warrior culture films are loosely based on historical events, such as the film *300* (Snyder, 2006), and films based on compilations of specific heroes in particular war eras, as the film *Gladiator* (Scott, 2000). Occupying the other end of the warrior culture film media spectrum are documentaries based on facts, and some films that are entertainment based and historical such as the docudrama *Black Hawk Down* (Scott, 2001) based on events that occurred in Somalia in 1993.

Not all films used in this study are historical; however, in order to effectively compare the gender roles in warrior culture film media and in real life, many of the films used are historical, at least in terms of war campaigns. Therefore, a limitation of this study lies in the finite number of popular warrior culture films, and the historical data. There are a limited number of films about warrior culture historically based on actual events. This limits the timeframe of conflicts that can be studied and the number of films themselves. This study also used loosely historically based films. Two examples are *Gladiator* and *300*. In those situations, while the researcher was not able to obtain actual comparative data concerning women's actual roles in those conflicts, some historical data was available that discusses the general role of women during these conflict eras. The researcher used this general historical information to compare to the general timeframe of the conflict depicted in the films. In addition, these films were listed chronologically in order of release date. This is significant to this study because more recently women have been officially present in conflict and thus more effectively documented. This significance is revisited in the analysis of the film and life data.

The films chosen for this study were as follows:

**Table 1. List of Films for Review**

*Platoon* – Vietnam (1986)

*Full Metal Jacket* – Vietnam (1987)

*Courage Under Fire* – Gulf War (1996)

*GI Jane* – Pre current war era (1997)

*Saving Private Ryan* – WWII (1998)

*Three Kings* – Gulf War (1999)

*Gladiator* - Fiction, Ancient Rome (2000)

*Black Hawk Down* – Somalia (2001)

*300* – Slightly Historical, Ancient Greece (2006)

Television series films include:

*Band of Brothers* - WWII (2001)

*Vikings* – 8<sup>th</sup> Century War Era (2013)

### **Data Collection Procedures**

U.S. Military soldiers would naturally be more drawn to films that are similar to their own situations (Chambers, 2013). While not everyone in the military community watches movies, research suggests that males under the age of 25, more than any other age or gender demographic, tend to watch what are often called men’s films, that is, action adventure films (Fischhoff, Antonio, & Lewis, 1998). Watching films is “the number one leisure activity in Western societies” (Stack & Bowman, 2012, p. 1). The time on task of watching these films multiple times increases their influence on the viewer. This study revealed a clear picture of which warrior films specifically might be influencing soldiers in their day-to-day actions and behaviors, along with society’s perceptions of combat and military culture.

This study used two sets of data: One was derived from the content analysis coding; the other was the historical information the researcher gathered by data mining. The first data set is the content coding of selected warrior culture film media, and for the purposes of this study is known as the “film data.” The second data set is from U.S. Military Policy, scholarly historical works, and actual data about women in combat roles from sources such as WREI, the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS), and the Center for Military Readiness (CMR), for purposes of this study known as the “life data.” These two sets of data, film and life,

gave the researcher the information needed for a comparison of the art of warrior culture film media and the real life of women in military roles that place them in areas of conflict and combat.

**Film Data (Art).** Film is a visual art form and as such, the film data collected in this study was through observation. In the first review, the films were observed for the Bechdel test. This pass/ fail test was originally meant as a joke by cartoonist Alison Bechdel. The test, which came into popular culture through the *New Yorker* as a relevant and simple method to detect gender bias, has three criteria, and a fail in any of the three is a fail for the entire test. The first criterion is whether or not there are at least two women with speaking roles. The second criterion attempts to determine if the two women with speaking roles speak to each other. The final criterion asks whether the women speak to each other about anything other than men. This first lens is valuable in this study to help identify the gender roles and their frequency in the films, as well as the genders playing them. In addition, the Bechdel test also gives a straightforward pass or fail grade to each film (listed in Table 2 of Chapter four), which gives insight into how women are included or excluded in warrior culture film media. Following the Bechdel test, the films were observed in order to open code warrior culture film media for the different scenes of warrior themes. The researcher observed the film scenes closely, repeatedly, and using the basics of film theory. In film theory, film content, usually stills from scenes or short clips of scenes, are analyzed for content. The two major components that are analyzed are content, what is in the scene of the frame, and form, what how that frame, scene or film is portrayed. While observing the warrior culture film scenes, the researcher looked for themes of warrior culture, gender roles, and other trends as part of the focused and theoretical coding. Using an open coding method, the researcher drew on the discussion of warrior culture to select scenes that depict warrior culture themes and trends, such as leaving no man behind or courage under fire.

**Life Data.** To retrieve data on the real life roles of women in the U.S. Military, the researcher mined credible and scholarly data sources. The Women's Research & Education Institute (WREI) has been conducting quantitative research on women's service in the U.S. Military, providing annual records and documentation of personnel assignments by gender and mission. Throughout the analysis, this research, along with other information gathered as part of this data, distinguishes between actual data collected and historical supposition; in addition, it provides a perspective with which to analyze the results of the content analysis. From these results, conclusions can be drawn about the meaning of the themes of warrior culture.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Quantitative analyses are commonly effectively employed to study gender in media, and this study was influenced by this method. For instance, in his study about the influences of the beholder and beheld, Fischhoff (1998) used a quantitative analysis of film gender roles and examined the roles of the viewing audience (the beholder) and the film characteristics (the beheld), including the direction of the director. Fischhoff (1998) was interested in correlating viewers' emotions with their fantasies and experiences as they watched the film. His study included some warrior culture themes such as pride and violence to determine fantasy fulfillment. Fischhoff (1998, 2000) showed the relationship between film choice, genre, viewer and viewer fantasy, and popular film quotes by gender. Yet, while Fischhoff's (1998) study informed this work by understanding that certain viewers watch certain genres of film and are influenced by it, he did not address the questions of how film frames gendered roles in warrior culture film and how these images impact the implementation of women into combat roles. These questions were central to this study, and to answer them, qualitative analysis was identified as appropriate.

The use of qualitative data for analysis of film media is also common. Macnamara (2005) described media content analysis as a subset of content analysis and noted that Lasswell (1948) succinctly described media content analysis as a list of four general steps: 1. Who says what? 2. Through which channel? 3. To whom? 4. With what effect? (p. 12). This study paralleled these questions as part of the analysis; however, instead of focusing on what is being said, this study focused on seeing. These questions are revisited in Chapter Five as part of the summary of this study.

Chetty (2004) conducted a similar qualitative study of the images of women in war films. Using marketing posters and other publicity images, Chetty (2004) found a patriarchal agenda in images representing war films in which the dominant message was female dependence on men. By using visual artwork, Chetty (2004) demonstrated that the representations were from a particular point of view and that such a set of images “fosters a discourse of male empowerment” (p. 34).

The method of this study, qualitative content analysis, is open, focused, and theoretical coding. In the open coding process, the researcher reviewed the films in this study for warrior culture themes and trends. Prior to the focused coding process, the films were observed for the Bechdel test. This pass or fail test gave the researcher an opportunity to observe scenes for the presence of women in both speaking and non-speaking roles and for their interaction. This information served as an effective reminder of the actual genders in the films as well as the overall roles women played in each film, which was helpful during the focused coding. During the focused coding, the researcher used film theory to review these warrior culture scenes for the presence of gender roles, how those gender roles are portrayed, and how these gender roles are seen. For the

theoretical analysis, the researcher used both gender theory and film theory, specifically Auteur theory, to determine the meaning of how these scenes are seen.

Open coding in content analysis is used to refine prior coding efforts and to define and describe themes and trends. The researcher used the information from the literature review about warrior culture to identify warrior culture themes within the films selected for this study. As these patterns of warrior culture emerged, the researcher documented themes and trends to determine what scenes within the warrior culture films were used for the focused coding.

Coding is an ongoing process, and as such the researcher used film theory (ways of seeing) and bricolage when performing focused coding. Bricolage is a technique that uses what is available to complete what needs to be done. For example, a person might use available tools or materials, such as substituting a rock as a hammer, or using screws rather than nails. In this study, the available materials (data) were the images seen or presented in each frame of the films. Because each film in the sample was different and did not exhibit all the desired components in a frame, the researcher employed bricolage to widen the gaze and look within the warrior culture scenes to determine if other data should be observed and collected. Using bricolage also helped the researcher redefine the themes and trends and recode as necessary to ensure the data informed the findings.

Once the focused coding was completed, the researcher used gender theory and the Auteur theory to examine meaning within the coded gender roles in warrior culture film media. The researcher examined how gender is portrayed to determine the meaning of that portrayal as it related to themes of warrior culture. The researcher used the Auteur theory to examine the intent of the director and gender theory to explore the differences between gender roles in warrior culture film media and real life women in combat roles.

There were two goals in analyzing this data: 1) to look at the gender roles in the film clips to understand what media is communicating about gender; and 2) to compare those messages to the real life participation of women in the U.S. Military. This analysis provided a narrative of warrior culture and the issues and barriers that leaders, both men and women of all ranks, will face as they interpret and implement new U.S. Military policy. In addition, the analysis revealed problems women will face as they take on combat roles in the U.S. Military.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This chapter reviews the data from the warrior culture film and television media gathered in accordance with the method described in Chapter Three. The two television shows observed were the first episodes of the first seasons of *Band of Brothers* (Robinson, 2001) and *Vikings* (Rench, 2013). Media content analysis was used in this study, with the researcher first observing warrior culture film and television media for scenes of warrior culture themes, then rating the media for the Bechdel test. These scenes of warrior culture themes were then observed for gendered roles and the gender of the character portraying that role. The identified gender roles were then compared to real life and historical data on women's presence and roles during the events depicted in the warrior culture media. Studying this content gave context to the social issue of the conflicting ways that women are portrayed in combat roles and the expectations of women as they take on these roles.

After the first analysis a focus on the gender in the gendered role had to be shifted. This shift is due to the fact that historically in the U.S. Military women were not allowed to serve in infantry and combat forces. Even though the actual and historical role of women in combat is evident in the research, women were not formally assigned to combat roles. For example, in the film *Saving Private Ryan* the units that were on the beaches at Normandy were male only, and so the film did not depict women there. However, there were women who did serve and were in ancillary positions in medical, administrative, and flight operations that were not shown in the film. In fact, the women in the film who did have a role had their lines voiced over by a male. This demonstrates the complexity of this issue and how subtly women can be excluded or demeaned in an event as large as World War Two.

While the intent of this study remained on the women who served in a military capacity, it was clear from the first film analysis that special attention would be needed for all women in the film, regardless of role. For example, the researcher also observed for women in the films who are not just primary characters in the films, but also for women in smaller roles, such as extras or those women who are present in other ways such as a pin up or sex slave.

### **Analysis**

All films were observed on wide screen setting on a computer screen with pause and rewind/back-up capability. All films were viewed as released to the public; there were no directors' cuts viewed for this study. In this chapter, each film or television show is reviewed individually as it was observed, with emphasis given to the methodology in chapter three. All of the observations, including those for the Bechdel test, were observed throughout the films and television shows. If any observation of note was found, such as two women speaking to each other, or a scene that presented a warrior culture theme, the researcher paused the media and recorded the observation data. This data was noted with the time (the hour, minute, and second) within the film when the phenomena occurred in the presentation.

After the media was observed, the film or television show was rated for the Bechdel test as either a pass or a fail (see Table 2). A pass was media that contained at least two women in speaking roles who speak to each other about something other than men. A film failed the Bechdel test if it had fewer than two women with speaking lines or if the two women were present but do not speak to each other or if they do not speak to each other about anything other than men.

During the observation, specific warrior culture themes identified in chapter three were identified. The themes identified were: leaving no man behind, brotherhood, men protecting

women or the weak, and courage; gendered roles were observed and noted for the gender of the character in those roles. The results of gender observations were then compared to historical real life data of women who were serving in the films' respective campaigns. Trends in the comparison between warrior culture themes and gender roles in the art of warrior culture film and television media were noted.

## **Results**

The first few films are reviewed in more detail as the warrior culture themes are established and the method is completed. The data from the method is presented in the tables, and the additional observations, or observations that have specific merit to this study, are annotated.

### ***Black Hawk Down***

The film *Black Hawk Down* (Scott, 2001) takes place in Somalia in 1993 when United Nations (U.N.) forces were present to destabilize the existing regime in an effort to help bring food and humanitarian aid to a starving population. During the event that the film represents, an operation takes place in Mogadishu, Somalia in which a U.S. Black Hawk helicopter that drops soldiers into the city is shot down by Somali Forces. The bulk of the film is about the firefight that ensues from the soldiers' insertion and the results from the Black Hawk helicopter having been shot down. This film is based on an actual event and ends after all the soldiers make it safely back to base.

The film *Black Hawk Down* fails the Bechdel test. The two women in the film with speaking lines are a Somali mother who is hiding with her children in her house, and the wife of one of the soldiers who calls home before the mission. The wife is just coming in the door and misses the call. The women never speak to each other during the film. The only other woman of

note in the film is a pin-up of a bikini-clad woman next to the phone from which the soldier calls home.

The film has many warrior culture themes; however, the overarching theme is about leaving no one behind. This ethos is actually quoted several times during the film, the first time by the military leader of the mission, Colonel Garrison, played by Sam Shepard, 35 minutes into the film. This theme is repeated throughout the film, so strongly and influentially that when the U.S. soldiers finally get to the helicopter crash site, they spend over three hours digging out the remains of a dead U.S. pilot to bring his body back to the base. During this time, there are repeated attacks and firefights in which U.S. soldiers are injured and killed. The theme continues throughout the film as another U.S. pilot is captured by Somali forces, and a smaller helicopter is shown flying over the city with a loud speaker repeating the message to the pilot to stay strong and that he will not be left behind.

A lesser theme is about brotherhood, mostly displayed at the beginning of the film when the characters are introduced and the scene of the base is established, and at the end of the film when the soldiers are back safely at the base.

While there are no women at the U.S. or United Nations bases in the film, there is one female gender role, Sargeant Grimes, played by Ewan McGregor. Grimes is first introduced as the soldier who has a “rare and mysterious talent that keeps him from going out into the city.” The soldier to whom Grimes is speaking realizes that the “talent” to which Grimes is referring is typing, a traditional role for women. Throughout the film, Grimes, who is sent out on the mission due to another soldier’s injured arm, makes coffee, and on more than one occasion needs to be directed how to do the job of a combat soldier, must be looked after, and must be saved from peril. Grimes redeems himself in the eyes of his comrades by killing an enemy combatant and

saving the life of another soldier.

The main characters in the film are from a Ranger battalion. Rangers must endure additional training beyond that of a regular infantry soldier and are considered more elite than the regular soldiers. Special Forces soldiers have additional training beyond Rangers and are considered the most elite of combat soldiers. There are a few roles for the Special Forces soldiers in this film; however, other than Grimes' character, both Rangers and Special Forces, the soldiers have roles that are masculine and exhibit warrior culture traits.

Data collected by the Women's Research Education Institute (WREI) indicates that 1,000 women were present in the U.N. Forces in Somalia at the time of the event that the film represents (Adams-Ender et al., 2013). This study revealed no women portrayed as U.N. soldiers. Both Rangers and Special Forces are considered combat arms roles in the U.S. military and therefore are not open to women. While women were not allowed to serve as Rangers or Special Forces during the event depicted in 1993, most of the women present were with the U.N. Forces, or possibly in support roles for the Rangers and Special Forces. Several scenes in the film showed events at the U.N. Forces base (which was in a different place than the Ranger base), in particular the ending scenes when the soldiers enter the base to safety and are offered water to drink. There is no data to show that the soldiers who offered the water were women; however, they were depicted as men in the film. All other U.N. Forces were depicted as men in the film. The main focus of the film and this study is on the U.S. soldiers, and the lack of women in the Rangers and Special Forces may account for the lack of women soldiers in this film. The WREI data of the number of women present does not distinguish between U.S. and U.N. forces; therefore, it is uncertain if the film is accurate as far as women's participation in the U.S. Military forces.

Regarding character Grimes's female gender role, the only data found was anecdotal from the soldier's wife who tried to stop the film because she believed that Grimes (whose character was developed after her husband) was portrayed as a hero in the end, when, in fact, her husband was serving a 20-year jail sentence for child pornography. Her plea went unheard, and the film was released without change to the Grimes role or character.

### ***Platoon***

*Platoon* (1986), written and directed by Oliver Stone, takes place in Vietnam and follows a college-educated soldier, Chris, played by Charlie Sheen, through his time in the Vietnam War. This film fails the Bechdel test. The only two women with lines in the film are an older Vietnamese village woman and a younger woman who is raped by the soldiers. Neither woman speaks English, and neither speaks to each other, which fails the criteria for the test.

During the film, there are several scenes of warrior culture. There are moments when Chris, as a new person to the unit, carries too much equipment and needs some help. Chris gets help from both Sargeant Elias and Sargeant Barnes, and as the film develops, Chris develops a brotherhood with Elias. During the murder scene and during the rape scene in the village, there are clear instances when one soldier protects the weak from the other soldiers. When Barnes is threatening to kill a villager unless he gives information, Elias enters the confrontation and stops the event. As the soldiers are leaving the village, some soldiers are raping a young woman, and Chris intervenes to help stop the rape.

Clearly in this film the gender roles played by women are portrayed as weak and needing protection from men. The gender role that emerges early in the film portrayed by a man is Chris. Chris is in need of help when he goes on his first patrol with the unit in Vietnam, and Elias portrays the caregiver by not only carrying equipment for Chris, but also by looking after Chris

for most of the first half of the film.

According to WREI (2013), 7,000 women served in Vietnam during the time that the film takes place. The opening scene takes place on the tarmac of a base in Vietnam. This is a work environment that would not be close to the fighting and where women would be stationed. There were no U.S. Soldiers portrayed by women in the film.

The most prominent woman in the film is Chris's grandmother to whom he writes letters about his daily life and thoughts. These letters comprise the voiceover by Sheen, who narrates scene changes through these letters. Interestingly, Chris tries to find himself and his own sense of right and wrong through the trials of war. The only person in the film with whom Chris discusses this effort is his grandmother through the letters (as voiceover), at times asking her for strength and not writing to her when he feels ashamed of his actions.

### ***Full Metal Jacket***

Another Vietnam-era popular film, *Full Metal Jacket* (Kubrick, 1987), follows a platoon of Marines through basic training and subsequently one particular marine who continues on to Vietnam. The basic training portion of the film takes up most of the first half and focuses on a few marines in the platoon. The drill sergeant, Gunnery Sergeant Hartman, played by R. Lee Ermey, takes a liking to the main character, Joker, played by Mathew Modine, and a dislike to another marine, whom the drill sergeant nicknames Pile, after Gomer Pyle, played by Vincent D'Onofrio. Hartman punishes Pile for his mistakes rather brutally and embarrassingly, in one instance making Pile walk behind the marching platoon while sucking his thumb and with his pants down around his ankles like a baby. When direct punishment does not change Pile's behavior or make him a better marine, Hartman turns to group punishment for Pile's mistakes. This makes the platoon turn on Pile as well. By the end of basic training, Pile makes the

minimum standards with the help of Joker, and he graduates. The last night that the platoon is in the barracks, Pile is awake and in the bathroom. Joker, who is on fire watch duty, walks in and asks Pile what he is doing. Pile stands up, and makes quite a bit of noise as he goes through a drill routine. This noise wakes Hartman who then storms in and questions both marines. Pile shoots Hartman with his rifle and then shoots himself.

The next scene depicts Joker in Vietnam as a military journalist covering the Vietnam War. The scene opens in the local streets of a nearby town and focuses on the backside of a woman as she walks across the street and offers herself as a prostitute to Joker and his colleague. This is the scene of the much quoted line, "...me love you long time..." is presented. This prostitute is seen again later in the film as a platoon of marines prepares to go on a mission. She is on the back of a motorbike and is presented by her pimp who negotiates a price for the entire platoon. A price is settled on, and the prostitute takes the first soldier into an abandoned building.

The last woman in the film is a sniper who kills some of the platoon while the marines are on their mission. The gender of the sniper is unknown at first, and as the marines make their way into the building and into a firefight, they discover that the sniper is a woman. This knowledge befuddles the platoon for a few moments as they decide what to do with the woman who has been shot but is not yet dead. After some discussion and pleas from the woman to put her out of her own misery, they decide to kill her, and Joker pulls the trigger to do so.

*Full Metal Jacket* (Kubrick, 1987) has warrior culture themes of men protecting the weak, rites of passage, and courage. Joker looks after the weaker-skilled Pile through the first half of the film. The themes of rites of passage and courage are present in the second half of the film as Joker has written on his helmet "Born to Kill" and wears a peace symbol on his flack jacket. Joker remarks, when questioned about it by a senior officer, that it represents the duality

of man. However, he reveals through narration that he laments the fact that his journalistic duties have not sent him to the war front, and he thinks he should go in order to determine his own courage level and test his marine training.

As in the last film, there were 7,000 women serving in the Vietnam War (WREI, 2013). The missed opportunities to portray women in this particular film are in the main bases where Joker is stationed, a relatively safe place where women would have administrative roles and medical duties. During the first half of the film, there were no women portrayed. This is accurate since the marines have different basic training facilities for men and women. However, during the second half of the film, the depiction of the only women marines encounter are either prostitutes or snipers may give poor expectations for women marines in the U.S. Military. Understanding how to interact with women who are not prostitutes or snipers in war is not modeled in this film at all.

### ***Courage Under Fire***

*Courage Under Fire* (Zwick, 2000) is set in the Gulf War, and follows fictional characters through a set of extraordinary events. The film follows an investigation of a posthumous Medal of Honor nomination, the first ever to be awarded to a woman. Lieutenant Colonel Nathan Sterling, played by Denzel Washington, is completing the investigation. Sterling has demons of his own that have followed him from his time in the same war. His superiors give the assignment to Sterling as a last-ditch effort for Sterling to get through his own Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and get on with his life and career.

*Courage Under Fire*, by the title alone, has connotations to warrior culture themes. The film is set as a Medical Evacuation (MEDIVAC), which is a “leave no man behind” theme. The set also portrays the theme of protecting those who cannot protect themselves; in this film those

who need protection are injured. The film chronicles an investigation about a nomination for a Medal of Honor, the highest award a service member can earn. The Medal of Honor recipient usually displays courage, honor, and self-sacrifice under extreme circumstances and in the presence of a deadly force, which is the highest form of a rite of passage.

Remarkably, even though the film is about a woman earning the Medal of Honor, and there are many women in the film, *Courage Under Fire* still does not pass the Bechdel test. The female gender roles in this film are the mother and daughter roles of Captain Karen Walden, the Medal of Honor candidate, played by Meg Ryan. Walden also plays many other roles, depending on the testimony of the different crewmembers who were with Walden the night of the event in question. This MEDIVAC event takes a turn for the worse as the crew needing rescue had been held in position by an enemy group. The MEDIVAC team then takes part in a firefight and ends by crash landing in a position different from the original rescue location. Walden and her crew must wait throughout the night for rescue themselves, enduring small skirmishes and firefights from the enemy. The copilot is also injured during the crash and has no memory of the event. The film follows the crewmembers' interviews to determine if Walden, who dies during the rescue of her crew the next morning while providing cover fire for her crew, was accurate and Walden truly earned the Medal of Honor. Each member who is interviewed tells a different version of the story, which paints Walden in different gender roles. For example, when Sergeant Manfriez, played by Lou Diamond Phillips, describes the event, he says Walden was crying, scared, and needed to be protected by Manfriez. Specialist Ilario, the medic played by Matt Damon, paints Walden as a tough and strategic leader who gave her life to save the others. Filmed as flashbacks, Walden is seen in all these roles.

Other female roles in the film are Walden's mother and daughter, and Sterling's wife and

secretary. Sterling's boss also has a secretary with a few speaking lines that match her job description. None of these women speaks to each other during the film.

Other than the crewmembers who needed saving (during different parts of the film) and Walden's various roles, all male gender roles in this film are played by males. The stereotypical female roles are played by women. According to the Congressional Medal of Honor society, only one woman has earned a Medal of Honor: Mary Walker during the Civil War at Bull Run in 1861. The film did not portray women other than those listed above, although 41,000 women served in the Gulf War.

### ***G.I. Jane***

*G.I. Jane* (1997, Scott) is also a fictional pre-9/11-era film about the first woman, Lieutenant Jordan O'Neil, played by Demi Moore, who becomes the test case for women going through the toughest training program in the U.S. Military, the Navy SEALs. O'Neil must endure many different kinds of hardships to prove she is able to complete the training, including a claim that she is a lesbian, which prompts an investigation that disrupts her training. The film ends in a training exercise that turns into a real-world rescue mission.

*G.I. Jane* is the only film examined in this study that passes the Bechdel test. O'Neil has two meetings with another woman, Senator Lillian Dehaven, played by Anne Bancroft, in which they speak to each other about O'Neil's career path, not men. However, it is noteworthy that O'Neil and Dehaven speak about O'Neil's career path through comparison to those of males who are O'Neil's peers.

Throughout the film there are many warrior culture themes; *G.I. Jane* is one of two films examined that contained all the themes in this study. During these warrior culture scenes, O'Neil switches gender roles from a role equivalent to strong leading male going through a rite of

passage to a female gender role being raped in a mock survival scene. O'Neil finally earns her place in training by fighting her way out of the rape situation and shouting to her assailant, "...suck my dick!" This act earns her many accolades by her peers. In the third act of the film, the final training exercise turns to a real-world rescue mission; O'Neil also leads her team to victory over the enemy and saves the stranded Ranger team. Other than these exceptions by O'Neil, men play all male gender roles portrayed, and women portray the female gender roles.

This film is a work of fiction. There were no women Navy SEAL in training during the time frame depicted in the film. However, the prequel information given in the first few minutes of the film indicates that the Gulf War spurred this possibility, and Senator Dehaven in the film took it to the next logical level. The Gulf War in reality sparked some study of women's roles in combat and helped redefine those roles and the definition of combat. As of January 2016, women can apply to the Navy SEAL program.

### ***Saving Private Ryan***

A World War II epic drama, *Saving Private Ryan* (Spielberg, 1998), follows a platoon of Rangers led by Captain Miller, played by Tom Hanks, as they take part in the invasion at Normandy. Miller subsequently is ordered to take a small squad to find Private Ryan who has earned a ticket home because the State Department notices that his three other brothers have already died in combat. It is a perilous journey for the platoon across France to find Ryan, played by Matt Damon, losing two men along the way. When found, Ryan refuses to leave his post. Miller's squad and Ryan's squad stay to defend a bridge until reinforcements can arrive. Miller, as the senior person, takes command and stages a trap for the Germans. Most of the Americans die during the battle, with the exception of Ryan and second American, an interpreter, Corporal Upham, played by Jeremy Davis. Upham plays the female gender role in the film, needing to be

protected and taught how to be a combat soldier, and goes through his rite of manhood as he, in the end, shoots a German soldier and redeems himself after he could not save one of his peers.

*Saving Private Ryan* (Spielberg, 1998), winner of five Academy Awards, has six women in the film. The first is shown in the opening scene at the National Cemetery, presumably Ryan's wife who asks him if he is all right. Two women, the secretary who speaks to her female supervisor, notice that three of the four Ryan brothers died in combat. Another woman is Ryan's mother. The lines of these three women are delivered via a male voiceover. There are three other females: a mother and her daughter, and a singer whose record is playing while the Americans wait for the Germans to come. All speak in French. The message is clear, however, and while the mother and daughter speak to each other, it is about the man in their life, the husband and father. The singer is singing about the man she loves, as translated by Upham. This film also fails the Bechdel test.

The lack of women in the front lines is gender-role appropriate for the timeframe of World War II. There were 400,000 women who served in this era; however, the women who served would not have been present in the same places as this film depicts. The only exceptions are the short scenes after the beach is conquered at Normandy and three days later when Miller discusses tactics with his superior. In an area that is well behind front lines of combat and where bases are established, women would have been present in administration and medical roles.

### ***Three Kings***

A Gulf War-era film, *Three Kings* (Russell, 1999), is a fictional account of a group of soldiers who go absent without leave (AWOL) from their stations in search of a stash of gold. During their search, the soldiers get in a firefight. Some are captured, and the group takes up the cause of the local villagers to leave the country and need to be rescued.

*Three Kings* fails the Bechdel test. While there are many women in this film with speaking roles, they either only speak with men or about men to each other. Women in non-speaking roles are present throughout the film, as extra soldiers during the celebration of the end of the war and as villagers throughout the film.

*Three Kings* is the second of two films with elements of all the warrior culture themes studied. Most of the themes were demonstrated by particular acts by the group who initially demonstrated greed but subsequently ended up in situations that presented opportunities for heroic acts. The individuals, in the end, took the opportunity to be heroes, all with varying degrees of success.

### ***Gladiator***

Ridley Scott directed *Gladiator* in 2000. The film stars Russell Crowe as Maximus Decimus Meridius, a general of Rome. Maximus is a favorite of the Caesar, Marcus Aurelius, and as such is hated by the Caesar's son and heir to the throne, Commodus. Maximus is ambushed and reported dead. Before Maximus is supposed to die, he learns that his wife and son are already dead. Maximus fights his way away from his captors and home to find it has been burned and his family murdered. Found by a traveling band of slave collectors, Maximus then is sold as a gladiator. Maximus fights his way back to Rome and wins enough events to be given the opportunity to meet, fight, and ultimately kill the new emperor.

Warrior culture themes in this film mostly deal with courage and vengeance or justice. Maximus seeks vengeance for himself and his family, and in the process his desires are parallel with those of a Rome free from the new emperor's tyranny.

Two women in this film have speaking roles, and they do speak with each other. One is Lucilla, the sister of the new emperor, and the other is her servant. They only speak once to each

other in the film, and they talk about the man in their life, Lucilla's son. Lucilla, played by Connie Nelson, is portrayed as a strong woman who sacrifices herself sexually for the welfare of her son. The non-speaking female role is Maximus's wife, played by Giamia Facio. Facio's role in the film is to wait for her husband's return; however, before Maximus can save her, she is raped and crucified. This film fails the Bechdel test.

The gender roles in this film mostly follow traditional binary genders. The only exception is the heir emperor, Commodus, played by Joaquin Phoenix, who at times displays the negative stereotype of female gender: scared, plotting, and scheming in order to get his way. Beyond this study, the non-traditional and/or anti-themes of warrior culture provide fertile subjects for future research.

### **300**

The film *300* is crafted after the graphic novel of the same name. Directed by Zack Snyder in 2006, this story of the Spartans is a tale about brotherhood, justice, and the few standing up to the many. The story takes place in ancient Sparta when Xerxes comes to conquer them. King Leonidas, played by Gerard Butler, cannot take the entire Spartan army to defend Sparta by law because of the ways in which the elders have interpreted the oracle (a young naked dancing girl). Leonidas consults his wife, Queen Gorgo, and subsequently decides to take 300 of his best men in defiance of the law to a place called the Hot Gates where there is a fighting chance of a few soldiers against the many thousands in the Xerxes force.

While there are no women who speak in this film other than Queen Gorgo, played by Lena Headley, there are many women extras in Sparta. There are women sex slaves present in some scenes of the Xerxes camp. As well, in the film's opening, there is a voiceover of Leonidas growing up, and his mother is shown but does not have any speaking lines. Therefore, the film

fails the Bechdel test.

Women in ancient Greece were not traditionally warriors, although there is some indication that women in that era were, in fact, influential in the affairs of state. Women could not vote, but at times, when they were not slaves, women were able to own property.

### ***Band of Brothers***

This television show follows a World War II unit through Ranger training until just prior to the D-Day invasion in 1944. Other than a few flashbacks of women on a movie screen within the film, there are no women depicted. Therefore, this film also fails the Bechdel test.

The gender roles in this film are present for male characters, but not for women, other than one scene in which the soldiers are watching a film with a woman depicted. This scene is visited twice, and in both cases, the focus of the frame is on the soldiers, not on what they are watching. Again, according to the data there were 400,000 women who served in World War II, so it would be reasonable to expect to see some women, at least in administrative, kitchen, and medical roles during the scenes of this film.

### ***Vikings***

The television series, *Vikings* (2013), passes the Bechdel test. One of the first scenes in the film, after a battle scene, shows Lagertha, played by Katherine Winnick, fishing with her daughter and having a discussion about life and fishing. The show continues to feature Lagertha and other women as shield maidens, women warriors who fight and raid with Vikings. These shield maidens train with the other Vikings to become qualified to go raiding and are considered part of the raiding team without seemingly interfering with the warrior theme of brotherhood. The shield maidens also display courage as they fight, saving other Vikings as the battles demand it and going back for fallen peers with the group.

The historical data is somewhat weak here, indications are that women warriors existed in that era that fought and traveled with the Vikings. These women also helped settle the new lands as the Vikings crossed into new territories.

### **Summary of Findings**

In this chapter, the differences and disconnections between gender roles present in warrior culture film media and the actual participation of women in the U.S. Military were explored and examined. An observation of the popular warrior culture film media revealed that the role of women is reflected poorly in comparison to actual events. This study showed that women in warrior culture film media are either portrayed as not present, that is, excluded from events that women were actually present in, or women were present, but under circumstances that are negative in character, such as rape victims or as weaker persons needing the assistance of a man. These negative characterizations of women in combat in warrior culture film media could contribute to negative expectations of women as they are integrated into combat roles in the U.S. Military.

The Bechdel test is an important measurement; a failure of the test represents not only an absence of women in a film but also a presumption that women speak to each other only about the men in their lives. While the WRIE data cannot reveal that the 1,000 U.N. forces of women in Somalia spoke to each other or what they spoke about, it appears fair to presume that they talk about more than the men in their lives.

The table below summarizes the warrior culture films and television series reviewed in this study, their pass or fail status of the Bechdel test, and in which part of the test the failure occurs.

Table 2: Films reviewed with Bechdel Test Results

<b><u>Film</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Women in Speaking Roles</u></b>	<b><u>Women talk to each other? (Yes/No)</u></b>	<b><u>About something other than men? (Yes/No)</u></b>	<b><u>Pass Bechdel Test? (Pass/Fail)</u></b>
<i>Platoon</i>	2 (old woman villager and rape victim; neither speak English)	No	Not Applicable	Fail
<i>Full Metal Jacket</i>	2 (prostitute and sniper)	No	Not Applicable	Fail
<i>Courage Under Fire</i>	4 (pilot, wife, mother, daughter)	No	Not Applicable	Fail
<i>G.I. Jane</i>	4 (O'Neil, senator, nurse, secretary)	Yes	Yes (Although discussions not about men are about gender roles)	Pass
<i>Saving Private Ryan</i>	3 (wife, French mother and daughter – both speak French)	No	Not Applicable	Fail
<i>Three Kings</i>	3 (young sexy reporter, Cruz, Iraqi)	Yes	No	Fail
<i>Gladiator</i>	2 (Lucilla and slave girl)	Yes	No	Fail
<i>Black Hawk Down</i>	2 (soldier's wife and Iraqi mother)	No	Not Applicable	Fail
<i>300</i>	2 (Spartan queen and oracle)	No	Not Applicable	Fail
<i>Band of Brothers</i>	None	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Fail
<i>Vikings</i>	4 (Lagartha, Gyda, villager, and Siggy)	Yes	Yes (Lagartha and Gyda talk about fishing)	Pass

The data retrieved from the warrior culture media in this study revealed images and roles of men and women within that culture incongruent with evolving gender-neutral military staffing expectations. The perception of women in combat revealed from these media sources is the

hegemonic narrative that women are not force multipliers on the battlefield; rather, their role is to give visual pleasure to men, as in the form of a pin-up, or to pine for them as a wife at home. Certain women of status may be allowed to give advice to men; however, any decisions must come from men. Women may also be saviors of men, but the glory of the tale is about how the man is a good warrior, which, ironically, is why he needs saving. The narrative is told from the director, (Auteur theory) the point of view that reinforces the hegemony.

Quite a few women are cast as extras in the films studied, usually as prostitutes or native villagers, some of whom need help or protection from men. In *Three Kings* (1999) women extras as soldiers are present, but their roles in the film do not go beyond those of extras.

While courage was a warrior culture theme reviewed in this study, the theme of justice or revenge is not. Justice or revenge is a theme not necessarily exclusive to warrior culture; thus, it was not specifically examined in this research. However, like the clothing and uniform choices for the women in the films, an observation of these films revealed this unavoidable theme; therefore, courage is listed in the summarized chart with other themes.

Table 3. Warrior Culture Themes by Film (X = Theme is present in film)

<b>Film</b>	<b>Men Protect Women and the Weak</b>	<b>Brotherhood</b>	<b>Rite of Passage (Manhood)</b>	<b>Never Leave a Fallen Comrade (Warrior Ethos)</b>	<b>Courage</b>	<b>Justice or Vengeance *</b>
<i>Platoon</i>	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Full Metal Jacket</i>	X		X		X	X
<i>Courage Under Fire</i>	X		X	X	X	X
<i>G.I. Jane</i>	X	X	X	X	X	
<i>Saving Private Ryan</i>	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Three Kings</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Gladiator</i>	X	X			X	X

<i>Black Hawk Down</i>	X	X		X	X	
<i>300</i>	X	X	X		X	X
<i>Band of Brothers</i>					X	X
<i>Vikings</i>			X		X	X

- Justice or vengeance is not exclusively a warrior culture theme; however, it is glaringly present in the media reviewed and serves as a catalyst for the other warrior culture theme behaviors observed.

The above table of warrior culture themes represents the frequency of these themes in warrior culture film media. These themes are powerful and plentiful in film media. Many of these themes are also exclusive of women. The very nature of brotherhood or manhood is, by its language, exclusive of women. The themes of protecting the weak or never leaving a comrade behind presume that women are physically unable to meet the standard of these themes. That a woman in physically incapable of dragging a comrade (many times this is actually said as “leave no man” behind, as in *Black Hawk Down* however the person down was a man in that specific case) to safety or that women cannot even take care of themselves, but need a man to do it for them. The last theme, courage, is only portrayed by women who display male gender roles.

Finally, this study gathered data about gender roles and the genders portrayed within those gender roles. The following table compiles the gender role information gathered from the film observations and also characterizes the gender role using inductive reasoning.

Table 4. Gender roles in warrior culture film and television media.

<b><u>Film</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Women in Film, both Speaking and Non-Speaking Roles</u></b>	<b><u>Presence of Gender Role by Stereotype and Portraival</u></b>	<b><u>Gender Role Portrayed by Male or Female</u></b>	<b><u>Characterization of Gender Role</u></b>
<i>Platoon</i>	2 (old woman villager and rape victim, neither speak English)	Chris needing help when first going on mission.	Male	As newcomer who does not know better, not a character flaw.
<i>Full Metal Jacket</i>	2 (prostitute and sniper)	Mothering by Joker, prostitutes,	Mostly male gender roles played by males; females played female	Women are either prostitutes or snipers, and that is confusing to men.

		and soldiers.	gender roles. Some exceptions.	Either way – both represent a war prize when conquered.
<i>Courage Under Fire</i>	4 (pilot, wife, mother, daughter)	Women and injured needing protection, Walden weak and a poor leader. In some versions, Walden is strong and courageous.	Female roles portrayed by women; hero role sometimes played by both male and female.	Women are not tough enough to be in combat or a leader. Women are also portrayed equally as honorable as male peers.
<i>G.I. Jane</i>	4 (O'Neil, senator, nurse, secretary), women extras at beach and reporters.	Weak and stranded needing protection and rescuing.	Female roles portrayed by women; hero role sometimes played by both male and female.	Women can be capable as long as they are beautiful or act like they are men.
<i>Saving Private Ryan</i>	3 (wife, French mother and daughter – both speak French)	Female gender role seen as unskilled, scared, and weak.	Upham is male in female gender role.	After Upham kills an enemy, his rite of passage gives him courage.
<i>Three Kings</i>	3 (young sexy reporter, Cruz, Iraqi) women extras with no speaking roles.	Both male and female gender roles were present.	Male gender roles played by males; females played female gender roles.	Women used for sex; otherwise only called upon when in need of rescue.
<i>Gladiator</i>	2 (Lucilla and slave girl)	Women seen as needing protection.	Male gender roles played by males; females played female gender roles.	Women have no say in state affairs, and have only their bodies to trade.
<i>Black Hawk Down</i>	2 (soldier's wife and Iraqi mother)	Gender role present and seen as unskilled and needing protection.	Female gender role played by male, Grimes.	Males who perform female roles, like making coffee and typing, makes a soldier who is not ready for combat and needs protection.
<i>300</i>	2 (Spartan queen and oracle), women slaves	Both male and female gender roles are present.	Male gender roles played by males; females played female gender roles.	Women may not be warriors; many are slaves and sex slaves. Free women barter with sex.
<i>Band of Brothers</i>	Women in a film watched by soldiers.	Male gender role present.	Male gender roles portrayed by males.	Women were not present at all in WW II.
<i>Vikings</i>	4 (Lagartha, Gyda, villager, and Siggy), and other villager extras	Both gender roles present.	Male gender roles played by males; females played female gender roles.	Women and men seen both as warriors and as contributing members of village.

The last column of the table above iterates the overall image of how women and female gender roles are portrayed in warrior culture film media. The characterization is reflective of the expectations present as women take combat roles in the U.S. military. Clearly these

characterizations are mostly negative, have sexual or war rape trophy overtones, and do not paint an inviting environment for women who seek to join men in combat roles in the U.S. Military.

## **Conclusion**

This study reviewed specific warrior culture film media for warrior culture themes and the roles within those themes. The themes of men protecting women or the weak, brotherhood, the rite of passage from boy to man, warrior ethos, and courage were examined. The review was conducted in order to explore the roles women in warrior culture film media and the comparison of those roles to real life. The summary of data indicates that every film reviewed shows that there are gendered roles present. Men or women may portray the female gendered roles, however men may only fill the male gendered role.

This comparison of the art of film and the life of data collect from historical records reveals that while women were in fact warriors and present on the battlefield during combat, women are systematically excluded from being portrayed as warriors in film media. The data collected also revealed that when women are present in warrior culture film media, they are generally portrayed as weak, needing help, war trophies and sexual objectification or rape victims. This portrayal of women is present many times in warrior culture film media partly because of how the director uses the frame and film theory to create opportunities for men to be tested in the warrior themes. For example, for a man to protect women or the weak, there must be a woman present in need of protecting. For a man to experience brotherhood, the presence of women must be excluded. For a man to seek justice for an injustice, that injustice must have been wrought on a woman who then needs to be avenged.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and examine the differences and disconnections between gender roles present in warrior culture film media and actual roles of women in the U.S. Military. A review of the literature revealed information about the history of women in combat roles, warrior culture, film influence, and gender theory that led the researcher to analyze the content of warrior culture film scenes in warrior culture films through the lenses of film and gender. These warrior culture themes were war as a male rite of passage, the warrior ethos of never leaving behind a fallen comrade, brotherhood, and the concept of men protecting women and the weak. Within these themes were subthemes of courage, and in terms of protecting the weak, the concept of justice and either avenging or revenge for the weak. These themes were then examined for the portrayal of gender roles and the gender of the actors within those gender roles. This information was compared with real life data, as available, for the scenes and films that were analyzed.

Quantitative research about how women are portrayed in warrior culture film media has been conducted, but lacking in the literature was an understanding of what that information might mean to women taking their place in combat roles in the U.S. Military. By using the lenses of film and gender, this study examined the roles of women in combat in warrior culture film media as they are seen. This “seeing”, that is, what is in the scene and how it is intended to be portrayed and is portrayed, particularly in the patterns of the warrior culture themes, may lead to the reproduction of expectations of women in real life combat roles that are contrary to actual roles of women in combat roles. This study revealed that these expectations of women in combat roles, therefore, will continue to oppress women by portraying them as not present at all

in combat, being present only as prostitutes or the helpless, or being sexualized as war trophies. This study emphasizes the ways powerful themes of warrior culture pervade society and the military. Unless the cycle of reproduction of male hegemony is disrupted by media that is more representative of the actual contribution of women in combat, then the successful integration of women into combat roles in the U.S. Military is in jeopardy.

### **Summary of Findings**

This study described the ways that warrior culture film media enacts warrior themes within them. The research questions for this study were developed to explore and examine how warrior culture film media portrays women. The questions were how are gender roles portrayed in warrior film media? How are women portrayed in these gender roles in warrior film media? Does the portrayal of gender in warrior film media reflect reality? If not, what conflicts are being created about expectations of modern women in combat? And last, how do images of warrior culture and the roles of men and women in that culture in popular media conflict with more equitable and evolving gender-neutral military staffing expectations?

The films studied in this research represent examples of warrior culture film media. All of the films have at least one warrior culture theme and all of them serve to demonstrate how women and female gendered roles are portrayed in warrior culture film media. Below are some examples and other observations that were evident during the content analysis. The other notes are messages that are subtle, but present in the films and represent not only how women are portrayed, but if their presence is excluded or included, and also how they are also treated by their male peers. This in turn, perpetuates the cycle of the patriarchal hegemony present in the U.S. Military.

As part of the analysis to determine the role of women in the reviewed films, each film

was administered the Bechdel test. One television series, *Vikings* (2013) passed the Bechdel test. One film, *G.I. Jane* (Scott, 1997) also passed the Bechdel test marginally, and three films, *Three Kings* (Russell, 1999), *Gladiator* (Scott, 2000), and *300* (Snyder, 2006), generally reflected the presence of women accurately, although the data for the latter two films are not conclusive. The *Vikings* series is the most recent media reviewed, which may signify a shift in the portrayal of women in warrior culture film media. However, one challenge of film in general is how to tell the story of an event, which in real life could have lasted moments to years, in a film timeframe of around two hours. Television has the luxury of more time over presumably an entire season of shows that may be used to develop characters more fully than a film. This may also be a reason that *Vikings* can portray women in a fashion not always in need of rescue or an object of desire, but one who has her own storyline. The purpose may be to increase the viewer demographic. To portray women as both desirable and strong could, theoretically, attract both male and female viewers.

The Bechdel test was helpful as an analysis tool because it brought attention to not only female in the frames of the film, but the gender roles as well. Once the Bechdel test was established, the films were reviewed for male and female gendered roles. All films revealed both male and female gendered roles. Once the gendered roles were established, it was noted during observation that men or women could portray female roles. However females did not portray male gendered roles.

Women in most of the films reviewed are generally portrayed in socially weak roles: as prostitutes or mothers and as general public in need of help. These portrayals imply that women's roles in these historical eras are strictly weak, women are in need of help and/or rescuing, or as sexual objectifications in the form of a reward for doing well or as rape in the

form of a war trophy.

Lastly, when compared to actual participation of women in the events depicted in warrior culture film media, women are generally excluded or portrayed differently than in real life.

### **Other Observations**

*G.I. Jane* has many scenes of O'Neil working out, showing her body and fitness. She is usually working out half naked. Also in the film, O'Neil experiences an attempted rape. She is accused of being a lesbian, unlike a female, or the worst thing a male can be accused of in a highly "macho" environment, being gay. She has an interesting reverse role conversation with her boyfriend in the bathtub before she goes to training. He may have to wait for her while she is deployed, a classic reverse of gender roles. He says he will not wait, but later in the film he reverses his decision.

Gender norming, while created to equalize genders, actually creates the appearance of unfair treatment. O'Neil, like her peers, also shaves her head and lives with the men in order to be less of an outcast. The message appears to be that unless one is treated exactly the same, one is not good enough to earn peer acceptance. The message is reinforced in the rape scene during the SERE exercise.

In *Three Kings* the message is that if women are too ugly to have sex with, if women challenge men, or if they are women playing the mother and wife role, then such women are allowed to save men. Ironically, when the men in this film actually stop being greedy, they take on themes of warrior culture, such as protecting the weak or protecting justice, and subsequently they need to be helped and rescued by women. For example, Barlow calls his wife for help and then Barlow's wife calls the recruiting center to tell Barlow's unit where he is being held captive. During the escape, mustard gas is released, and when Gates takes off his mask and gives it to a

child, Gates then needs to be rescued by a female villager. And finally, when the group is caught by their units for desertion and theft, the reporter who was not pretty enough to be a sexual partner to Gates gets the group out of trouble by exposing the whole event and swaying the media story to make the entire event look good for the U.S. Military. *Three Kings* does, however, use women as extras in the scenes where there are many actors in groups. In some ways the extras are just that, extra, and certainly the attention of the viewer should be on the primary actors. Yet considering the amount of time, money, and effort to make a film realistic for the time period and event, hiring women as extras lends authenticity to the frame. Specifically, when women were present in the actual events and then suspiciously absent when reproduced in film, the exclusivity of the scene reinforces the patriarchal hegemony.

*Gladiator and 300* are similar films in that women are treated as war trophies for the most part with the exceptions of a few women who are royalty. In both cases, the queens in these films have speaking roles, but only speak to men, and both, while valued for their opinion with their partners, were raped to prove their lack of power.

### **Conclusions**

Narrative formulas are not complicated. There are a few different types of tales that storytellers utilize for entertainment and these tales take on the relevant properties appropriate to the time, place and people the story is intended for. The notorious epic warrior needs to have an arc of character, and that arc is usually facilitated by the common story lines in warrior culture film media. Even the ancillary characters need an arc of character that comes from common tales. These too come from the warrior culture themes. And if there are no women to help, a warrior must seek a weak male to help instead. However, in order for the weak male not to appear too effeminate, a male plays the female gendered role. This male then has a chance to have his own

character arc and redeem himself as a man. This might be shown as his personal rite of passage, or just him showing courage. Many films have males in female gender roles such as *Black Hawk Down*, *Platoon*, and *Saving Private Ryan*. This role is present because it is not just badness or some sort of evil that is needed for men to be good or heroic. It is also the process of courage in a man and testing himself through the rite of passage as part of protecting the women and the weak. An easy way to demonstrate that a male character has passed that rite is for him to go from needing protection to protecting. Instead of portraying these characters as boyish, it is far easier (especially within the two-hour time frame) to show these characters as feminine, using gender stereotypes such as making coffee, typing, or being afraid and needing protection.

As the films in this study have shown, women are generally portrayed in a fashion that is inconsistent with real life or with the roles that women will take on as they integrate in to combat roles in the U.S. Military. This disconnect between how women are portrayed and the real life of women in combat has and will create conflicting expectations of women in combat roles which will add to the barriers and limitations that surround successful and complete integration.

### **Recommendations for Actions**

The following recommendations are made for use of the information gleaned from this study. If these suggestions are implemented, types of conflicting expectations of women in combat roles will not entirely disappear. However, any conversation that brings awareness to behavior that is influenced subconsciously will add to the awareness that these conflicts exist. It is important in any social change to understand the present social norms before deciding on the best path to the desired social change outcome. U.S. Military leadership awareness of the powerful influence of media, how women are portrayed in warrior culture film media, and how that portrayal influences expectations will help set the groundwork for social change by offering

understanding that initial expectations for women in real life combat roles may be unrealistic and unjust, which can lead to more realistic expectations as women begin to integrate into combat roles.

This study brings light about media's role in creating disconnects that may hinder and delay successful integration of women into combat roles to U.S. Military leaders, women in the U.S. Military, and those who study gender theory. The researcher recommends that the information summarized in this study be utilized in a curriculum designed for U.S. Military members. This curriculum would reinforce the idea that a film can be enjoyed for its entertainment value, whether a work of fiction or not, yet that film still may not entirely reflect reality or expectations of reality. This curriculum could be presented and integrated into current leadership annual training for U.S. Military units, or as additional optional training for U.S. Military members.

Second, this study could be available for U.S. Military leaders in positions to make policy and leaders in positions to enforce policy regarding women in combat roles. These transformative leaders need ample information to help them understand and navigate the complex social issues of women in combat roles. Understanding the expectations that women will encounter as they take combat roles will help leaders interpret the barriers and issues surrounding the integration of women in to combat roles in the U.S. Military.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

One trend evident in the findings in need of its own study is the image of women portrayed in warrior culture film and television media. Such a study would focus solely on the costumes women wear in these media. It is clear from cursory observations about how women are presented that they are sexually objectified. The key question may be how their clothing compares to real

life. The bricolage gaze performed by the researcher during this process revealed that even in films where the presence of women is indicative of real life, certainly their manner of dress is not. For example, the women in the films *300* and *Gladiator* are scantily clad throughout the film or, in some cases, naked. Images from history depict women of that era wearing more clothes, and the types of clothes were not as revealing. It could be argued that the directors were either using artistic license to make the film better or appealing to the demographic watching the film. Either way, the representation does not accurately depict how women moving into combat roles will dress, and this adds to conflicting expectations of modern women in the U.S. Military. The exception to this trend is the television series *Vikings* (2013). This series portrays women in a more equal characterization generally, and while there is a presence of rape as war trophy, it is underplayed as compared to other media. *Vikings* also portrays women in general as wearing as much clothing as their male counterparts in the series. This could be a reflection of changing social awareness or simply that the series is set in the cold north of Scandinavia where more clothing is more essential to survival than in other places such as Rome or Kuwait.

Additionally, the women portrayed in these films have a high rate of sexual activity with the male characters. In fact, in *300*, *Gladiator*, *Platoon*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *G.I. Jane*, and *Vikings*, there were scenes of women being raped, threatened with rape, or as prostitutes engaged in sex. This may reflect the idea of women in combat only being linked only to sex or rape, and women being treated as being war trophies; thus deeming such conduct acceptable in the circumstance of war. Sexual assault, while beyond the scope of this study, remains part of the barriers and challenges that face women in the U.S. Military, and this reality is clearly reflected in the art of film and television. The influence of this theme through film may be why sexual assault is listed as a major concern and a problem for the integration of women. Women's lived experience and

recent data show that sexual assault is a common occurrence within the military. Media may play a role in this problem by reinforcing such behavior and situations as commonplace in war that goes unreported and unpunished. Women are portrayed as sexualized objects and war trophies, so men may only understand how to interact with women in war in this way. In some ways excluding women from the circumstance of war in an effort to decrease sexual assault seems to make sense, but at the same time this approach appears absurd that leaders cannot come up with a better solution to sexual assault than to just limit exposure of women to men. A closer study of behavior of sexual assault and media will contribute to more fully understanding this topic, which would also help contribute to the overall issue of gender integration in the U.S. Military.

## **Conclusion**

This study provides a deeper understanding of the differences and disconnections between the gender roles present in warrior culture film media and the actual roles of women in combat during the researched timeframes and campaigns. Generally, women in warrior culture film media are excluded entirely, portrayed as needing to be rescued and as war trophies or sexual objects of desire. This study reviewed warrior culture film media from a qualitative perspective that will help inform the fields of gender theory and U.S. Military leaders.

Nine films and two television series with warrior culture themes were examined for gender roles, the gender playing that gender role, and a comparison to the real life of women in that campaign or era. These scenes, watched by millions of people, some many times, influence the expectations of how women are and should be treated in combat roles.

The results of this study can be used as part of awareness training that will inform discussions about the roles that warrior culture film media plays in creating expectations of women in combat roles. The information garnered from this study could also be used in

developing a curriculum for U.S. Military leaders as they search for information to help mitigate the issues and barriers that women will face as combat roles open to women in the U.S. Military and integration begins.

Transformative leaders, both in the U.S. Military and in other leadership positions, need information from every perspective to embrace the challenge of the integration of women into combat roles in the U.S. Military. A social change of historic proportions, it will not be without misunderstandings, pain, and suffering. Expectation management by leaders will be a key factor to the success and minimization of issues and barriers for women. This study provides a perspective and awareness of expectations that can be predicted, and the conflict that those expectations might bring.

This study also informs general feminist and gender theory. The U.S. Military is an immense institution with strict binary gender mapping that now grapples with enormous social change. Any study that aids in the process of this change will be, ultimately, valuable to the gender conversation at large.

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