

THE MILITARIZATION OF WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE BODIES

A Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how women's reproductive (lactating, menstruating, birthing) bodies and choices are constructed by rhetorical processes of militarization. I consider what women's militarized bodies tell us about the policing and containment of women's reproductive health, lives, and choices in historical, contemporary, and futuristic dystopian texts. Overall, I argue that media texts reveal the many ways in which women's bodies are policed, surveilled, confined, and disciplined often through contemporary discourses of choice and autonomy. Through temporal, topical, and typical triangulation, this work reveals that the militarization of women's reproductive bodies is both pertinent and persistent, impacting women's reproductive health in real-world contexts.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my life partner, Dominique, and our dog, Denver. While it is not lost on me that I am dedicating my dissertation about women's reproductive bodies to a cis, straight man and a male canine companion, they supported me the most throughout this process. Dom listened to me talk through my chapters a million times and supported my work as a fellow feminist. Dom and Denver brought emotional support. They gave me love, strength, and happiness. They kept me (mostly) sane. They stepped up and took care of our home. They completed simple (but important) day-to-day tasks so that I could focus on my work. They were always proud of me and had faith in me, even when I was discouraged and unsure. I would not have been able to do it without them.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Terms such as “ASAP,” “on standby,” “good to go,” “bite the bullet,” and “snafu” are part of a discourse that traces back to the armed forces. In fact, there is a long history of the relationship between the military and civilian life. As militaristic language has integrated into facets outside of the military, Salvatore Babones (2012) argues that there are consequences of its causal use. He explains the increasing use of militaristic language outside of the military has become “aggressively offensive” (p. 85). As military language in civilian spaces has generally moved from ideas of peace-keeping, protecting, and defense to combat, violence, and conquest, we associate mundane aspects of the world around us with warzones (Babones, 2012).

The medical field is one structure that has a strong relationship with the military and regularly adopts military language. Particularly in discussions of illness, metaphors of drugs as soldiers and the battle/fights for cures against diseases are commonplace. Nie et al. (2016) suggests that using military metaphors in cancer and HIV research is problematic because metaphors in the healthcare setting that emphasize war and violence dehumanize patients. They explain that patients’ bodies become “battle grounds or war zones on which health providers fight” (p. 10). Instead, they argue that healthcare language “should underscore the healing, caring, and humanizing dimensions of healthcare” (Nie et al., 2016, p. 9).

Militaristic language is also adopted in understandings of reproductive health. For example, Elisa Lurkis (1994) explores how the framing of reproduction is often set within the context of “sperm wars.” She argues that a war-like understanding of reproduction grants government agencies to look at sperm as soldiers and women’s bodies as another militarized

zone. Thus, framing women's bodies as militarized zones condones militaristic government action (Lurkis, 1994). However, military language is just one example of militarization and there is a long history of militarizing women's reproductive bodies so that they align with the interests of militarism and can directly serve the military's interests.

In this dissertation, I study militarization—the process of adopting or the indoctrination of military values and procedures to support military efforts—in relation to reproductive health. Of course, the process of militarization can additionally focus on “the degree to which a society's institutions, policies, behaviors, thought, and values are devoted to military power” (Kohn, 2009, p. 182). Militarization is also a specific type of disciplining, in which military values, language, and military-like actions are adopted by individuals to glorify concepts of war, violence, surveillance, or the policing used by the military. González and Gusterson (2006) notes that militarization does more than glorify war, it feeds America's obsession with war. Mistakenly, the terms militarization and militarism are sometimes used interchangeably. Militarism is the general belief that the government should maintain a strong military. Valuing the strength of the military force can occur, for example, in the consistent recruitment of soldiers and increases in the federal budget for military expenses. As González and Gusterson (2006) explain, militarism is upheld in a number of ways that go unchallenged.

[Like militarization,] militarism has shaped American society, too, though in different ways. In the twenty- first century, militaristic societies generally do not require boys to be physically separated from their families to be transformed into soldiers. Instead, it is more common for the contemporary national security state to reach into all aspects of life. In the contemporary United States, spending on war and defense is generally unquestioned; economic life is tightly tied to the imperatives of war-making, war preparedness, and national “security”; and popular culture is saturated with entertainment— video games, tv programs, films— that glorify and normalize militarism. (p. 12)

Militarization depends, in part, on upholding the value that the military should always be striving to be bigger and stronger. However, militarism does not always include militarization. Although both militarism and militarization glorify the values of the military, the process of militarization expands past militarism and can be much more insidious. Cynthia Enloe, a foundational scholar in feminist perspectives on militarization, suggests that militarism can often be measured in the size, spending, and support for military endeavors (1993). Militarization, however, “poses a special problem...because it has wide-ranging effects on so many different groups that it evokes a plethora of explanations. No single explanation of why militarization occurs, why it persists, seems adequate (Enloe, 1993, p. 39). Considering its complexity, militarization is still a topic with many hidden components. Thus, making the concept connected to gender and reproductive bodies ripe for analysis. Specifically, the focus of this project examines how militarization occurs in/on reproductive bodies within contexts of war, military labor, and military control.

The bodies in this dissertation are either 1) in the military, or 2) clearly linked or related to the military or military efforts. In other words, women’s reproductive bodies are militarized so that they align with the interests of militarism and can serve directly the military’s interests. In my examination of militarization and reproduction, I ask, “How are women’s reproductive bodies depicted—rhetorically described, visualized, and constructed—in a number of military contexts from both historical and contemporary texts?” This project is rooted in the assumption that popular culture texts are never merely about leisure, but always already represent political and social understandings of culture. Therefore, advertisements, books, websites, and popular culture texts about the military are embedded in larger historical moments, cultural understandings of the world, and public discourse. I argue that the militarization of women’s reproductive bodies happens in such a way that the military and their goals are not disrupted by

women's sexed and gendered bodily differences. Instead, women's reproductive bodies and their differences to men's bodies are incorporated into existing military structures. To make this argument, I explore how women's reproductive—bleeding, lactating, and birthing—bodies are contained and regulated to both assist the military in its goals and as a means to control women's bodies. Militarization is a mode of suppression and for women in or connected to the military militarization, it is also the containment and domestication of their reproductive bodies.

In what follows, I first provide a discussion of reproductive politics. I then present militarization as a framework and provide the major theories within feminist perspectives on militarization. Next, I provide a methodological overview by exploring what the field of rhetoric has offered regarding studies of militarization and proposing my own framework in which I suggest temporal, textual, and topical triangulations as viable approaches to rhetorical criticism. Finally, I offer an overview of my three case studies: an examination of World War II tampon advertisements, an analysis of the Breastfeeding in Combat Boots book and website, and an interrogation of the Hulu television series *The Handmaid's Tale*. In this section, I also address the limitations regarding this project's focus on race and gender.

### **Re-envisioning Reproductive Politics**

The term “reproductive politics” was coined in the mid-1960s during the second wave of feminism and is used to describe women's rights activists' involvement in issues surrounding abortion, adoption, contraception, sterilization, pregnancy, sex education, and sexuality (Solinger, 2013). In this dissertation, I also use “reproductive politics” to refer to the broad range of reproduction-related bodily activities, including (in addition to those listed above) menstruation, breastfeeding, and surrogacy. As feminist scholars Laura Briggs, Loretta J. Ross, and Rickie Solinger point out, the term reproductive politics is useful because it emphasizes that

politics (and politicians) are at the center of reproductive health issues. This is to say that reproductive politics are about policies, access to reproductive healthcare, and social norms regarding reproduction and reproductive bodies, but they are also more than that.

This dissertation understands reproductive politics as central to all politics and our everyday lives. As Laura Briggs (2017) suggests, reproductive politics shape all facets of our lives, including the economy, our personal finances, schools, law enforcement, the military, housing markets, and foreign policy. She states, “there is no outside to reproductive politics, even though that fact is sometimes obscured” (Briggs, 2017, p. 4). Thus, Briggs’s idea, which argues that reproductive politics are at the center of all facets of politics, makes the connection of reproductive politics and women’s reproductive bodies to militarization clear. Briggs’s work also provides a useful starting place to consider the “war on women,” policies and actions taken to restrict women’s access to reproductive healthcare. As Briggs and other feminist scholars, including Joan Marshall Wesley (2013), note, the term “war on women” became popular around the 2012 presidential election to compare women’s abortion rights supported by President Obama to anti-abortion policies of Republican politicians. The war on women reflects the slow stripping of women’s rights and reducing the autonomy women have over their bodies.

Although phrases such as “reproductive politics” and the “war on women” emerged within particular political moments regarding abortion policies, politics policing women’s reproductive bodies have a much longer and broader history. My understanding of reproductive politics points to the fact that women’s reproductive bodies are always already existing in political contexts and are subject to nationalist discourses, regulations, and surveillance. In the remainder of this section I expand on the traditional use of the term “reproductive politics” by showing how policies policing women’s bodies occur in contexts outside of abortion and

pregnancy. I note two ways to re-think reproductive politics as more than pregnancy and abortion laws and, more specifically, how reproductive politics are connected to the state or military's control over women's reproductive bodies. First, I examine explicit regulations to control women's reproductive bodies. Second, I look at how the construction of women's reproductive and sexual roles can also be productive for the state's goals. Keeping these considerations in mind and expanding our understanding of reproductive politics, I focus on examples that highlight the relationship between women's reproductive bodies and the military.

### **Policies and Procedures Controlling Women's Sexual and Reproductive Bodies**

Explicit policies and procedures can, of course, tell us a great deal about the state's relationship to controlling women's reproductive bodies. In this section, however, I am going to provide examples that exist outside traditional understandings of reproductive politics, which traditionally focuses on abortion, pregnancy, and motherhood.

The European-American venereal disease (VD) outbreak during World War II, as Mary Louise Roberts notes, "reveals the wider moral assumptions of American society and the military" (2010, p. 1006). Women's bodies were demonized and policed through the collaboration of military and medical policies instituted in the United States. Discourse and policies surrounding the VD outbreak exposed the hypocrisy of the U.S. military's policies toward sex for men and women. Policies revealed that American concern was less over if soldiers having sexual relations with women overseas and more concerned with men having sex with women who contracted VD, as the disease posed a danger to the strength of the troops fighting in the war (Roberts, 2010). Men were seen as a danger to the war if they contracted VD. Women, however, were always a potential carrier and threat, regardless if they contracted VD or not.

VD testing and policing during World War II were different for men and women. Men suffering from VD were depicted as criminals, often put in jail as a form of humiliation, despite other men engaging with prostitutes who were not punished if they were clean of sexual diseases/infections (Enloe, 1983). Yet, this outbreak overseas also created a tighter surveillance of women on the home front, marked as a means to uphold a strong military. In particular “victory women,” “Rosie the Riveters,” or women entering the workforce in American factories/businesses during the war were subjected to the Contagious Diseases Acts, a number of policies that allowed government agencies to further police women’s bodies (Enloe, 1983). This act used testing as a way to monitor women’s sexuality, disregarding returning soldiers as the source of the VD outbreak.

In the early 1940s, local health officials and police officers were granted the authority to arrest any women they suspected of “sexual delinquency” and many working women were forced to take mandatory VD tests. The purpose of policing victory women was to not only protect soldiers from VD, but to ensure that victory women did not radically shift American gender roles (Enloe, 1983). FBI statistics show that in 1942-1944 there was a 95% increase in American women charged with moral violations. All of the women arrested spent an average of four or five days in jail awaiting the VD test results while they were counseled about their sexual behaviors (Enloe, 1983, p. 30). At the heart of the Contagious Diseases Acts was the belief that “women must serve man and male institutions, not just by providing cheap or unpaid labor, but by providing ‘clean sex’” (Enloe, 1983, p. 25). The policies suggested that women must be sexually healthy so that men’s sexual freedom can uphold the military, as well as other male institutions.



What was less monitored was the morality of the soldiers. Despite the heavy policing of women's bodies, infantrymen's promiscuity continued. "Infantrymen who faced death every day were not easily scared by the threat of a curable infection...At bottom it resulted from the army's basic lack of will in carrying out the War Department's repression of prostitution." (Roberts, 2010, p. 1013). The state's regulation and policing of women's reproductive bodies demonstrates state action on behalf of the military. Women on the home front were easier to police and, thus, were placed under tighter restrictions. According to policies, men's bodies and soldiers were at risk and women were the threat to state security.

Premarital examination legislation was also a way to restrict and control women's bodies during the Second World War, occurring alongside VD testing mandates, and the Cold War (Lewis, 2005). Premarital exams often consisted of pelvic exams and sexual counseling to women before marriage and a blood test for men. Premarital exam laws were first passed in 1935 in Connecticut state legislation. However, after a 1936 national campaign about premarital exams, states quickly adopted legislation requiring couples to provide documentation of exam completion, verifying they were not carriers of VD or syphilis. By 1941, 33 states had premarital exam laws in effect. Physicians during this time emphasized that the exams were in the best interest of the couple (Shafer, 1954). As physician J.K Shafer (1954) notes, "the principal purpose of the provisions of various statutes requiring premarital physical examinations appears to be the prevention of transmission of [sexual diseases] to either party to a marriage and to the prospective progeny of the union" (p. 487). However, premarital pelvic exams and the legislation mandating the practice reveals a larger interest of the state.

Many physicians during these periods of war were determined to change American sexual behavior in the name of state security. As Carolyn Herbst Lewis (2005) documents that

some physicians used the Red Scare to validate their reasoning for pelvic exams, noting that the collapse of the American family would lead to a Communist takeover. Thus, physicians took a role in reinforcing gender norms and heteronormativity through a type of moral and political surveilling. As Shafer states, it is the physician's role to "[promote] public morality and moral and physical development of the individuals, and every state has the power to determine who shall assume or occupy the matrimonial relationship within its borders" (1954, p. 492). Pelvic exams were equated with strengthening individual marriages in the name of freedom and the fight against communism. As Lewis (2005) argued, physicians could guarantee a moral and political superiority through traditional gender roles and heterosexual sex.

Physicians claimed a passive and receptive vaginal orgasm as the hallmark of a well-adjusted and normal femininity. A woman's ability to achieve vaginal orgasm during intercourse with her husband was both symptom and cure, as it verified her appropriate gender and sexual role performance—a passive and feminine wife yielding to her active and masculine husband. Vaginal intercourse that culminated in a vaginal orgasm was, therefore, the definition of the "right kind" of sex. (p. 245)

Thus, VD testing and pelvic exams led to policies regarding women's reproductive and sexual bodies that uphold state interests. As VD testing for women was depicted as upholding a strong military and premarital pelvic exams were narrated by physicians as fighting communism, these policies worked to control women's bodies in a way that affected their reproductive and sexual lives.

It is important to note that these types of policies and mandated tests policing women's reproductive and sexual bodies are not restricted to historical accounts. For example, marital exams for women are still common practice in Utah (Iati, 2019). Moreover, bans and restrictions on accessing abortion and birth control remain the most prominent form of restrictions on women's reproductive freedom today. Although many formal policies which control other facets of women's bodies have been replaced with more subtle and self-policing procedures and norms.

For instance, as Arwa Mahdawi (2019) notes, employers and health insurers are using mobile apps for family planning to obtain information about women's fertility, menstrual cycles, and pregnancies. Using the work of feminist surveillance studies scholar Rachel Dubrofsky, Mahawi (2019) argues that these mobile applications and other forms of subtle surveillance can potentially be used to further restrict women's reproductive rights by making "women's access to affordable healthcare increasingly precarious" and putting women's jobs at risk.

### **Woman's Sexual and Reproductive Roles as Service to the State**

Women's bodies through their caretaking and sexualized roles have been manipulated, used, and deployed by the state and military for national interests in a number of ways (Enloe, 1983). Indeed, these reproductive and sexual roles can even be modified for national interests. The most prominent examples are the ways in which the roles of military wives and prostitutes are used to uphold the military industrial complex. First, military wives have a number of duties that expand past the traditional demands of wives. Most importantly, military wives are expected to support their husbands in a way that avoids being in conflict with military. As part of this institutional support, military wives are expected to celebrate their husbands' service accomplishments, organize networks to provide support for other military wives—especially when their husbands are on deployment. Military wives serve as civilian support and sympathetic, maternal figures, which soften the public persona of the military to the public (Enloe, 1983). "In her support role, the wife acquiesces to her husband's career and his authority by choosing not to pursue any interests which might conflict with his work" (Weinstein & Mederer, 1997, p. 8). The demands placed on military partners as support systems for not just the family, but the community increase as her husband advances in rank (Weinstein & Mederer, 1997). As the expectation of the wives' services as volunteers increases, their labor has two

primary benefits: it's free and it cements the military family's allegiance to the base and larger military structure (Weinstein, 1997). One of the perceived roles of military wives, however, is to bear children while taking on traditional household duties (Weinstein & White, 1997).

Military wives are seen for their reproductive potential. On top of being socialized to act as a soldier's wife, military wives are typically expected to bear children (especially boys) who are depicted as future enlisted men. In other words, military wives are seen as "providing the military with its most reliable man power pool" (Enloe 1983, p. 49). Military families create prospective future soldiers who are socialized into the military at a young age to save drill sergeants the bother later (Enloe, 1983). Another way to understand the role of the military wife with children is a more specific type of republican motherhood. Republican motherhood politicizes motherhood for political issues while reinforcing societal gender norms (Kerber, 1976). Military wives with children are politicized to uphold the goals of the military and nation state while reinforcing gender norms as wife and mother.

Largely, women with husbands in the military are seen as benefiting the institution and, beyond beneficial, integral to the functioning of the military. "Wives and children must be kept happy enough so that male soldiers can give their primary loyalty to the military. And the soldier is most likely to re-enlist if his wife and children are also committed to his service" (Enloe, 1983, p. 68). In all, the ideal military wife coincides with the goals of military leaders by being a militarized social worker that supports military operations while at the same time boosts morale on base, procreates, and encourages their husbands to re-enlist (Enloe, 1983).

The glorified concept of military marriages is what Mary Vavrus identifies as a newer rhetorical tactic to keep military families cohesive with military goals. Vavrus (2013) notes that military wives no longer marry a soldier, they marry into the whole military industrial complex.

Through marriage and child-bearing, women can promote banal militarism, perform military propaganda, in the name of unity as a spouse (Vavrus, 2013). While their husbands serve in a group of men that define their manhood and are deemed essential to the country's national security, military spouses are marginalized from the inner workings of the military as they are expected to perform on the institution's behalf (Enloe, 1983).

### **Prostitutes**

Female prostitutes for male U.S. soldiers are also positioned to be useful for military and state goals. Prostitution is a common and entrenched feature of U.S., European, and Asian militaries that can be traced back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As Lee (2007) notes, prostitutes are available to U.S. soldiers “especially in situations of imperial occupation or colonial domination” (p. 454). Rita N. Brock and Susan B. Thistlethwaite's (1996) scholarship indicates that prostitution and sex trading in close proximity to military bases is, in fact, ubiquitous. Feminist scholarship including the work of Rita N. Brock and Susan B. Thistlethwaite, Cynthia Enloe, Gwen Kirk, and Margo Okazawa-Rey has examined the relationship between military prostitution and the state as well as militarism, sexuality, nationalism, and colonialism as intersecting factors that uphold and define military power through prostitution. These feminist scholars analyzing militarism and prostitution suggest that in any town with a relationship with the military there is an extensive history which reveals the connections between militarism, sexuality and military policy. Overall, “the history of the militaries preoccupation with and control of prostitution is so intimately related to military policy on rape, homosexuality, pornography and marriage” (Enloe, 1983, p. 19). In times of conflict, war, post-war, and peace,

sexuality and militarism are always already intertwined, shaping the social order of communities housing U.S. military bases and the women who live there.<sup>1</sup>

Often, justifications for prostitution in the military are rooted in assumptions about men's inherent sex drive. Roberts (2010) notes, "grounded in the assumption that male sexual needs could not be suppressed, the system was designed to ensure the medical safety of sexual contact" (p. 1003). Similarly, Enloe (1983) argues:

Military reformers [in times of war or conflict] were especially worried about reconciling soldiers' presumed male 'sex drive' with military efficiency. Left uncontrolled, soldiers' 'natural sex drive' lead them into a vicious downward spiral of indebtedness, drunkenness, illness and poverty. If men serving the military were allowed to satisfy their sexual needs with greedy, unclean women, so the reformers reasoned, they would continue to undermine the country's military capabilities" (p. 22).

In other words, prostitution is permitted or ignored as a way to uphold soldier morale to keep them productive laborers and engaged in military goals without being distracted by their longing sexual desires. However, the primary reasons against prostitution are largely perceived as issues of health by military commanders and government policy, lending authorities to surveil women rather than U.S. soldiers more closely.

Furthermore, there is a rich history of prostitution in global south and indigenous communities. Compared to prostitution in wealthier nation states, prostitution is constructed differently and ultimately has larger power differences between women from global south communities and U.S. soldiers. For instance, as Lee (2007) notes, since World War II, the large-

<sup>1</sup> In this section I speak about prostitution at large. However, there are many variations to how militarized prostitution interacts with military bases and personnel, creating differing influences on understandings of women and sexuality from base to base and country to country. Sometimes prostitutes are admitted directly on base and at others times they remain in "makeshift shantytowns off base" (Enloe, 1983, p. 45). Some countries have worked to legalize prostitution, creating a more transparent relationship between prostitution and U.S. soldiers. Other countries continue to criminalize prostitution as "part of a disciplinary regime targeted at female sexuality" (Cheng, 2010, p. 79). Yet, regardless of its legalization, location, negotiation with foreign states, or population of prostitutes, prostitution is a means of controlling both women's and soldiers' sexuality to uphold military readiness. As Enloe (1983) states, the military can "control male soldiers' sexuality by controlling the poor women with whom they were most likely to have sexual relations" (p. 21).

scale sale of women's sexual labor to U.S. soldiers has created long-term effects and public outrage in places such as Okinawa, the Philippines, and Thailand. Cheng (2010)'s scholarship on U.S. military prostitution demonstrates how ideas about military prostitution in global south and indigenous communities reinscribe and reinforce that a woman's sexual integrity and sexual readiness is the most important thing about her as "both state and civil society discourses reproduce the stigma of prostitution that ultimately disempowers women who perform sexual labor and undermines their sense of legitimacy as rights-bearing subjects" (p. 95). Along with disenfranchisement from the state as sex workers, women from the global south and indigenous cultures struggle to protect themselves from the violence of the U.S. military. American troops equipped with the military's weapons and authority would use their own anger and demonstrate their power on local women prostitutes. This abuse, as noted by Enloe (1983), was a destructive means to vent anger against their own situation as well as to humiliate global south and indigenous men in the community. Both the prostitution and rape of local women reinforced the stigma against sexual women, and subjected militarized sex workers in the community to be further marginalized, while allowing U.S. soldiers to benefit from the sex trade while escaping any questioning to their morality and legality (Cheng, 2010).

The scholarship on military wives and prostitutes are keen examples showing the way women and women's bodies are used on behalf of the military state in reproductive politics. However, these examples of how women's reproductive bodies are politicized for the state and/or military are not necessarily militarization. In the previous examples, women are not adopting military values, goals, or procedures. However, the remainder of this dissertation narrows the focus on militarization to focus on the ways in which women are working in or aligned with the military and the process of militarization works to transform women's unruly

bodies into bodies that work for the military state. Put another way, for the depictions of women in this project, their lives are closely aligned with the military industrial complex and this dissertation teases out how militarization works to contain the unruly threat of women's bodies by transforming them into ideal worker/soldiers. In order to understand the relationship between reproductive politics and militarization, it is important to first provide an overview of how feminist scholars grapple with the concept of militarization.

### **Feminist Perspectives on Militarization**

Militarization scholars in the fields of political science, international affairs, sociology, and women's and gender studies often look at the military as the pinnacle site of militarization, in which soldiers are militarized. Many feminist perspectives on militarization examine the relationship between gender and the military and approach the military and militarism as part of everyday sexism and misogyny, arguing the military creates the need for men to constantly prove their masculinity. Enloe notes that it is important for feminist critics to "dissect, explain, and critique—all three—the political workings of masculinities and femininities in warzones, in military institutions, and in militarized cultures in prewar, wartime, and post-war eras" (Enloe, 2010, p. xi). The relationship between gender and the military is tied to larger understandings of masculinity and the ultimate performance of manhood. As Sjoberg and Via (2010) state, "the functioning of the military-industrial or military-civilian complex needs men to be willing to kill and die on the behalf of their state to prove their manhood" and, at the same time, women are expected to be subservient to meet the needs of masculinity in the military (p. 8). The competitive nature of the military is integral to the process of militarization and the military industrial complex. Competition as a value is present in language about strength and domination. This masculine language is dangerous and is often used to subjugate women (Sjoberg & Via,



2010). Therefore, it is important to demystify the military and processes of militarization to reveal the ways in which male privilege shapes all soldiers' lives.

Many feminist scholars are also interested in women's direct connection to the military and the repercussions of masculinity as a dominant value of the military. Sjoberg and Via (2010) best explains the effects of women's integration into military roles:

Women's integration into state and other military groups does not change the gender bias of these groups' identities and expectations. In other words, women who join war fighting and peacemaking do not do so in armies or negotiations that are suddenly gender neutral because they are willing to include women. Instead, they join groups whose terms, premises, and behavioral norms are already defined in terms of the masculine values that they have prized before the inclusion of women. (p. 6)

This is especially the case in the military, where both men and women must constantly prove their masculinity. In many ways, as Peterson (2010) argues, a feminine presence is thought to devalue military strength and undermine masculine qualities that are deemed necessary in war. This is to say that women and the military are always in conflict as the institution continues to be a quintessential site of ideal masculinity. Even though the 21<sup>st</sup> century has more women soldiers in combat positions than any other time in history, the military still demands hypermasculine traits, such as "superior physical strength, incomparable male bonding, heroic risk-taking, extreme violence, and readiness to sacrifice one's life for the cause" (Peterson, 2010, p. 23). However, some scholars indicate that the recent increase in female enlistment does provide some pushback to the military's masculinist image. Peterson (2010) notes:

Some analysts argue that women's presence humanizes and democratizes militaries—perhaps even rendering them less masculinist. Others are less optimistic. Given traditional expectations of virile, aggressive hypermasculinity, militaries are treacherous places for anyone who is feminized. Women especially—but not exclusively—are at risk. (p. 24)

Peterson (2010) also suggests that women in and surrounding the military can be affected by the institution's exploitation of women through tokenism, at the same time that the military

ideologically marginalizes women from the structure all together. One of the ways in which women are exploited in the military is through the military's long-standing refusal to grapple with threats to servicewomen's reproductive and sexual bodies. Women's bodies are not seen as valuable in combat, but men's bodies are. Thus, women are often connected to the military through what their sexual bodies can offer male soldiers, while men's bodies are valued for their strength and labor.

Several feminist scholars have narrowed their focus on the threats women's bodies face in the context of the military and war. This work demonstrates that militarism is harmful for women's bodies and lives, often using rape and sexual violence as a prime example. While these threats tell us less about militarization and more about militarism, they show how masculinity and militarization can be dangerous for women. Threats to women's reproductive and sexual health, including removal of healthcare, rape, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and sexual assaults and violence, have both immediate and long-lasting implications for women's lives. This is certainly the case within the military and in times of war or war training. For example, many historians have documented the long-standing relationship of rape and war (Branche & Virgili, 2012; Chrystal, 2017; Heineman, 2011; Hillman & Walsham, 2011; Kunt, 2017). Elizabeth D. Heineman (2011) explains that sexual violence happens in a number of realms related to the military beyond war:

In times of war, nationalist men commit violence in civilian spaces against co-national women whose sexual deportment, they feel, weakens the national effort. Demobilized soldiers, required for years to commit acts of violence but subsequently asked to revert quickly to civilian norms, abuse their wives. Brothels surround military bases in areas where there is no conflict but where prostitutes endure clients' violent outbursts and pimps' economic exploitation to the point of debt servitude. (p. 2)

As DeLargy (2013) argues, it is no coincidence that the military has a long-standing history of dehumanizing women, considering sexual violence, hyper-masculinity, and militarization have a

strong relationship. Hypermasculine identities are privileged, highlighting characteristics of aggressive, competitive, violent and dominant men. While enemies are portrayed as dangerous, violent behaviors by men are justified as defense and protection.

### **Rhetorics of Militarism**

Within the field of rhetoric, there is an abundance of work on the military in the context of war. Rhetoricians examining war within presidential address can tell us about public opinion on conflict, rhetorical tactics in war discourse, and the ways increases in military spending are justified, and they can add to or reframe our understanding of historic events. For example, there is a great amount of scholarship within the past 20 years examining aspects of the Civil War and Lincoln, World War I, and World War II. Similar studies have also examined more contemporary war discourse, including 9-11 rhetoric and the Bush administration. Some popular aspects of 9-11 scholarship explore the rhetoric around terrorism and the political rhetoric that justifies war. For example, John Murphy (2003) analyzed George W. Bush's explanation of the 9-11 attack. Murphy (2003) concluded that the "choice of genre, use of visual imagery, and creation of self and audience" in Bush's 9-11 rhetoric shaped the presidential authority needed for public persuasion in the interpretation of the 9-11 events (p. 608). Zarefsky (2007) examined Colin Powell's rationale for war in a 2003 speech, finding that Powell relied on argument from ignorance and flawed evidence. Similarly, Kathleen Hall Jamieson (2007) conducted a careful analysis of statements made by the Bush administration prior to the March 2003 U.S. intervention in Iraq. She argues there was a substantial lack of evidence to support the Bush administration's claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and points to a number of verbal slips, logical fallacies, and weak rhetorical strategies (Jamieson, 2007).

There is also a trend in the field of rhetoric to move away from a singular focus on the top-down presidential aspect of military rhetoric. Instead, scholarship on the military shifted to militarization and how military concepts became part of civilian discourse. Arguably, conversations of militarism in civilian spaces increased after September 11, 2001, in which as Biesecker (2007) notes, the topic of homeland security became part of household conversations, and military terms were signifiers that shaped our perceptions and provided a “coherence to our everyday lives” (p. 204). Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz’s (2015; 2019) work on “homeland maternity” is an example of militarization seeping into civilian life, and she makes a clear theoretical contribution to the relationship between women’s bodies and the state. Fixmer-Oraiz (2015) argues, “as reproductive bodies are imagined to threaten national security, either through supposed excess or deficiency, a culture of homeland maternity intensifies the requirements of motherhood as it works to discipline those who refuse to adhere” (130). Homeland maternity thus points to how the potential of pregnancy and women’s reproductive bodies, especially after 9-11, is a site of “homeland security culture,” a more specific form of militarization. In Fixmer-Oraiz’s (2015) article and (2019) book, the idea of homeland maternity embodies a long history of the state policing women’s bodies. These works suggest that military language and ideals shape the way in which “good” civilians police themselves and each other.

Fixmer-Oraiz’s work on the militarization of civilian maternal bodies is complemented by the work of rhetoricians who focus on the gendered bodies of military members. Paul Achter (2010) looks at the way injured veterans and their bodies are represented. He suggests that because of the way in which veterans were depicted, their injured bodies symbolized a domestic representation of war and aided in the support for US foreign policy in the home front. Shannon Holland’s (2006) article “The Dangers of Playing Dress Up: Popular Representations of Jessica

Lynch and the Controversy Regarding Women in Combat” examines public discourse around the capture of U.S. soldier Jessica Lynch and the way in which her body was gendered in public discussions about women in the military and, specifically, women in combat positions. The popular press represented Lynch by the means of biological determinism, suggesting that a natural femininity made her female body unfit to perform in the military as a soldier. Scholarship examining how soldiers and their bodies are represented indicates that the U.S. military is highly gendered, unwilling to accommodate women (and justifies this by masculine standards as the ideal standards of the military), and likely to reinforce harmful gender roles through biological determinism.

Marita Gronnvoll and Kristen McCauliff (2013) examine U.S. media tropes about female suicide bombers in the “War on Terrorism.” They argue audiences understand these depictions of women within the already constructed narration of women as dangerous and the in/visibility of (Muslim) women’s bodies. Gronnvoll and McCauliff’s work is grounded in constitutive rhetoric to note that women’s bodies are marked as always already a threat to not only masculine preserves but also the state. In depicting the suicide bombers’ marked bodies, the authors state:

We cannot deny that the veil is an extremely complicated text. A veiled woman is fundamentally different from an unveiled woman and subject to the multiple interpretations endemic to this cultural artifact. We find that U.S. media reporting of female suicide bombers often assigns human-like qualities to the veil. Thus, the veil becomes more than a garment that allows the woman to strategically hide her weapon. Rather, the veil assumes a particular kind of agency as it is collapsed with the woman who “hides” beneath it. She becomes the veil and the veil becomes her. The human element of the bombing, and thus the political and ideological motives, are eclipsed by the portrait of the anthropomorphic marker of Muslim women’s presence. (Gronnvoll & McCauliff, 2013, p. 349).

Their arguments suggest that women’s militarized bodies are marked differently than men’s bodies. Women’s bodies are largely depicted by what they are not (e.g. masculine, in control, stable). The in/visibility of women’s militarized bodies and markers of difference is also

highlighted in Gronnvoll's (2007) article "Gender (In)Visibility at Abu Ghraib." Gronnvoll's (2007) analysis points to the way women soldiers, and specifically soldier Lynndie England, were discussed in popular discourse surrounding the torture of prisoners of war at Abu Ghraib by American soldiers. Gronnvoll argues there were "gendered standards" for the women while the male soldiers were described in nongendered ways. Additionally, the work analyzed the feminization and sexualization of the Iraqi prisoners. Overall, much of the work on rhetoric and militarism focuses strictly on the military or the disciplining by the state through homeland security or a homeland security mindset. This work tells us how women fit into the structure of the military, but not always how the military and its values fit into women's everyday lives.

Gendered discourses on women's militarized bodies are further explored by a smaller number of scholars who attend to reproductive health. Alongside Fixmer-Oraiz, much of Megan McFarlane's body of work looks at the relationship between women's reproductive body and the military. In McFarlane's (2018) work on the double bind of pregnancy in the military, she blends rhetorical and qualitative methods (examining military documents as well as conducting interviews with enlisted servicewomen). She argues that despite progressive policy changes in the military that attempt to remedy some of the difficulties of maternity in the military, there are contradictions in the way the policies are enforced and the way in which servicewomen experience pregnancy in the military. As McFarlane notes, "simply being pregnant [in the military] is problematic" and at tension with both regressive policies and progressive policy changes (2018, p. 23). Furthermore, as pregnant servicewomen grapple with the challenges of military policy during their pregnancy, they often reinforce some of the same problematic ideologies and policies that both limit and frustrate them. "Women's performances enact responsabilization—even as they recognize it should be resisted—therefore affirming a

problematic ideology and further marginalizing and Othering pregnant servicewomen” (McFarlane, 2018, p. 23). In connection to my own project, I suggest that women in the military often contribute to the militarization of (their own) pregnancies. In McFarlane’s (2015) article, she also looks at women’s experience with motherhood in the military through a visual analysis of images released of breastfeeding military mothers in uniform from the Mom2Mom Support Group. In the image, two white women are sitting in an open green field, wearing their camouflage military uniforms with their hair slicked back into buns. Their uniform jackets are unbuttoned, their t-shirts are raised, and they are looking down at the infants attached to their breasts. The analysis of this particular image of two mothers in uniform breastfeeding their children speaks to U.S. military’s institutionalized power of gender norms worldwide for soldiers and civilians alike as well as suggests the in/visibility of breastfeeding mothers and the representations and balance of both service to country and the practices of motherhood (McFarlane, 2015).

As a rhetorical critic, I collect and interpret a range of artifacts that demonstrate the longstanding connection between militarization and women’s reproductive bodies. In doing so, I build on a tradition of rhetorical scholarship that, as Bonnie Dow (2001) notes, provides criticism through an “artistic mode.” This artistic mode suggests that critics are the creators and not discoverers of the context surrounding their texts. Thus, what this dissertation contributes is a new context of militarization in which both the collection of texts and potential for new texts work together. While there is a great deal of scholarship on how women’s reproductive bodies are manipulated and deployed by the state for national interests, much of this work is not interested in the process of militarization on reproductive bodies. However, the context of these texts in this project articulates the relationship of reproductive bodies to the bodies surveilled,

modified, and constituted as ready to serve the military through militarization. These militarized bodies are examined in a way that highlight new understandings of militarization that show bodies that are clearly sexed (female), but are contained and regulated to fit within the constraints of the military's masculine spheres. As I develop in my case studies, militarization works to contain the threat of women's disruptive bodies by transforming them into orderly workers and soldiers that strengthen the military. As previous trends in rhetoric have shown, much of the existing scholarship on militarization is focused on military and state force. My approach and focus on militarization is unique because I seek to understand *how* it occurs through women's bodies and lives.

### **Triple Triangulation**

In this dissertation, I offer a triple triangulation. I triangulate three topics surrounding reproductive health, three types of texts, and three time periods in which militarization of women's bodies occur. In what follows, I first explain how triangulation in linguistics informs methodology for rhetoricians. Then, I speak to the ways in which rhetoricians triangulate approaches to and concepts in rhetorical criticism. Finally, I theorize "topical," "typical," and "temporal triangulation" and note their implications for this project.

Triangulation is an established methodology in linguistics. Dimitrios Chaidas (2018) notes that this is unsurprising considering that the study of linguistics "falls within the area of multimodality, [thus] it also aspires to suggest a way for multimodal research to stave off the criticism about impressionistic analyses" (p. 138). Blending methodological approaches is a way to closely examine linguistic practices (Ray, 2015, p. 169). Scholars (Chaidas, 2018; Ding, 2007; Hocking, 2018; Ray, 2015; C. Taylor & Marchi, 2018) note the beneficial implications for their work from triangulating. Chiadis (2018) notes that implementing triangulation is a means of



“checking results” (p. 138). Employing triangulation can also provide a more in-depth exploration of complex layers of meaning, emphasize the discovery of salient patterns, and increase validity and reliability in research (Ding, 2007).

Hocking (2018) provides a few categories of known triangulation in research. First, there is the triangulation of different kinds of data. As Hocking explains, this may include “literary analysis, text-linguistic analysis, comparative literature, archeological evidence, and so on” (2018, p. 9). Another type is the converging of method. The term “triangulation” frequently appears as a research method as often referred to a researcher using a blend of qualitative, quantitative, and rhetorical approaches. For instance, Brian Ray (2015) expands upon Miriam Myerhoff’s work to argue for more research triangulating interviewing (qualitative), corpus analysis (quantitative), and discourse analysis (rhetorical). Rhetorical research, including Ding’s analysis of Confucius understandings of virtue (2007), has used this triangulation of multiple methods to examine the means of persuasion. The type of triangulation that, arguably, most applies to the field of rhetoric is the uniting of multiple theoretical concepts. Although rhetorical scholars may be less inclined to use the term “triangulation,” many celebrated rhetorical theories triangulate concepts.

Rhetoric itself can be seen as the ultimate triangulation as a rhetorician examines the interlocking relationship between text, context, and audience. However, there are dominant theories in rhetorical studies that are presented as triangulations, without necessarily using the terminology. Regarding rhetorical approaches, Sonja Foss (1996) notes that the first step of neo-Aristotelian criticism is to reveal the context. Foss suggests triangulating the rhetor (motivation and purpose), the occasion (current historical, social and political understanding of text), and the audience (public perception) before applying the canons of rhetoric to a text to determine its

effectiveness. Similarly, Lloyd Bitzer's (1968) concept of the rhetorical situation simultaneously considers constraints, exigence, and audience of any particular text to highlight how rhetoric is situational. Bitzer notes that this triad of constituents comprise the rhetorical situation, his theory of how rhetors responding to existing situations within given constraints.

However, noting that triangulation is using multiple theories or methods is oversimplifying its methodological contribution. A group of three within any particular triangulation work together and have interlocking relationships that inform each other. Triangulation does not simply present three steps of a process. Triangulations work simultaneously to deepen thought, magnify theses, and provide new insight. My work is not a triangulation of method or varying types of data (e.g. qualitative and quantitative), nor is my dissertation necessarily a larger triangulation of rhetorical concepts. In the dissertation I offer a triple triangulation, triangulating three different topics, types of texts, and timeframes.

First, topical triangulation (the triangulation of three topics) demonstrates the broad landscape of militarization in reproductive health. Additionally, the topics I cover—menstruation, lactation, and surrogacy—are less examined than pregnancy and abortion in reproductive health research and offer additional lens for how we consider reproductive politics and the militarization of women's reproductive bodies. By covering a range of topics, this dissertation argues that militarization is fully imbedded into all aspects of women's reproductive health. Second, typical triangulation (the triangulation of three types of texts) emphasizes that representations of militarization and reproductive bodies are found in a number of different types of texts. Specifically, I examine printed materials (advertisements and books), digital content (website), and a television series. Third, temporal triangulation (the triangulation of different times) shows that militarization is part of our past, present, and future. I argue temporal

triangulation provides the biggest exigence for scholars to continue interrogating the militarization of women's reproductive bodies. By triangulating a historical, contemporary, and a future-oriented dystopian text, the analyses collectively present a clearer idea of the consequences regarding the militarization of women's bodies over time and across public and popular discourse in multiple contexts.

Temporal triangulation offers a new way to understand the relationships of texts within rhetorical criticism. The historic text(s) offer a glimpse into the contextual workings of past policy and social/cultural understandings within a particular discourse. Zarefsky's (1998) "Four Senses of Rhetorical History" argues that an important aspect of rhetorical history is the historical study of rhetorical events. This "sense" of rhetoric is studying key arguments, terms, or rhetorical constructions over time. This includes the changes or evolution of public understandings. Following Zarefsky (1998), a historical text in temporal triangulation, then, can be studied as a "force in history" or as part of a pattern in a rhetorical trajectory (p. 28). Historic texts are particularly important because of their relevancy to current discourse. Wraga (1947) emphasizes this relationship between history and the present when he suggests that all ideas/rhetoric come from and are modified within language over time—no ideas exist outside of history.

The contemporary text(s) offer a magnification of the current standing social and political climate shaped by public discourse. Texts reflect the now assumed insight into how existing cultural artifacts highlight experiences, everyday life, and socio-political connections. Contemporary texts highlight the relationships between culture, discourse, and material consequences of power as they stand (Grossberg, 1997). Uniquely, contemporary texts have the potential to illuminate the past while offering a prediction of how rhetorical discourse will

continue to exist or change. As Lawrence Grossberg (2010) states, studying cultural artifacts “matters because it is about the future, and about some of the work it will take, in the present, to shape the future. It is about understanding the present in service of the future” (p. 1). On the other hand, McGee’s (1990) work on fragmentation reveals that texts and readings of texts are fragmented; an audience will never have all of the text, only pieces of the text in larger, ongoing conversations. This is to say that analyzing contemporary texts offers something that historical texts cannot, in part, because critics will always have a contemporary understanding of theory, culture, and social relationships even while examining historic texts.

Finally, utopian/dystopian fictions, by their nature, offer a glimpse into an imagined, and often envisioned as a potential, future. If each imagined future works as a unique universe, any utopian/dystopian text is a glimpse into that universe where the successes or weaknesses of our society are magnified into remarkable or devastating consequences in the years to come.

Raymond Williams (1978) argues that utopian/dystopian texts, which he refers to this type of literature as “future tense,” are not always considered logical explanations of the future. He states,

There are periods in a culture when what we call real knowledge seems to have to take priority over what is commonly called imagination. In our own image-conscious politics and commerce there is a proliferation of small instrumental professions which claim the sonorous titles of imagination and creativity for what are, when examined, simple and rationalized processes of reproduction and presentation. (Williams, 1978, p. 123)

This is to say that the future tense is not purely imaginative. He warns us not to disregard the future tense as inconceivable imagination and examine what the future tense offers as a presentation of what is to come with deep consideration of the construction and reconstruction of how the world is presented to us. For instance, the dystopian text of this dissertation shows a glimpse into a glum future building from both the historic and existing understanding of

women's bodies as they are militarized. The dystopian future text often lends itself to be social commentary on the current state of politics or social norms and often holds eerie reminiscences of or nostalgia about the past.

Triangulating historic, contemporary, and utopian/dystopian future texts reveals a larger temporal understanding of overlapping ways in which women's bodies are constructed, constituted, militarized, and policed in a number of varying contexts. Beyond analyzing the typical relationship of the historic and current, the utopian/dystopian text offers a richer insight of the unintended potential of a living text. In other words, the utopian/dystopian text brings forth the political and social relevancy of the past and present textual examples in more material and concrete ways. In this project, for instance, by showing the dire outcomes of old and ongoing language and cultural understandings, the dystopian text highlights the urgency of a remedy as well as expands our reading of texts in a deeper analysis of discourse over time.

### **Dissertation Overview**

My dissertation contains three case studies, introducing a variety of ways that women's bodies are militarized. Although it may seem that the final case study is an outlier as it examines the representation of a fictional military in a dystopian world post-America, all three case studies work together to emphasize how militarized women's bodies are integrated into military spaces by changing how women's bodies operate to fit masculinist norms. Each of these chapters seek to explain how women's bodies are militarized.

My first case study evaluates 1940s Tampax tampons advertisements as a part of World War II propaganda campaigns that depict tampons as more than a reproductive technology, but a technology to aid in the labor gap. During World War II women's labor efforts were more than a strategy to keep the economy afloat. Women's entrance to the workforce was, in many ways, as

important as military efforts for a united and productive America. The construction of women's bravery, patriotism, and labor are not crafted in the same way as men during war, but in a gendered and sexed way. Women's patriotism is determined by their ability to conform their body to fit the masculine workplace. Tampon advertisements during this time add to our understanding of women's relationship to work, the military, tampons, and their reproductive bodies.

The second case study examines the *Breastfeeding in Combat Boots* (BFinCB) book and website. These texts provide a wealth of information for mothers in the military who wish to breastfeed while continuing to serve their country. The book and its associated website and blog are frequently cited in news stories about women in the military and BFinCB's advocacy has even resulted in changes in military policy regarding breastfeeding, suggesting that BFinCB has succeeded in positioning itself as a reliable and useful resource for and about mothers in the military. Specifically, I examine soldier mothers' (private) act of breastfeeding is brought into the public through their military service. In doing so, the military shows motherhood is accepted but without meaningful, structural changes into already existing masculine spaces. BFinCB highlights that women are "best" at motherhood and domestic labor, while providing any changes to make it easier for women to be mothers in the military.

My third and final case study analyzes the first two seasons of the Hulu television series *The Handmaid's Tale*. The series, as described by Hulu, tells the story of "a woman forced into sexual servitude [and she] struggles to survive in a terrifying, totalitarian society" ("Hulu," 2017). The web television series is based off of the 1985 book of the same name authored by Margaret Atwood. I use *The Handmaid's Tale* as an example of the handmaids' (the women forced into sexual servitude) militarization in a fictional, post-America, dystopian realm named

Gilead. The show represents a hyper-reality (an inability to distinguish what is reality from simulation) of a conservative Christian military state policing handmaids' bodies, which are both exploited through surrogacy and protected for their reproductive ability. In this chapter, I provide a Foucauldian analysis examining how multiple layers of power—both sovereign and disciplinary—form the depiction of Gilead as a Christian military state oppressing women of their reproductive freedoms.

The three studies that constitute this dissertation draw on rhetorical methods and theories to examine particular moments of women's bodies in relation to the military. The way in which women's militarized bodies are imagined provides insight into the policing of women's lives and choices. Using a variety of texts, including depictions of historical, contemporary, and fictional dystopian U.S. militaries, my project illuminates how ideas about women's militarized bodies play out in a number of realms to question the implications of militarization on women's reproductive health in real world contexts. In a political moment of anxiety regarding the lack of autonomy women have over their own bodies, highlighted by the timeliness of *The Handmaid's Tale*, this dissertation speaks to the exigence of providing access to and education about reproductive health in order for women to reclaim agency over their own bodies.

### **(In)Visibility and Identity Markers**

Before continuing on, it is important to address some limitations regarding the identity politics both discussed and absent throughout the dissertation. First, there are assumed markers of race and class that are present in this dissertation, especially in the first two case studies. The women I am referencing are almost always white and middle-class, unless otherwise specified. Yet, it is not lost on me that race is important to my analyses, as an intersectional approach to feminist projects are valuable and necessary to dismantle white supremacy. Whiteness is also

important to consider as militarization looks and performs differently for women of color and individuals of varying backgrounds. The fact that the women in the texts I examine are predominantly white provides insight into how whiteness is embedded in ideas of militarization.

In the World War II advertisements, all of the depicted women were white, as white women were the heroines needed to save the economy. Many women of color were already working in other low-paying jobs before the war and their labor was, at large, seen as less valuable than the white housewife trading in her apron to work on the assembly line (Anderson, 1982). Thus, white women were the subjects in the advertisements. In BFinCB, race was neither mentioned in the book nor on the website. As Morrissey and Kimball (2017) argue, women of color experience breastfeeding differently than white women. However, the text did not point to these differences or mention the different obstacles women of color might face in the military. I argue that in the BFinCB texts, there is an assumption that the text is for and about white women. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, women of different races take on the roles of handmaids, marthas, and workers in the colonies. However, despite a visible difference in the racial hierarchy of women's roles in Gilead, media critics of the show argue that there is a problematic nature to the show's post-racial approach in addressing issues of reproductive freedom (Abraham, 2017; Bastián, 2017; Berlatsky, 2017; de Souza, 2017; Phoenix, 2018). Due to the focus of this chapter, and the post-racial overtones of the text, racial difference is not emphasized in my analysis of surveillance militarization as it is deployed in the show.

Second, there are limitations in the way my language often conflates sex and gender. My language choice is neither to imply that all women lactate and menstruate nor that only women lactate and menstruate. I acknowledge that trans men may also lactate, menstruate, and give birth. Thus, I acknowledge that the terms "woman" and "women" are restraining and can often



erase the experience of trans people while conflating ideas of sex, gender, and heteronormativity. However, the nature of the texts that I examine predominantly focus on cis, straight, women with fully functioning reproductive bodies. Therefore, my language choice reflects the limited representations of women and women's reproductive bodies of the texts I analyze within this dissertation.

## CHAPTER II

### MILITARIZING MENSTRUATION: RHETORIC OF WORLD WAR II TAMPAX TAMPON ADVERTISEMENTS

A 1944 advertisement for Tampax tampons depicts a line of women working with machinery and wearing shielded masks with the caption, “Reduction of Female Absenteeism.”

The advertisement reads:

Statistics show that women absent themselves from work much more often than men; indeed, such absenteeism is said to be 50 per cent higher among women. Though available data do not clearly assign the responsibility for this marked differential, obviously menstrual inconveniences account for a considerable proportion of the days lost.

During World War II, women’s labor in manufacturing jobs was essential to the economy as men were drafted to the war. Propaganda campaigns regarding women’s civic and patriotic duties encouraged women to work outside of the home. Employers began sponsoring campaigns that emphasized a “reliable, healthy” laborer and declared the menstrual cycle to be a barrier to the ideal, masculine workforce (Vostral, 2008, p. 100). Advertisements for menstrual products were also included in these propaganda campaigns and tampons were depicted as more than just a menstrual product, but also a technology to aid in the labor gap.

In this chapter, I explore the ways 1940s Tampax tampon advertisements transformed tampons from a passing technology (a tool that allowed women to pass as non-menstruating) to a war or military technology and how such a transformation was supported by military and medical institutions. Tampons during the war became a strategic commercial product supported by patriarchal authorities, and the rhetoric of tampons as a technology of war constituted the bodies of women war workers into not just laborers and patriotic citizens, but women soldiers.

The way in which tampons discipline the body is easily justified by traditional notions of patriotism that encourage women to aid in war efforts. By investigating the rhetoric of 1940s tampon advertisements, communication scholars can better understand women's relationships to gender, work, and nationalism during World War II.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, this chapter highlights the role of technology in a process of containment for women's reproductive bodies. To investigate these connections, and as part of this larger dissertation, I focus on how bodies are militarized in the advertisements. In this chapter, I ask: how do tampon advertisements negotiate the stigma of menstruation and (middle class) women's typical location within the domestic sphere to depict militarized women's bodies as soldiers during World War II?<sup>3</sup>

To answer this question, I first articulate an understanding of tampons as a technology. I explore the public anxieties about women in war and bleeding as barriers to women's perceived abilities to be in the workplace. Second, I suggest constitutive rhetoric is a useful framework to provide a deeper understanding of women in relation to the military and 1940s tampon rhetoric. Next, I provide a critical reading of 10 Tampax tampon advertisements available between 1939 and 1945. In this analysis, I point to the ways in which tampons were presented as more than a product for women. They were constructed as a passing technology to help them blend into the masculine workplace and a military medical marvel. Specifically, I argue that tampons in the 1940s were transformed from a passing technology (one often understood to be liberating for women) into a military technology that contained women's bodies to perform parallel to a

<sup>2</sup> This topic is particularly unique considering there are only 46 communication and communications peer reviewed search results for the term "menstruation." While a greater number of sources are located in women's studies scholarship, much of this work is neither rhetorical nor examines vintage advertisements, let alone discussing the complexities of patriotism in relation to menstruation.

<sup>3</sup> I avoid the terms "feminine hygiene" products or "sanitary" products, unless referencing the language in a particular advertisement or the work of another scholar. I argue, using these terms perpetuate negative ideas attached to menstruation and suggest that women's bodies are unclean.

soldier. As I argue below, working women are compared to soldiers because their labor is narrated as an important part of the fight in the war and, yet, remain gendered in the ways in which they can contribute to the war. By providing a reading of World War II tampon advertisements as an artifact of war and the military, this chapter posits how technology studies can contribute to ideas of militarization through the containment and disciplining of women's bodies. Specifically, I examine how the tampon militarizes the body of civilian women war workers and positions them as soldiers. In the section that follows, I explore tampons as a technology and how such technology works in maintaining stigma around menstruation.

### **Tampons as a Technology**

A feminist approach to technology studies is a helpful lens to view the tampon as a technology. Of course, cisgender women are the primary users of tampons and a feminist perspective can acknowledge the benefits and limitations of this technology within patriarchal systems but, more importantly, feminist technology studies offer a framework that considers technology and its relation to the body and gendered subjectivities.

According to feminist Science, Technology, and Society (STS) scholar Judy Wajcman (2004) there is “a mutually shaping relationship between gender and technology in which technology is both a source and a consequence of gender relations” (p. 7). Likewise, Anne Balsamo (1996) offers the phrase “technologies of the gendered body” to explain the relationship between women's bodies and technology. Indeed, as feminist scholars interested in technology have noted, little attention is paid to the ways in which women are politicized and depoliticized by technology and there is also a lack of attention to technologies' relationships with the body (Johnson, 2010). Wajcman (2004) coined the term “technofeminists” for scholars who do work to bridge this gap. One interest to technofeminist scholars is the misconception that technology is

inherently beneficial for women and can improve their social standing mobility. Wajcman states, “a range of social factors affect which of the technical options are selected. These choices shape technologies and, thereby, their social implications. In this way, technology is a sociotechnical product, patterned by the conditions of its creation and use” (2004, p. 34). For example, the creation of household appliances perhaps made home life easier, but they also reinforced that women’s place was in the home and indeed solidified home appliance as “women’s products.” It is not just that technology is invented and then there is a reaction/response, but also social norms dictate what technology is made. It is a reciprocal process, making a technofeminist perspective a useful lens for examining menstrual products.

As Anne Johnson (2010) notes, “technology *is* the combination of artifacts together with social practices, social relationships and arrangements, social institutions, and systems of knowledge” (p. 38) Similarly, Balsamo (1996) argues technology is a sociotechnical product and there are strong implications for how gender, the body, and technology work together. She states, bodily and reproductive technologies “reinscribe dominant narratives of gender identity on the material body by providing the means for exercising power relations on the flesh of the female body” (Balsamo, 1996, p. 160). Tampons, which allow women to pass, provide a specific discourse of gender and capable bodies and expectations for laborers. Tampons also reinforce that women’s bodies are in need to fixing and containing, becoming tools in which to control the body to become manageable in public. Through examining tampons as a technology, we can see that the tampon is more than an artifact but is linked to the user, showing that human relationships to tampon technology are important to consider. The technofeminist perspective also lends itself to understanding tampons as an influential tool not only for women’s private lives but also for political, social, and economic structures.

As Vostral suggests, the stigma/taboo surrounding menstruation shapes aspects of the way in which tampons have “contributed to changes in women’s behavior and the challenges that these technologies have provoked concerning women and their bodies” (Vostral, 2008, p. 19). In this chapter, I use the term “passing technology”—used by Vostral (2008)—to emphasize women wearing tampons as passing as non-menstruating or a tool that aids in hiding the fact that women are on their period. Vostral explains the term “passing technology” as a term that allows women to pass in a specific way.

At certain moments the technologies helped women pass as healthy. In others, they helped them to pass as non-bleeders. Because women have relied on the pass, their exposure is felt more keenly in moments in which menstrual blood seeps through their clothing, for instance. Through menstrual hygiene technologies have been used and construed as personal and private, and artifacts because they help to represent the body as something else: not bleeding. (2008, p. 10)

Another function of menstrual products, especially tampons, is it allows menstruating women to temporarily forget their body is bleeding. Whether this discretion manifests in hiding the visibility of menstruating, allowing women to forget they are menstruating, or hiding the menstrual products themselves, there is a tension of the invisible bodily functions and the visible, public and productive woman. This tension becomes heightened as the modern tampon gained popularity during the 1940s.

The modern tampon (a tampon with an applicator and extraction string) was introduced to American women in the late 1930s (Vostral, 2008). Early tampon advertisements highlighted that a benefit of the tampon is that there are no signs that a woman might be wearing a menstruation product. For example, because there are no marking of undergarments or pads worn under clothes during menstruation, “Tampax will not and cannot show a line or bulge” (“I Didn’t Know It Was So Simple’—to use Tampax”). As another vintage advertisement states, “It does away with chafing, wrinkling, and ‘showing.’ Of course Tampax is invisible, and the

wearer does not even feel it” (“Don’t be so conservative!”). Discourse about tampons and menstruation marks the woman’s body inferior and creates a dilemma for women entering the workforce. If tampons cover up the fact that women bleed as a means to fix women’s leaky bodies, then there are implications of what is the ideal body for public spaces and workforce. Women are imperfect workers while the ideal laborers are men. This is particularly relevant to the rise in tampon consumption prior to and during World War II. The desire to hide menstruation to appear more competent within sexist confines of gender and the body is due, in part, to negative connotations around menstruation and larger desires to contain women’s bodies.

Dominant ideas about menstruation have had a strong relationship with the stigmatization of women’s bodies. As Young (2005) argues, “feelings of disgust and alienation” are associated with menstruation and the menstrual processes is referred to “as dirty, messy, disruptive, annoying, something to dread” (p. 101). Women internalize shame in relation to their period and factors of embarrassment associated with menses are attached to the visibility of bleeding, or being outted from the “menstrual closet” (Young, 2005). Shame associated with women’s bleeding is connected to dominant ideas about hygiene and cleanliness, which “reflect the social relations in the culture, commonly subordinating a group of people on the basis of physical differences described as body pollution” (Thomas, 2007, p. 67). As Susan Bordo (1993) notes, we are obsessed with women’s bodies, but “we are hardly accepting of them” (p. 15). Women are constantly asked to change and modify their bodies to masculine spaces. This is to say that ideas about menstruation stretch beyond the individual woman, but influence cultural ideas about women’s bodies, bodily acceptance, and bodily competence.

Culturally and historically, American women have been socialized to understand menstruation as “at best an inconvenience and at worst as filth in need of being sanitized, hidden,

or eliminated altogether” (MacDonald, 2007, p. 344). As Vostral (2008) notes, “no matter how hard women work to gain equal rights as measured next to male citizenship, menstruation seems to betray them” (p. 11). Periods are viewed as stopping women from performing masculine roles which rely on intellectual or logical characteristics (Delany, Lupton, & Toth, 1988; MacDonald, 2007). The need to conceal one’s bodily secretions as a way to hide stigma/taboo is embodied through tampon technology for women to pass as non-bleeding subjects in order to enter public spaces. As women’s bodies are militarized, their bodies become suitable for the state’s use. It makes sense that the state would want masculine bodies to occupy spaces linked to national defense and economic prosperity due to the stigmatization around women’s bodies as hindrances to productivity. Thus, the tampon as a passing technology becomes a mode of containment for women war workers, disciplining and militarizing women’s bodies to function on behalf of the state. To understand the importance of the tampon as a technology and its disciplining nature during World War II, it is important to examine women’s relationship to the war and the military.

### **Constructing Wartime Subjectivity**

Scholars who study militarization note that the military has an omnipresent influence in both our public and private lives. As Lorraine Dowler (2012) suggests, “militarization is the process that gives rise to a societal belief-system that violence and war are appropriate ways to resolve conflict” (p. 492). Dowler (2012) also argues that militarization exists not only in global politics, but also in the intimate settings of the home and body. Feminist scholars, like Dowler, who study militarism and gender argue that both state and sovereign powers reveal how violent action is more than a dictate of the state, military ideals are part of a process perpetuated and maintained by society that polices women’s bodies and lives. Cynthia Enloe (2004) adds that the



way in which patriarchy is established and maintained is inherently part of everyday militarization. Enloe suggests the patriarchal aspects of militarization are as ubiquitous as nationalism and patriotism, noting “most militarizing states need women to seek to be patriots, yet need them to do so without stepping over the bounds of ‘proper’ femininity” (Enloe, 2004, p. 172).

The goal of studying gender and militarism is to “expose the multiplicity of roles that women play in sustaining global economic forces and state” (Griffiths, O’Callaghan, & Roach, 2014, p. 116). More specifically, gender and militarism scholarship often highlight the way in which women sustain unobtrusive military-structured communities and in doing so, this work often reveals how the military is extended into everyday life. By extending the concept of a military, a feminist approach to militarism reveals that militarization is a gradual progression in which a people become disciplined by the military or dependent on militaristic ideas (Griffiths et al., 2009). Thus, militarization is a useful concept while examining the way in which women entered wartime jobs during World War II. In the remainder of the section, I first provide a historical understanding of women, war, and labor. Then I note how women adopted a new, temporary subjectivity during World War II.

Women’s relationship with war comes with tension. Despite the fact that women have always played an integral role in fighting in war, as Pamela D. Toler (2019) highlights, only “a handful of women warriors have elbowed their way into historical accounts” (p. 5). Women’s efforts in wars have been erased or used in a footnote within a larger story about men, masculinity, and war. Toler explains that women are forgotten or intentionally excluded from wartime imagery and narratives because, “if men are seen as warriors, women are not-warriors. In its most positive form, the ‘not warrior’ role is framed in terms of motherhood, potential and

actual. Women are considered too precious a resource to endanger” (p. 8). Even though these histories are eradicated from public memory, women were, in fact, integral to the military’s success during World War II.

Women were drawn into the wartime efforts for several reasons: a decrease in income as men left for war, greater investments in job training for women, and notions of patriotism. Despite the emphasis on men’s roles during World War II, women, too, were “at war.” However, women’s participation in the war was always constrained and shaped by gender expectations. There were two main ways in which women were participating in the war. First, women could work in the wartime economy. About one-sixth of women laborers in 1944 were in a war-related industry (e.g., fabricated metals, airplane assembly, rubber chemicals). Two-thirds of women entered manufacturing jobs more broadly, while others obtained clerical jobs (Goldin, 1991). In Alves and Roberts (2012) analysis of World War II newspaper classified advertisements, they confirm that despite the war granting new opportunities for women in wartime manufacturing, “the majority of advertisements during the war continued to be for stereotypically female occupations, indicating important continuities in the wartime labor market” (p. 54). Nonetheless, there was great concern over how employers can hire women workers and have women hold on to their femininity. The Office of War Information (OSI) reacted by associating war work with domestic chores (Yesil, 2004). One 1944 OSI pamphlet states, “many factory jobs are very similar to running a sewing machine or vacuum cleaner, assembling a meat grinder, sewing by hand, and other familiar household tasks.” Tasks that were considered less appropriate for women were masked in comparisons of traditional feminine tasks. Bilge Yesil (2004) argues that the OWI went to extraordinary lengths to frame women’s newfound labor as gender appropriate, thus, increasing women’s participation in the workforce in every division and sector. By 1944,

women held 30% of positions in factory work and one-quarter of all clerical positions. About the same percentage of women occupied sales and commercial jobs from before the war to during war. Conversely, women's occupancy in domestic service dropped from almost 18% to 9% during the war as women shifted into other divisions of labor as needed in the wartime economy. The most growth, however, was the 462% increase of women entering defense industries during the war (Yesil, 2004).

The second way in which women were participating in the war is through the military directly. In the military, women were initially put into roles to serve men, such as drivers, cooks, and secretaries. As the war continued, women were enlisted for other roles typically reserved for men, including military mechanics and engineers (Toler, 2019). Although military women were clearly a part of wartime efforts, there were always structures to keep women out of combat roles. For example, the bill that founded the WAAC or Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (later becoming the Women's Army Corps) noted that women were "to serve 'with' the army, not 'in' the army" (Toler, 2019, p. 196). Social pressures to keep women feminine and away from combat created limitations for the WAAC, and similar women military structures in other branches, because women were not allowed to serve outside the U.S. As Gerard DeGroot (2000) states, "when the women in question not only dressed like men, but began to act like them—in some cases to the point of combat—the threat [of women overstepping their boundaries] was magnified" (p. 110). Women becoming too soldier-like was threatening to the military structure. The role of women, therefore, was in tension with military needs and societal gender norms. Women were important to the labor power and success of the military, while also were seen as a social threat to men's place on top of the social hierarchy. Women workers were largely recruited by propaganda and the general sentiment that everyone had a role in the war. More

specifically, this sentiment proposed everyone had a role appropriate for their gender and assigned gender performance. Women in the wartime economy and the military held an interesting tension in the workforce. Women's type of acceptable labor expanded as many of the restrictions of positions and roles women would take before the war continued to be enforced. The negotiation of how and where women could be "at war" operated as both a containment of women's work and of their bodies.

During this transition of women occupying new facets of work, Rosie the Riveter imagery served as propaganda to support war efforts. J. Howard Miller's (1943) poster is the contemporary image of Rosie the Riveter and features a close up of a woman war worker wearing a denim jumpsuit and red bandana. She is flexing her bicep with the words "We Can Do It!" behind her. Despite its eventual popularity and seemingly feminist sentiment, this image did not become popular until the 1980s (Kimble & Olson, 2006). Conversely, Norman Rockwell's (1943) illustration became famous soon after it was published on the front cover of *Saturday Evening Post* magazine. Similarly, Rockwell's Rosie is presented in a denim jumpsuit with her sleeves rolled up, while sporting victory curls in her hair and wearing pins presenting her support of the troops. Unlike Miller's image, Rockwell's Rosie is looking off to the side as she sits in front of an American flag with a sandwich in her hand and her rivet gun and lunch pail rest on her lap. Rosie the Riveter presented a new image of working women: women depicted as suitable laborers to keep the economy afloat while men fought in the war.

Both images served to show women masculine enough to be blue collar laborers but still feminine enough (with curled hair and lipstick) to go home and perform their other womanly duties (Kimble & Olson, 2006). Alongside mass distributed images of Uncle Sam during the draft, images of Rosie the Riveter highlight how civilian women were militarized for World War

II efforts through propaganda. This type of propaganda gives insight to how tampon advertisements interpolated women into not just workers but soldiers. Women became soldiers in the sense that their fight in the war (contributing to the workforce to combat financial ruin) is required to win the war.

As economic and security declines created a need for large additions of women in the workforce to replace drafted soldiers during the war, studies about workplace, women, and menstruation habits took place as a means to reduce absenteeism at work. Ongoing medical and psychological studies about tampons were influential to the changing workforce during World War II and Vostral (2008) notes that these studies were significant because “many employers adopted findings from these academic studies, so that the most current theories of menstruation and menstrual hygiene products were put into motion” (p. 90). Employers, for example, expected women to take control of their menstrual cycle by altering the body through passing technologies such as tampons. In addition to advice from corporations, physicians, and employers to manage their periods, the surveillance of women’s bodies and compliance of using tampons at work was further regulated by health campaigns intended to emphasize the importance of menstrual technologies. As Vostral (2008) notes:

By addressing both physiological ailments as well as psychological behaviors, employers sought to create a more productive workforce (albeit based upon the model of the universal male). Besides improving women’s attitudes about menstruation, the campaigns influenced the commercial market of menstrual hygiene products. The model of an able body held economic, commercial, and patriotic meanings in 1940s America. (p. 100)

As Vostral (2008) reasons, a number of ideas about the woman’s body were normalized in advertisements that positioned women tampon users as patriots in aiding in the war:

menstruation should be hidden at work, women were accepted as part of the workforce during the war, and women who used tampons were better workers, reducing absenteeism on the

assembly line. However, these ideas did more than normalize discussions on menstruation, the advertisements and militarization of tampons constructed a particular type of woman worker in World War II. Drawing from Maurice Charland's understanding of constitutive rhetoric, I postulate that 1940s tampon rhetoric provides a deeper understanding of gendered subjectivities, which are governed simultaneously by technology, the body, and popular discourse.

Charland (1987) states that texts have the potential to position "the reader towards political, social, and economic action in the material world and it is in this positioning that its ideological character becomes significant" (p. 141). Using Louis Althusser's work, Charland (1987) suggests that the invention of ideology is not separate from what comprises a subject; the subject both "speaks and initiates action in discourse (a subject to a verb) and in the world (a speaker and social agent)" (p. 133). Furthermore, Charland (1987) has also made the notable contribution that subjectivity and telos are tied together (Tate, 2005). Charland explains that we are "'always already' a subject," meaning as a people we are products of our time and our identity is thus constructed in a particular way due to the social, political, and economic context in which we live. As Tate (2005) notes, "this does not mean that new subject positions are not possible at particular historical moments" (p. 7). Charland argues that constitutive rhetoric is the "discursive background" of the everyday. It is ubiquitous and mostly implicit. As Mills (2014) suggests, "the ideological effect of constitutive rhetoric is not ephemeral. It is enduring. The analysis of the rearticulation or repetitive articulation of a constitutive rhetoric might reveal details about its ongoing effect that are not clear or not present in the rhetoric's naissance" (p. 108). In short, the ways in which subjects are constituted is established within a particular time in history and particular set of motives. Thus, the context of World War II, given the goal of moving women into the workforce to sustain the American economy, the discourse of Tampax tampons is

imperative to understanding the subjectivity of women during this time. As constant militarization of the body acts as a means to privilege masculinity in all facets of life, the tampon is a specific tool garnered by the military to craft an identity in which women are still feminine and subjected to patriarchal structures, but conform to a role that can be conceived similarly to fighting in the military.

I argue that gender and militarism work together in a mutually shaping relationship to craft the gendered identity of patriots and at the same time, women war workers are also depicted as soldiers. Despite the notion that women should be kept separate from combat, the Tampax advertisements present a soldier that is feminine enough to be woman, but with a body modified to produce work like a male laborer. I develop my understanding of tampons as a technology by using theories of constitutive rhetoric to understand how women war workers are positioned and position themselves as soldiers within wartime tampon discourse from Tampax. This is to say, while the wartime Tampax advertisements frame women who use tampons in the workplace as patriotic, women became a new type of soldier by using tampons to aid in World War II agendas. In the analysis that follows, I examine 10 Tampax Tampon advertisements during World War II from (1939-1945), out of the 50 Tampax advertisements archived from this time period in Duke Digital Repository's Ad\*Access collection from Duke University. The Tampax advertisements I analyze not only provide diverse content prior to and during the war, but, based on my review of the advertisements, highlight the discourse which depicted working women and the war directly both through images and text.<sup>4</sup> These advertisements not only suggest that tampons are a useful tool in times of war, but that the tampon is the key to strengthening weak women's bodies and

<sup>4</sup> While most advertisements during this time focused on women's freedom to play sports, wear any type of clothing, and go to the beach, these particular Tampax advertisements differ from other advertisements by placing women and the managing of women's bodies as an integral part to the war effort.

producing productive laborers – as technologies are, by definition, tools to enhance human capabilities. Overall, these advertisements highlight the tension that women were “at war,” but not as combat soldiers, gendering the way in which women participated in wartime efforts. At the same time, Tampax advertisements undermines this tension by using language that militarizes the women’s body as a way to establish the credentials of the perfect gendered soldier protecting the home front.

### **Tampons, the Military, and World War II: Making Soldiers**

Women in the 1940s were able to move to the workplace, and emphasizing their importance in manufacturing jobs was one way in which women were discouraged from entering the military (McCracken, 2002). The large-scale propaganda campaigns functioned to discredit women on the battlefield at the same time they presented women as capable of replacing men in working class jobs (Vostral, 2008). The military itself used “women’s health” as a barrier to prevent them from entering combat positions and heavily scrutinized women working in the Women’s Army Corps, the Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, and the Women Airforce Service. Lawmakers targeted these military sectors in attempts to regulate women’s positions in the military and relegate them to clerical work (i.e. stenographers, typist, clerks, and communication specialists) (Vostral, 2008, p. 104). In all, beliefs regarding masculinity and femininity impact common conceptions on the gendered abilities of men and women, making women an inherent threat to the masculine structure of the military (Riley, 2008).

Still, the language within war propaganda framed women’s entrance into the workforce were important in military efforts for a united and productive America. For, indeed, women’s labor efforts during the war were more than a strategy for keeping the economy afloat and participating in the economy (i.e. the workforce, consumerism) was depicted as a noble act on



behalf of the country. Women's patriotism during World War II was unique as their duties consisted of moving into the workforce to temporarily take men's manufacturing jobs while simultaneously keeping a steady household. However, women's transition into the public sphere faced scrutiny based on ideas about women's bodies in traditionally male dominated spaces. Menstruating was still seen as a psychological issue. Menstrual product campaigns attempted to combat these concerns by emphasizing women's empowerment and depicting the tampon as a new solution to manage female workers. Tampon advertisements were one method to introduce a different discourse surrounding menstruation. Specifically, tampon advertisements were in tune with the latest research around menstruation. The advertisements suggest their product is the best available for women in the workforce, while using women and outside authorities as advocates to support Tampax.

In the analysis that follows, I argue that during World War II, notions of women's bravery, patriotism, and citizenship are constructed in a gendered and sexed way. Women did not participate in wartime efforts the same way as men and their contributions to "the fight" were feminized. Women were not just good patriotic citizens, but a gendered soldier. The identity of this soldier highlights the vigor, courage, and strength of women in the workforce and, at the same time, notes that women could only serve their country in their home country. While tampon advertisements depicting working women use war metaphors, the soldier image for war workers is familiar with war but fights in a non-combative way. The "fight" was two-fold, upholding their part of wartime labor and fighting against their own bodies to contain menstruation. Only through the use of the tampon can women be imaged as and pass as a soldier in the fight. As discussed in the next chapter about breastfeeding soldiers, women's bodies must be contained to

fit masculine spaces and women's reproductive, leaky bodies are militarized to the extent that they can be "at war," but not fight in the same way men can.

First, I point to the ways in which tampons are associated with war technologies by framing tampons as a type of technology within a military context for World War II. I demonstrate that the advertisements use medical authorities as the voice of the military to construct the tampons as a medical marvel and military technology (a technology of war is a tool that aids the military in meeting its goal). For this chapter, I use the terms military technology and technology of war interchangeably because the apex of military culture, as mentioned in the introduction, is war. More importantly, considering the historical context of this chapter, the military's goals during this time were all concentrated on winning the war. In the second section of the analysis, I note how the advertisements constitute women war workers as soldier through detailed characteristics of patriotism and attributions of efficiency.

### **Medical Authority and Tampons as a Technology of War**

The tampon, as a passing technology, took a particular role during World War II. Tampax advertisements narrate the tampon as a medical marvel, a military-related invention to keep the workforce strong during the war. The tampon as a medical marvel uses passing technology rhetoric within the specific context of the war. Using medical authority to show the importance of passing as non-menstruating for the military and struggling war economy, the tampon is posited as a technology of war, protecting and healing women at war. The tampon, however, is just one example of the longstanding relationship between the military and civilian healthcare.

Mark Harrison (1996)'s review of medicine and the military argues that there are simultaneous processes of the militarization of medicine and the medicalization of war. While most scholars interested in militarism and medicine agree that the military shapes medical

development for civilians, the greater social and cultural influences of the relationship between military and civilian medicine is not often acknowledged. Specifically, the practices of military medicine aided in the development of new technologies and these medical technologies were later popularized in everyday life (Pranghofer, 2016). Harrison (1996), using the work of Christopher Lawrence, notes the effect of militarizing civilian medicine, medical authorities crafted a new “disciplinary code based on dressage and surveillance rather than physical punishment,” and like the military this type of discipline standardized civilian bodies (p. 269). Surveillance and discipline are predominant themes in militarization, and this dissertation, but are also an important part of modern medicine. Medical technologies and practices shape our understanding of the body to be “a standardized and calculable entity” (Pranghofer, 2016, p. 472). In this militarization of medicine, the medical authority used to support the use of tampons for women at war, shifts tampons into a type of war technology.

Medical authority (e.g. the recommendation, approval, or influence of doctors and nurses) serves as an important resource to establish and re-circulate tampons as a tool to produce productive laborers to aid in military efforts. Medical authority is prominent in Tampax advertisements for both for physicians and general audiences. First, advertisements in medical journals “created an impression that physicians not only accepted but promoted Tampax tampons” and demonstrate the special role physicians played in understanding the tampon as a technology that benefited the military during the early and mid 1940s (Vostral, 2008, p. 78). Interestingly, these medical advertisements emphasize social implications as well as the health benefits of tampons as the advertisements made clear references to the military’s stake in women’s bodies. In particular, the medical advertisements highlighted both absenteeism from work and emotional distress from worries of failing to conceal menstruation. Important to this

chapter, however, is the way in which medical authority situated tampons as a military technology backed by a reliable military mechanism: American medicine and doctors aiding the war.

Next, medical authority is also used in mainstream publications, such as magazines and newspapers, to constitute the tampon as a military technology during World War II. As several of the advertisements articulate, “perfected by a doctor, Tampax is made of pure surgical cotton. Wearer does not feel it when in place. Cannot chafe. Easy disposal” (“Women At War! Pay Attention to Tampax”). The fact that a doctor, Earle Cleveland Haas, invented the Tampax tampon ensures readers that Tampax is a credible remedy, as their advertisements often mention Haas. Tampax advertisements mentioning Haas demonstrates that American medicine represents the interests of and benefits the military during war. Medical authorities clearly aligned with larger forces of militarization act in accordance with ideologies of militarism, in which doctors find cures for incapacitated laborers to win the war. The wounded soldier who might leave her position at work to cope with menstruation suffers emotionally and physically, as the medical advertisements indicate. The wounded warrior worker has temporarily lost her ability to contribute to American efforts in the war and must be healed before turning back to work. Tampons not only heal wounded woman workers, but also work as a medical marvel to prevent any further incapacitation. “Since tampons were once used for vaginal infections, and menstruation remained a medical disability, advertising again relied on medical expertise to legitimate the product” (Vostral, 2008, p. 78). The approval from doctors across Tampax marketing became a large factor in their messaging (Vostral, 2008). This relationship is relevant in Tampax advertisements directed at the medical community and the public, as women are simultaneously positioned as women at war and medical patients. The Tampax advertisements

show the tampon as a tool that keeps women working longer and harder as their contribution to the war. As the tampon becomes a necessity to keep women's bodies productive, the technology becomes more than a technology that hides menstruation and more aligned with a tool that is useful to the military's goals.

In an advertisement entitled "Absenteeism With Out Logic," the advertisement, directed at physicians, uses medical terminology to discuss the problems associated with menstruation.

The advertisement reads:

In special cases, the need for discriminating therapy—analgesic, hormonal, emmenagogic, even surgical—may justify home confinement. But for so many, absenteeism is motivated solely by a desire to avoid the risk of physical distress and emotional uncertainty, caused by vulval irritation from perineal pads. ("Absenteeism With Out Logic")

The treatments associated with menstruation listed in the advertisement show the unnecessary measures taken for women to cope with their period and the inadequacy of menstrual pads. Thus, Tampax is the solution: "Today the Tampax habit becomes—more than ever—the logical one for adoption...and for professional recommendation" ("Absenteeism With Out Logic"). The advertisements suggest that physicians present Tampax as the best solution to their women patients. Here, patriarchal authority from male physicians, the military, or factory managers is at work to reinforce the social implications of women wearing tampons to work. This work is especially important due to its connection to war. Women, within advertisements directed toward the medical community, are workers and patients in need of a medical marvel for a strong military home front. The tampon allows women to transition to competent workers with the medical approval of doctors to solve women's health deficiencies for the fight. As Balsamo (1996) notes, this type of transition highlights the ways in which bodily technologies "contribute to the repression [and] conceptual fragmentation" of the body (p. 159). The tampon militarizes

the body, manipulating it to be uniformed and productive, to produce fighters in the war. Thus, tampons are positioned as a technology that can help reduce the phenomenon of soldiers going AWOL, making the tampon a military technology that is instrumental in militarizing women's bodies. This medical marvel heals the soldier's body in the battle of menstruation as she is also a soldier protecting her nation from economic decline. Advertisements that supported women wearing tampons suggested that tampons not only helped women "pass" as non-menstruating, but also allowed women to uphold the integrity of male dominated spaces during the war.

Similarly, in a 1944 Tampax advertisement published in *American Journal of Nursing*, an image of a line of women working with machinery and wearing shielded masks is titled "Reduction of Female Absenteeism."

On this point Pommerenke recently made the following observation before the American Association of Industrial Physicians and Surgeons: 'With a better understanding of the purpose and nature of menstruation, and its recognition as physiological rather than as a pathological process, many a woman many be re-educated and come to regard the so-called difficult days as days in which she need not seriously curtail her usual activities.'

The advertisement validates that conversations around menstruation were changing during a time of war. By using absenteeism as an argument alongside medical research, the advertisements place the stress of the wartime economy as a primary factor for the medical community to reevaluate how menstruation is discussed and how women are introduced to tampons.

Pommerenke's argument, reinforced by the ad, suggests that tampons are medical marvels that heal the emotional and pathological effects of menstruation. Further, and, perhaps, more importantly, this technology keeps women at their station, doing their part to uphold the wartime economy. Tampax is presented as the physical and emotional cure to all women's problems, while the advertisements insist that doctors can assist women become capable laborers. "Your patients should be grateful to you for recommending Tampax—and (in many cases) it may

enable them to stay “on the job” where they are so vitally needed” (“Reduction of Female Absenteeism”). Medical authority is not only responsible for producing a wartime technology for working women, but is important to reinforce social norms, including the normalization of tampon use for single women during the 1940s.

Doctors have great influence over how “healthy” bodies look in terms of citizenship. In fact, medical authorities historically have advised and surveilled women’s bodies in terms of relevant social norms and dominant ideas of citizenship, particularly in times of war. For example, by the end of World War II premarital pelvic exams were mandated for women in many states across the United States. The exam, which ultimately considered a woman’s ability to vaginally orgasm during intercourse with her husband, “verified her appropriate gender and sexual role performance—a passive and feminine wife” (Lewis, 2005, p. 245). Similarly, by suggesting that women who use tampons can successfully cure dysmenorrhea and hide symptoms of menstruation (though the use of a passing technology), physicians crafted an ideal model for a woman’s healthy body. However, it is not the characteristics of the tampon alone that make the tampon useful the military’s goals. Rather, as Johnson (2010) suggests, “when an artifact is created or introduced, or used, the material features do not do not determine the social relations around it” (pp. 47-48). The context of the war and the need for women to enter the economy changed the social relations between medical authorities, the military, and tampons. In doing so, Tampax used medical authority’s idea of the healthy body to attract consumers and advertise to physicians and women taking on new responsibilities outside the home and in helping during the war. Doctors have long advised and surveilled women’s bodies during times of war, but in this case militarizing the tampon was necessary for the larger war effort for women at war participating through the economy. Just as pelvic exams and proper performances of

heterosexuality were important to fight communism in the Cold War, medical authority constitutes an ideal healthy body, but the ideal healthy war-ready body.

The idea of health is also present in popular press advertisements as it both utilizes medical authority and configured tampons as a military technology. In a 1943 issue of *New York Times Magazine*, a drawing of a nurse accompanies a Tampax advertisement entitled “After the Nurse had Discussed it frankly...” The advertisement recites a monologue of a woman’s trip to the doctor’s office. Surprised to hear of the benefits of Tampax tampons from her nurse consultant, the woman in the advertisement’s narrative considers the authority of the nurse and doctor’s approval of the technology as well as gains insight to “some very simple anatomy” (“After the Nurse had Discussed it frankly...”). While tampons were once reserved to a small group of women, such as “dancers and actresses,” “Tampax makes the same thing available for the sanitary protection of women in general—war workers, housewives, business girls and students.” Although the advertisement includes women laborers both inside the house and in public spaces, the reference to war workers as the first type of woman highlights the relationship between medical authority and the construction of the war worker soldier, as I argue in the following section.

### **Constitutive Technology and the Shift from Gendered Patriots to Soldiers**

Appealing to American patriotism in wartime commercial advertisements is a popular marketing ploy. Tampax’s 1940s advertisements and the integration of a new menstrual product for women say a great deal about women’s roles during war time (Enloe, 2000). Tampax emphasizes the role of women’s patriotism by addressing tampon users and implies that women who use their tampons can better support the war as productive workers. War-time Tampax advertisements focused on women at work shifted away from the more typical tampon



advertisement focus on freedom to enjoy leisure pursuits in public. One advertisement, representative of advertisements prior to the war, is entitled, “Every Day of The Month Is a Day of Freedom.” The image accompanying this advertisement is a drawing of women playing tennis, horseback riding, riding a bike, dancing, and playing golf. The text above the image reads, “free from discomfort, free from embarrassment” (Every Day of The Month Is a Day of Freedom”). The Tampax brand’s emphasis on freedom and leisure outside the home and insists women can do anything. This marks that women have their own agency to be visible, public, while enjoying leisurely activities including swimming at the beach or playing sports. As the war created a need for women to be productive laborers, Tampax developed advertisements that featured the importance of women working without the constraints of their periods, constructing women war workers as soldiers.

Tampax tampon advertisements mirror the ways in which women’s bodies were hyper-visible. As Riley (2008) states:

Women are sometimes seen and sometimes not; sometimes as bodies to be moved, manipulated, and militarized; and at other times, their bodies are ignored as practices of femininity are used to emphasize weakness, vulnerability, and helplessness. (p. 1193)

Women’s bodies were visible in the workforce as an important apparatus to wartime labor and yet the functions of women’s bodies were highly regulated and militarized to become invisible in differences to men’s bodies. As women moved into factories, they were manipulated to become more masculine, and women’s bodies were militarized by tampons to fit the standards of masculine workers. Yet, their feminine idiosyncrasies are never completely lost as soldiers. Femininity is emphasized to justify the gendered labor of women war worker soldiers while noting that women are unfit for war unless they adapt their bodies and behaviors. The focus on

women's bodies suggests a change in the conceptualization of tampons as a necessity for winning the war.

For example, a 1943 magazine advertisement states, "Women at War! Pay Attention to Tampax." Then, under the heading and in smaller font, "internal sanitary protection makes work easier on 'those days.'" In the main text, the advertisement speaks to the changing roles of women from private to public work settings while characterizing the war workers as soldiers:

When your entire daily life is speeded up by war conditions, you will find Tampax great help on such days...Think what this means to plant workers traveling in buses and to housewives on their feet early and late, giving their best to the war effort. ("Women at War! Pay Attention to Tampax")

Women's transition to economic relevancy during the war crafted new expectations for women and campaigns and advertisements reflected the importance of women at work (Vostral, 2008). However, the advertisement promotes that women were "at war" whether they were at home or in the factory, and thus in need of Tampax. As demonstrated by the advertisement's title, a significant portion of Tampax's advertisements published in popular magazines and newspapers clearly addressed women as "at war," emphasizing that tampons were an essential part of women aiding in war. The ads, across the board, highlighted an importance to inform women about such new advancements to their reproductive health. This form of propaganda both positioned tampons as a new technology to assist in wartime aid and constituted what tampon users should aspire to be.

Military jargon was often incorporated into Tampax advertisements as they constituted working women as part of the war. Cockburn and Ormrod (1993), as noted by Balsamo (2010), claim technologies' "prevailing notions of gender become reinforced and reinscribed" as the design of and consumer interest in the technology evolves (p. 46). As tampon advertisements crafted women as soldiers through language, women were called to the workforce to fulfill their

role in the war. The images and texts in these advertisements demonstrated what the ideal war worker soldier should look like: feminine and, at the same time, ready to perform masculine labor. These images of women shaped ideas of minimized womanhood and constrained femininity to depict a particular type of patriot. The war workers in the advertisements were gendered soldier (with gendered patriotism) to fight alongside, but she was not a soldier who participates directly in combat.

A 1944 advertisement published in *Pennsylvania Medical Journal* shows a woman sitting on a chair in front of a coatrack with a woman's outer coat. She is wearing slacks, work shoes, a collared shirt; however, her hair is still in polished waves and she is wearing lipstick. A pair of goggles dangle from her hand and a toolbox sits by her feet. She is slumped over resting her chin on her hand as she looks down at the ground in despair. The title of this advertisement, "Absent With Out Logic," is largely scripted at the top of the advertisement with bolded, enlarged letters for the first letter in each word. In fact, "AWOL" is emphasized over the title of the advertisement. The heightened attention to AWOL references a military acronym when a soldier goes missing unintentionally, originally "absent without leave." The advertisement insinuates, with both the title and the emphasis of the term AWOL, that women leaving their work to attend to menstruation is preventable and unnecessary. Thus, further attention is given to the compliance and practice of tampon use at work (Vostral, 2008, p. 98). Posters decorating factory walls "warned that one day's absence might cause a soldier's demise" (Vostral, 2008, p. 104). A woman leaving one's post is a danger to employers and, at large, the American workforce. Women absent from work are, according to the ad, AWOL from their patriotic duty as a soldier who has gone missing from the battalion. To prevent absent bodies on the job, tampons militarize women's bodies as women become in sync with the timeliness and conditions of the

workplace both on and off their period. As Dowler (2012) suggests, militarization is the “appreciation of military ideals” (p. 491). Timeliness, as a military ideal, then, is a way in which military resolutions become part of everyday life.

As women’s bodies were depicted more often in working spaces, conversations about war militarized women’s bodies (in both the factory and at home) as part of the move to make women part of the war effort. The efficiency and active presence of women’s bodies at work reminded Americans that women’s jobs “were not only about a wage, but also about victory in war” (Vostral, 2008, p. 104). This idea of efficiency was key to constituting the soldier in tampon advertisements. A 1942 advertisement published in *American Weekly* entitled, “Girls in Slacks at War Plants Hail Tampax,” reads:

War workers in slacks have their own special problems in sanitary protection. Slacks can be very revealing if worn over any bulges or wrinkles... No wonder the slacks brigade is enthusiastic about Tampax. (“Girls in Slacks at War Plants Hail Tampax”)

The term “brigade,” similar to the acronym AWOL, characterizes women who wear slacks in their line of work as equivalent to a subdivision of the military. Using a military term and applying it to a tampon advertisement temporarily militarize women in their position within the workforce. Tampax equates women’s labor to being part of the war, but within a gendered context. Women are constituted as fighters in formation, intact with the battalion, and comfortably in uniform. If women are aiding in the war, then technologies that enable women to successfully move into the workforce and wear slacks comfortably are an essential technology for Americans at war. Additionally, this creates an interesting tension between tampons assisting women and assisting the military. Johnson’s (2010) work describes the tension of technologies being beneficial for women but operating in a sociotechnical system that is overwhelmingly patriarchal. This tension is apparent as the tampon becomes an apparatus to adapt women’s

bodies to their uniform rather than modifying the uniform itself. In doing so, I argue that Tampax tampons present analogies of women as more capable and soldier-like, configuring gendered soldier subjects as tampon advertisements are distributed and women move to the workplace. The depiction of women soldiers with contained bodies in Tampax advertisements were non-threatening due to the content, which constantly feminized and gendered the soldier in a way that is seen as incompatible with combat (e.g. curled hair, lipstick).

In addition to the war lingo used in the Tampax advertisements, the advertisements depict a militarization of the body by describing tampons as women laborers should perform—compact, efficiently, and with durability—through a rigid definition of femininity and labor. At the same time, the descriptions of tampons also emulate expectations for feminine characteristics, as the women in the ads—war workers or not—remain feminine by donning lipstick and perfectly curled hair. According to Dowler, “Militarization is the process that gives rise to a societal belief-system that violence and war are appropriate ways to resolve conflict. Most importantly, feminists who investigate militarization argue that this approach to conflict, is not only viewed as the norm, but is a hyper- masculine evolution that also impacts issues of class, race and sexuality” (Dowler, 2012, p. 492).

The military relationship configures the women war workers as soldiers in a specific way through a specific context, as argued above. However, what is particularly unique is how these women posited as soldiers is read as having the same features as the tampon technology (a passing technology of the military) itself. Thus, working class women engaged in wartime duties normalizes language which both feminizes their laboring bodies and normalizes the rigid, masculine, efficiency expected of them in the factory as language mirrors the expectations of tampons as an operative worker onto women’s bodies on the line. Ultimately, the advertisements

reflect that women who use tampons can “keep active during ‘those days’” with a “quick and dainty” tampon on the assembly line (“Do you belong?”). The tampon by itself is not quick and dainty; the user must also subscribe to these characteristics. The tampon, like soldiers are “compressed” or compact and others are “not aware of its [or her] presence” (“It takes a woman to understand...;” “It really takes a Woman who can use her own Imagination”).

While the tampon causes “no bulges or wrinkles,” as stated in the majority of the ads, good women in the workforce cause no bumps in the assembly line. Their labor runs as smoothly as the slacks they wear, regardless of what time of the month it is. Yet, the “freedom” mentioned in much of tampon advertisements is a type of militarization of the body, which constitutes tampon users during World War II as a type of soldier, that is “celebrated in terms of being able to wear” any kind of clothing while covering that a woman may be on her period. However, the idea that women can wear pants to work without any sign of menstruation technology can “also be understood as a mobilizing force to justify military action elsewhere and to reassure Western women of their own freedom” (Dowler, 2012, p. 494).

### **Discussion**

The tampon as a technology has granted many advantages to women to fight against sexism built into social, political, and economic structures. At the same time, tampons are still a technology to “fix” women and hide menstruation, perhaps the most natural function of a cisgender woman. Tampax tampons, invented by a male doctor, serve as a technology to improve male spaces—the workforce, public spaces—and have women fit into ideal, masculinized citizenship. This work analyzing vintage advertisements is especially important in an understanding of the role of technology in disciplining and containing women’s reproductive bodies on behalf of the state. What technofeminist scholarship offers an examination of tampons

in a militaristic setting is a sense of how militarizing menstruation become a process of creating productive laborers for the state instead of a technological advancement for women. However, there is a complex tension between the benefits tampons offer and the way in which they modify women's bodies for militaristic gain.

The general reading of tampons as a technology is that these technologies enable women to occupy public spaces and gain a new sense of freedom, while maintaining the privacy of their own body and its functions. This work justified a new understanding of tampons through an examination of Tampax advertisements and the rigidness of tampon advertisements over a span of more than 70 years.

This is not to say that tampons are necessarily an oppressive technology either, for technologies are defined by socio-economic contexts. On one hand, these products, a form of invention or technology associated with the human body, make it possible for women to carry on with their daily lives without any visual indication that they are bleeding. History reminds us that menstruating women were separated and isolated from society as they were seen as ill and unclean (Young, 2005). On the other hand, these technologies constitute subjects who embody the concealment of natural cis-gender bodily functions, which I argue makes these products part of a monthly cycle of controlling women's behaviors.

In Johnson's (2010) work she argues that there is not a possibility of a feminist technology or artifact; "artifacts can be feminist only as part of sociotechnical systems that constitute feminist social relations" (p. 51). Thus, rethinking the ways that the daily functions of women's bodies and related bodily technologies are narrated, sold, and commercialized is important to change dominant narratives around women's health discourse and menstruation. The ability for tampons to be a tool to reclaim public spaces, like the workplace, relies on the

social relations of women in public. This shift in ideology also reinstates agency of women's bodies back to women instead to structures militarizing bodies. There is still much work to be done in terms of research addressing menstruation and period rhetoric. However, an analysis of Tampax advertisements makes for a worthy addition to this emerging scholarship. As we reconsider the tampon as not only a technology of passing, but also a technology of war and part of a discourse that constituted tampon wearers as soldiers, it is important to question the fabric of women's menstrual rhetoric and how the consequences of surveilling women's bodies are absorbed into militarized women's lived experiences.



## CHAPTER III

### “GIVING THE BREAST FOR BABY AND COUNTRY”: MILITARIZING LACTATION FOR SOLDIER MOTHERS

In 1980, the United States military was comprised of approximately 8% women on active duty and 6.8% in the reserves (Enloe, 1983). The percentage of women in the military doubled by 2016, with the military comprised of about 16% women. Part of this increase is due to policy change, including the 2016 policy that allowed all combat positions in the U.S. military to be open to women (Reynolds & Shendruk, 2018). About half of all military personnel (including women soldiers) are parents (Wadsworth, Bailey, & Coppola, 2016). Though she represents a small percentage of the military at large, the mother soldier still makes up a significant portion of the women in the military. Yet, there is something unique in depictions of mother soldiers, making them different from the constructed woman soldier image. Specifically, mother soldiers are more closely linked to their perceived innate nurturing and protective characteristics when it comes to children. Reflecting on imagery of women posed with military guns and infants, Enloe (1983) suggests,

Nurturing children is part of any revolution, particularly one that extends over many years. But interweaving the images of women as combatant and mother so tightly suggests that as soon as the immediate threat recedes, as soon as the ‘war is over,’ [women] will put down the rifle and keep the baby. (p. 166)

As Enloe highlights, the expectations for mother soldiers build on securing the future for the next generation, as a way to nurture the children of their home country. Mother soldiers proudly serve their country by performing the service of child rearing (Bayard de Volo, 1998, p. 263).

One recent example of the uniqueness of representations of mother soldiers pivots around the issue of breastfeeding. In 2012, Brynja Sigurdardottir's photograph of two U.S. Airforce women breastfeeding in military uniforms went viral as part of the Mom2Mom Support Group's campaign during World Breastfeeding Week. The image and public discourse also caught the eye of scholars critically examining the visual representations and popular press coverage of women's ability to breastfeed while serving in the military (McFarlane, 2015; Midberry, 2017). Similarly, in 2015, photographer Tara Ruby's collection of photographs of breastfeeding mothers in military uniforms went viral, fulfilling Ruby's desire to bring awareness to how military structures create barriers for women wanting to breastfeed while on active duty. As Jennifer Midberry (2017) notes, the photographs were used in a number of news articles about the tensions of breastfeeding mothers and military life while constructing images of "good" motherhood. Many of Ruby's photographs were featured in news articles associated with policy changes after the army modified its policies to provide designated breastfeeding stations for soldiers to breastfeed (Grinberg, 2015). Unlike the 2012 images, the 2015 pictures were accompanied by information about and advocacy for policy change, bringing attention to the organization Breastfeeding in Combat Boots (Midberry, 2017).

Breastfeeding in Combat Boots (BFinCB), according to the website, is "a non-profit whose mission is to advocate, inform and support all personnel serving in the military (active, reserve or guard) and other non-traditional jobs (police, firefighting, construction) who wish to breastfeed while serving their country" ("Breastfeeding in Combat Boots"). Robyn Roche-Paull, a U.S. Navy Veteran and lactation consultant, authored both the website and book focused on women soldiers considering the option of breastfeeding while on active duty or looking for a resource to navigate the structural barriers to breastfeeding while in the military.

Overall, the BFinCB website and book speaks to its larger declaration: --"Giving the Breast for Baby and Country" -- and is positioned as soldier mothers' primary source for practical information about breastfeeding.

In this chapter, I examine the BFinCB book and website to interrogate the process of militarization in active duty women's breastfeeding choices. I consider not only how women's bodies are militarized while they are "on duty," but also the ways in which military values and lifestyles shape soldier mothers' everyday reproductive and parenting choices. In other words, even though the women I discuss in this chapter are soldiers, militarization seeps into their domestic responsibilities, in ways that are perhaps not typical of other jobs and vocations. Their duties as soldiers get articulated through and conflated with their private choices surrounding their reproductive bodies and motherhood. Specifically, I argue that BFinCB articulates breastfeeding as a service not only for baby but for the country by collapsing the boundary between women soldiers' public and private lives. As a result, servicewomen's private/domestic role as mothers are pulled into their public role as soldiers and rhetoric of militarization works to dictate personal choices regarding women's reproductive bodies. This process is exemplified in the BFinCB book and website as the text suggests through military metaphors that (1) breastfeeding is a battle, (2) women's bodies are akin to machinery that operates on a time schedule, and (3) the family unit functions like a military unit. In this chapter, I first provide an overview of military breastfeeding policies. Second, I contextualize militarization as it relates to the reproductive choices for women in the military. Next, I parse out the way in which acts of motherhood move from private spaces in the public, which often reinforces motherhood as the primary role for women while upholding the same structural obstacles. Finally, I investigate

“breast is best” rhetoric to understand the underlying assumptions made in the BFinCB texts about breastfeeding as the best option for mothers and their infants.

### **Military Breastfeeding Policies**

The key texts for this chapter, the BFinCB book and website, are in part a response to the inconsistent approaches to breastfeeding across the military. The differences in breastfeeding policies across the five branches of the military are most apparent in the descriptions of designated spaces supervisors must provide servicewomen who wish to breastfeed. All five branches have policies that note the space must be “private” or “secluded” (Roche-Paull, 2016). However, the five branches’ policies regarding a designated space to breastfeed do not always specify that the location must be clean or the standards determining cleanliness. Only the Air Force and Marine Corps note that a bathroom or bathroom stall is not an acceptable space to provide breastfeeding women. Additionally, the Marine Corps and Navy are the only branches that require the location to be both private and have a water source (Roche-Paull, 2016).

Similarly, policies on time and breastfeeding differ across branches. The Army, Marine Corps, and Navy provide two to three 20-minute breaks to breastfeed during an 8-hour workday. The Airforce allows 15-30 minutes every three to four hours. The Coast Guard simply notes that supervisors may approve additional time for nursing mothers to express milk, “however, many agencies already provide compensated breaks” (“Leave and Work Flexibilities for Nursing Mothers,” 2011). Regarding deferment from deployment after the birth of a child, the Army, Marine Corps, and Navy provide a 6-month deferment, while the Air Force and Navy allow a year deferment from deployment. Again, the Coast Guard provides a minimalist policy suggesting that the deployment can be handled on a case-to-case basis (Roche-Paull, 2016).

As the data indicates, military policies concerning breastfeeding and parenting are inconsistent and often left open to interpretation. Roche-Paull describes military policies on breastfeeding as merely “legal justification for making a request to breastfeed or express your milk while at work” (2016, p. 109). The flexibility in these policies, as well as the guidance provided by BFinCB, suggest that the extent of the accommodations to breastfeeding soldiers is ultimately at the discretion of military supervisors. This is to say that military supervisors may be generous and give ample flexibility to breastfeeding mother soldiers or provide the bare minimum accommodations according to the policies of that branch. As the BFinCB book notes, “operational commitments will ALWAYS have precedence over your right to breastfeed or pump: the mission always comes first” (Roche-Paull, 2016, p. 109). Both BFinCB and military policies put the military’s goals as the first priority, often rendering breastfeeding as an unfeasible option due to military life restrictions. Nonetheless, BFinCB still suggests breastfeeding as an option for servicewomen and is presented as a source to overcome any structural barriers.

### **The Military, Servicewomen, and Reproductive Choices**

Despite women’s individual needs or desires for reproductive healthcare, women soldiers’ bodies are militarized in medical treatment to be battle-ready. A battle-ready soldier is prepared to look and perform in uniformity with her fellow servicepeople. This process is similar to how tampons helped the conditional soldier be “battle ready” in the workforce, as I discuss in the previous chapter. A look at the military’s policies controlling women’s reproductive healthcare demonstrates that the military’s goal of bodily uniformity for women can have consequences that are often counterproductive to the military’s goal to have soldiers prepared for combat.

The best examples of the consequences of military interference in women's reproductive choices focus on birth control. Although women in the military have easy access to birth control with little to no financial or health insurance hurdles (women in the military at large can receive birth control pills at no cost), women in the military face a particular set of challenges regarding knowledge of contraceptives. The challenges include ineffective training on contraception options, dosage, or side effects; discrepancies between contraception knowledge and use; a focus on STIs for male contraceptive training while highlighting pregnancy for female contraceptive training; and gender norms regarding sex and promiscuity (Duke & Ames, 2008). These challenges are exemplified in Navy policy, where protocols "penalize sailors for advocating for themselves in most other domains of military life (e.g., refusing to follow orders), making it unlikely that many would follow up with their health care provider if a form of contraceptive were inappropriate" (Duke & Ames, 2008, p. 250). Considering the typical reprimanding for questioning authority figures with any sort of order, Duke and Ames (2008) suggest that militarized discipline makes women in the military less likely to push back on recommendations or instructions by medical authority figures, limiting the choices available.

Servicewomen's restricted access to knowledge about birth control options is only exacerbated when women are preparing to be deployed overseas. Despite the fact that both the military and servicewomen are concerned about periods during deployment, there is a lack of communication between military officials and servicewomen regarding menstrual suppression through birth control methods. Scholars studying servicewomen's access to reproductive health argue that women soldiers want methods to alter their menstruation cycle during deployment, but are unaware of the suppressant methods available, including oral contraceptives and vaginal rings (Carroll, 2019; Christopher & Miller, 2007; Foster, 2019). Servicewomen are also unclear

about the potential side effects of such treatment ("Menstrual Suppression Could Help Deployed Women Avoid Discomfort, Inconvenience," 2011; Pitotti, 2016; Trego, 2007). Moreover, some military procedures create barriers for servicewomen wanting to suppress menstruation. As Caitlin Foster (2019) reports, up to 26% of women in the military cannot access birth control while deployed. Many of the women who were denied access reported that their military doctors denied or discouraged them from using birth control overseas. These orders stem from General Order 1 protocols that limit particular soldier behaviors, including having sex and drinking alcohol, to maintain "good order and discipline" (*General Order No. 1*, 2009). Foster (2019) suggests that these policies intended to prevent sex are antiquated and hurt women's health.

The repercussions for the lack of available resources around women's birth control options create an interesting dilemma, as many studies show women in the military have a large number of unintended pregnancies (Holt, Grindlay, Taskier, & Grossman, 2011; Ponder & Nothnagle, 2010). In fact, women in the military have higher rates of unintended pregnancy than the civilian population (Heitmann et al., 2016). More critical studies provide an in-depth analysis on the military's "natalist," pro-life policies that affect women's access to healthcare, reproductive choices, and family planning (Lopoo & Raissian, 2012) or the experiences of and tribulations accessing abortion for women in the military (Grindlay et al., 2017). Unintended pregnancy is, however, only one consequence of what Megan. D. McFarlane (2018) calls women soldiers' "constrained choices," caused by the military's inflexibility in accommodating women's reproductive bodies into the military structure. Rather than creating flexible structures for women in the workplace, women's bodies and reproductive lives are militarized to accommodate military structures.

The denial of birth control can also create stronger periods with more intense cramping and heavier flows. Women also take birth control to balance hormones and clear acne, all medical conditions the military is generally ignoring in their ban on birth control during deployment (Foster, 2019). The military's authority to police women's reproductive bodies is justified by moving women's reproductive abilities (menstruation, pregnancy) from the private, domestic sector to a realm that is public and politically charged in the name of national security. The military militarizes women's bodies in a way that is personal, corporeal, and outside of a servicewoman's responsibility to her country. Nevertheless, by portraying women's bodies as unorderly through natural bodily functions, military authorities have control over women's knowledge about, access to, and decisions about their own reproductive health.

### **Blurring Private and Public Boundaries**

Feminist scholars challenge the work of masculine-centered political theorists to ask questions about women's roles in public/private spaces and develop new understandings of how public and private realms are often divided and blurred. Feminist scholars' ideas of citizenship include women and their labor or participation with special consideration of the political and social oppression of women's autonomy, arguing that historically the public/private divide places women's domestic labor as subordinate to the activities of the male public sphere (Pateman, 1988; Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974; Spelman, 1988). Carole Pateman's (1988) *The Sexual Contract* highlights how public/private divides for women are legitimized by separating men's (public) labor from women's (domestic) labor. Specifically, Pateman's example of marriage contracts is telling of the sexual contract's influence to understanding historical public/private divides, as she notes, "under the common law of coverture, a wife, like a slave, was civilly dead" (1988, p. 119). She argues that from the start of marriages, women – like slaves – are typically



asked to renounce their birth surname and assume the surname of the husband by using the title “Mrs.” Following Pateman’s work, feminist scholars note that women, through their ability to reproduce, are often deemed the primary caretakers in a family setting. Moreover, “women everywhere lack generally recognized and culturally valued authority” that is offered to men in the public sphere (Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974, p. 23). Women, through the contract of marriage and motherhood, take on the roles that servants for the upper class used to provide; they clean, shop, cook, look after the children, care for aging relatives, and often act as assistants to men’s labor. Pateman writes that “a wife, for example, contributes research assistance (to male academics), acts as a hostess (to a business man’s clients), answers the phone and keeps the books” (Pateman, 1988, p. 128). In short, the sexual contract keeps women in private spaces by relying on assumptions about women and their perceived sexed differences. These differences depict women as incapable, incompetent, and irrational in roles usually held by men in the public sphere and suggest that women are best suited for private labor through sexual contracts that legitimize their subordinate position to men. However, the public/private divide is not always as simple. There are ways in which private acts can successfully move into public spaces. The reconfiguration of public/private divides is best demonstrated through ideas surrounding the role of motherhood.

Motherhood, although a domestic role often pushed into the private, can be a role that women use to become more public citizens—the consequences of which can be helpful or detrimental to women’s liberation. Valeria Fabj (1993) explores the liberating potential of this shift when she suggests that through the act of motherhood, women can find a political voice to speak about private experiences in a way that men cannot. In other words, women can use their gender as ethos to advocate for women’s and children’s issues, or issues within the private

spaces women occupy. Because most mothers encounter barriers that men without domestic responsibilities do not experience, these women often gain a political voice by asserting the collective knowledge of motherhood into the public realm (Campbell, 1989). As Sara Hayden (2003) explains, “living in societies in which their identities remain tied to their maternity, motherist politics offer women around the world an organizing base on which to justify public activism” (p. 197). However, as Linda Kerber (1976) argues, public displays of motherhood can also preserve traditional gender roles (of women in private, domestic work). Republican motherhood, a term coined by Kerber, suggests that as women use motherhood to carve out a new political role for themselves, the political role they create is notably gendered and rooted in essentialist arguments about women. Republican motherhood, then, becomes a means of creating political action for mothers on behalf of mothers and children (future political citizens). Republican motherhood is not seen as a threat to a masculine public sphere, as in its use of motherhood as political ethos, republican motherhood reifies that some aspects of motherhood should be women’s first priority. Put another way, even though motherhood can move into the public realm, women continue to be expected to perform domestic/private labor.

The act of breastfeeding highlights the tensions around motherhood entering the public realm and demonstrates the way in which motherhood is politicized, not radicalized. In other words, motherhood is brought to the public but ideas about and policies which affect motherhood often remain unchanged, leaving the same gendered structural barriers. For example, despite overwhelming support for women breastfeeding their infants, it is unsurprising that women who want to breastfeed at work encounter a number of challenges as they balance motherhood (traditionally reserved for private spaces) and their public role as laborer. At the crux of these challenges is the double bind that working mothers face: women who do not breastfeed are

considered deviant mothers while, at the same time, breastfeeding diminishes women's identities as good workers (Lee, 2018). As Robyn Lee (2018) suggests, "in the workplace mothers are subject to competing pressures to avoid transgressing normative ideals of embodiment" (p. 78). The public/private tensions around breastfeeding are further complicated through lactation rooms.

Although lactation rooms or areas might seem like progressive steps in favor of new mothers joining public spaces, these spaces ultimately reinforce the idea that acts of motherhood belong behind closed doors. Lactation rooms, then, are another example of how motherhood becomes public, but the act of breastfeeding should still be private. As Lindsey M. Rose (2012) argues, breastfeeding is "a private exercise positioning women as other, excluding them from the public sphere, and reinforcing the perpetuation of binary discourses of private/feminine and public/ masculine" (p. 52). This is not to say that lactation spaces are inherently working against women's liberation. Rather, discussions about when and where women breastfeed or pump highlight the tensions of the public/private aspects of motherhood while shaping gender politics in the workplace. These gender politics for lactation rooms are shaped by breast is best rhetoric.

### **Breast is Best**

"Breast is best" rhetoric is the assumption that a mother's choice to breastfeed is the most beneficial choice for her infant. Despite the many obstacles—physical, social, or otherwise—modern mothers might face regarding breastfeeding, mothers are still expected to provide as much breast milk for their babies as possible and to do so as often as they can. In other words, breast is best rhetoric expects women to breastfeed their newborns regardless of the cost to the mother's wellbeing (Nadesan & Sotirin, 1998). When mothers are unable to breastfeed, they are conditioned to feel shame about the inefficiencies of their bodies or choices and their inability to

provide what seems to be the healthiest, most nutritious food source for their child/ren. This shame is still internalized for barriers beyond their control, including insufficient milk, babies' failure to thrive, inability to breastfeed, or mothers' physical or mental illness (Wolf, 2010, p. 105).

Joan Wolf (2010) suggests that arguments for the efficacy of breastfeeding are particularly enticing because its status as the gold standard in newborn care are supported by medical and government authorities. At the same time, medical and government institutions perpetuate false, misleading, and exaggerated claims that breastmilk is superior to formula. Wolf (2010) questions the medical concurrence with these recommendations saying, "the science behind the consensus is deeply problematic...Indeed, a great deal of evidence suggests that the difference between breastfeeding and bottle feeding has little impact on the overwhelming majority of infants in the developed world" (p. xii). Primarily, lies about breastfeeding uphold unequal "distributions of power, and the significance of breastfeeding in America has its roots in long-held assumptions about femininity and masculinity" (Wolf, 2010, p. xiv). In short, unverified claims about breastfeeding became dominant discourses through medical authority and have strong implications for how we understand gender, maternal bodies, and "good" mothering.

Gendered connotations of breastfeeding, specifically breastfeeding in public, can be understood by more closely examining notions of the nipple (Bock, Pain, & Jhang, 2017). Although breastfeeding—through breast is best rhetoric—is usually presented as good mothering, women's "nipples were [historically] almost always [depicted as] problematic, either sick literally or perverted" (Bock et al., 2017, p. 12). Because breastfeeding requires the nipple,

visibility of – or even potential exposure to – the nipple creates an anxiety around the public act of breastfeeding. As Bartlett (2002) notes,

Lactating breasts when they are taken outside the home are capable of disrupting the borders of morality, discretion, taste and politics; in short, breasts are capable of transforming legislation, citizenship, and cities themselves. Lactating breasts are particularly scandalous. (p. 111)

The taboo of women’s nipples that Bock et al. and Bartlett highlight brings forth the tension between breast is best rhetoric and the spaces and conditions under which women should or can breastfeed.

In the section that follows, I explain what metaphoric criticism offers my analysis of BFinCB and provide a brief overview of how metaphors of the body have functioned as a rhetorical tool over time. Then, my analysis proceeds in three parts. First, I examine how breastfeeding is compared to battles in a larger war. Second, I point to the ways in which women’s bodies are depicted as milk-producing machinery, performing best on a rigid timetable. Third, I note how BFinCB addresses men as part of the breastfeeding team, using masculine metaphors to offer men a role in women’s choice to breastfeed as the family unit is equated to a military unit working together.

### **Military Metaphors for the Service of Motherhood**

In its broadest sense, metaphors are rhetorical devices that speak to one thing using the terms of another. I. A. Richards (1936) defines a metaphor as “a verbal matter, a shifting and displacement of words, whereas fundamentally it is a borrowing between and intercourse of thought, a transaction of contexts” (p. 94). Kenneth Burke (1945) explains the metaphor as “a device for seeing something in terms of something else. It brings out the thisness of a that, or that thatness of a this” (p. 503). This is to say that metaphors are devices that reach their rhetorical potential through amplification (Ivie, 1999). Metaphors are one of four “master rhetorical tropes”

identified by Burke in his book *A Grammar of Motives*. These master tropes—metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony—play a central role in the representations of reality and, although these tropes are commonly used in literary works and analyses of literary works, they are also indispensable in understanding language (Burke, 1945).

However, rhetoricians argue that metaphors are more than stylistic devices (Anderson & Sheeler, 2005; Burke, 1945; Fahnestock, 2011; Ivie, 1999; Jasinski, 2001; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors speak to the political climate through enthymemes. By interrogating the unstated premise in metaphors, rhetoricians reveal larger, collective values which are telling about a particular audience during that time (Anderson & Sheeler, 2005). Overall, metaphoric criticism examines metaphors' effectiveness and capacity for changing the arguments of the rhetor. Then, a rhetorical critic's job is to not only bring forth these observations, but also to assess how metaphors fit into particular worldviews (Foss, 1996). Karrin Anderson and Kristina Horn Sheeler's (2005) work suggests that metaphors shape language and persuasion and, thus, metaphor critics should critically assess how metaphors "function in a particular body of discourse" in order to give "insight into how that discourse affects people" (p. 3). Similarly, Robert L. Ivie and Oscar Giner (2017) note that metaphors, indeed, affect people but also a group of people – or an audience – "come into existence" because of a metaphor (p. 202). As metaphors often describe groups of people through analogy, metaphors simultaneously group these people together. Moreover, metaphors that group people divulge a great deal about power dynamics as the "affective force of metaphorical naming might be framed in terms of nationality, clan, class, colour and so forth" (Ivie & Giner, 2017, p. 202). For example, Karrin Anderson's larger body of work examines metaphors used to describe women in leadership positions and

these metaphors demonstrate the rhetorical power through the material consequences women in running for political office face.

Metaphoric criticism is useful to gender scholars because metaphors about women reveal how women are perceived by audiences in different contexts. Anderson and Sheeler's work, as an example of how metaphoric criticism intersects with gender studies, is particularly telling for what metaphors can tell us about media depictions of women. In their work, metaphors like "the pioneer" and "the bitch" highlight how women in leadership roles are understood in popular media and how "metaphors act as constraints *and* rhetorical resources for political leaders" (Anderson & Sheeler, 2005, p. 189). They find that metaphors often reflect long-standing archetypes that point to stereotypes of women which categorize their personas as unfit for political roles, especially the U.S. presidency. Anderson argues that metaphors are powerful rhetorical tools that "construct women candidates in ways that reveal the persistence of cultural stereotypes about women political leaders" and "can both reveal and reinforce stereotypes, especially those that may not be explicitly stated in other communication forms." (Anderson, 2011, p. 333). Likewise, these metaphors not only tell us about how the media constructs women candidates, but also how gender and gendered expectations are perpetuated. Metaphors of the body are another telling example of how gender is constructed, often through a conflation of gender and sex, as these metaphors use cis bodies to be representative of all women and men. Metaphors in descriptions of women's bodies highlight social and political constructions of women through a medical framework (Wohlmann, 2017).

Historically, metaphoric language has been a useful rhetorical strategy for medical authorities to explain medical and scientific bodily functions in layman's terms. Emily Martin (2001) provides a rich history of metaphors of the bodies used in medical settings.

During the centuries when male and female bodies were seen as composed of analogous structures, a connected set of metaphors was used to convey how the parts of male and female bodies functioned. These metaphors were dominant in classical medicine. (p. 30)

Not only were medical metaphors prevalent tools to relay understandings of medical knowledge, the popular metaphors were also rhetorical tools that reflected the social and political climate at the time. For example, many metaphors in the 18<sup>th</sup> century reflect the human body for both men and women in a primitive nature environment. As human bodies face disease or illness, metaphors of the body often focus on the constant state of jeopardy or potentially under attack by vicious creatures as fears of plagues, smallpox, and yellow fever were of grave concern (Laqueur, 1986; Rosenberg, 1979). However, other medical authorities during the 18<sup>th</sup> century used metaphors which highlighted the differences in men and women's bodies. Many of these metaphors were rooted in the assertion that "men and women's social roles themselves were grounded in nature" and these social roles highlighted the ways in which their bodies functioned (Martin, 2001, p. 32). As men's social presences in the public sphere was strong and dominant, metaphors depicted men's bodies in the same light. In turn, women were associated with metaphors that understood women's bodies as weak and constantly ridding itself of impurities (Martin, 2001).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, due to waves of financial disparity, men and women's bodies were narrated through economic metaphors –validating men's position as breadwinners. Influential 19<sup>th</sup> century writer Rev. John Todd significantly impacted the dissemination of these metaphors. Emily Martin (2001) best explains the impact of Rev. John Todd's understanding of women's bodies:

Rev. John Todd saw women as voracious spenders in the marketplace, as so consumers of all a man could earn. If unchecked, a woman would ruin a man, by her own extravagant spending, by her demands on him to spend or, in another realm, by her



excessive demands on him for sex. Losing too much sperm meant losing that which sperm was believed to manufacture: a man's lifeblood. (p. 34)

Metaphors, like the one used by Todd, relied on the assumptions that framed women's bodies as predatory, demanding the use of men's bodies and money. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, following metaphors of the body as a financial hub, spending, saving, and balancing accounts, the developing of modern medicine correlates with metaphors of the body as hygienic appliances in an industrial society. Metaphors which understand the body as part of the industrial world remain popular into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and are often appropriated to make arguments for women's reproductive bodies (Martin, 2001; Wohlmann, 2017). Using the industrial nature of the military, with the constant manufacturing and transportation of supplies and soldiers, metaphors of the body as part of an organized system are prevalent in the BFinCB texts.

In what follows, I examine BFinCB's instructions to women on how to navigate breastfeeding in the masculine arena of the military. I argue that language of militarism through metaphors of the body appearing within the private, civilian act of breastfeeding is part of the process of militarizing the woman soldier's body. BFinCB deploys military metaphors about breastfeeding and women's embodied responsibilities to their newborns. Through these metaphors, BFinCB argues that it is women soldiers' motherly duty to also serve the nation by moving private domestic act of breastfeeding into public realms. The military metaphors I examine suggest that breastfeeding is a battle, women's bodies are akin to machinery that operates on a time schedule, and the family unit functions like a military unit.

### **Breastfeeding as a Battle in the War**

One dominant metaphor in BFinCB places the challenge of breastfeeding for soldier mothers as a war made up of numerous battles and the struggle to breastfeed is situated as parallel to the fight that servicewomen face in combat. Following this metaphor, BFinCB

acknowledges that a soldier cannot just jump into combat. Soldiers require disciplined training and are given weaponry before battle. Therefore, the BFinCB book offers a 46-page section dedicated to breastfeeding guidance and techniques called “Basic Training: The Basics of Breastfeeding.” The chapters in this section compare learning about how to “properly” breastfeed your child to boot camp, noting you only have a brief amount of time to prepare yourself before the child comes and it is important to acquire all the proper techniques for the battle of breastfeeding in public areas of the workplace. Additionally, BFinCB states that “breastfeeding is OJT (on-the-job training) in the truest sense of the word” (Roche-Paull, 2016, p. 53) and women truly learn the most in their practicing of breastfeeding. The OJT military acronym associates breastfeeding as a duty or labor performed by mother soldiers as it adds to the metaphor of basic training where you learn as you do. Additionally, to prepare for breastfeeding there is a list of “supplies” in the basic training section, which presents a survival kit to breastfeeding on the job (e.g. nursing bra, nursing pads, sling).

Although the high demands of the military might suggest that bottle-feeding is the favorable option due to these battles in the war of breastfeeding at work, the metaphoric language of BFinCB is successful because it is deployed through “breast is best” rhetoric. As Joan Wolf (2010) notes, breast is best rhetoric is routine in the world of breastfeeding advocacy and that hyperbolic language around the benefits of breastfeeding—including the metaphors of battle—is a rhetorical strategy to make strong appeals in favor of the act. This is clear as BFinCB argues, “breast milk is the gold standard,” a hyperbolic claim about the benefits of breastfeeding.

The challenge coin is another example of how military language about combat is deployed in discussions around breastfeeding while more explicitly channeling breast is best language. Challenge coins are privately produced coins adopted by military units as a

motivational tool to recognize special achievements with the purpose of enhancing troop morale. Soldiers consider challenge coins similar to – or of greater significance than – military ribbons and medals (Reynolds, 2004). Over time, the number of coins in circulation have increased as challenge coins are re-appropriated and made for not only military achievements, but also for corporate sponsorship and organizational awards. With the high production of challenge coins, it is a concern that military-based coins will lose their value and worth to soldiers (Reynolds, 2004). BFinCB’s creation of a challenge coin for the issue of breastfeeding positions is in line with other military achievements. The coin’s description details some of the challenges that make a mother worthy of the challenge coin:

Are you a breastfeeding mother serving in the military? Have you successfully battled the many unique challenges that come with ‘giving the breast for baby and country’? Have you pumped in a HUMVEE or at the range? Pumped while overseas and shipped your milk home? If you can answer yes to any of these (and more) then you deserve a Breastfeeding in Combat Boots Challenge Coin. ("Breastfeeding in Combat Boots")

The coin, available for purchase on the BFinCB website, is intended to celebrate women for their accomplishment of breastfeeding despite the many challenges listed that might discourage women from the practice. With the history of the challenge coin, the BFinCB coin can be understood as both holding significant worth for the battle to breastfeed and as an arbitrary award for a task mothers have the ability to perform. However, it is interesting to examine how the coin itself also brings up prominent military language to advocate for breastfeeding.

The front of the coin shows two mothers: an officer and an enlisted mother soldier. Acronyms for the 5 military branches are listed and the coin reads “giving the breast for baby and country.” The coin highlights how BFinCB frames breastfeeding as a service equivalent to military duties. Breastfeeding is a service that constitutes their positions as both mothers and patriotic soldiers. On the back of the coin is a pair of combat boots with the slogan “Protect,

Promote and Support.” Each of the three verbs in the slogan remain constant with BFinCB’s conflation of maternal and military responsibilities and the coin’s presentation of mothers who “protect, promote, and support” positions women not as subversive to the military’s goals, but as uniquely qualified to achieve them.

First, “protect,” implies guarding the health and wellbeing of children but also women as protector of their nation, linking back to Fixmer-Oraiz’s (2015) concept of “homeland maternity.” Women’s reproductive bodies are “imagined to threaten national security” and, thus, are rearticulated in a way that benefit military goals (Fixmer-Oraiz, 2015, p. 130). The protection of children is, then, a shared goal of mothers and the military regime alike. Second, the term “promote” highlights that BFinCB and mothers are clearly advocating for breastfeeding, but as women breastfeed, they are also promoting military culture. Although the policies and hyper-masculine spaces of the military are, arguably, inherently oppressive for women, the website and book are careful not to critique the same system that creates constraints for breastfeeding mothers. Instead, BFinCB works *within* the system to change policy and, at the same time, maintain order in the strict regime of military culture. This is ironic, considering the text is asking women to advocate for their choice to breastfeed as they are supposed to uphold the military structures that make it difficult to breastfeed while on duty in the first place. Finally, the website validates the coin by suggesting its “support” for breastfeeding mother soldiers. The website states:

But why a Challenge Coin for breastfeeding in the military you ask? Because breastfeeding while serving in the armed forces is tough with multiple challenges to overcome, and breastfeeding rates have been shown to increase when mothers feel supported. A Challenge Coin signifies accomplishment and provides a tangible piece of support for a job well done. ("Breastfeeding in Combat Boots")

Similar to the coin's term "promote," the coin shows "support" both for women's military service and their right to breastfeed. Importantly, in recognizing through the form of a challenge coin the need to enhance morale around the issue of breastfeeding, BFinCB has to highlight that breastfeeding is, in fact, not an easy accomplishment. The website thus acknowledges challenges, but implies that all barriers brought on by a career in the military can be knocked down. This rhetoric emphasizes the mother-soldier's strong desire to breastfeed because it is presented as the morally superior choice for her and the child. Indeed, the mother soldier is uniquely positioned to breastfeed because she is battle-ready, and the battle itself is justified through the use of breast is best rhetoric.

The framing of maternity through a larger discourse of militarism points to how BFinCB situates motherhood not as accommodated by the military, but as potentially integrated into already existing structures. Although the public acceptance of new mothers integrates breastfeeding into the workday of soldier mothers, the military still places challenges for women soldiers. These challenges upheld by the military structure are positioning breastfeeding as a worthy battle—a fight that must be won—to make the breastfeeding mother an intelligible part of the military. She is a mother soldier who is recognized with a challenge coin for a special achievement. The move to understand breastfeeding through the metaphor of war is complemented by BFinCB's metaphor of women's bodies as machinery.

### **Machinery, Factories, and Clocks**

Roche-Paull (2016) states, "your breasts are marvelous milk-making factories housed in flesh" (p. 63). In a later section of the book, she expands her metaphor of breasts as factories and uses the example of a pen factory to explain the concept of supply and demand in relation to milk production.

The more milk you or your baby remove from your breasts, the more milk your breasts make. This is why it is called supply and demand. Think of it this way. Your breasts work like a factory making pens. If the factory makes a lot of pens (milk), but the consumer (your baby) doesn't buy them, the pens back up and soon the factory owner (your brain) tells the factory to stop making pens. However, if the factory makes the pens and the consumer keeps buying them, the factory will make even more pens to meet the demand. (Roche-Paull, 2016, p. 66)

Explaining milk production with the economic term “supply and demand” is not unique to BFinCB. In fact, for many new mothers, the more milk expelled from the body the more milk breasts will produce, making “supply and demand” an appropriate concept for association. The comparison of women’s bodies to machines, factories, or technology is also not unique and, as stated earlier, commonly found in healthcare settings and was particularly important in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Wohlmann, 2017). This metaphor of machinery also assists in the move from private to public, as the breasts are understood in terms integral to American success, removing the mystery of the functions of the woman’s body. However, BFinCB takes this economic analogy and understanding of the body as machinery one step further.

As women’s breasts are compared to milk producing machines, BFinCB suggests a new mother’s breasts be put on a regulated schedule with the goal of producing enough natural milk for the baby to avoid formula feeding. The “Military Pumping Scenarios” chart, in the appendix of the BFinCB book, is one example of the expectation for women’s bodies to be on a schedule. In the chart, there are rows that rates seven scenarios from best to worst. The chart’s three columns mirror the books recommended pumping schedule. “You should pump at least three times in an eight-hour shift, that’s one lunch break and two other breaks (midmorning and mid-afternoon)” (Roche-Paull, 2016, p. 193). The best scenario, which is listed first, is to successfully breastfeed three times in a single shift with the baby at the base’s child development center (CDC). Although it is noted in parenthesis that this is an unlikely, it is still listed as the

recommended option. In turn, the lowest ranked scenario (marked as a likely scenario) is neither breastfeeding nor pumping at all during the shift. Still, the assumption is made that the mother will breastfeed later at home with the child. The five scenarios in between consist of different combinations of breastfeeding at the CDC, pumping for 10-20 minutes, quickly pumping to relieve breast engorgement, and missing an opportunity to pump within the three timeslot columns during a single shift (morning, lunch, and afternoon).

Overall, the chart suggests that taking time during work and finding opportunities to take breaks to go to the CDC and personally breastfeed the child is the best possibility, while pumping is also seen as acceptable. As women's bodily functions are scheduled, the bodies are publicized, turning the private act of lactation into a public act of motherhood in the workplace. In this proposed scheduling of breastfeeding or pumping, BFinCB argues that the ideal situation is to have precise timing for not only the body's ability to produce breastmilk, but also in the hectic schedule of a military soldier—conflating breastfeeding women's bodily schedule and work schedule. At the same time, BFinCB recognizes that “the military is a 24/7 job in and of itself, and many of the specialties within the military do not lend themselves well to pumping breaks,” women are still expected to make time to breastfeed or pump. BFinCB notes that breastfeeding/pumping is the most important role as a mother soldier, even if it means skipping lunch, not breaking, or waiting to use the restroom (Roche-Paull, 2016, p. 193). Similar to having women laborers manipulate their body to be more efficient on the assembly line by using tampons, women must adjust their bodies to avoid disrupting the masculine routine of the workplace. To do this, a woman's body becomes synchronized in relation to the schedule of the military's workday.

Yet, mother soldiers are not just on a military schedule during their day shift, their civilian, maternal clock also transitions to military time. The BFinCB website states, “the milk-making hormone, prolactin, is highest between 0100 and 0500 hours, so having your baby breastfeed during the night helps to increase and maintain your milk supply as well as filling his little belly.” Similarly, the book notes, “Having the name and number of a good friend or co-worker [and breastfeeding consultants] to call when things are rough at 0300 can be a lifeline” (Roche-Paull, 2016, p. 55). Milk-production at home is now understood through the rubric of military time as the boundary of a mother’s private space further denigrates, blurring the distinctions between her duties as a mother and a soldier as breastfeeding is militarized.

Machines are predictable when they function appropriately and are properly maintained. Of course, the body compared to machinery fits with the military ideals of uniformity, timeliness, and the banality of repeating the same tasks. However, as argued by Wendi Hadd (1991) and Emily Martin (2001) speaking about bodies as machines denies human qualities to people and treats “human beings as though they are but interchangeable parts” (Hadd, 1991, p. 168). In particular, describing women’s bodies as factories and machinery separates women (and their agency) from their bodies. For the machinery like bodies of mother soldiers, breastfeeding is a task that stretches beyond their responsibilities as a mother. It speaks to their expectations as a soldier indoctrinating their children into military culture. The personal connection of mother and child becomes part of the military routine, making the mother soldier just another cog in the machine.

### **The Family Unit as a Military Unit**

“It takes a whole family to undertake the mission of breastfeeding. I couldn’t have done it without the support of my husband” (p. 257).



While the majority of the book is dedicated to the mother, a small section is dedicated to encouraging fathers to be supportive and adopt their roles as coaches in traditional, heteronormative family structures. Roche-Paull addresses the fathers by noting, “you are a powerful team member, and your team will have a much better chance to succeed if you are actively involved” (2016, p. 259). While the mother’s responsibilities are expanded across chapters, the men’s responsibilities and area of expertise can be reduced to approximately six pages and “three simple steps:” learning when the baby eats, how the baby eats, and when the baby is done eating (Roche-Paull, 2016, p. 260). At the same time, men are not solely responsible for supporting their breastfeeding partner. The book and website suggest that it is the mother’s duty to make men feel included (and to get their husband energized enough to read this part of the book) in order for men to assist women in the task of breastfeeding.

Sometimes partners of breastfeeding mothers feel left out. However, there are many ways they can be supportive...Partners who support the breastfeeding mother can feel proud knowing they have contributed to the health and well-being of both mother and child. (Roche-Paull, 2016, p. 39)

As the men addressed by BFinCB are coddled into supporting their partner, masculine analogies about the family unit as a military unit and sport teams are also provided to further simplify the “three easy steps” for fathers to understand infants and their partner’s bodies.

In her note to fathers, Roche-Paul explicitly makes the connection of a family’s similarities to the military.

The breastfeeding family is a lot like a cohesive military unit. No unit can succeed if the members are not all working together toward a common goal. And, likewise, breastfeeding families must all work together toward their common goal of breastfeeding. Each member of your unit has a specialized task that only they can do. (2016, pp. 258-259)

The structure of the “Dads and Breastfeeding” section is telling regarding the role of each member of the family unit. The roles are assigned accordingly: the mother breastfeeds, the baby

eats, and the father serves “as a coach or guide to help make sure everything goes well” (Roche-Paul, 2016, pp. 258-259). The mother is allotted one paragraph describing her role to the father: the mother’s job is to put the baby “in the kitchen” (skin-to-skin contact at her breast). The baby is also given one paragraph; the baby has a “demanding job,” but he is well prepared. The baby must learn to feed himself by identifying the breast, wrapping “his cute little hands around it,” open his mouth, and suck (Roche-Paull, 2016, p. 259). The baby, throughout this book and website, is always gendered as a boy, easily imagined as a future member of the military. Finally, BFinCB reassures men they are needed by insisting fathers have “the hardest job in the family” and must help get the baby to the breast at the right time and in the right position (Roche-Paull, 2016, p. 259).

By using the family unit as a team, the father is placed at equal worth as the mother and baby in the role of breastfeeding. As BFinCB emphasizes that “parenting is a contact sport,” it is noted that each member must get involved (Roche-Paull, 2016, p. 258). It is not enough for the father to be encouraging; each team member has a physical role to play. This indication of the physicality of the father’s role in breastfeeding goes back to military training, where no soldier is left behind; everyone is included or it is a failed mission. The larger analogy of the family as a military unit acts as a rhetorical tool to further publicize motherhood as an act for the nation. The physical role of the father’s coaching role and his masculine position in his heteronormative family assists in the move from motherhood from private to public. The father’s public role in breastfeeding is further exemplified by the SPORTS acronym used to explain a proper latch on the breast for the infant.

After explaining the correct latch for baby in more technical terms, the book asks, “But how do I do that? One may ask. Don’t worry, they taught you how to solve the problem when

you were in basic training” (Roche-Paull, 2016, p. 262). Assuming the father is in the military himself, the book continues to compare fixing the latch of a breastfeeding baby to a double-feed in a rifle and a father helping his wife breastfeed is engaging in actions that are familiar to any soldier.

Corrective action for the breastfeeding baby is the same as corrective action for the M-16 (or M-4). When a baby has a bad latch, it is almost always a double feed. You have two rounds in the chamber at the same time (in this case, breast and lower lip). Just like any other double feed, you’ll have to pull **SPORTS** (slap, pull, observe, release, tap, and shoot). If you remember your basic rifle marksmanship, you will know what to do without even asking.

**S** – Slap – Put your hand on the baby’s back and push him toward the breast.

**P** – Pull – Reach one finger between the chin and the breast and pull down on the baby’s chin to elicit a rooting reflex.

**O** – Observe – Does the jaw open, do the cheeks fill and round out, do the lips flare, and does the pain go away?

**R** – Release – let go of the chin and let the baby suckle and test the new latch.

**T** – Tap/Try again – Repeat the first four steps two or three times to see if you can correct the bad latch.

**S** – Shoot – Darn it! We have to take him off the breast and try again.

If you can’t fix the latch with the basics of **SPORTS** you are going to need remedial action. You’re going to have to drop the magazine (take the baby off the breast), clear the chamber (calm the child then elicit a rooting reflex off the breast to encourage a VERY wide open mouth), and reload (put him back to the breast).

This set of instructions introduced by the **SPORTS** acronym enforces hetero-masculinity at the same time that it places the role of the father in the realm of militaristic values. The M16 reference in the **SPORTS** acronym, again, emphasizes the fight and battle of breastfeeding in a military setting. This time using the masculine machinery of the M16 to emphasize there is a common enemy that a family/military unit must protect the child against: formula (feeding). Although the fight for mothers to breastfeed was apparent in metaphors of battle and war, for

fathers and men this fight is articulated through means of violence. The baby is the weapon to prepare and reload to properly feed on the breast and ward off the prospects of formula. The father, in addition to the mother, have the domestic space of parenthood aligned with the goals of the military.

The three sets of metaphors adopted by BFinCB—breastfeeding as a battle, the body as machinery, and the family unit as military unit with hypermasculine metaphors of fatherhood—demonstrate that through the rhetorical processes of militarization, the act of breastfeeding makes the mother soldiers, and their husbands, publicly ready to defend the nation. Breastfeeding is understood as the ultimate challenge a mother soldier must overcome by regulating her body in a way that turns mothers' bodies into a public timetable and positioning the act of breastfeeding as an act of patriotism and service for country.

### **Discussion**

In my examination of BFinCB, I have argued that BFinCB's book and website moves the act of breastfeeding, typically a private act for mothers, to a public service for the nation with mother soldiers producing a new generation of patriots. BFinCB depicts mother soldiers as an ideal type of gendered citizen who, as Spring-Serenity Duvall (2015) argues, "are responsible for shaping the minds of future citizens, [and] representing national identity in maternal bodies" (p. 328). BFinCB's use of militarism is persuasive, especially considering the audience: militarized soldier mothers. More than its persuasiveness, the militaristic language adopted by BFinCB is culturally useful and reveals the power of, what William James (1910) refers to as, "militaristic sentiment." BFinCB captures James's sense of militarism as productive in creating "hardy" soldiers, like the breastfeeding soldier mothers. This type of soldier is a character that is important, both historically and politically, to the idea of American patriotism. What James

grapples with is how to hold on to the “splendid military aptitudes of men,” that is so important to American identity and patriotism, without engaging in war (1910).

James’ (1910) militaristic sentiment in BFinCB texts, nonetheless, have consequences for soldier mothers as they navigate their choices around breastfeeding. Private acts of motherhood turn public through the process of militarization and women’s choices about their reproductive bodies are publicized in a way that surveils mundane acts of motherhood. Indeed, BFinCB is a rich resource for mother soldiers interested in breastfeeding their infant. The texts offer insightful guides to military policies, procedures, and explanations of the ins and outs of breastfeeding, demonstrating the unique challenges for breastfeeding a military setting. At the same time, in the militaristic metaphors (as part of militaristic sentiment) used to compare breastfeeding to a battle or war, women’s bodies to machinery, and family units to military units, BFinCB ultimately reinforces that domestic responsibilities should be women’s first priority. The breast is best rhetoric articulated by BFinCB naturalizes mothering as what women are “best” at and connects maternal qualities back to the functions of the female body. Mothering is thus integrated in the services, but in a way that privileges women’s biological differences from men. Biological difference is accepted and integrated into military culture, but also this difference is necessary because women’s differences—their lactating breasts—are part of what make them ready for the battle of breastfeeding. BFinCB, then, only articulates a woman who is a mother and breastfeeds. Put simply, the mother soldier is constructed in a way that portrays all servicewomen serving best when they fulfill their potential as mothers and, as seen in the family unit as a military unit metaphor, within the construct of the heterosexual nuclear family. Which leaves the question, what are the implications for women in the armed services who choose not to breastfeed and are not mothers?

This chapter adds to feminist understandings of moving motherhood in the public in relation to women's reproductive bodies, particularly in the case of breastfeeding. The move from private to public is highlighted by the materiality of lactation rooms in public places, breastfeeding coverups designed for women to hide breastfeeding, and the tensions between the lack of access to breastfeeding in public and shaming women for breastfeeding in public. However, by examining the public/private of breastfeeding in relation to militarization, I reveal the way in which motherhood is accommodated by and integrated into the public (and, thus, the military) but not creating meaningful, structural changes into already existing masculine spaces. Specifically, the integration of motherhood into the military, as articulated by BFinCB, is problematic. This is especially important considering the purpose of this text is to provide women to advocate for themselves in the workplace. At the same time the BFinCB book and website provides instructions to women for how to maneuver within the military, it asks women to uphold a structure that oppresses them by hindering their ability to fully make their own choices about motherhood. Despite the policy changes that allow women to breastfeed or pump in private spaces, the military did not change policies that make it easier for women to be mothers. Instead, women soldiers must alter their behavior to fit the rigid expectations and the acceptable type of performances of motherhood in the military, upholding the military's masculinist ideologies. Furthermore, the specific performance of motherhood in the military relies on the construction of the mother soldier as protector of national security and is strongly linked to breastfeeding. In what I argue to be an explicit iteration of the militarization of breastfeeding, the soldier mother's enactment of a tight bond between breastfeeding and service to the nation in BFinCB enables the policing of women's--mother's--choices outside of the military. In BFinCB, a militaristic breast is best rhetoric surveils the reproductive body of female

soldiers and suggests a specific form of infant feeding for all mothers. Still, BFinCB implies that every battle with breastfeeding can be won against the enemy of formula feeding and that breastfeeding is not only the superior choice, but also the choice of a good citizen, adding to the high expectations we have for mothers, both inside and outside of the military. Moreover, speaking of women's bodies through militarized metaphors denies women humanistic qualities. Dehumanizing metaphors, which places military goals and inanimate objects at the forefront, separate women from their agency over their own bodies. Therefore, for women, there is a larger war that is not over the choice to breastfeed, but about the ongoing fight over reproductive justice. Militarized language should not distract from the real war, which is not in line with military values; it is the fight to reclaim women's choices about their reproductive bodies from militarized structures and language to women themselves. In other words, the real danger of militarization is that – in structures both in and outside of the military – it is women who have to change their bodies and behaviors associated with motherhood instead of the public making spaces inclusive for women and mothers.

## CHAPTER IV

### “UNDER HIS EYE”: CHRISTIAN MILITARISM AND FOUCAULDIAN POWER IN HULU’S *THE HANDMAID’S TALE*

Margaret Atwood’s 1985 book *The Handmaid’s Tale* is a progressive dystopian novel that describes the rescinding and dismissal of women’s (reproductive) rights in American politics. More than 30 years after the book’s release, the television streaming platform Hulu released a television series of the same name, based on Atwood’s novel. The series follows the handmaid June (renamed Offred), one of many sexual servants assigned to male military leaders in The Republic of Gilead (henceforth referred to as Gilead). In Gilead—a right-winged, Christian, totalitarian, military state responsible for the overthrow of the United States government—some women are used as reproductive vessels to repopulate the state. June—a white, college-educated woman—demonstrates that even the most privileged of women are not safe when women’s rights are stripped in the name of fertility and repopulation. The Hulu version furthers Atwood’s original arguments about the patriarchal policing of women’s reproductive bodies, and in particular, the modern interpretation of *The Handmaid’s Tale* depicts the militarization of pregnancy enabled by the containment of fertile women in a time when fertilization and birth of healthy infants are rare.

In my analysis of Hulu’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, I use a Foucauldian framework to understand power in Gilead. Gilead is a representation of a type of Christian militarism, using Christian values as justification for sovereign and disciplinary power upholding Gileadean rites, rituals, and laws. Christian militarism is rooted in Christian traditionalism, which upholds scripture as an authoritative and inerrant source (Barker, Hurwitz, & Nelson, 2008; Marsden,



1991). More specifically, Christian militarism is first and foremost reliant on biblical inerrancy to promote militarism and “righteous warfare as an ideal” (Barker et al., 2008, p. 308). To uphold Christian militarism, Gilead is depicted as relying on disciplining and confinement of women’s bodies by justification through the Hebrew Bible. For example, the handmaid’s role in Gileadean society is rooted in the story of Rachel and Jacob. In this story, two sisters, Rachel and Leah, marry Jacob. Leah gives birth to seven children without any problem. Rachel, however, Jacob’s true love, cannot get pregnant. Rachel asks Jacob to impregnate their handmaid, Bilhah, so Rachel can have children “through” her. As Genesis 30:1-3 states, “behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.” Bilhah gives birth to two sons, and Rachel names and raises them both. Handmaids bear children for their patriarch and are expected to do so willingly, through service and dedication to country and God.

As the previous two case studies demonstrate, the process of militarization brings women’s bodies into alignment with the military, containing the threat of women’s menstruating and lactating bodies. Menstruating bodies are transformed into the productive bodies of soldiers through the use of tampons. Breastfeeding bodies are deployed on behalf of the nation; breastfeeding itself is transformed into a patriotic act. In this chapter, I turn to Hulu’s production of *The Handmaid’s Tale*, arguing that the show’s representation of militarization highlights how biopower functions within two forms of power—what Foucault describes as sovereign and disciplinary power—and how power operates as part of the larger process to subjugate handmaids in the dystopian representation of a Christian military state. As represented in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, women’s pregnant bodies are brought into alignment with the militaristic state through a process of Christian militarization and the enactment of both sovereign and

disciplinary power. The show's depiction of Gilead upholding Christian militarism gives insight to how the process of militarization can deploy "Christian values" as a disciplining and state tool to glorify concepts of war, violence, surveillance, and police individuals. In what follows, I provide an overview of Foucault's ideas of power. I address sovereign power, disciplinary power, and how biopower fits within the two. I also grapple with how contemporary feminist scholars use a Foucauldian framework to discuss pregnancy and women's reproductive bodies.

### **Foucauldian Power**

Power is central to Michel Foucault's body of work. Foucault's work highlights various power mechanisms or forms of domination which people are subject to. He also sought to shed light on how the role of institutions utilize control to maintain social order and continue to oppress marginalized groups (Alim, 2019). For Foucault, power is not something that can be possessed, but is relational. Additionally, power is varied, in flux, and operates in a way that reproduces itself. Above all, power is persuasive (Roldan, 2012). By focusing on sovereign authority, disciplinary mechanisms and biopolitics in an analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale*, this chapter grapples with the complexity of multiple form of power in a depiction of a Christian military state and its implications for relevant social commentary as a fictional dystopian text. The focus of this chapter, then, looks at how handmaids are represented as the most oppressed women in Gilead's hierarchy and how their subjectivities function as justification for utilizing power to protect the state. As Eray Alim (2019) states, Foucault's forms of power are not mutually exclusive, but still "have different functionalities and Foucault's aim was to demonstrate how power was exercised as an instrument to repress and regulate human subjects and but also reproduce certain forms of subjectivities" (p. 17). In what follows, I will provide an

overview of sovereign power (also referred to as juridical power), his work on confinement as a disciplinary power, and note how biopower aligns within the two forms of power.

### **Sovereign Power**

For Foucault, sovereign power is when political and state leaders possess the undisputable right to use hard power over their subjects. Sovereign power is used by a central authority figure and often involve the preservation laws which keep said leader in power (Foucault, 1978a). This is perhaps best exemplified in Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Hobbes' *The Leviathan*. In these texts, it is evident that in situations which contested the sovereign's authority, the sovereign used direct disciplinary measures against the offenders. Thus, sovereign power is dependent on hierarchical structure and is used to reinforce a hierarchy that protects the sovereign in their position at the top (Alim, 2019). For instance, through a ruler's direct power over their subject, a ruler could implicitly and explicitly threaten their subjects' lives to maintain control. As Foucault explains:

If he were threatened by external enemies who sought to overthrow him or contest his rights, he could then legitimately wage war, and require his subjects to take part in the defense of the state; without "directly proposing their death," he was empowered to "expose their life": in this sense, he wielded an "indirect" power over them of life and death. (1978a, p. 135)

In this description, Foucault uses the notion of war as an example of how a subject's life might be indirectly threatened. However, as Foucault notes, if a subject were to challenge a leader's authority the leader might directly take a subject's life. For instance, a leader may directly take a subject's life by sentencing the culprit to death.

Sovereign power as connected to war and leadership is connected to ideas of the state. However, Foucault suggests that the state organizes and utilizes power at many intensities. Foucault notes that "the State is a practice not a thing" to emphasize that the state is not

necessarily the principal source of power and control (1978b, p. 282). Sovereign power is often used in examples of older forms of brutal domination set forth through historic monarchies and dictatorships. Foucault's work on sovereign power both provided a historical explanation of sovereignty from the European Middle Ages and a critique of political theories of sovereignty. He often focused on sovereign power within the context of "madness" and clinical reason in political leadership, economic systems, and within institutions at large (Singer & Weir, 2006). Foucault spent considerable time in his lectures and books contrasting sovereign power with the modern disciplinary power. Although sovereign power is often considered an archaic form of power, it still remains in tension with disciplinary power.

### **Disciplinary Power: Surveillance and Confinement**

Foucault suggests that over time hierarchical power structures utilizing sovereign power adopt more subtle mechanisms of power and domination (Foucault, 1980). Disciplinary mechanisms are put into place to create disciplinary power in institutions that uphold the state rather than using violent force at the state level. Foucault explains disciplinary power as "the training of behaviour" (1977, p. 129). Disciplinary power worked to support the state by better organizing institutions such as asylums, hospitals, schools, and prisons. These institutions constituted disciplined subjects, working on behalf of the state, through a number of corrective and punitive practices. Two disciplinary mechanisms theorized by Foucault are surveillance and confinement.

Foucault's (1977) work *Discipline and Punish*, best encapsulates his ideas on surveillance as a disciplinary mechanism. He examines the penal system's transition from physical torture to the creation of the western prison practices. Surveillance is the idea that the state is always watching but, knowing the state is omnipresent, citizens will discipline

themselves by watching and regulating their own behavior. Foucault's (1977) analysis of the panopticon, notes that prisoner will discipline themselves for fear of corporeal punishment by the state; prisoners discipline themselves so the state does not need to. Foucault suggests that although public corporal punishment is often replaced by imprisonment, the body is still at the center of disciplinary practices. As Foucault (1977) states,

Systems of punishment are to be situated in a certain political economy of the body: even if they do not make use of violent or bloody punishment, even when they use "lenient" methods involving confinement or correction, it is always the body that is at issue— The body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission...this political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection ( in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body. (pp. 25-26)

For Foucault, the manipulation of body is always important to forms of punishment and to lead the oppressed into submission to the state in both sovereign and disciplinary power. It does not, however, mean that all corporeal, sovereign punishment is removed. It is when more subtle forms of disciplinary actions fail that sovereign power comes into play.

In Foucault's (1965) work *Madness and Civilization*, he theorizes confinement as a specific form of disciplining for those who are deemed social deviants (e.g. mentally ill, morally corrupt, homeless, unemployed or suffering from a disease) in eighteenth century Europe. Confinement was an easily accepted disciplinary mechanism because the confined were depicted as morally flawed; thus, away from society seemed to be a fitting place for them. Many of the houses of confinement were seen as a correctional institution, granting moral penance, especially for the sin of sloth. Using Christian arguments, practices of confinement healed "the sin of idleness is the supreme pride of man once he has fallen" (Foucault, 1965, p. 56). Confinement

was then depicted as a way to control and reinvigorate labor structures. Many houses of confinement were practicing forced labor on the confined. The obligation of work would grant an ethical exercise or moral guarantee and “morality permitted itself to be administered like trade or economy” (Foucault, 1965, p. 61). Thus, confinement was not about addressing medical concerns of the mentally or physical ill; it was a way to condemn and provide penance for idleness. This type of disciplinary power is upheld not by the individual as a way to self-discipline, but at the institutional level. Institutions work on behalf of the state to regulate individuals by disciplining their bodies into productive members of society, working in a way that aligns with the state’s goals.

### **Biopower**

The controlling of bodies occurs through biopower. As Alim (2019) explains, “biopower is a different force than sovereign and disciplinary powers in that through its reproductive potential, it aims to ‘make life live’” (p. 18). Biopower, as describe by Foucault (1978a) is the “numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations” (p. 140). Dianna Taylor (2011) explains there are two levels to biopower, one acting as a regulatory power and the other as a disciplinary power. Biopower as a regulatory power targets population, species, and races. Its aim is to regulate populations and controls aspects such as birthrates and longevity. Here, biopower is a technology of the state which manages births, deaths, and reproduction of a population. Biopower as a disciplinary power focuses on individual bodies and aims to subjugated those bodies through institutions (e.g. schools, armies, prisons, hospitals) by education and training. As a disciplinary power, similar to other Foucauldian arguments, biopower is about more implicit forms of control and no longer within violent measures. As Foucault writes:

“Deduction” has tended to be no longer the major form of power but merely one element among others, working to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces under it: a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them. (1978a, p. 136)

Foucault’s ideas of biopolitics and biopower contribute to ideas of how modern forms of governance work to subjugate people. The result of biopolitics and biopower of either form is a population of docile bodies. For Foucault, docile bodies are separated from subjectivity and human autonomy: bodies “that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, 1977, p. 136). Although biopower is typically seen as the other end of the spectrum from sovereign power, biopower is multifaceted and works in relation to both sovereign and disciplinary power. In my analysis of *The Handmaid’s Tale*, I suggest that biopower operates both through the state and instructional, disciplinary level. In what follows, I will outline how contemporary scholars have theorized about Foucauldian power and women’s reproductive bodies with an emphasis on pregnancy.

### **Foucauldian Power and Pregnant Bodies**

Biopower and other Foucauldian frameworks are useful tools for feminist scholars to examine domination over women’s wombs. In conversation with Foucault, Nikolas Rose’s (2007) work uses the term “ethopolitical” as a type of governance that regulates the health of a population, specifically regulating the earliest stages of pregnancy down to the fetus and molecule level. This is to say that pregnant women are subjected to biopolitics (the policies that subjugated bodies and control populations) through their womb. Similarly, Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz (2019) looking at homeland security as the disciplining governance makes the connection that “parenting and pregnant individuals are particularly subject to interpellation within this

biopolitical terrain” (p. 18). A key example of how biopolitics affect pregnant women is the hyper-medicalization of pregnancies.

Feminist surveillance studies scholars theorize about the relationship between surveillance and women’s bodies, and the hyper-medicalization of pregnancies, in the name of public safety. Rachel R. Hall (2007), compares the demand in transparency for public security and safety during traveling to ways in which surveillance is used to create transparency of the womb for protection of the fetus. Hall explains the phenomenon of increased airport security and implementation of clear plastic bags with toiletries. The transparency of these products brought a visibility to products used to discipline and clean body. These items became on display in the name of national security. Hall (2007) explains that displaying private items that discipline the body, creates a “binary opposition between interiority and exteriority” (p. 321). Hall’s work on interiority/exteriority is particularly useful in understanding the desire to surveil pregnant bodies. Publicizing the fetus, through sonograms and medicalized pregnancy practices, is a way to fetishize the fetus and separate the growth of the womb from the personhood of the mother.

Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard V. Ericson’s (2000) term “surveillant assemblage” also conceptualizes surveillance and the public fetus. They explain the term by noting, “a great deal of surveillance is directed toward the human body. The observed body is...broken down by being abstracted from its territorial setting. It is then reassembled in different settings through a series of data flows” (Haggerty & Ericson, 2000, p. 611). Sayantani DasGupta and Shamita Das Dasgupta (2015) also provide a useful explanation stating, “[Surveillant assemblage is] how fluid systems of technologies and practices work together to analyze and break down bodies into their component parts, gathering and organizing this information” (p. 153). In regard to pregnancy, women’s bodies are separated from the womb as information about the fetus is gathered. What is



important to emphasize about surveillant assemblage is the public distribution of information about pregnant women to monitor pregnant women (Lupton, 2012). Although it is the case for pregnant women that their bodies are no longer their own with the public nature of their inhabited womb, this lack of bodily autonomy by the confinement of pregnant bodies, especially when the pregnancy is posited as at risk.

Wombs as risk are often confined through bed rest. Women, through the recommendation or instruction of their doctor are confined to beds in order to not disrupt the growth process of the fetus. As Alcalde (2011) explains, “Bed rest epitomizes the expectation that women be attuned to the needs of others and of self-sacrifice: women spend varying amounts of time on bed rest for the benefit of the fetus, in spite of the negative side effects on the woman” (p. 212). This type of confinement brings a sense of shame and to pregnant women and, according to Alcalde’s qualitative study, women on bedrest feel as if they or their body has failed. Women self-blame missing the mark in comparison to the ideal pregnancy. As bed rest asks or demands women give up control over their bodies. At the same time, women who are (even in the slightest bit) resistant to bed rest orders are “identified as medically and morally non-compliant, and as unfit mothers” (Alcalde, 2011, p. 212).

The hyper-surveillance of pregnancy can look different across contexts. For transnational surrogates in India, for example, women can contractually be placed on forced bed rest from the start of their pregnant. Medical authorities constantly observe the health of the fetus and ultrasounds and even the look or shape of baby bumps determine if the surrogates get punished or not by authority figures surveilling the surrogates (DasGupta & Das Dasgupta, 2016). The confinement of surrogate bodies demonstrates that the health of the fetus overshadows the autonomy and health of pregnant women. In regards to transnational surrogates in India, there is

a capitalistic investment in the health of the fetus. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, however, the health of the fetus is depicted as an investment for the state and military. Confinement, in Gilead, is represented as a means of militarization.

In the analysis that follows, I first provide a closer look at what the examination of the handmaid role offers in my examination of *The Handmaid's Tale*. The term handmaid and the depiction of these characters' morality offers insight into how Gilead is represented as justifying the subjugation of these women. Second, I examine the military structures in Gilead's representation and how they uphold overlapping forms of power to control Gileadean women. Third, I highlight the tensions of how corporeal discipline and corporeal protection are depicted in Gilead. Finally, I speak to the direct policing of the womb or fetus of handmaids and how depictions of the militarization of handmaids' bodies operates in multiple forms. Overall, the analysis offers an understanding for how multiple layers and variations of power—both sovereign and disciplinary—operate in this depiction of a militarized society. This analysis adds to conversations about biopower and pregnancy because *The Handmaid's Tale* gives us a representation that moves the discussion beyond just disciplinary power, which most contemporary feminist scholars focus on in their work on Foucauldian power and pregnancy. Additionally, the chapter conceptualizes how militarization and power operate together in using pregnancy as a means for state and military control.

### **Handmaids**

In the *Handmaid's Tale*, handmaids are portrayed as victims of slavery, enslaved on the basis of religious and state crimes or performing outside of heteronormative, feminine, and gendered expectations. Their enslavement is justified by depicting women as going against traditional Christian values in conservative interpretations of religious morality. June, for

example, was forced to become a handmaid when Gilead invalidated marriages in which one partner was divorced and committed adultery. In June's case, the show presents a backstory in which her husband, Luke, left his first wife for June (Fortenberry & Barker, 2017). Similarly, *The Handmaid's Tale* depicts Emily and Moira as lesbian women and we can assume that their capture and enslavement are due to their breach in heteronormative performances (Miller & Barker, 2018c; Miller & Morano, 2017b; Miller & Morano, 2017c).

In addition to the handmaid's moral flaws, a closer look at the term "handmaid" can also tell us a great deal about their position within the show. The term handmaid refers to a servant and is someone "that is necessarily subservient or subordinate to another" ("Handmaid," n.d.). *The Handmaid's Tale* positions handmaids as less than within a hierarchy, and there is no exception to the depiction of Gilead in their gendered hierarchal society. Even among the other oppressed women portrayed in *The Handmaid's Tale*, handmaids have almost the least amount of freedom. The only exception is those sent to the colonies, a toxic wasteland caused by pollution. Additionally, the show portrays handmaids at the bottom of the hierarchy due to their immorality as compared to Gileadean's working class married women, econowives. Econowives are married to guardians (police guards) or other working-class men (in non-elite, government roles) that uphold Gilead's militaristic economy. In the episode "Baggage," Heather, a fertile econowife, discloses to Offred that she is constantly threatened with being forced to become a handmaid if she breaks Gileadean laws.

In all, the handmaids are under the most surveillance in their vulnerable (yet protected) position of the last remaining fertile women. In fact, this chapter implies that through the depiction of the show all members of Gilead, regardless of status, have the power to discipline and confine handmaids. While guardians and state officials, of course, discipline the handmaids,

much of the direct disciplining and surveilling of handmaids happen within their confinement to domestic (i.e., the commander's home). As the show depicts the confinement of handmaids to be an important part of disciplining and controlling the reproductive labor of immoral women (handmaids), the other women in Gileadean society (i.e. aunts, marthas, wives) act as foot soldiers who, although still oppressed in the rigid gender hierarchy, surveil and keep the handmaids in confinement as they are also confined in other ways by Christian militaristic principles.

### **Military-Like Institutions in the Depiction of Gilead**

Military-like institutions assist in militarizing surrogacy in Gilead. By creating these structures and processes, military values are dominant in Gileadean culture and military values are no longer implicitly woven into civilian life. Instead, Christian military values used to discipline and confine immoral bodies are overt goals in Gilead. The Red Center serves as a central example to the overt militarizing of the handmaids, reminding the handmaids that their immoral choices and fertile bodies have led them to a new life of confinement and forced labor. In this section, it is important to consider Foucault's question about institutions' relationship with the state: "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?" (p. 1978a, p. 228). An examination of how the Red Center is depicted in *The Handmaid's Tale* is useful to show how, for Foucault, power flows through many types of institutions and these institutions become mechanism utilized by the state.

The Red Center, also referred to as the Rachel and Leah Center, is the place fertile women are processed and trained as handmaids. Although there is no mention of the similarities, visually the show aligns the Red Center with military boot camp. Handmaids are taught how to present themselves with proper posture and stand in neatly filed rows, similar to military stances

and marches. Handmaids have formations in which they arrange themselves, often in tidy lines or circle-like formations, representing the circle of life and fertility. At the Red Center, handmaids sleep in bunks filed in rows within a large room, resembling barracks, as aunts (female state officials in charge of training handmaids) occasionally stop by and pace the rows to make sure all is quiet (like drill sergeants).

In the training at the Red Center, the show highlights how handmaids are indoctrinated with Gilead ideology and oriented with Gilead's new laws. Aunts are represented as strict officers, leading the camps of handmaids and teaching them the Christian belief system of Gilead. Upon Offred's arrival to the Red Center, Aunt Lydia lectures at the front of the room as the girls sit in rowed desks like military recruits. Slides with images of pollution and charts marking the drops in infertility are projected onto the wall in front of them. The handmaids sit facing forward, with their hands clasped and fingers laced upon the desk. They do not stir.

Aunt Lydia: They made such a mess of everything. They filled the air with chemicals and radiation and poison! So, God whipped up a special plague, the plague of infertility...As birthrates fell they made things worse: birth control pills, morning after pills, murdering babies. Just so they could have their orgies, their Tinder. (Miller & Morano, 2017c)

To be fully prepared for their new life, aunts provide a thorough orientation on their new role and how to understand world with a Gileadean mindset. Despite some imagery also resembling a boarding school, emphasis of giving themselves to their country is predominant in the disciplining of the handmaids.

In the context of the Red Center, sovereign power is enacted over the handmaids, treating them more as animals than schoolgirls. Mutilations (e.g. cattle prod burns, removing an eye), a form of violent hazing, disciplines uncooperative handmaids into submission almost immediately. For instance, cattle prods were introduced as a consequence for bad behavior on day one of the Red Center. According to Aunt Lydia, handmaids are given a second chance, a

chance for redemption. Much like the times of public executions, violence in Gilead is represented as “always ready to invert shame inflicted on the victim into pity or glory” for both the prosecuted and the state’s actor who committed the violent act (Foucault, 1978a, p. 9). Violent punishment is a spectacle and, thus, violence serves as a reminder that death is the handmaids’ other option, if not willing to submit to their position.

Much as boot camps serve to train future soldiers, the show constructs The Red Center as a training ground, in this case training handmaids about their most valued ritual. “The ceremony” is an event that happens once a month in which the handmaid is raped by her commander as she lays helplessly on the bed. Wives hold the wrists of handmaids and look into their husbands’ eyes. Although the wife is included in the ritual to connect to her husband and feel part of the impregnation process, the wife acts as an institutional surveilling force to keep the commander/handmaid relationship as only a transaction of sperm. There are also a number of procedures in the ritual that come before the forced sex. As Offred explains, “a bath is required before the ceremony. I am to make myself clean, washed and brushed like a prized pig” (Miller & Morano, 2017c). Another required procedure is a bell the rings calling the household together. The commander reads the passage of Rachel and Jacob from the Bible to the household and after the handmaid, commander, and wife proceed to the bed. Handmaids practice the ceremony in the Red Center to learn the proper positioning of the act. During training, they pair up and take turns performing the roles of the wife (who kneels on the bed) and the handmaid (who lays on her back at the edge of the bed, dress raised, awaiting penetration). In a larger sense, handmaids are trained at the Red Center before they are pushed into the battle zone that is the commander’s home. They are taught the necessary battle positions and the value of sacrificing their individuality and bodily autonomy for the greater good.

In the final stages of the Red Center, handmaids are assigned to a commander's home. Handmaids are deployed to battle grounds in which they are represented as prisoners of war and only their training from the Red Center can keep them alive. Offred explains the consequences of what happens if handmaids do not follow the Red Center's training protocols:

We're prisoners. If we run, they'll try to kill us. Or worse. They beat us. They use cattle prods to try to get us to behave. If we're caught reading, they'll cut off a finger. Second offense, just the whole hand. They gouge out our eyes. They just maim us in worse ways than you can imagine. (Hauser & Sigismondi, 2017)

Offred, who is primarily stationed at the Waterford residence, is imprisoned by the family she serves: Commander Fred Waterford and his wife, Serena Joy. As noted below, Offred's room is represented as a type of jail cell. Offred is always being told to go back to her room, she is never allowed to loiter in the house, she has specific times in which she can be outside her room, and is restricted to a small number of places where she can go. The way in which handmaids are portrayed as imprisoned subjects speaks to Foucault's (1965) ideas of confinement. The disciplining of their bodies is justified by their past immoral behavior, as evaluated by the state's new understanding of Christian values, creating little to no remorse in many depictions of Gilead's elite confining handmaids. Handmaids' idle reproductive bodies are then placed back into positions of labor in which their bodies are exploited for their reproductive abilities for an economy rooted in repopulation and child-rearing. In this process of Christian militarization, handmaids can redeem their sins by re-harnessing their reproductive labor for the state to better the economy, in producing a new generation of Gileadean citizens.

The Red Center and the transition to a commander's home are portrayed as institutions disciplining on the state's behalf. However, the wielding of sovereign power is also at play in these structures. In this depiction of a dystopian state, disciplinary and sovereign power work

together, unlike our contemporary understanding of disciplinary power replacing sovereign power and torture. Foucault's understanding of the design of institutions is particularly helpful.

In organizing "cells," "places," and "ranks," the disciplines create complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical. It is spaces that provide fixed positions and permit circulation; they carve out individual segments and establish operational links; they mark places and indicate values; they guarantee the obedience of individuals, but also a better economy of time and gesture. They are mixed spaces: real because they govern the disposition of buildings, rooms, furniture, but also ideal, because they are projected over this arrangement of characterizations, assessments, hierarchies. (Foucault, 1978a, p. 148)

What is important to note about the Red Center and the Commander's home as representations of disciplinary institutions are the ways in which they operate to uphold the state and form clear hierarchies, with handmaids at the bottom of said hierarchy. At the same time, pairing these disciplinary institutions with sovereign, violent power upholds Gilead's multi-layered authoritarian state. Authoritarian leaders carry out orders for the state and in violent punishments as disciplinary measures use foot soldiers at the institutional-level to control the masses.

### **Handmaids' Discipline and Corporeal Protection in a "Freedom From" Society**

Aunt Lydia: You are special girls. Fertility is a gift directly from God. He left you intact for a Biblical purpose...Oh! You are so lucky! So privileged! (Miller & Morano, 2017c)

Gilead's tensions of both sovereign and disciplinary power are also an important factor in how biopower operates in the protection and punishment of handmaids. As Foucault (1977) has argued, public performances of violence as corporeal punishment, such as public executions, were replaced with incarceration. However, Gilead's creation of a new oppressive regime as a way to repopulate Earth uses socially and politically barbaric traditions rooted in violence, as well as increased surveillance of handmaids. Gilead is depicted as reverting back to hangings and executions on public display as a threat to citizens who resist or rebel against Gilead law. "Guardians"—members of Gilead's militarized Christian police force—are exemplified as



openly carrying automatic weapons through the streets and Aunts use cattle prods to discipline handmaids. Corporal punishments for crimes, particularly the loss of a body part (e.g. eye, limb, finger, hand), are used as reminders of the sovereign power held by the state.

Despite the constant state of fear evoked by the state's use of violent, sovereign power, Aunt Lydia frames the handmaid's role as a blessing, a second chance. Within Gilead, there is a noticeable tension between the protection of handmaids through disciplinary measures and the control over handmaids through the state's sovereign power. Aunt Lydia's explanation of freedom to the handmaids, demonstrates this tension as it justifies Gilead's use of punishment in many forms.

Aunt Lydia: There is more than one kind of freedom. There is freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. That is a gift from God. (Miller & Barker, 2018a)

Aunt Lydia's speech suggests that Gilead did not take away the freedom of handmaids, but has given the handmaids a new type of freedom, using the dueling concepts of freedom to and freedom from. Using disciplinary power, we understand the concept of "freedom to" as choice. In Gilead, the state's constant interfering represents "freedom from," particularly freedom from harm in regards to the environmental crisis in Gilead and the state offers freedom from through a sovereign biopower that saves handmaids from extinction to continue to populate the earth.

Corporal punishment is portrayed as a shaming tactic, revealing to the public what crime or sin one has committed against Christian militarism. For instance, after women are forbidden to read in Gilead, if a woman is caught reading she loses a finger. If she is caught reading a second time she loses the whole hand. Even though there is not explicit reference to forbidding women to read in the bible, all crimes are depicted as sins in the context of Gilead's Christian military state. Even powerful women, like Serena Joy can face this punishment (Miller & Barker, 2018b).

Despite class and status, all members of Gilead are subjected to the threat of what happens when they do not obey the law. As Erving Goffman (1963) notes, the term “stigma” has traditionally been associated with “bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier” (p. 1). These markers of poor morality are often cut or burnt into the body of the offender, “a blemished person, ritually polluted, to be avoided, especially in public places” (Goffman, 1963, p. 1). If, as Goffman notes, people with a stigma are treated as not fully human, that way disciplining their body through brutal means is not an ethical dilemma (Goffman, 1963). Similarly, Foucault notes that torture of the condemned was seen as a purge of the crime. Torture, then, had two important elements: “it must mark the victim” by scars or wounds, branding the perpetrator with the violent punishing act, and it must be “spectacular” in that all are able to either see the violent act or the results of it (1978a, p. 34). In Gilead, violence is depicted as a tool that can be weaponized to specifically control action, language, and even what topics citizens are allowed to talk about. All citizens of Gilead are surveilled and disciplined from through state violence, as the aforementioned examples of sovereign power demonstrate, but handmaids are unique due to the special surveillance focusing on their reproductive potential. The special type of surveillance reserved for handmaids is significant because their bodies are often protected from corporal punishment that might affect their ability to reproduce.

For example, a depiction of Offred being interrogated by the state and Aunt Lydia is telling of this juxtaposition. During the interrogation after proving a cheeky remark to the state officials, Aunt Lydia swings the cattle taser, clubbing Offred’s head. Offred falls to the ground and Aunt Lydia steps over her body and tasers her while on the ground. Serena Joy runs in and throws herself on top of Offred yelling “No! Stop! she’s pregnant!” Almost immediately, Aunt

Lydia backs away and covers her eye and forehead with her hand in regret. (Miller & Morano, 2017b). Offred's body, unlike the other bodies in Gilead, is untouchable in that moment. She is immune to corporeal punishment. However, this new protection granted is not to protect Offred, but to protect the womb, the fetus. The fact that Offred is an extension of her womb is an unintended benefit.

This is to say that handmaids can often receive lesser punishments or given second chances in order to keep their reproductive abilities. Both Janine and Emily's story arcs represent the duality of handmaids receiving corporeal punishment and being protected, even in small ways, from certain punishments to continue providing their reproductive ability. After being arrested and tried for the crime/sin of homosexuality (from Gilead's loose interpretation of the Book of Leviticus in the Hebrew Bible), Emily's clitoris is removed while the martha in the love affair, tried of same the crime, is hanged (Miller & Morano, 2017b). While this punishment is, indeed, cruel and painful, the alternative is death. In a later season, Emily is only banned to the colonies when she murders a guardian in the town's public square. Similarly, Janine, after sassing Aunt Lydia, has her eye removed. As Moira explains, "we're breeding stock. We don't need eyes for that." Moira's comment points to how handmaids are often punished in a way that is still painful, but does not affect their reproductive capabilities. Janine is, after escaping a sentence of stoning to death, later sent to the colonies after putting an infant's life in danger. Janine and Emily are two handmaids seen as incapable of fulfilling their role and are banished to the colonies—typically a death sentence in which citizens are enslaved and subjected to working in toxic waste filled fields. However, the two are reinstated as handmaids when Gilead needs more handmaids. For Emily and Janine, the colonies are not a death sentence but a holding place, a form of intense incarceration, to discipline them into abiding by Gilead's standards of conduct.

The handmaids are too valuable to lose. Thus, their punishment is modified to keep their reproductive potential alive. The ongoing surveillance of handmaids in the depiction of Gileadean society is then a focus point in the show to emphasize the importance of handmaids' reproductive potential.

### **Enacting Surveillance over Handmaids' Bodies**

Gilead citizens, and the foot soldiers within, are always protecting what might be an undetected fetus or a future fetus. The handmaids are portrayed as subjects that always have reproductive potential and could, at any moment, be pregnant. Thus, the idea of minimizing risk is constant in the surveillance of both pre-pregnant and pregnant handmaids. In what follows, I detail how through disciplinary power handmaids' movements are tracked by confining them to particular spaces and how their internal bodies are monitored to reduce and avoid risk to the womb.

### **Locating the Womb**

On a more intimate level, handmaids are represented as surveilled by the wives and marthas of the house to which they are assigned. These women foot soldiers form a more direct form of surveillance and monitor the movement of handmaids within the house. Through Foucault's disciplinary form of biopower, women foot soldiers carry out the state's work through the home of the commander as a form of state institution. Confinement as a form of disciplinary power limits Offred to certain rooms—she is not allowed in the office, the master bedroom (except during the ceremony), or certain rooms that are reserved for the commander and/or his wife. When Offred first arrives at the Waterford house, Serena Joy notes that she is allowed to sit on the couch just this once. As Offred sits, Serena Joy commands, “don't make a habit of it,” implying that the living room, and especially the couch, is not for Offred's use (Miller &

Morano, 2017c). Directly following the introduction of both Mrs. And Mr. Waterford, Serena Joy notes “I want to see as little of you as possible. Do you understand?” (Miller & Morano, 2017c). *The Handmaid’s Tale* implies that Offred spends a significant amount of time in her upstairs bedroom in the Waterford house. Many of Offred’s internal monologues revealing her deep thoughts occur in her bedroom or attached closet and bathroom. In the pilot episode, Offred offers a vivid description about her thoughts on her assigned room.

Offred: A chair. A table, a lamp. There’s a window with white curtains. The glass is shatter-proof, but it isn’t running away they’re afraid of. A handmaid wouldn’t get far. It’s those other escapes. The ones you can open in yourself given a cutting edge or a twisted sheet and a chandelier. I try not to think about those escapes. It’s harder on ceremony days, but thinking can hurt your chances. (Miller & Morano, 2017c)

Handmaids are given very little. This is, in part, because Gilead officials fear that, if given too many personal belongings, they might find ways to harm themselves. Offred also describes how her door is consistently unlocked and does not fully close. She describes the condition of the door as “a constant reminder of who’s in control” (Gerstein & Baker, 2017).

The audience is also more likely to see Offred spend time in her bedroom as punishment. Thus, banishing or confining to her room is not only used to enact control of Offred’s movement and location, but also functions as a form of incarceration, a prisoner stuck in a holding cell. Serena Joy is often the one sentencing Offred to her room. For example, the household starts planning for a baby when Offred’s period does not arrive on time, until Offred reveals to Serena Joy that it was a false alarm. Angered by the disappointing news, Serena Joy grabs Offred by the wrist and marches her upstairs, throwing Offred down to the floor of the handmaid’s bedroom. Serena Joy then yells, “You will stay here and you will not leave this room. Do you understand me?” When Offred hesitates to answer, Serena Joy flings herself on the floor. Resembling imagery of a drill sergeant yelling into the face a weak, failing soldier, Serena Joy screams again

in Offred's ear, "DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?" After a pause, Offred musters a "yes, Mrs. Waterford" while still laying on the floor facedown. Before slamming the door shut on her way out of the bedroom, Mrs. Waterford turns to Offred and threateningly states, "Things could get much worse for you (Miller & Morano, 2017b). In this example, even in Serena Joy's threat to Offred, the handmaid's bedroom is seen as a space of confinement in which the womb is locked away safely. Moreover, Offred can continue to contribute to society by protecting her reproductive potential as a for of labor for Gilead. Confinement, as it is articulated by Foucault (1965), is not for medicalization or treatment of the womb as it is a protection of assets. With the protective measures in place, the handmaid's room is a realm without risk and injury to the handmaid, and thus her potential fetus.

### **Pre-Pregnancy and Pregnancy Monitoring**

Gilead's disciplinary surveillance of pre-pregnant and pregnant handmaids is not only apparent in the tracking of handmaids' location, but the tracking of handmaid's bodily functions. The handmaid's body is monitored, surveilling what the handmaid eats, her menstruation cycle and womb readiness, and every stage of pregnancy. First, food intake is monitored by marthas. For example, Offred Handmaid eats at a table in the kitchen with the Waterford's martha, Rita. Because Offred does not eat in the dining room, Rita can monitor how much she eats and when. There is an understanding that the food rations of handmaids are monitored though scenes in which Handmaids are rewarded with food for good behavior. For instance, Janine is rewarded with ice cream after birthing a healthy baby girl for a commander and his wife (Miller & Morano, 2017b). In another example of the surveillance of food intake and food as a reward, Offred is unusually offered a cookie by Mrs. Waterford at a celebrational ceremony in which the wives eat and rejoice as the handmaids assist with the delivery of another handmaid's baby. At

some point, Offred is pulled aside by Mrs. Waterford to give the wives an update on the delivery process. After answering the wives' questions, Offred is offered a macaron for her "good behavior" for politely providing accurate information to the wives and assisting in the birth.

Wife 1 (Leah): Would you like a cookie, dear?

Wife 2 (Caroline): You shouldn't spoil them. Sugar is bad for them.

Leah: Oh, surely one won't hurt. It is a special day.

Offred gently takes the treat, looking down to avoid the gazes of the wives. Leah remarks, "Oh, isn't she well-behaved?" (Miller & Morano, 2017a). Handmaid's food intake is monitored because unhealthy food is associated with ideas of risk and health. However, wives and marthas enforcing preventative eating behaviors are not for the sake of the handmaid but to maintain a healthy womb.

Second, handmaid's menstruation cycles are monitored. In the Waterford household, Rita is the holder of Offred's sanitary napkins. The scheduling of "the ceremony," the monthly attempt for commanders to impregnate the handmaid, revolves around the handmaid's menstruation cycle, predicting her prime ovulation day. Scheduling the ceremony is determined by marthas tracking handmaid's period days and flow and doctors' regular pelvic examinations of handmaids. Information about the handmaid's period is then disseminated to the handmaid's commander, wife, martha, and aunt responsible for overseeing the household.

Finally, during pregnancy, Gilead's foot soldiers (especially the wives and aunts) all monitor the body of the handmaid as an indication of the fetus's health. When Offred is pregnant, Aunt Lydia comes over routinely to measure Offred's weight and exact dimensions of her belly bump. Aunt Lydia keeps a journal documenting the progress of the pregnancy. Offred's external bodily changes are documented as a technological tool to examine and, make transparent, her internal body: her womb. Then, updates on the fetus' health – determined by

Offred's weight gain and belly measurements – are attributed to the good or bad handmaid behavior. These depictions of the surveillance of pregnant handmaids resemble the conditions of those participate in transnational surrogacy in India where less than ideal ultrasound results or even the shape or size of a baby bump can determine if the surrogates get punished or not (DasGupta & Das Dasgupta, 2015).

Handmaids are not trusted to care for themselves in their pregnancy, a condition of high vulnerability. Rather, the women surrounding the handmaid are expected to intervene to protect the fetus from any risk. The health of the handmaid matters to the extent that her health and body are no longer her own. For example, even Offred's bathing becomes a site of inspection to monitor the fetus' health. As Offred sits in the bathtub at the end of the day, Aunt Lydia walks in to Offred's bathroom unannounced. "Rub-a-dub-dub," she sings, handing Offred a fresh washcloth sitting beside the tub. "Be sure to wash everywhere." Offred begins to wash her chest, shoulders, under her chin, and beneath her arms. "No, dear. I mean down there," Aunt Lydia explains. "You don't want any nasty bacteria getting to the baby, do you?" Offred spreads her legs and her hand disappears out of the shot while there is a gentle splashing in the tub. There is a silent pause as Offred and Aunt Lydia keep eye contact while Offred cleans herself. Interrupting the moment, Aunt Lydia dips her fingers in the tub, "Ooh! Water's getting cool. Finish up and off to bed. Baby needs rest" (Chang & Skogland, 2018). The increased use of technologies, and observations of the external body, to monitor the fetus is rooted in the desire to eliminate any risk to the baby. As Lupton (2012) states:

The pregnant woman, by monitoring and regulating her own actions, is expected to create a shield of safety around her foetus by preventing any potentially polluting substances to pass into the uterus. Pregnant women are also expected...to avoid certain spaces that may contain 'invisible lurking germs.' (p. 330)



Lupton highlights that pregnancy brings forth new concerns about women's bodies. Ideas of risk to the fetus shift the type of surveillance of handmaid's bodies from tracking her location to a monitoring of the internal body, the womb, where the fetus resides. During pregnancy in a contemporary society, health is monitored through hyper-medicalization and testing regimes. Lupton (2012) suggests that "public health activities are all agents of the government of citizens' health. The management of the health of one's body has become a feature of good citizenship, a dimension of the 'care of the self'" (p. 335). In Gilead, however, medicalization is not (only) an act of self-care. Regarding Foucauldian disciplinary measures, the institution of women foot soldiers looks after the handmaid and her womb to avoid punishment from the state. Thus, handmaids are required to medicalize their bodies as aunts, wives, and marthas, hover over them to assure healthy wombs. Women foot soldiers contribute to the hyper-medicalization of handmaid bodies as a form of surveillance and self-protection from state interference with sovereign power in the form of violent punishment.

### **Discussion**

In this chapter, I investigate the depiction of biopower, through both sovereign and disciplinary forms of power, work to uphold a fictional conservative Christian militaristic state. Gilead, in its multiple and interlocking forms of power, surveil and confine handmaids with women foot soldiers acting on behalf of the state through institutional structures. Certainly, traces of sovereign power are present in Gilead. However, modes of self-disciplining are combined with corporeal punishment or threat of physical punishment directly from the state, placing women's livelihoods in immediate danger by the state's dictator-like commanders. Thinking about how power, discipline, and surveillance are represented in *The Handmaid's Tale*

highlights the problematic politics of current surrogacy practices and the criminalization of women of color's pregnant bodies.

First, this chapter demonstrates how amplifying surveillance and making central the threat of corporal punishment in Gilead speaks to the problematic nature of surrogacy as a practice. Surrogacy places outside authorities—individuals paying for the service, doctors, courts—in control of the surrogate's body to regulate her body and behaviors as they see fit. The danger is that surrogates lose autonomy over their own bodies. For example, television star Kim Kardashian West hired surrogates to carry out the pregnancies for her third and fourth children (Berg, 2019). Several gossip articles focused on the fact that Kardashian West's surrogates were instructed to eat "as organic as possible" (Berg, 2019). The food restrictions for Kardashian West's surrogates were justified as a precaution to have the "healthiest baby possible" after two difficult pregnancies of her own (Whittaker, 2018). Despite whether or not the celebrity's surrogates were placed on strict diets is beside the point. The stories about the potential of Kardashian West regulating her surrogates' bodies was cavalier about surrogates relinquishing their rights to eat and do as they choose, highlighting the dangerous effects of when women are only seen as wombs during surrogacy.

Second, *The Handmaid's Tale* serves as an important reminder that the U.S. has already enacted power regimes similar to Gilead's. The way in which handmaids are policed by marthas, aunts, and wives has an eerie resemblance to how women of color are policed by white men and women in Trump's America. While "good" women, often white women, can be self-disciplined and work through their pregnancies without the interference of the state, Black women are often seen as juxtaposing the good mother image through stereotypes of the Black crack baby. Angela J. Hattery and Earl Smith (2018) note that Black women's pregnancies are often criminalized

from the start. Laws and the criminal justice system more closely monitor Black pregnant women.

Women who engage in behaviors that ‘harm; the fetus they are carrying are increasingly charged with crimes. The most common scenario involves women who use drugs or abuse alcohol while pregnant and who are charged with child endangerment or, worse yet, if the fetus is born dead, with fetal homicide. (Hattery & Smith, 2018, p. 126)

Fetal harm laws are certainly controversial and are rooted in the assumption that pregnant women with drug problems should be criminalized. In many ways, due to popular “War on Drugs” policies, the solution became to limit the number of Black women having children through forced sterilizations, contraception, and abortion (Roberts, 1997). Black women no longer get to make choices about their health as they are seen as unfit mothers. Yet the problem is not simply that Black women are being disciplined for using drugs while pregnant. The problem lies at the disproportionate disciplining of Black women compared to white women. For example, Black women are ten times more likely than white women to be reported to a child welfare agency for drug use. Moreover, Black children are more likely than children of other races to be in foster care for having an incarcerated mother (Hattery & Smith, 2018).

In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, the threat for women is the hyper-surveillance and disciplining of their actions by Gilead. “Under His eye” as a reference to God’s watchful eye is more than just His presence. The eye speaks to the larger Christian militaristic state watching each handmaid’s every move, ready to discipline ill-behaved handmaids in the name of God and protection of the fetus. Gilead is represented as relying on the militarizing of wives, aunts, and marthas to monitor the most oppressed women with a false sense of power, just like the U.S. relies on legislation to monitor Black women in a rigid patriarchal hierarchy.

In chapter one, tampons during World War II were depicted by Tampax tampon advertisements as military technologies that confined women's unruly bodies into a type of soldier ready for battle. In chapter two, BFinCB suggested that women alter their bodily form and functions to fit into the masculine realm and timetable of active military duty. In both of these chapters, women's reproductive bodies "as is" were disruptive and needed to be fixed, disciplined, and confined. Finally, *The Handmaid's Tale* offers us a glimpse into a world in which "good" women performing on behalf of the state surveil the "bad" sinful women in their pregnancies and individual choices. Beyond confining and disciplining their reproductive bodies, their entire bodies were imprisoned and tracked in movement, performance, and shape. In these examples, women's bodies are represented as laborers and wombs, isolating women from their bodily agency to appease men and adhere to the goals of the military and state. The increasing hyper-surveillance of women to adhere to masculine social norms highlights the potential for a world where women's reproductive restrictions are the root of all political oppression and women are seen merely as mothers or future mothers.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Militarization—the process of military values, language, or practices embedding into the fabric of society—is important to critique because of its unique contribution to surveillance and formation of docile, confined, and disciplined bodies. Whereas militarism is rooted in the states’ strong military interest and capabilities, militarization is the process in which military values are adopted in a number of different realms. Understanding the implications of militarization by scrutinizing, illuminating, and evaluating the values at its very core is particularly revealing about gender. How militarization functions in war, military training, U.S. structures, and, sometimes, the civilian lives of women highlights the creation and replication of masculine hierarchies (Enloe, 2010). Yet, as this dissertation shows, the most invasive types of militarization are undetected and seep into the practices, values, and language regarding the reproductive bodies of women tied to the military. Militarization’s integration into these women’s lives not only justifies but also glorifies violence, war, surveillance, discipline, and the dehumanization of others (Enloe, 2016). Thus, it that much more important to study, critique, and identify militarism where it largely goes unnoticed.

This dissertation sought to analyze how values of the military and a militaristic society are inserted into the daily practices of women’s reproductive lives. This project examined how the rhetorical process of militarization constructed both the reproductive bodies of military servicewomen and women connected to the military, as well as the reproductive choices available to them. Examining women’s militarized reproductive bodies in a number of contexts (i.e. vintage advertisements, a book, a website, and a television series) revealed the many ways in

which women's bodies are policed and confined, often through discourses of choice, autonomy, and the interests for the state. Furthermore, by examining lesser discussed aspects of reproductive politics (menstruation, lactation, and surrogacy) this project contributed to larger bodies of work on gender, reproductive politics, and militarism. The three cases studies at the heart of this project demonstrate how military values, language, and practices are commonplace for many women with connections to the military.

### **Summary**

My first case study (Chapter II) took a historical approach to examining militarism and reproductive politics by analyzing 1940s Tampax tampon advertisements. In all, the advertisements served as WWII propaganda and promoted white women's labor efforts as they entered the workforce during the national conscription for young men. Women entering the workforce was seen as a significant part of civilian war efforts to keep the economy strong. Tampons, then, as a technology that kept women working longer and harder, were depicted as a vital force to winning the war. The construction of the women wearing tampons in the labor force was an important component to these advertisements. Although women were depicted as brave, hardworking patriots, at the same time they were also portrayed as hyper-feminine workers. These gendered understandings of women war workers emphasized that women working during the war was important, but it was also temporary.

My analysis of the tampon advertisements during WWII adds not only to our knowledge of the relationship between gender and work, but also points to how Tampax tampon advertisements transformed the traditional use of tampons into a war technology. Tampons helped women's bodies become more like men's bodies; however, women in these labor positions were still understood as untraditional. Tampons were tools that disciplined women's

bodies to perform for the masculine-centered workplace while highlighting public anxieties about women in war, women's bleeding bodies, and stigmatization of menstruation in public places. In turn, women war workers became a type of soldier that could only fight alongside the military, but not in the military. My reading of WWII tampon advertisements demonstrates that menstruation is militarized by emphasizing disciplining of the body and surveilling the ways in which women could appropriately aid in the war while holding on to her femininity.

Chapter III examined the book and website of the nonprofit organization Breastfeeding in Combat Boots (BFinCB). The organization serves as an advocacy platform and resource for military servicewomen, providing information about breastfeeding and navigating military bureaucracy, all while continuing to serve their country. More specifically, in this chapter, I interrogated the way women's breastfeeding choices were presented within the process of militarization. The military does, in fact, shape the values and lifestyles shape of women's reproductive and parenting choices. To do this, private choices around the decision to breastfeed becomes a public choice articulated through the duties or responsibilities of soldier and patriotic citizen. Moving discussions around breastfeeding into public domain gives the public and military superiors the right to interfere with and discipline women's bodies.

The BFinCB book and website highlighted three important military metaphors used to represent the act of breastfeeding. First, breastfeeding was represented as a battle. Second, women's bodies were compared to machinery. Third, families were depicted as military units working together to complete the mission of breastfeeding while working in the military. What I found was that these metaphors were dehumanizing, placing military goals as most important, and deemphasizing women's agency in the matter of breastfeeding. Women were seen as inanimate objects and language of militarism positioned the needs of women and child as

secondary to breast is best rhetoric. This chapter indicated that militarism in the workplace highlights the danger of asking women to change their bodies instead of having masculine structure change their policies to fully integrate women employees.

The final case study of this dissertation (Chapter IV) looks at a representation of a dystopian future within the Hulu television series *The Handmaid's Tale*. Comparing Gilead to a Christian militaristic power, I use a Foucauldian framework to suggest that *The Handmaid's Tale* Hulu series provides a unique reading for a potential future in which reproductive politics are at the center of surveilling and disciplining women's bodies. In Gilead, biopower and biopolitics occur through both sovereign and disciplinary power. *The Handmaid's Tale* as a dystopian text makes a compelling argument about the role of militarization through "Christian values" in our current political system's rescinding of women's reproductive rights. *The Handmaid's Tale* also makes keen observations about the act of surrogacy and general sentiments which treat women as reproductive vessels instead of human.

Through temporal, topical, and typical triangulation this work demonstrates that the militarization of women's reproductive bodies is both pertinent and persistent. Temporal triangulation notes that the militarization of women's bodies is not an isolated incident. In fact, it is a long-lasting occurrence with no foreseeable end. This is especially true given the history of the United States and its current dedication to militarism as a framework for both national and international issues (Bacevich, 2005). Topical triangulation provides an overview of the many facets of reproductive health that the militarization of women's reproductive bodies exists in, including menstruation, lactation, pregnancy, and surrogacy. Finally, typical triangulation highlights that representations of militarized reproductive bodies are found in a number of mediated contexts, print and digital, old media and new media. Using a variety of times, topics,



and, texts, my project illuminates how ideas about women's militarized bodies play out in a number of realms to question the implications of militarization on women's reproductive health in real-world contexts.

### **Implications**

My dissertation points to several overarching theoretical and real-world implications. One prominent point articulated through this dissertation is that women's bodies are always seen as reproductive bodies. In other words, our societal understanding of a woman and her body cannot separate her existence from her reproductive capabilities. Using Saussure's (1916) principle of linguistics in which symbols are always already that which they are not, we can understand woman as not man. Moreover, Celeste Condit's (1992) critique of Kenneth Burke's (1966) "Definition of Man" applies the same principle. Burke notes that,

man is the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol mis-using) animal  
inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative)  
separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making  
goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order)  
and rotten with perfection. (1964, p. 507)

In turn, Condit replies, if that is the case:

woman is the symbol-receiving (hearing, passive) animal  
inventor of nothing (moralized by priests and saints)  
submerged in her natural conditions by instruments of man's making  
goaded at the bottom of hierarchy (moved to a sense of orderliness)  
and rotted by perfection. (1992, p. 351)

This is to say when women are not the subject, are not on top of the hierarchy, then women are always defined by what men are and men are not. In terms of women's bodies, women are not men because women do not have penises, testicles, and so on. Women's differences are then amplified by what they do have: breasts, ovaries, uteri, vaginas, and the potential to give birth, breastfeed, and menstruate. The differences of the body ultimately come down to reproductive

differences. Then, if women's bodies are not men's bodies, then women's bodies are reproductive bodies. Of course, defining and understanding women and their bodies as "not men" and "not men's bodies" is problematic. First, it conflates sex and gender, excluding trans women and non-binary individuals, as well as essentializing the experience of women to be around reproductive abilities. Second, if women are seen as reproductive vessels, then we are dehumanizing women in the way that sees women only for their bodies and not for other human qualities.

Additionally, this dissertation bridged a number of themes about how women's bodies are militarized. First, the theme of shame and concealment of women's bodies was consistent throughout this project. For the vintage Tampax tampon advertisements shame and concealment were, perhaps, the most obvious. As Young (2005) argues, there is a long history with associating women's bodies as dirty and unclean. Women are taught to feel shame about their period and embarrassment if menstruation becomes visible. Regarding breastfeeding, BFinCB implicated noted the importance of concealing breastfeeding by adapting women's bodies to military time. If servicewomen are able to successfully adjust their breastfeeding schedule to fit the military work schedule, then their body adapts to military time without disrupting it, making the act of breastfeeding invisible to the structure. In all three case studies, the shame and concealment of women's bodies made bodies disciplined and, therefore easier to incorporate into the military, workforce, or state's system.

Third, in this dissertation, language was an important tool of militarization. My focus on militaristic terms and metaphors also emphasizes the contribution rhetorical studies makes to theorizations about militarization. Returning to Maurice Charland's (1987) work on constitutive rhetoric, we can see how militaristic language interpolates subjects into militarized beings. As

Charland notes, “audiences are constituted as subjects through a process of identification with a textual position. This identification occurs through a series of ideological effects arising from the narrative structure of constitutive rhetoric” (p. 147). Studying militarization from a rhetorical perspective shows how militarizing language is the discursive formation of a militarized subject. For example, the Tampax tampon advertisements created conditional soldiers, BFinCB crafted ideal mother soldiers, and *The Handmaid’s Tale* reinforced the subjugated position of both handmaids and women foot soldiers in the patriarchal state of Gilead.

Another implication of this project speaks to the invasive nature of militarization on reproductive politics. Militarizing politics dictate women’s actions as they make choices about their bodies. *The Handmaid’s Tale* provides an insightful example of the way policies, state or otherwise, control women. Moreover, the BFinCB text also demonstrates how a wide range of military policies on breastfeeding shape the choices available to women as they navigate feeding their infant in the workplace. As a real-world example rooted in U.S. politics, heartbeat bills affect women seeking abortions by limiting the timeframe in which doctors can legally perform an abortion. Heartbeat bill bans abortions after a heartbeat can be detected, which is usually around six weeks (Epstein, 2019). For context, some women do not know they are pregnant at the six-week mark as it falls just shortly after pregnant women miss their first period. However, the bills leave room for interpretation as they do not provide a specific gestational timeframe for limiting abortion (North & Kim, 2019). Many physicians note that this is a problematic framework for understanding life and the fetus, especially considering that “the fetus does not yet have a heart at six weeks’ gestation — the cardiac activity detectable at that time comes from tissue called the fetal pole” (North & Kim, 2019). Some even call heartbeat bills unconstitutional in its manipulative framing to sway doctors from performing the procedure (Epstein, 2019).

Anti-abortion bills militarize pregnancy care through strict procedures physicians must take to determine heartbeats of fetuses and the way in which the fate of a pregnancy falls in to the hands of the state.

Militarizing pregnancies also includes laws that attempt to persuade women to continue the pregnancy. For instance, Kentucky's 2017 House Bill 2 (H.B. 2), a policy that forces doctors to provide government-mandated information about the fetus's status, demands doctors go through a number of unnecessary procedures in an attempt to dissuade women from obtaining an abortion. As physician Ashlee Bergin explains,

H.B. 2...is cruel and offensive. It mandates that I display an ultrasound to every abortion patient, describe it in detail, and play the sound of the fetal heartbeat — even if the patient does not want it, even if in my medical judgment I believe that forcing it on them will cause them harm. The law forces me to do this to a patient who is half-naked on the exam table, usually with their feet in stirrups and an ultrasound probe inside their vagina. With my patient in this exposed and vulnerable position, the law forces me to keep displaying and describing the image, even when the patient shuts her eyes and covers her ears. (Bergin, 2019)

Laws that require doctors to go through strict procedures and make calls about fetal heart beats militarize pregnancy by removing women's agency and choices about continuing a pregnancy regardless of her religious background, views on personhood, and socioeconomic status.

Politicians have inserted themselves into examination rooms through H.B. 2, putting a barrier to ethical patient care as patients are forced to listen to heartbeats, see ultrasounds, and are subjected to unwanted information about a pregnancy they have no desire to endure (Bergin, 2019). As patients undergo forced procedures and physicians are no longer given agency to make decisions with their patients' best interest in mind, reproductive health uptakes the values of the state, leaving women as manipulated, militarized pawns with fewer and fewer options regarding their unwanted pregnancy.

Finally, discipline and surveillance in order to conform to militaristic ideals was a central component of this dissertation. Women's militarized bodies align with Foucault's (1977) docile body, a body which is manipulatable through training. In the case studies, bodies were shaped and confined to exist cohesively, without disruption, in a number of masculine structures (i.e. the workforce, the military, Gilead). Foucauldian concepts that were highlighted in Chapter IV, but present throughout the whole dissertation, indicating that women's bodies can be disciplined and surveilled in any setting: at work, in the home, in public, and in private. Women's bodies are constrained or confined through technologies (e.g. tampons, bras), put on timetables (e.g. menstruation suppression, breastfeeding schedules, tracking ovulation), and surveilled at all times by the state and through the self. Women are asked or commanded to make their reproductive bodies invisible or more like men's bodies to be considered acceptable. Yet, it is rarely the structure or state that conforms to make women's bodies, as they are, acceptable.

### **Future Research**

Moving forward in my research agenda, I am particularly interested in continuing my exploration of militarization and women's reproductive health in two ways. First, I am interested in filling the gap of looking at race, gender, and the militarization of women's reproductive bodies. While there are certainly implications for women of color, as discussed at the end of *The Handmaid's Tale* chapter, there is underwhelming research regarding militarization and women of color. Racism is not absent from the surveillance and disciplining of women of color's pregnant bodies. It is alive and well in the healthcare system, where factors of bias and stereotyping create discrepancies in the way women of color are treated. For instance, Black women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women and even celebrities or privileged women of color (e.g. Beyoncé and Serena Williams)

are not immune these discrepancies in the American healthcare system ("Why are Black Women at Such High Risk of Dying From Pregnancy Complications?," 2019). In all, I think more work on women of color and the militarization of women's reproductive bodies can connect these dots.

Second, I am interested in how practices and language of militarization is incorporated into the resistance against policies attacking women's reproductive freedom. I think *The Handmaid's Tale* as a text continues to be a point of interest from a number of angles. The image of women dressed in handmaids' attire protesting comes to mind. As a 2018 article from *The Guardian* explains,

The outfit worn by Margaret Atwood's handmaids in her 1985 dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* and its recent TV adaptation has been in evidence from Argentina to the US, the UK and Ireland, and has emerged as one of the most powerful current feminist symbols of protest, in a subversive inversion of its association with the oppression of women. (Beaumont & Holpuch, 2018)

The article suggests that the bright red dresses, cloaks, and white winged hats donned by Gilead's handmaids have become the most visible representation of the subjugation of women by the state and, then, an appropriate metaphor for reproductive justice activists (Beaumont & Holpuch, 2018). The way in which *The Handmaid's Tale* has become a cultural short hand for women's trauma speaks volumes to the show's cultural impact. Thus, *The Handmaid's Tale* as a metaphor for resistance is one example of how militarism has seeped into resistance movements against policies which militarize and discipline reproductive bodies.

Moreover, I think the third season of *The Handmaid's Tale*, which is not addressed in my final case study chapter, is representative of how militarism is appropriated for the resistance against the patriarchal state. Simply, the show's third season explicitly speaks to *The Handmaid's Tale* relevance to contemporary American politics as handmaids use tactics of

militarization for the rebellion. Offred, perhaps, best articulates the handmaid's militant tactics when she states, "they should have never given us uniforms if they didn't want us to be an army" (Miller & Skogland, 2017). This quote from Offred demonstrates that militarism is a tool of resistance at the same time it can be the location of oppression for the handmaids.

As I think about my dissertation, the real-world implications of militarization on reproductive health, and my future work, I also consider how my dissertation comes to life in my lived experiences on a day-to-day basis. For example, on my way to work, I pass by a Planned Parenthood located on a major road. That particular location is one of three Planned Parenthoods that provide abortion services in the state of Virginia (Planned Parenthood, 2019). For me, that building represents resilience in the reproductive justice movement. As I mentioned in my introduction, more than 200 abortion providers closed since 2013 and six states have only one remaining operative Planned Parenthood abortion provider (Lai & Patel, 2019). To that end, the remaining active Planned Parenthood locations are symbolic of the ongoing fight of feminist activists. However, I also think about the anti-abortion protesters that often occupy the building with signs. It is also worth mentioning that within half a mile of the Planned Parenthood there is a pregnancy crisis center and at least two anti-abortion billboards sponsored by 40 Days for Life, a national pro-life organization. Within the fight for reproductive justice, there is significant push back, making my work and future work on reproductive health grounded in exigence. Thus, my visceral lived experience shapes the impetus for my work on women's health.

This dissertation in full grants a much-needed perspective on militarization rooted in the discipline of communication with a focus on rhetoric and gender studies. The intersections of militarization and women's bodies offers a new lens for understanding gender and reproductive politics. Using the case studies in this dissertation, I have engaged with the feminist potential of

separating women as human beings from their reproductive potential, questioning assumptions about gender, essentialism, and the notion that women's primary role should be related to child-rearing, domestic labor, and caretaking. Although feminist scholars and activists have pushed the boundaries of exploration regarding the military, militarism, and gender, the potential of the case studies in this dissertation remains to be fully realized. The fight for women's autonomy in their access to, choices around, and education about reproductive healthcare remains a part of the larger war against women in the militarizing, policing, and surveilling of their reproductive bodies.



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