

CROSSING INTO THE BLUE:
CADET CULTURE AND OFFICER DEVELOPMENT AT THE U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY

by

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Crossing Into the Blue: Cadet Culture and Officer Development at the U.S. Air Force

Academy

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This dissertation examines how cadets at the United States Air Force Academy make sense of their experiences, form attitudes and beliefs, and construct identities within a restrictive environment where espoused values conflict with theories-in-use. The analysis of qualitative data from focus groups and in-depth interviews, along with visual data in the form of editorial cartoons, shows how cadets engage in resistance against the institution, encounter a culture of non-compliance, perpetuate the military masculine-warrior narrative, and use humor in sense-making and the construction of gender differences.

By exploring how cadets maintain a sense of self that they describe as simultaneously separate from and in line with what USAFA attempts to impose on them, this dissertation contributes to several literatures. In showing how cadets make decisions about doing “the right thing,” the analysis adds to the research on rule-bending, or “secondary adjustments,” in total institutions. It also engages with research on the conflict between espoused values and theories-in-use within organizations. Over time, USAFA has shifted from an institutional to an occupational paradigm, contributing to a decline in commitment to institutional values and the proliferation of a culture of non-compliance. Moreover, cadets have constructed a highly masculinized culture based on an unrealistic narrative of heroism and combat readiness. Pluralistic ignorance creates and perpetuates sexist stereotypes, and the combat narrative, combined with beliefs about physical fitness, becomes an acceptable way to express gender biases. This confluence of factors generates a contradiction between policies promoting the inclusion of women in the military and women’s lived experience. Editorial cartoons both challenge and perpetuate the tensions prevalent within USAFA. They allow cadets and alumni to resist and conform to USAFA norms, express stigmatized emotions, establish boundaries for appropriate behavior, and navigate hegemonic masculinity. The analysis of this highly masculinized total institution suggests potential directions for policy, practice, and further research.

These views are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the United States Air Force Academy or any other government agency.

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CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
	Organizational Behavior	9
	Identity Work Within Total Institutions	14
	The Construction of Military Masculinity	21
	Pluralistic Ignorance	25
III.	SETTING AND METHODS.....	30
	Data Collection and Analysis	36
	Methodological Issues	47
IV.	BUILDING A CULTURE OF NON-COMPLIANCE.....	51
	Institutional and Occupational Paradigms.....	51
	Espoused Values and Theories-In-Use.....	56
	Total or Reinventive Institution?	60
	Reconciling Rebellion and Conformity	72
V.	FITNESS TESTING AND THE MILITARY MASCULINE-WARRIOR.....	74
	The Military Masculine-Warrior	75
	Sustaining the USAFA Masculine-Warrior Paradigm	80
VI.	THE DODO	101
	<i>The Dodo</i>	102
	Hypermasculinity	113
VII.	CONCLUSION.....	126
	Contributions	126

Recommendations	129
Future Research.....	132
Concluding Thoughts.....	136
REFERENCES	138
APPENDIX	
A. SURVEY 1 (2005)	150
B. SURVEY 2 (2010)	154
C. FOCUS GROUP GUIDE.....	158
D. INTERVIEW GUIDE	160

FIGURES

Figure

1. Cadet Wing formation. Liz Copan, April 2014.....	105
2. Demotivational mural. Bastardo, February 2001.....	105
3. Why cadets do the right thing. She-Devil, March 2002.....	106
4. Water haze. Zero, June 2000.....	108
5. Pilot training commitment regret. Spiffy the Cat, February 2002.....	109
6. Graduation. PING!, October 2002.. ..	110
7. Combining free-fall and water haze can be disastrous. D. Daggett and J. Sanchez, February 2000.....	112
8. Gondolas to the gym. k!, March 2000.....	112
9. Basic Cadet Ixchu receives a stern lecture from Cadet Second Class Bratka on Inprocessing Day. Susannah Kay, June 2012.....	114
10. Home for the holidays. Zero, November 2000.	115
11. Home for the holidays (brutal reality mix). Spoon and Zero, November 2000.....	116
12. First-years on the prowl. Zero, March 2000.....	117
13. Priorities. PING!, June 2001.....	118
14. First-year indoctrination through boot-camp style yelling. TSgt Ken Wright, March 2004.....	118
15. Cheap computer-drawn whores. She-Devil, December 2002.....	121
16. Easier pull-ups. She-Devil, February 2001.....	121
17. Upperclassmen morale and welfare. She-Devil, April 2000.....	122

18. Fraternization and favors. She-Devil, October 2001.....	123
19. How She-Devil interprets her toons. She-Devil, October 2001.....	124

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In a November 2014 statement to the *Colorado Springs Gazette*, Lieutenant General Michelle Johnson, the Superintendent of the United States Air Force Academy (hereafter, USAFA), discussed an investigation into cadet misconduct, including sexual assault, illegal drug use, and cheating. "This past behavior was troubling and suggested certain subcultures that were inconsistent with the culture of commitment and climate of respect we work hard to uphold," Lieutenant General Johnson stated. "In part, recognition of this prior misconduct has caused us to refocus on our culture and climate."¹ Although her statement focused on an investigation of the athletic department, allegations and confirmed cases of misconduct have troubled the image of USAFA for decades. Over the years, several Superintendents made similar statements about cadet misconduct and promised to maintain a culture of commitment and climate of respect.

It comes as no surprise, then, that in the wake of bad behavior at USAFA, and at other federal service academies, some observers question whether the mission of the academies is worth the cost. Journalist Tom Ricks, who has written on defense topics for the *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post*, argues, "Shut down West Point, Annapolis, and the Air Force Academy...[commanders] prefer officers who come out of ROTC programs, because they tend to be better educated and less cynical about the military."² Bruce Fleming, an English professor at the U.S. Naval Academy and its most outspoken critic, also calls for closing the service academies and comments. "They pretend to be colleges," he

¹ Tom Roeder, The Gazette. <http://gazette.com/broken-code-afa-superintendent-calls-for-investigation-of-athletic-transgressions/article/1534978> (Retrieved November 19, 2014)

² <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/16/AR2009041603483.html> (Retrieved May 10, 2015)

writes, “but exercise military control. Most fundamentally, they combine two incompatible goals: military obedience and the freedom to question offered by knowledge.”³ Scott Beauchamp, an Army veteran and writer for the *Washington Post*, says that calls for closing the service academies are not new as they have been targets of closure since the 1800s, when American folk hero and Tennessee congressman Davy Crockett tried to shut down West Point.⁴ All three writers argue that, although the cost of producing graduates from service academies is almost four times that of producing Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) officers from civilian schools, the graduates do not stand out compared to officers from other commissioning sources. Fleming’s criticism of the services academies concludes with a significant question about accountability: Are the service academies achieving the goals in their mission statements? Each academy has a mission statement. For example, the USAFA mission statement reads, “Educate, train, and inspire men and women to become officers of character, motivated to lead the United States Air Force in service to our nation.” Regular assessment of outcomes would determine if the institutions achieve their stated goals.

In response to criticisms of the service academies along with calls to shut them down, investigations of cadet misconduct, and repeated assurances that the institution will address shortcomings in culture and climate, I became determined to understand the cyclic and persistent nature of these difficulties. I wanted to investigate how a culture of non-compliance develops in a federal service academy, where cadets develop greater loyalty to

3

http://www.salon.com/2015/01/05/lets_abolish_west_point_military_academies_serve_no_one_squander_millions_of_tax_dollars/ (Retrieved May 10, 2015)

⁴ http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-we-dont-need-west-point/2015/01/23/fa1e1488-a1ef-11e4-9f89-561284a573f8_story.html (Retrieved May 10, 2015)

teams, cliques, and friends than to the Air Force core values and the Honor Code. I also desired to ascertain how cadets create and maintain an environment that remains consistently hostile to women. Like every Superintendent who has assumed command, Lieutenant General Johnson wants to eliminate subcultures whose climates do not align with USAFA's institutional core values. To accomplish this objective, the Academy has punished and expelled many cadets. I argue that, although USAFA has adapted curriculum changes and created new programs designed to educate cadets, faculty, and staff about sexual assault and commitment to the institution, an alternative approach would begin with addressing behavior at a fundamental level. Cadet behavior, in and of itself, is not unique, but the process by which their attitudes and behaviors become learned and constructed is significant. Through observation, experience, and repetition, cadets learn and establish behaviors. Accomplishing real change will also require understanding how cadets interpret their mission statement and how they construct meanings regarding education, training, inspiration, service, and character.

As an alumnus and former faculty member with experiences at USAFA spanning almost fifteen years, I have direct knowledge of cadet life and have an in-depth understanding of their attitudes and behavior. Entrée to this restricted site, simplified by familiarity with USAFA politics and regulations, provided opportunities to research a rarely accessed population. My introduction to USAFA and military socialization began in the summer of 1996. I arrived with an ambition of honorable service to the nation; however, the promise of a fully funded education and guaranteed employment also appealed to me. During my cadet career, I gradually adopted an attitude of mediocrity and became disenchanted with USAFA, especially toward leadership, rules and regulations, and even

cadets. I replaced my initial focus on duty, honor, and country with cynicism, non-compliance, and the pursuit of occupational benefits. Years of informal observation and participation within USAFA led me to believe that these attitudes and behaviors were a common dilemma for past and current cadets. The process of disenchantment and establishment of a culture of non-compliance interested me and influenced the direction of my research.

My primary ambition for this dissertation is to explore the construction of cadet identity, particularly within an environment where espoused values conflict with organizational theories-in-use, resulting in pluralistic ignorance and the perpetuation of false norms. The following topics have guided my research:

- The dynamic between commitment to the institution and its goals with the commitment to self and burgeoning identity. In other words, how do cadets maintain a self that is simultaneously separate and in line with what the institution attempts to impose on them?
- The manner in which cadets engage in selective rebellion against authority and rules and regulations. For what reasons do cadets participate in selective rebellion? What role do “secondary adjustments,” or tactics and strategies of rule-bending, play at USAFA?
- Related to selective rebellion, the enactment of non-compliance. How do cadets make decisions about their lives while at USAFA, with regard to doing the right thing? What do they consider right?
- Editorial cartoons create boundaries and perpetuate and challenge organizational culture through humor. How do they act as a medium to display

unacceptable and acceptable emotions and behavior, specifically hypermasculine behavior?

- In the USAFA organizational culture, espoused values of the institution conflict with theories-in-use adopted by its inhabitants. Specifically, how do gender stereotypes maintain a contradiction between policies pertaining to the inclusion of women and the actual lived experience?
- Harassment of women, with regard to fitness, significantly increases by the time cadets are in their third year. How does pluralistic ignorance contribute to the perpetuation of false norms about the capabilities of women, especially in fitness testing, but also more generally, as members of the armed forces? How do cadets navigate the hypermasculine culture of USAFA? The integration of women in the military has gradually increased, although tolerance for their presence has remained unenthusiastic.

Chapter Overview

In this dissertation, I explore how cadets make sense of their journey in officer development at USAFA and how their resulting interpretations inform their attitudes and beliefs. The journey begins as college-aged women and men enter this federal military service academy, juggling undergraduate studies, physical fitness, and military training. Four years later, cadets graduate and are commissioned into the United States Air Force as 2nd Lieutenants, serving out a five-year contract they incurred for their time at USAFA. In Chapter Two, I outline the theoretical frameworks I used to inform my analysis of their experience. I draw from literatures on military sociology, gender in organizations, humor,

and pluralistic ignorance to shed light on several aspects of the officer development process at USAFA. In focusing on the military as an organization, I made use of the institutional/occupational thesis and the research on the relationship between espoused values and theories-in-use. In addition, I drew on the literatures on identity work within total institutions and the construction of military masculinity. Moreover, I highlight works on how the influence of a vocal minority influences the construction of norms through pluralistic ignorance.

Chapter Three describes the setting and research methods along with data collection and analysis. It also provides an overview of USAFA and emphasizes the dearth of qualitative research at this site, a shortcoming that this dissertation addresses. Chapter Four examines how a cultural shift toward the occupational paradigm and reliance on theories-in-use contributes to a decline in commitment to the institution and proliferation of a culture of non-compliance. In Chapter Five, I show how cadets construct a highly masculinized culture, which draw heavily on a narrative of heroism and combat readiness. I argue that pluralistic ignorance creates and perpetuates sexist stereotypes, and the constructed combat narrative becomes an acceptable way for cadets to express these gender biases. Chapter Six analyzes the role of humor, particularly how comics allow cadets and alumni to resist and conform to USAFA culture, express unacceptable emotions, create boundaries for appropriate norms and behavior, and navigate femininity and masculinity. Chapter Seven integrates these topics in a discussion about the state of officer development at a federal service academy, and reviews implications for practice, policy improvements, and further research.

The goal of this dissertation is not to label individual and collective attitudes as dysfunctional or single out cadets as troublemakers. Rather, it aims to understand how cadets make sense of their actions while living and training in a restrictive environment designed to institutionalize, educate, and socialize them as leaders in our nation's armed forces.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In reviewing the literature, I found no studies that have touched on the construction of meanings at USAFA. In fact, no studies at this site have approached research on a micro-level, although other service branches have conducted some in the last decade. Barrett (1996) examined the construction of masculinity the U.S. Navy using life-histories, Cohn (2000) showed how men opposed women by using a “standards discourse” in the U.S. military, Sasson-Levy (2003) looked at how Israeli women shaped their gender identities in order to fit into a military hegemonic masculinity, Callahan (2009) conducted an autoethnography of power and control in USAFA training, Archer (2012) used mixed methods to investigate gendered stereotypes in the Marines, and Hale (2012) took on a constructionist view of masculinities in the British military. Although these studies offer a limited, albeit thought-provoking, look at constructions of self, I found a lack of research at the level of social interaction, especially at the federal service academies. Historically, the U.S. military has generally been a subject of macro-level analyses, exploring trends and reviewing policies for such issues as the integration of women in the armed forces, general attitudes toward women, the history of women in the military, and Congressional recommendations for changes in military organization (Diesntfrey 1998; Segal 1995; DeGroot 2001; Drake 2006; Burrelli 2013).

I contribute to the research on the military by analyzing my data through an interpretivist paradigm, examining the in-depth interviews, focus-groups, and observations for insights about how individuals construct meanings about being a cadet. I consequently discovered how cadets process and tailor their interactions with each other, depending on

their changing definitions of various situations. My research helped me expose distinctive intergroup relations and social interactions that elude quantification. These social interactions cannot be captured through numerical assessments of attitudes on six-point scales.

In examining meaning making among cadets, this research engages with and contributes to several literatures. In this chapter, I review relevant aspects of each of these bodies of research in turn. I begin with the organizational behavior literature. This lays the foundation for Chapter 4, in particular, by focusing on the military as an organization and emphasizing the institutional/occupational thesis and relationship between espoused values and theories-in-use. I then examine the research on identity work within total institutions, which forms a running theme throughout this dissertation. Next, I address the construction of masculinity in the military, also a consistent theme. Finally, I discuss literature on pluralistic ignorance, bringing attention to the influence of a vocal minority on the construction of norms within an organization.

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

Current research on the military as an organization focuses primarily on two topics. The first, referred to as the “institutional and occupational paradigm” (hereafter, I/O), argues that the military has moved away from an institutional format to one resembling that of an occupation (Janowitz 1964; Moskos 1986; Moskos and Wood 1989). In this perspective, the military and civilian society have gradually converged. Changing technology has created new models of combat and modified organizational behavior and military personnel have, at least purportedly, become rational economic actors, less motivated by

the common good than by pay and benefits (Segal and Segal 1983; Winslow 2007). The second topic concerns how formal organizational processes, or espoused values, can lack congruence with informal organizational processes, or theories-in-use, increasing cynicism and perpetuating a toxic training regime (Dornbusch 1955; Pierce 2010; Schien 2010). Here, I examine both of these in more detail.

Institutional/Occupational Paradigms

The first major publication on military sociology, *The Professional Soldier* (Janowitz 1964), established a foundation of study in civil-military relations and uncovered within it a gradual transformation of a traditional disciplinary model toward one of corporate management. Building on this foundation, Charles Moskos (1986) presented the institutional/occupational thesis to advance a comprehensive understanding of trends in military organization. The military was moving away from an institutional paradigm and began resembling an occupational format, Moskos argued, implying organizational consequences in the structure and the function of the armed forces.

Segal (1986) clarifies the I/O thesis, separating the model to addresses two levels of analysis: the organizational, comparing the military as an institution with the military as a workplace; and the individual, comparing military service as a calling with military service as a job. Most people who enter the American armed forces serve for fewer than ten years, expressing patriotic reasons for joining the armed forces, but also holding the desire to learn a skill applicable in the civilian labor force and also earning educational benefits, among other tangible benefits (Segal and Segal 2004). In the modern military organization, there is a struggle between heroic leaders, who embrace traditionalism and glory, military

managers, who are scientific and rational, and the military technologist, who is close to or actually overlaps an occupation with the civilian sector (Janowitz 1964). The definition of the military professional has broadened and changed and current debates involve those who see the military as a calling or as just another job (Segal 1986; Segal and DeAngelis 2009).

Traditionally, the military has represented a “calling,” in Weber’s (1930) sense of the term. It was more than an occupation; it was a style of life (Janowitz 1964). The military calling gave life to General Douglas MacArthur’s famous speech invoking “duty, honor, and country.” In an institutional military, members are expected to perform tasks and roles not limited to their primary military specialties (Moskos 1986). A member is still in the military whether on or off duty, on or off base, or in or out of uniform. An institution is legitimated in terms of values, norms, and a purpose that transcends individual self-interest in favor of a presumed higher good. In the past few decades, however, those for whom the military is just another job have gradually outnumbered those who see the military as a calling (Janowitz 1964; Segal 1986). The military has sought to avoid the organizational outcomes of the occupational model; however, supply and demand of the all-volunteer force has trumped this consideration and favored contractual obligations, self-interest, and the marketplace (Moskos 1986). For those considering an occupational military, the typical reasons to join include educational benefits, stable employment, the acquisition of occupational skills, and income (Scott, McCone, and Mastroianni 2006).

As an organization, the military struggles to instill institutional values according to tradition while still meeting recruiting and retention demands to maintain their ability to support and defend the nation. The results of this struggle have become apparent in the

flight of talented young officers for the greener pastures of the civilian sector. Pierce (2010) observed that micromanagement has become part of the military culture, producing a growing perception of lack trust in subordinates and top-level leaders/management who are invulnerable to criticism. There is also a concern that the military is at risk of changing from a professional organization to that of an obedient bureaucracy (Pierce 2010).

Espoused Values and Theories-In-Use

A recent debate in organizational theory of the military looks at the interplay between espoused values and theories-in-use. According to Winslow (2007), organizations formally express themselves and their culture through symbols and what is easily observable, through the use of artifacts (e.g. uniforms, unit patches, flags), espoused values (e.g. doctrine, codes of conduct), and basic underlying assumptions (e.g. unwritten rules). Pierce (2010) further refines this model by pitting espoused values against what he calls theories-in-use, or the cultural norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions provide unconscious guidance and direction, and consequently, the subsequent behavior of organizational members.

Schein (2010) suggested that the espoused values of an organization's senior leadership reflect only the tip of a much larger iceberg, supported by larger theories-in-use hidden deeper within the organization. From this perspective, to assume that an organization's espoused values are those embraced by all members is to ignore the true underlying assumptions that govern organizational members' thoughts, actions, and identities. In his analysis of U.S. Army officer attitudes, he found that, in general, "a lack of congruence between espoused values and theories-in-use can inhibit individual

commitment and subsequently impair organizational performance” and thus organizational effectiveness (Pierce 2010:103).

Values provide organizational members with a sense of what *ought to be* as opposed to what *actually is*; values are a deeper level of culture, which provide guidance in the face of ambiguity (Pierce 2010; Schein 2010). Espoused values are often evident in organizational strategies, goals, philosophies, training programs, and published organizational value statements. At USAFA, for example, an organized structure of rules regulates cadet behavior. This is a collection of regulations of the Academy, considered by the public to be the primary source of control, which are similar to the code of ethics of any profession (Dornbusch 1955).

Theories-in-use are those unwritten values that actually govern behavior in an organization. Every organized group within the military is likely to develop a distinctive style of performance, much like the personality of each individual; all units in a military organization are governed by identical regulations but style of performance varies from one group to another based on a collection of unwritten rules unique to each unit (Shibutani 1978). Ideally, organizational members are motivated to pursue organizational goals when there is a match between members' expectations and reality (Scott et al. 2006). However, a lack of congruence between espoused values and theories-in-use can inhibit individual commitment and consequently impair organizational performance (Pierce 2010; Schein 2010). Shibutani stated, “The demoralization of a group does not result from the degeneration of individuals; it develops from cooperation on the basis of informal norms” (1978:420). Experience at USAFA teaches cadets not to consider regulations of paramount importance when they conflict with informal codes (Dornbusch 1955). In case of conflict

between the regulations and tradition, the regulations are superseded and the organization may consequently descend into a demoralized state.

IDENTITY WORK WITHIN TOTAL INSTITUTIONS

Identity has been a central concern of social psychology since its inception, despite a lack of agreement about its meanings (Snow and Anderson 1987; Strauss 1997). Historically, sociologists have taken more interest in the social contexts within which identities develop, while psychologists more often focus on psychological processes for behavior (Gecas and Burke 1995). According to Gecas and Burke (1995), identity is the most public aspect of self. Others emphasize that identity comes from the characterizations individuals make in terms of the structural features of group memberships, such as social roles, memberships, and categories (Stryker 1980; Strauss 1997). Similarly, some define identity as a person's knowledge of belonging to a social category or group (Stets and Burke 2000). These definitions are each correct in their own way, depending perspective used. Thus, I organize this section by three theoretical approaches to identity, briefly discussing the Chicago school of symbolic interactionism, the primarily psychological social identity theory, and identity theory, which has roots in sociology.

Symbolic Interactionism

Coined by Herbert Blumer (1969) and based on the perspectives of Mead (1934) and Cooley ([1902]1964), symbolic interactionism focuses on the construction of meaning. Blumer (1969) specified three basic premises of this process: 1) humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them; 2) the meaning of things derive

from social interaction; and 3) these meanings are handled in and modified by an interpretive process of people in interactions. The self plays an important role in each of these premises; indeed, Blumer argued that the self is itself a construct. The experience of self has a “dual nature” as both object and process (Hewitt and Shulman 2010). As an object, we can envision how we appear to others. Cooley ([1902] 1964) used the image of the “looking glass self” to illustrate this imagined judgment, as well as how we feel about the image. As a process, Mead’s notion of the “I” and the “me” captures how we respond to the judgments of others, adapting the self to their responses. We do so from an organized set of attitudes we assume; thus, the self appears as an object involved in interaction and as a process that adapts to changing situations.

From the symbolic interactionist perspective, identity is the self-as-object. Identity “is primarily a matter of establishing and maintaining a situational relation between self, roles, and location” (Hewitt and Shulman 2010: 77; see also Gecas and Burke 1995). Interactions constitute the situations, and identity—or identities—allows people to “locate themselves relative to one another” (77). Defining oneself as a student, for example, frames interactions in a classroom differently than does defining oneself as a professor or a janitor. Identity “locates a person in social space by virtue of the relationships and memberships it implies” (Gecas and Burke 1995: 42).

Social Identity Theory

The psychological social psychological approach, represented by Social Identity Theory, views a person’s identity based on group membership (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Tajfel and Turner 1986). Although developed primarily by psychological social psychologists, social

identity theory has also engaged sociology, drawing on sociological constructs in early formulations of the social identity theory (Hogg and Ridgeway 2003). This theory emphasizes cognitive models of individual action in intergroup relations and has a strong social-cognitive basis, placing greater emphasis on the interplay between identity processes and intergroup dynamics (Cook 2000). External forces are more central to this perspective.

Certain social contexts elicit certain identities and shape their meanings. Actors import consensual cultural meanings into local interactions and situational environments shape localized meanings of situational identities (Tajfel and Turner 2007). Groups and categories are defined using these cultural meanings, which become part of the social identity of the group; through a process of self-categorization, individuals form an identity by accentuating perceived similarities between self and other in-group members while accentuating differences between self and out-group members (Stets and Burke 2000). Essentially, the self is reflexive, takes itself as an object, classifies itself in relation to other social categories, and ultimately an individual defines themselves and is defined by others as members of a group. Identity, in this case, is a meaning or set of meanings people hold for themselves that define “what it means” to be who they are as persons, roles, and group members (Burke 2004). An individual’s knowledge of their membership in a group or category constitutes a social identity (Tajfel and Turner 2007).

Identity Theory

Taking the Chicago School’s approach to symbolic interaction, several prominent researchers added a positivist slant and formed another model of identity theory. Identity

Theory, a research program in sociological social psychology, considers a person's identity based on the roles they play and in relation to others (Prus 1996; Burke and Stets 2009). Identity Theory focuses on how identities are organized in a salience hierarchy (Stryker 1980; Stryker and Serpe 1994). Individuals choose role behaviors depending on the salience of identity, and an identity motivates behavior when it is high in salience. The greater one's commitment to an identity, the greater its salience (Stryker 1980; Stryker and Serpe 1982; Adler and Adler 1989; Gecas and Burke 1995). For example, for one person, the occupational role-identity has high salience and work takes precedence over family, while for another person, the concerns of the family come first, resulting in a salient family role-identity (Stryker and Macke 1978; Callero 1985; Hogg and Ridgeway 2003). Different social identities are salient in different social contexts. (Goffman 1959; Callero 1985; Ely 1995; Howard 2000). These multiple identities are hierarchical and ordered in relation to one another, moving up and down within the hierarchy based on their likelihood of being invoked in each social context (Stryker 1980; Stryker and Serpe 1994).

Total Institutions

In *Asylums*, Erving Goffman (1961) explored the concept of total institutions, which he defined as "a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life (1961: 11). Clegg (2006) notes that institutions are total when they contain its members in all aspects of life, with no escape, maintaining a normalcy of life inside the institution regardless of how abnormal it might seem from the outside. While the active duty military once used to resemble a total

institution in which academics, residential life in the barracks, social life, and military training are all integrated, the military service academies remain a closed system, comparable to the environment of the psychiatric hospital studied by Goffman. Huntington (1957) asserts that the armed forces constitute total institutions whose mission requires the systematic disciplined use of violence, a role shared throughout the world's militaries (Goertzel and Hengst 1971). Drake (2006:63) studied three service academies and found that all were at the extreme end of masculine culture, discrimination, harassment, and that there is something unique "about the combination of a total institution and a competitive, physical training environment that puts women at a severe disadvantage." However, it is important to note that with the end of the military draft and inception of the all-volunteer force, the military has moved away from compulsory recruitment, a characteristic relevant to total institutions (Mouzelis 1971).

Scott (2010) revisits the concept of a total institution and instead proposes a "reinventive institution," in which members volunteer to join total institutions for purposes of self-improvement. Members actively produce, negotiate, and legitimate the exercise of power within the reinventive institution. With the establishment of the all-volunteer force and self-recruitment, members in the military experience a mixture of autonomy and coercion, individualism balanced with discipline, and resistance against power. People choose to join institutions in the belief they need to change, for career advancement, community building, political allegiance, and place themselves into a system of rules and routines with unquestioning obedience (Scott 2010). Total institutions transform identities through coercive methods on the unwilling, whereas reinventive institutions construct improved identities through mutual surveillance and discipline.

Power and Resistance

Total institutions rely on the exercise of power, which Max Weber famously defined as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance” (1978: 53). In this dynamic, power presupposes resistance. Consistent with this, Michel Foucault argues, “resistance is only possible when there is an exercise of power, and vice versa” (1982: 212).

Military organizations exercise power using command hierarchies, explicit rules and regulations, complex divisions of labor and task specialization, ultimately fostering an us-vs-them or in-group and out-group mentality (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce 2010). Common values, rituals, and systematic practices unite members of an organization in collective action and can also marginalize alternative values and favor some interests over others (Anderson 2009). One technique that hierarchical organizations use to instill discipline and deference at lower levels is the manipulation of distance; the lowest ranking members of an organization are confined to smaller spaces, are not allowed certain benefits afforded to higher ranking members, and are subject to collective discipline (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce 2010). Another exercise of power involves possessing the means of control, characteristic of total institutions, including sign-out logs that track a member’s whereabouts outside the immediate area, identification badges for access in restricted areas, and the wear of uniforms. These are explicit symbols of domination, demonstrating outward use of power over members of an organization, representing control over behavior, and establishing detachment from outsiders, all serving to manifest and reinforce a hierarchical order (Bryant 1979; Scott 1990). An important distinction is that the

exercise of power results not from weakness but from the ideas driving those in power and their claims to legitimacy; “a divine king must act like a god, a warrior king like a brave general, an elected head of a republic must appear to respect the citizenry and their opinions, a judge must seem to venerate the law” (Scott 1990:11). The military rank structure and organizational hierarchy contribute to and promote claims to power and its application.

Power is perceived negatively by those it affects, giving rise to resistance. The powerful can impose their definition of the situation on others, thus potentially reproducing and maintaining the structural arrangements that privilege them; however, individuals working against power can maintain control of meanings in the situation by resisting the identities that others ascribe to them (Cast 2003). The powerless can do this in a number of ways. Those working against power often employ tactics that include shunning, character attacks, rumors, jokes, and anonymous resistance against those in power (Scott 1990). These practices enable subordinate members of an organization to distance themselves from external cultural controls, maintain their dignity, and actively attempt to recover autonomy (Fleming 2005). Cynicism also allows members of an organization to defend their identities from the influence of those in power (Fleming 2005). Fleming and Spicer (2003) see cynicism as a process through which members do not identify with the espoused values of their organization, yet follow them publically while covertly maintaining their own identities.

The powerless also engage in rule-breaking and selective rebellion in institutions created around domination (Scott 1990). For example, a study of dishonesty in the U.S. Army revealed that the military as an institution has created an environment where

there are so many orders and requirements that it is impossible to execute to standard all that is required (Wong and Gerras 2015). Military subordinates must often determine which requirements will be followed and which will only be reported as accomplished. The study validated the resistance of military personnel against their leadership, and a culture where deceptive information is routine and accepted, mostly due to frustration about unreasonable expectations.

Callahan (2009) suggests that adversative education, exercised by USAFA and other service academies, traumatizes both women and men and lead to dysfunctional reactionary behavior. She states that problems experienced at USAFA originate in cadet training practices that deprive individuals of personal control. "That sense of personal empowerment is the ability to engage successfully as a functioning adult within any given social system" (Callahan 2009:3). Cadets subsequently seek avenues in which they perceive they can exert control when the institution deprives them of power and control.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF MILITARY MASCULINITY

Historically, studies of women in the U.S. military have generally been a subject of macro-level analyses, exploring trends and reviewing policies for such issues as the integration of women in the armed forces, general attitudes toward women, the history of women in the military, and Congressional recommendations for changes in military organization (Diesntfrey 1998; Segal 1995; DeGroot 2001; Drake 2006; Burrelli 2013). While the examination of hegemonic masculinity has exposed, in civilian society, the constructions of gender, exclusion of women from areas of activity, production of gendered social structures, enacting masculine identity through displays of manliness (Acker 1990, 1992;

Ely 1994; Ely and Meyerson 2010), the military has only recently taken a hard-look at this topic. In their review of hegemonic masculinity within various fields of study, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) found that specific patterns of hegemonic masculinity had been entrenched in the military but were becoming increasingly problematic (Barrett 1996; Sasson-Levy 2003; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Hinojosa 2010; Hale 2012).

Perry (2009) noted that women are often harassed as a frequent response to women's invasion of male bastions. Their presence in nontraditional fields and their high levels of education elicit harassment from males, who think their own behavior is a well-deserved response to the advances of women. The military is an example of a nontraditional institution in which females are highly educated and have taken on roles outside of the traditional gendered order is the military. Sexism is directed toward women who are viewed as threatening traditionally male roles within the military (Ivarsson, Estrada, and Berggren 2005).

USAFA was founded in 1955 as an all-male military institution. In 1975, Congress ordered the integration of women at the Air Force, Military, and Naval Academies (Gruenwald 1997). However, Matthews et al. found that, even with an increase of women in the military ranks, social attitudes "continue to reflect historical biases and stereotypes that may hinder their performance" (2009: 242). Thus, perhaps not surprisingly, immediately following the integration of women at the service academies, men held more traditional gender role attitudes than their female counterparts did (Looney, Kurpius, and Lucart 2004). In addition, although attitudes at the Naval Academy changed favorably in the first year of integration, most men still preferred keeping women out of the academy. USAFA cadets held similar beliefs questioning the legitimacy of the presence of women.

Research conducted over 20 years apart reveals that men at USAFA had significantly more traditional attitudes about women's roles than men at civilian institutions (DeFleur, Wood, Harris, Gillman and Marshak 1985:985; Looney et al. 2004) and men also thought women did not belong at USAFA (Gray, Smith, and Luedtke, 2004). At USAFA, integration did not go smoothly due to resistance by both cadets and officers. According to Samuels and Samuels (2003), many older USAFA graduates who were socialized into the culture were highly resistant to any change in the system, and they become a hindrance to integration efforts. This attitude reinforced the masculine culture at USAFA and manifested itself throughout the institution.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Defined as "the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue, hegemonic masculinity figures heavily in research on the military (Connell 1987; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:832). As a gendered institution, the practices, values, rites, and rituals of the military reflect accepted notions of masculinity and femininity. Moreover, because its members are legally vested with the right to use lethal force in order to maintain political and physical domination of others (Barrett 1996; Hinojosa 2010; Hale 2012), military men can legitimately make a claim to hegemonic masculinity by virtue of the role they play in maintaining domination of others through force. The inculcation of this particular role can be attributed to constant references to the military as a rite of passage to male adulthood and a way to socialize boys to be men, learn toughness, construct masculinities and eliminate what is effeminate (Kimmel 1994; Barrett 1996; Klein 1999; Fiala 2008; Hinojosa

2010; Hale 2012). Men shape military culture and, as a socializing institution, masculine norms and values are reinforced and rewarded from the beginning of basic training (Dunivin 1994).

The integration of women in the military challenges the traditional image of the male warrior. Because the primary role of the military is preparation for and conduct of war, the image of the military is synonymous with the image of combat (Dunivin 1994). Military masculinity is achieved through participation in combat, which provide men the opportunity to demonstrate the warrior role proving one's masculinity and heroism (Arkin and Dobrovsky 1978; Dunivin 1994; Morgan 1994; Sion 2007; Hale 2012).

If the military uses combat to "separate the men from the boys," as the saying goes, what does it mean for a woman who is part of it? Military culture, infused with a masculine-warrior mentality, exerts an influence unlike that found in most other settings; women represent threats to the prestige of the military occupation, and especially to participation in combat roles (McCone and Scott 2009). Research has shown that in the military culture, "masculine" traits are emphasized and "feminine" traits are devalued (McCone and Scott 2009); however, a few studies examine how military members deal with the conflicting role demands of women who are called to be a mixture of both "Amazon warrior" and "girl-next-door" (Callahan 2009).

Physical Fitness

One persistent roadblock for women, and a central focal point of covert sexism at USAFA, is fitness standards and testing. Fitness factors heavily into the image of a military masculine-warrior. According to Baldi (1991:537), the true purpose of fitness at service

academies, as well as academic and military training, is to “prepare each cadet for the demands of being an officer and to instill confidence, self-discipline, and an understanding of the importance of teamwork”. In fact, the only real physical requirement is tautological: cadets must in be in good enough physical shape to pass the physical fitness tests, which is set to measure the physical fitness of cadets.

According to DeFleur et al. (1985), the fitness standard is one of the main areas where men hold the most resentment toward women without much evidence to support their opinions. The differences in physiology and the need for separate fitness standards reinforce stereotypes of difference between women and men. Thus, men who resent women may interpret this disparity in standards as favoritism toward women or a weakness, which results in a reinforcement of that resentment. Many men believe that women receive special treatment and need lower standards to compensate for weakness (Durning 1978; Diamond and Kimmel 2004). Diamond and Kimmel (2004) also found that women who did perform well faced criticism for making all women look bad. McCone and Scott (2009) suggest that women struggle with unintended negative consequences of policies and practices meant to facilitate their integration, such as different fitness standards, which end up reinforcing negative stereotypes that they have worked hard to overcome.

PLURALISTIC IGNORANCE

Pluralistic ignorance occurs when a normative position of a group is assumed to be more widespread than it actually is. Van Boven (2000) states that pluralistic ignorance occurs when people overestimate a collective endorsement of an attitude or norm when, in fact,

the attitude or norm holds little support among the collective. According to Miller and Prentice (1994), individuals make systematic errors in their perceptions of the members of a collective and their relation to those members, behaving publicly in ways that misrepresent their private views due to misjudging the private attitudes of the collective. A good example of pluralistic ignorance in practice is a professor asking students if they have any questions about a lecture and no hands are raised (Prentice and Miller 1994). Students misrepresent the silence and demeanor of the students to indicate that everyone understands the lecture and that they alone are confused. Breed and Ktsanes succinctly put it this way: “No one believes, but everyone believes that everyone else believes” (1961:382). In contrast, false consensus is the belief that one is in the majority when in fact they are in the minority (Kilmartin, Smith, Green, Heinzen, Kuckler, and Kolar 2008). For example, binge drinkers in college may believe that most other college students also participate in binge drinking, when in fact they do not. Although similar in behavior, the interpretation behind the action differs between pluralistic ignorance and false consensus.

The Vocal Minority

The silence and inaction of the collective is exacerbated by a vocal minority driving social norms; there is an illusory support for a public norm derived from a very influential and vocal minority. Because people are more likely to notice the extreme actions of those in the minority, there is a tendency to assume that this behavior is more common among the collective (Kilmartin et al. 2008). Although a powerful and vocal minority may have created this public façade, false norms perpetuate through the mistaken belief in its popular support (Miller and Prentice 1994). Even with the absence of overt attitudes, a

vocal subset can introduce inaccuracy in attitudinal bias in a collective, resulting in a misperception that the minority position on an issue is the majority position.

If one agrees with the collective attitude, this boosts self-confidence and enables self-expression without social isolation; however, if one does not agree with the majority viewpoint, one is less inclined to express their beliefs openly and instead silently follow the crowd (Taylor 1982). Pluralistic ignorance encourages people to suppress their own attitudes while partaking in behaviors in which they believe the majority engages and risk physical danger than risk incurring social isolation (Miller and Prentice 1994; Kilmartin et al. 2008). When pluralistic ignorance goes unchecked, allowing public norms to be enforced by an unrepresentative minority, it can further perpetuate false beliefs and misconstrued public opinion.

History offers many examples of pluralistic ignorance in social groups, particularly in enacting and maintaining policies incorrectly presumed to have wide support (Miller and Prentice 1994). Cases include the smoking, drinking, and card-playing Methodists of Elm Hollow, who were convinced their fellow congregants supported prohibitions on those activities even though a majority actively partook (Schnack 1932). In another example, the theists of Vassar College presumed that the majority of the campus held militant atheistic beliefs when only a minority conformed to that norm (Korte 1972). Research also reveals that students consistently overestimate alcohol abuse on college campuses (Prentice and Miller 1993). Other examples include estimations of religious–secular differences (Shamir and Shamir 1997) and the tendency of politicians to overestimate the punitive attitudes of Americans toward convicted drug users (Kugler and Darley 2012). Because individuals are less willing to stand out and challenge the prevailing dogma for fear they will be ignored or

disapproved of, pluralistic ignorance can lead to the perpetuation of even unpopular social norms (Van Boven, 2000).

Shamir and Shamir (1997) address the psychological and sociological perspectives of pluralistic ignorance emphasizing the elements of “ignorance” and “pluralistic,” respectively. Using the psychological perspective, ignorance speaks to the cognitive aspects including information processing, attribution, and internal motivations. The nature of human behavior contains cognitive shortcomings and self-serving biases, which are factors during information processing and decision-making. The sociological perspective focuses on the plural or shared interpretations of false ideas due to error-prone information from the environment. People function solely as individuals but are reflexive and can think, feel, and act from the perspective of a collective (Shamir and Shamir 1997). Their willingness to express their opinion changes depending on perceptions; people carefully monitor the environment and shape their expression of opinions due to perceptual processes, social interaction, and fear of social isolation (Taylor 1982).

Finally, although research about pluralistic ignorance has occurred on other college campuses, only two studies have explored this phenomenon at federal service academies. Sondheimer, Toner and Wilson (2012) examined the political ideology of army cadets at the United States Military Academy (West Point). They learned that while a majority of cadets perceive themselves, collectively, as politically conservative, in actuality, the majority of cadets can be characterized as moderate and somewhat liberal-minded. The authors concluded that perceptions of conservative ideological dominance in the corps of cadets was a misperception, attributing its source to military socialization which sets its members separate from civilian counterparts and imparts a particular worldview upon its

recruits (Sondheimer, Toner and Wilson 2012).

In a study of gender bias in fitness testing at USAFA, cadets' personal viewpoints—women belong at USAFA and should have gender-normed fitness standards—differed from their perception of the entire cadet population viewpoint—women should have the same standards as men if they are to serve in combat—creating an environment of pluralistic ignorance (Do, Samuels, Adkins, Clinard, and Koveleskie 2013). Due to the mechanisms of intergroup relations and the reflections of self in the groups to which cadets belonged, cadets took on mistaken reflections of the collective, attempted to align themselves with both a public and private identity, and ultimately adopted mismatched behavior as a result of this pluralistic ignorance. People function solely as individuals but they also can and do think and act as members of a collective (Breed and Ktsanes 1961). If the collective, or group, is then defined using a shared cultural bias against women in the military, this meaning becomes part of the social identity of the group. This study revealed that the shared cultural bias against women was a mistaken reflection of the group, an incorrect assumption that arose out of a minority opinion and fear and embarrassment (peer pressure and the need to conform). This shame leads to silence and this silence keeps cadets believing that they actually approve of the things that are done to women (Goffman 1956; Latané and Darley 1970; Taylor 1982; Miller and Prentice 1994; Kimmel 2011). This research on the flawed cognitive process leading to a mistaken gender bias employed quantitative methods to fit into the positivist research tradition of USAFA. This dissertation aims to contribute to the knowledge from a qualitative perspective.

CHAPTER 3

SETTING AND METHODS

This chapter describes the impact of my personal experience on this project and the outline of my research design. First, I provide a brief overview of USAFA and its operations as an accredited undergraduate university and federal service academy. I explain how I gained access to the facility, straddling the boundary between insider and outsider, and the development of relations with my participants. I outline my methods, including collection and analysis of data from focus groups, visual analysis of editorial cartoons, and in-depth interviews. I finally conclude with a review of methodological issues I encountered regarding ethics and validity.

Setting

USAFA is a federal military academy, and accredited four-year university offering a Bachelor of Science in thirty-two majors, that provides the accession of commissioned officers for the U. S Air Force. Cadets who attend a federal military academy, West Point and Annapolis included, become a part of the armed forces upon graduation as second lieutenants. USAFA sits on about thirty square miles of forested land at the north end of Colorado Springs and, although similar to other public and private universities, is very unique because every aspect of education and training and life is contained within a small campus. There are approximately 4,300 cadets in the student body, known as the cadet wing, who live and work in the cadet area, the perimeter-secured central location of cadet life. An electronic proximity badge and prominently displayed Department of Defense identification card provides access to the cadet area, enclosed with security fencing and

entry gates leading to the dining hall, dormitories, academic building, and administration area.

Personal Experience

Two fundamental influences led me to pursue research on gender bias and the organizational behavior of USAFA; however, I did not think about my favorite sociological theories at the time but simply stumbled on a topic of interest worthy of examination (Zussman 2004). First and foremost, my experiences in and around USAFA as a cadet and faculty member spanning over ten years have yielded unique experiences accessible only to those with entrée within this restricted area. I have personally been subjected to USAFA politics and regulations, have first-hand knowledge of how cadets are affected during their time there, as well as how cadets respond to and conduct themselves while balancing their multiple identities of student, athlete, and military cadet. Relatedly, my research topic was also influenced by a keen eye for cynicism and the ways in which cadets grew (or degenerated) into a culture of non-compliance through informal observations and formal research projects. I arrived at USAFA in 1996 with lofty goals and aspirations for myself and in service to my country. I was also drawn to the occupational benefits offered by USAFA, including a completely funded education, guaranteed job opportunities, steady salary with benefits, and travel. While progressing toward graduation and commissioning into the Air Force, I became disenchanted with USAFA and easily slipped into a routine of mediocrity and even underachievement. The institutional values of duty, honor, and country gave way to cynicism, non-compliance, and the pursuit of occupational benefits. These attitudes and behaviors, where the ends justify the means, were not uncommon

among past and current cadets, and years of informal observation and participation within the institution interested me in the processes by which cadets become disenchanted with USAFA.

These personal experiences influenced my research topic and also include several advantages and disadvantages. Due to my lengthy history within the institution, I possess an established catalogue of insider knowledge and known associates who act as gatekeepers. The outsider has their work cut out for them, as they need to spend valuable time and resources getting in and setting up (Lofland et al. 2006). Having access to restricted areas and a vulnerable population is key to conducting research at USAFA, only made possible if you are already within its walls or connected with gatekeepers who will vouch for you. My insider status also helped me close the distance between researcher and participant by establishing immediate rapport with my participants, sharing the same experiences with them as an “active” member of my research setting (Adler and Adler 1987).

The dilemma of distance is encountered by all researchers and needs to be addressed, especially since I am so close to my participants. While interviewing, conducting focus groups, and analyzing editorial cartoons, I was cognizant of my thoughts and emotions as I recalled my own experiences. Research became a mirror for my own past and I was able to connect with my participants; however, I strove to not impose my own meanings and imagery when analyzing the language and meanings of my participants (Coffey and Atkinson 1996). As an insider, I needed to be mindful and not overlook assumptions and blindness to common, taken-for-granted social practices of cadet life (Hayano 1979:102). I also approached data collection using a presentational strategy of

acceptable incompetence, appearing as a learner in a student role, stating to cadets that I was once a cadet long ago but was interested in studying recent developments (Goffman 1959; Lofland et al. 2006). By taking on this student role, I was able to distance myself from what I knew as a cadet and instead focused on what my participants knew as cadets.

Negotiating Access

Lofland et al. (2006) would consider USAFA a quasi-public setting. On one hand, it is one of the most visited tourist attractions in Colorado offering public access to much of the campus. On the other hand, with the exception of unrestricted viewing areas for tourists near the administration building, entry control points to the cadet area are only accessible using a proximity badge. Because of its controlled and isolated nature, conducting research cannot even occur unless one is able to procure a proximity badge by completing the requisite paperwork endorsed by a high-ranking sponsor. Gaining access to participants was the most difficult aspect of my research, due to the fact that USAFA is a restricted site with what the IRB classifies as a vulnerable population. Studying a restricted site is difficult for researchers because special populations are difficult and costly to identify and research, especially if they are also located in an entry-controlled area (Sudman and Kalton 1986).

Negotiating access is time consuming, but access to closed settings was less problematic because I was an insider with complete membership and also knew gatekeepers who would vouch for my research. For outsiders without access, gatekeepers understand the institution's research protocol and can assist in gaining access to restricted areas and the research participant pool. Complete membership comes with a potential

liability, however. Participants are less likely to divulge information if they believe a researcher is working on behalf of the institution, so I needed to speak using shared terminology and in such a way to convince my participants that I was conducting research on their behalf.

Presentation of Self

There is a certain amount of posturing and also an emphasis in persuasion when presenting oneself to USAFA cadets. Self-presentation theory suggests why researchers cannot identify with any group at will, and how participants retain significant power in access – social identity must be negotiated through the process of self-presentation and an identity claim must be validated by an audience (Harrington 2003). My identities as an insider and USAFA alumnus were authenticated through the display of behavior that located me in recognized social categories familiar to cadets (Goffman 1983). Status is not possessed but conducted, so the performance of belonging in these categories allowed my participants to verify the legitimacy of my claim to these identities (Goffman 1959). I used anecdotes from my experiences as a cadet and former faculty member to gain the cooperation and trust of my participants through interpersonal relationships with them (Harrington 2003; Berg 2009). Once I built this initial rapport with my participants, through identification of shared social categories, I immediately reassured them of their power in granting access and that my research depended on their voluntary cooperation. Personal knowledge about my participants and familiarity with their routines and rituals, something I am familiar with as a former cadet, helped foster stronger relationships and membership with my participants (Berg 2009). I learned that cadet life was foundationally

similar to my experience as a cadet, which allowed me to focus on what was unique about their experiences.

Privilege and Power

Although my cadet identity assisted in data collection, one item of concern was my position of power over cadets. I was able to take on an insider status when interacting with cadets; however, it was difficult to maintain a boundary and obfuscate military rank in order to dampen the reactions cadets have to military researchers of higher rank. Because I have served in the Air Force for more than fifteen years, my rank and position on the military hierarchy give me a significant privilege and power over cadets who had not even begun their military career. Rank has its privileges and power, especially for subordinates who must obey the orders of higher-ranking personnel. In such a hierarchy, lower-ranking members speak with deference and are less willing to speak candidly with higher-ranking members. The power that comes with military rank would be enough to result in far different interviews than if cadets spoke with someone they could trust not to use rank against them. Being mindful of and attenuating power differences during my interactions with cadets helped better facilitate my research. When researchers occupy privileged positions to study those who are marginalized and in vulnerable populations, they must think of strategies to diminish power differences and dismantle some aspect of their identity in order to level the playing field (McCorkel and Myers 2003). Examining how aspects of my identity could impede my research was necessary in order to give my participants a truthful representation.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of my research issues, I collected data using several qualitative methods including focus groups, visual analysis of editorial cartoons, interviews, and field notes (Rubin and Rubin 2011; Warren and Karner 2010). Initially, I began my study of USAFA using quantitative survey research. My undergraduate and master's coursework on quantitative methods were a logical fit with USAFA's proclivity for survey research; however, I increasingly observed an absence of data on how and why cadets behave as they progress through their four years of academic and military training. Survey research, such as the annual Cadet Climate Survey, showed a spectrum of cadet attitudes and behaviors and measured trends over a period of time but the reports did not present reasons for these attitudes and behaviors or how or why they changed over time. I believe qualitative methods will yield better data, enabling me to direct attention to the processes that influence attitudes and behaviors.

I considered participant observation within the cadet area, to immerse myself within the population as an insider in a natural setting, but was unable to obtain approval from the IRB. Collection of data from direct observation within the walls of the cadet area constituted a breach of privacy and potential threat to security; however, the IRB allowed research in controlled environments, such as focus groups and interviews. Authorized personnel within the cadet area were required to pass security clearance checks and possess access badges, which meant that in situ observations and recording of cadets in this restricted area were forbidden due to potential breaches in national security.

Sampling

For researchers who are already a part of the faculty or staff, a common source of research participants exists in the DFBL Research Participant Pool, which is a volunteer group of students recruited from all first-year and third-year cadets. The purpose of this pool is to support behavioral research at USAFA while providing educational research experiences for cadets enrolled in research methods courses. Not all researchers are fortunate to have this type of access to a restricted population; however, they should develop rationales for why they should be there in the setting, in order to place themselves within the population as best as possible (Goffman 1989). In exchange for voluntary participation in research projects, cadets received extra credit for their time. Using the research participant pool, this was the “easiest” way to reach cadets; a benefit of using the participant pool for research is the ability to reach many cadets in a short time span and quickly achieve data saturation.

Surveys

While conducting research at USAFA for my master’s in Sociology in 2005, I learned that surveys would yield data quickly. With undergraduate training in quantitative research methods, and a compressed timeline for degree completion, I decided to pursue data collection using only surveys for Study 1 (see Appendix A). Due to a small sample size in the initial study, I ran the same survey again in order to confirm my initial findings and be able to generalize to the population with significance. As a faculty member at USAFA in 2010, I conducted Study 2, an updated version of the initial survey, which added new items to test a hypothesis on pluralistic ignorance (See Appendix B). Following the survey,

respondents participated in focus groups to discuss their answers with their classmates in a semi-structured format.

In Study 1, 41 cadets participated in a 31-item survey entitled *Understanding Attitudes on Gender and Training at the United States Air Force Academy*. Participants, 78% (32) men and 22% (9) women, represented the gender makeup of USAFA at the time. The survey used a combination of items measuring attitudes toward women in the context of a service academy, the military, and general population. Study 2 replicated much of Study 1, albeit with a larger sample. I sampled cadets five years later to determine if the results were more generalizable, as opposed to simply a product of a specific timeframe. This second study specifically investigated the relationship between the participants' own attitudes toward fitness standards and their estimates of their peers' attitudes – pluralistic ignorance. This time, 108 cadets participated in a 49-item survey, identical to the original Survey 1 with additional items measuring pluralistic ignorance. Participants were 74% (120) men and 26% (43) women. The results of Study 1 and Study 2 were published in *Military Psychology*, addressing the phenomenon of pluralistic ignorance with regard to gender bias in fitness testing at USAFA (Do, Samuels, Adkins, Clinard, and Koveleskie 2013).

Although I began my research projects with quantitative methods, I review this preliminary research to show how the process and results informed my use of qualitative methods in my dissertation. I will merely reference Study 1 and 2 in order to situate gender bias in fitness testing within an examination of the overall cadet culture and show how these attitudes developed.

Focus Groups

While I concluded my initial survey research of gender bias in fitness testing, I noticed a dearth of qualitative data in USAFA research projects and reports. I also detected survey fatigue and criticism about surveys from cadets during this stage of research. From side conversations I had with participants, I learned that many cadets did not bother with surveys because no one listened to them or provided any debriefing about their intended use, leadership did not acknowledge their complaints about survey fatigue, surveys did not offer the opportunity to provide written feedback, and there were no occasions for providing verbal feedback. Due to these shortcomings and my desire to understand the processes behind cadet attitudes and behaviors, I decided to switch gears and approach my research topics from a qualitative standpoint. What began as a quantitative research project emerged into a dissertation using qualitative methods. The decisions I made with regard to choosing qualitative methods stemmed from the desire to learn more about process, meaning, and how cadets talked about their experiences. Initially using surveys to establish a phenomenon proved useful, as I was able use the data as a foundation to collect rich data and thick descriptions.

I conducted semi-structured focus groups after deciding that focus group methodology would allow us to gather more data than one-on-one interviewing and allow for the negotiation of meaning between peers through collaborative discussion (Kitzinger and Farquhar 1999). Cadets who participated in the survey for Study 2 were asked to return to participate in focus groups to have discussions about the survey and their answers (see Appendix C). One hundred and eight cadets participated in twenty-three focus groups (cases) during the Fall semester of 2010. Although the common rule of thumb

for most projects asks for four to six focus groups, diversity in participants and the range of themes increased the number of groups necessary to achieve saturation in our study (Morgan 1996). Participants, 75% (81) men and 25% (27) women, roughly represented the gender makeup at USAFA. USAFA is about 23% women – for example, 22.8% of 1035 cadets admitted to the Class of 2016 were women. I organized each focus group to capture a variety of interactions based on group membership: first-year men, first-year women, first-year men and women, third-year men, third-year women, and third-year men and women. I deliberately arranged focus groups in these distinct combinations to see how cadets created and maintained discussions and narratives based on their peer grouping.

I created an interview guide with themes derived during a prior phase of this research in which we administered a questionnaire measuring attitudes toward women at USAFA (Do et al. 2013). By administering questionnaires prior to participation in a focus group, participants are likely to develop a commitment to a position before coming to the collective discussion (Berg and Lune 2011). Each focus group was asked to discuss their personal experiences and attitudes about the PFT revolving around themes of differences in standards, the performance of men and women on the test, perceptions of other cadets about the PFT, and purpose of fitness testing. This core set of questions was used with several follow-up questions in order to clarify or explain answers.

Our interviews used a “more structured” approach, relying on a facilitator who asked questions that guided the discussion (Morgan 1996). The size of each focus group was limited to six participants to promote diverse dialogue and achieve balance between discussing individual views with a wide range of potential responses. Each focus group was recorded using a primary digital audio recorder and an identical backup recorder.

Once each focus group session worked through the themes from the interview guide, the facilitator opened up the floor for miscellaneous discussion and closed when cadets felt like they exhausted their conversation topics. All participants were asked for consent before the interview and directed to use a numerical identifier instead of their name to ensure anonymity. Seven hundred and sixteen total minutes of audio were recorded and the average length of a focus group session was about thirty minutes with the shortest focus group at fourteen minutes (only two participants) and fifty minutes for the longest session. After the interviews were transcribed I assigned each participant a pseudonym.

Editorial Cartoons

The Dodo, purposefully named after the extinct flightless bird (as USAFA's mascot is the Falcon), was initially published in 1957 as a humor magazine, designed after the cadet desire to flaunt authority in a humorous and irreverent manner. Published for and by cadets, this paper humor magazine, creatively pieced together with articles and comics, evolved into a quasi-official publication that underwent a strict vetting process by USAFA leadership. While some leaders were lenient in this process, winking their eyes and silently approving of its content, others in charge of reviewing and approving the Dodo often censored content with no explanation. This censorship process became so exhaustive that a few graduates, upon leaving the military, created an online version in 1998 called the eDodo. Free from censorship online and underground, these graduates continued to anonymously create illustrated commentary about cadet culture, question authority, draw attention to sources of dissention, and vent frustrations. Before the Dodo was banned in 2006, senior leadership stated that they used it to gauge the effectiveness of policies they

enacted and how they were received by the cadet wing (Waring and Do 2012). Given the past and current cultural climate of USAFA, which include multiple scandals involving sexual harassment, religious intolerance, and cheating, Academy leaders had no tolerance for experiments in creativity with sensitive topics. Attempts to revive the Dodo have been unsuccessful, but the online eDodo lives on.

The analysis of editorial cartoons was fairly straightforward. These comics were hosted on the internet and could be accessed publically without restriction. Cadet culture was accessible to outsiders, but there was no context for reference; eDodo cartoons were mostly inside jokes – insider knowledge was required for full understanding of these comics. I analyzed four years of editorial cartoons submitted to www.eDodo.org by cadets and former cadets, starting with the first issue of eDodo and stopping after reaching saturation (May 1998 to December 2002). Editorial cartoons are unique, illustrated commentary drawn by several artists with their own style, that involve recurring themes related to normal USAFA life. I coded 1,130 editorial cartoons based on prevailing themes and created a database with the date, theme, description, artist, and publication date. The codes at this general level included, for example, the Air Force, training, sex, general life, complaints, and politics. After the first few rounds of coding, I further examined the categories and developed focused codes for USAFA-related comics. These codes deal with specific themes demonstrated and experienced at USAFA, for example, academic, athletics, culture, screwed, We Had It Tougher Last Year (WHITLY), and Mitch's (the cadet dining facility).

Initially, I thought an analysis of eDodo content would yield unique insights about cadet culture, specifically revolving around ingroup/outgroup status and cynicism. These

themes do make appearances in the data but are not as strong as the theme of masculinity. At USAFA, cadets learn to display specific emotions and behaviors acceptable to their peers and faculty and leadership. Cadets, faculty, and leadership shun unacceptable emotions and behavior; however, these unacceptable emotions and behavior become acceptable when it takes the form of comics. By humorously admitting vulnerability and emotions inconsistent with the hypermasculine culture, cadets are absolved of their perceived or real weakness. After a thorough analysis of the editorial cartoons, I focused my efforts on studying two artists in particular that were skilled in their artwork and effective in delivering humorous content. An artist named Zero contributed a vast amount of content revolving around themes of hypermasculinity, commonly illustrating acceptable and unacceptable attitudes and behaviors of men with a knack for defining, in his mind, what is masculine and what is not. His editorial cartoons reflected a contrast between what USAFA espouses as professional behavior and how cadets rely on theories-in-use to guide their attitudes and behavior. I also will draw attention to She-Devil, one of two regularly contributing women, who gained honorary male status through her work (Carreiras 2008; McCone and Scott 2009). She created content around traditional gender roles and ultimately was well aware that men accepted her gendered depictions of cadet life while women eschewed her for it. Examining her editorial content provides a unique look at one way in which women have integrated into the cadet wing, by becoming an honorary male or “one of the guys.”

Interviews

In my experience conducting surveys and focus groups with USAFA cadets, in addition to personal experience as an alumnus and faculty member, aversion to surveys is a common theme that arises in discussions about research. A history of response rates on annual cadet surveys reflects low participation and validity checks on data frequently show symptoms of respondent fatigue or disinterest observed in similar studies (Steeh 1981; Goyder 1986; Asiu, et al. 1998; Porter, Whitcomb and Weitzer 2004). Cadets are faced with so many “opportunities for feedback” throughout the year that USAFA recently set aside academic days just so cadets are able to churn through surveys in a few days instead of facing countless requests on a regular basis. While quantitative research using surveys show trends in attitudes and changes over time, little is known about the process behind these changes and how and why cadets behave in the ways they do. I decided to use interviews to address this shortcoming, which allowed me to understand cadet life from their point of view.

Interview data is uniquely insightful as the interview process enables more detailed, nuanced, and fully developed responses to researcher inquiries when compared to survey or questionnaire data. Participants are more likely to offer useful information when they establish a rapport with the researcher and “begin to understand what the study is about and to recognize the special interests of the researcher” (Morse 1998:74). Because the perception exists that surveys are a burden on cadets’ time and do not allow for open-ended feedback, I decided to incorporate interviews to try and capture rich data using a method that is almost never utilized at USAFA. I conducted unstructured, in-depth, active interviews, much like guided conversations between two individuals with a specific

purpose, to overcome limitations of prior research at USAFA that focuses overwhelmingly on survey and questionnaire data (Fontana and Frey 1994). To guide conversations, I created and used a freely organized interview guide that allowed me to address several themes while providing flexibility to change focus on the fly, depending on who I spoke with and in which direction they took the interview (see Appendix D).

In total, I spoke with twenty-nine cadets and generated an average of six pages of single-spaced fieldnotes for each interview over a period of four months. The interviews represent first-year and third-year cadets. Nine participants are women, which is roughly a third of our participants and a much higher representation than in the cadet wing (22% women). I directed respondents using an initial introduction that I read verbatim, due to IRB requirements, and used several themed questions to elicit conversation about their experiences as a cadet, the cultural climate of USAFA, expectations, frustrations, leadership, training, and non-compliance. For each interview, main questions remained the same but follow-up questions changed as interviews progressed and I was able to more clearly focus on the participants and their specific issues. The inductive nature of my research allowed me to test categories and concepts in the field as they arose (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2001).

Prior to each interview, I asked for consent and informed participants that the interview would be completely anonymous. I recorded each interview using a digital audio recorder after receiving permission from each participant. Collectively, the interviews took about 2,000 minutes with the average length of the interview taking one hour and ten minutes. I transcribed the interviews and assigned each participant a pseudonym. Due to IRB limitations, I only collected information about each participant's class year and gender.

In my field notes, I noted race and ethnicity to the best of my ability using visual observation, only as a last resort, unless participants self-identified or I was able to determine race and ethnicity using first-hand knowledge, country of birth or origin, home language, or other indicators divulged during the interview.

Data Analysis

I relied on inductive techniques to allow concepts and themes to emerge from the data without much reference to the literature; however, this research was heavily informed by theoretical concepts covered in Chapter 2. The process of discovering fresh and emergent themes is difficult because I cannot simply ignore the literature with which I am already familiar while analyzing data in a setting in which I am very invested. I did not select codes and themes before collecting the data but had an idea that certain ones would emerge from this site and its respondents based on my knowledge of work conducted in the same and other similar settings. New themes also arose from data that I never considered. Lengthy writing memos described many codes and concepts and themes that I needed to sort and summarize, sort again and compare, weigh and integrate, generate theory, and hope to generalize enough to extend the work outside USAFA (Rubin and Rubin 2011).

Lofland et al. (2006) provide a by-the-textbook guide for data analysis that includes practices, roles, organization, meanings, and hierarchy, to name a few. I picked these specific sections for their significance in my research and applicability outside USAFA, extended to the parent organizations of the Air Force and the military as a whole. Certain practices that may be routine and unremarkable, to the respondents and insiders, could be analytic gold from the viewpoint of an outsider looking in. The roles, or clusters of

behaviors associated with a specific position, of the respondents and other players at USAFA become important as well as the positionality of these individuals within the military hierarchy and rank structure. The respondents created meanings – certain ideologies, rules, and identities – about their experiences at USAFA. As I focused data collection based on ongoing analysis, themes emerged from this cyclical process of collection and analysis.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Ethical Issues

The main concern, before delving into ethical issues, was to ask myself if this particular group, setting, situation, or question needs to be studied by anyone (Lofland et al. 2006). Upon answering this question, laying the conceptual and methodological foundation for the entire project, along with any other decisions made during the early stages of research was critical (Berg 2009). Researchers who want to conduct any kind of study at USAFA need to be aware of these concerns, due to the unique ethical issues that arise. The first hurdle to any academic exploration at USAFA is gaining IRB approval.

IRBs evoke strong feelings among social science researchers, who see the research protocol approval process as too restrictive (Berg 2009). Some researchers believe the IRB often oversteps its purpose and limits, often limiting protocols due to a lack of understanding the nuances of qualitative research. The first ethical issue that arose was gaining approval from the IRB for a study based on qualitative methods. A qualitative study is especially problematic since it follows no set design, as data reflect shifting emphases dictated by new discoveries and are not pointed in any single direction toward the

solution of a specific problem (Becker and Geer 1960). The IRB is not accustomed to open-ended protocol so I needed to tailor my procedures to fit into IRB requirements. Additionally, IRB procedures like informed consent are primarily designed with experimental research in mind. Although I did not experience significant resistance in previous research projects at USAFA, I anticipated the need to explain qualitative methodology to an IRB that primarily uses the logic of quantitative methods. However I feel about this issue, I realized that the IRB consists of hard-working volunteers who strive to ensure human subjects are not harmed in any research protocol. This is somewhat difficult to envision at times, especially when there is a perception that the IRB is more willing to protect the interests of the institution over the participants and the advancement of knowledge.

A second ethical issue that arose from this project was the protection of research participants from harm through anonymity and confidentiality. Getting at the truth means “securing a close *approximation* of the empirical work” that is “trustworthy” (Lofland et al. 2006:169). I considered the lengths I would go to achieve this truth and at what cost to the institution or its participants. Decisions made in the early stages of research are critical, including the decision to enter the research environment as an unknown or known investigator in public or open settings (Lofland et al. 2006; Rubin and Rubin 2011). Conducting covert or overt research is one of the key ethical dilemmas facing researchers (Warren and Karner 2010). Integrating myself was relatively easy after gaining access and the trust of my participants; however trust is easily broken. When studying cadets as an insider, I always had a rationale for being there in the setting and that participants were

not a means to an end but an end in themselves (Goffman 1989; Murphy and Dingwall 2007).

Validity

The constraints of my research protocol and graduate school timeline did not allow me to conduct ethnographic interviewing, which includes establishing ongoing relationships with my respondents (Heyl 2001). The extent of rapport building and conversations took place within a 'single-serving' period of approximately 90 minutes. In almost all cases I would never see these respondents again nor would I contact them. Heyl (2001) would likely argue that this is not enough time for genuine exchange, openness, or purposeful exploration of meanings the respondents place on their experiences but I also needed to consider my timeline and do what I could within the limitations of the research protocol. For the purposes of our ongoing research at USAFA, conducting cross-sectional studies repeatedly over a period of time served me well.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) note that judging the quality of qualitative research includes validity, rigor, truthfulness, and integrity. To persuade readers of the authenticity, plausibility, and significance of representations of USAFA and its cadets, I conducted data collection over several years using different cross sections and several different methods with these attributes in mind. Using triangulation, combining several lines of sight, I strove to obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality in my research by examining cadet interactions in focus groups and individual thoughts in editorial cartoons and interviews (Berg 2009). Without going into actual statistics, validity comes from many kinds of evidence, lending credibility to our conclusions (Becker and Geer 1960). My meticulous

accounting in focus group and interview transcripts and depth of visual data analysis contribute to thick description, staying loyal and committed to representing as fully as possible the cadets and setting under investigation at USAFA (Warren and Karner 2010). With regard to credibility in my research, I analyzed my data without taking them at face value or dismissing them as valueless; I wanted to know what my participants believed, or at least say they believed, regardless of the truth of those beliefs (Becker and Geer 1960; Zussman 2004). In the end, readers will only have the reporting of my research so it is important to note that I should not impose my own meanings and imagery when analyzing the language and meanings of my participants (Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Lofland et al. 2006).

CHAPTER 4

BUILDING A CULTURE OF NON-COMPLIANCE

As I outlined in Chapter 2, the two major areas of focus in current research of the military as an organization include the examination of institutional and occupational paradigm (I/O) and the espoused values and theories-in-use of organizational processes. The I/O paradigm argues that the military has experienced a gradual trend away from an institutional structure toward one that resembles that of an occupation (Janowitz 1964; Moskos 1986; Moskos and Wood 1989). At the same time, examining the espoused values and theories-in-use sheds light on increasing cynicism, non-compliance, and the perpetuation of a training regime some consider “toxic” (Dornbusch 1955; Pierce 2010; Schien 2010). In this chapter, I draw on my analysis to reveal the consequences of these two processes for cadets. I argue that, as military personnel shift their attention toward occupational values and rely on theories-in-use in organizational functioning, their commitment to the institution and its principles weaken.

INSTITUTIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL PARADIGMS

Military academies constitute an extreme case of institutional and occupational conflict in the armed forces, with institutional emphasis on character, athletics, and honor, and occupational tendencies in the academic curriculum and guarantee of employment upon graduation (Moskos and Wood 1988). The stated mission of USAFA incorporates both aspects of the I/O paradigm. USAFA sets out to educate and train Air Force officers, instilling institutional values and ensuring an undergraduate degree in an academic major in preparation for a specific occupation. Institutional values include commitment,

selflessness, honor, ethics, and character, while occupational values encompass academics, technical skills, medical and financial benefits, and guaranteed employment upon graduation. Moskos and Wood (1988) found that cadets appreciate institutional values their first year, but this appreciation recedes the longer they remain at USAFA. Shibutani (1978) argued that high morale cannot be compelled, and in the long run, persuasive tricks to increase morale are exposed for what they are. People need to believe that their personal interests are being served, and they can be fooled for a while, but in time, the truth comes out. High morale and commitment to the institution, like affection and respect, must be earned (Shibutani 1978).

Moskos and Wood (1988) presumed that cadets might identify with their academic major, rather than as an officer candidate, if they took on an occupational paradigm of USAFA; an academic major reflects an occupational orientation and may impede institutional socialization. Cadets have many reasons why they joined the military: a need for money, healthcare, job security and guaranteed employment, world travel opportunities, firearms training, free education, a sense of purpose, defense of the nation, and patriotism. In my research, the major occupational factors in attending USAFA were free education and preparation for jobs in the civilian sector. Chris (third-year) decided to come to USAFA over ROTC at a civilian university because “we get preferential treatment when it comes to pilot slots.” In the interest of self and creating the highest likelihood of obtaining a marketable skill, Chris chose USAFA to secure this future. Likewise, Manny (first-year) sees USAFA as stepping-stone to a corporate calling:

I think it would be a good way to start my adult career. I think I want to do something with business later on in life. This is a good place to figure out what you're good at, what you're not good at. Hopefully I'll get to do something with money.

Arthur (first-year) chose USAFA “because you get a great education and you get to play Division I football.” Similarly, Ronnie (third-year) said, “Hey, free school, get paid to go here, guaranteed job when you graduate. That sounds like a pretty solid deal when you’re looking at it.”

Although cadets receive a commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force upon graduation from USAFA, I found that cadets focused only on the goal of graduation from USAFA instead of looking at commissioning as the journey into active duty service. I discussed this with Erica (third-year):

JD: We always looked toward graduation.

Erica: Yeah, I can’t wait to graduate to get out of here.

JD: We didn’t look at it like we were looking forward to commissioning.

Erica: I’ve never heard anyone ever say they’re looking forward to commissioning. Ever. I’ve never heard that once.

As Chris stated, “To a degree, cadets’ attitudes in general are ‘I’m going to do what I have to, to get by and graduate.’” Helen (third-year) sees her peers give up motivation and focus solely on one goal: “A lot of people, their way of dealing with it is saying, ‘I really don’t care anymore’ and saying ‘I can definitely get a 2.0 so I’m just going to graduate.’” Matt (first-year) provides a little more detail in his description of this trend:

This place breeds, I’m blanking on the word, I don’t know. It basically cancels out the drive. So they had this drive to get in, then they get here and they go through Basic, and you get into the school year, and you say it doesn’t matter. The 2.0-and-go attitude. As long as you graduate. Mission graduation. C is for commission.

Thus, my research revealed that many cadets drift through USAFA with an occupational mindset, focused on enduring four years of the Academy experience and committed to escaping the institution in order to attain monetary incentives, a guaranteed job, and a free university education. They see their time at USAFA as a means to an end.

Others, however, prioritize their commitment to the institution and the values of patriotism and duty.

Institutional allegiance

As discussed in Chapter 2, traditionally, the military was a “calling.” Those called to military service supposedly have a sense of purpose that transcends individual self-interest in favor of a presumed higher good, such as the Cadet Honor Code. The Code, created and upheld by cadets, states, “We will not lie, steal, or cheat, nor tolerate among us anyone who does.” Bill (third-year) internalizes principles and values of honesty and respect and says:

That’s the really really cool thing about the military. We’re all part of this really awesome organization where I may have never met you in my entire life but I know you’re going to do the right thing and that if need be, go into that battle with me and we may both lose our lives or you may give your life for me or vice versa. That in and of itself makes me extremely proud to be part of the air force and go to a service academy.

One of the core values of the Air Force Academy is *Service Before Self*, which has guided Erica in her decisions since applying to USAFA:

I didn’t apply anywhere else. I only applied to USAFA because I wanted to serve. You kind of get this impression when you come here that everyone is going to feel the same way you do, they come here to serve their country, not for free education. I see a lot of people who are like “I’m going to five-and-dive⁵ and use my degree from the Academy to make thousands of dollars.” If you’re here to make money it seems like the wrong intentions.

Many cadets expressed their selfless intentions for attending USAFA. Clint (first-year) said, “I’m going to have a purpose to what I’m doing. Serving my country, you know. That’s going to be worth it to me. I want to be here because I want to be in the military and serve.”

Amy (first-year), came to USAFA with prior Air Force service and bluntly declared:

⁵ “Five-and-dive” refers to serving the active duty service commitment of five years, incurred by all USAFA graduates who do not become pilots, and then separating from the military.

When I see these people who are coming in to get their education and do their five-and-dive, I get angry. For us, who have already been in the military, we're joining because we know that this is our lifestyle and we're going to be in it for the long run. It's kind of like they're cheating the system, so I get angry about that.

For Erica and Amy, certain expectations about institutional values were not met when they arrived at USAFA. Helen was frustrated often and told me, "Yes, I'm pissed off 99% of the time." Cadets who come to USAFA to be officers and train for military careers often realize that some of their peers have ulterior motives and different priorities. Steve (third-year) voices his disappointment:

We all kind of know that the Academy is not as good as we hoped it would be. A lot of us are pretty idealistic when we come here and we realize quickly that it's not quite as awesome as we thought. Do you know what I mean? It's still an awesome place but it's not all about leaders of character and integrity. There are plenty of problems.

Cadets walk a line between institutional values and occupational incentives, juggling commitment to one, the other, or both. The traditional military community, as a close-knit unit housed together on a military base, enhanced group cohesion. Modern military life has become more impersonal and social cohesion has weakened as institutional values gave way to occupational concerns (Janowitz 1964; D. Segal 1989). It emerged from my interviews that the commitment to an individual pursuit, almost always occupational in nature, overrides the greater institutional good at USAFA. These cadets are in college and want to live that college lifestyle but USAFA is also a military academy with rules and regulations governing their daily lives. Helen sees a lack of commitment from leadership, which in turn creates a lack of commitment in cadets:

A lot of us want to be really good officers. If they tell us how it's making us better officers, how it's helping the Air Force or directly helping the Academy, a lot of us would have more commitment towards [USAFA] instead of saying 'What clubs can I join? What things can I do? How can I get out of this football game?'"

Chris says that cadets are not committed to the military mission because everyone is “doing their own thing”:

I think the problem is that people aren't committed to this place. We are randomly assigned to forty different squadrons because that's the best way to organize four thousand people, but I don't have a dedication to my individual squadron in general because that's where I was placed randomly. We don't do anything specific. Flying, for instance down at the airfield, we have something we do. We have an end result. We have a mission to accomplish if you want to say that. But up here on the hill you have forty different squadrons that don't have a goal or mission. Everybody is just there to go to school so I think you lose commitment from people because they don't see the purpose of an individual squad.

Commitments to clubs, sports, school, and other activities override the USAFA commitment to the mission of developing officers for the Air Force. Cadets committed to USAFA, as an institution, have a stronger attachment to espoused values that govern their daily lives while cadets committed to occupational aspects place more emphasis on getting through their four years as efficiently as possible in order to meet their personal goals.

ESPOUSED VALUES AND THEORIES-IN-USE

Though organizational scholars use several different perspectives, much of the research on organizational culture assumes that a consensus exists throughout all levels of an organization. The suggestion that organizations could establish “strong cultures” in which all members of the organization embrace the beliefs, values, and norms endorsed by the senior leadership fueled such an approach (Martin 2002). Challenging this belief, Schein (2010) suggested that the “espoused values” of an organization's senior leadership reflect only the tip of a much larger iceberg, as it were, supported by “theories-in-use” hidden deep within the organization. From this perspective, assuming that all members embrace

an organization's espoused values risks ignoring the true underlying assumptions that govern organizational members' thoughts, actions, and identities.

In exploring this dynamic relationship, Pierce's (2010) analysis of U.S. Army officer attitudes revealed that, in general, although senior leaders believe the current culture of the Army follows an occupational paradigm, they prefer to develop and sustain an institutional-minded culture. As Pierce explains, "a lack of congruence between espoused values and theories-in-use can inhibit individual commitment and subsequently impair organizational performance" and thus organizational effectiveness (2010: 103). Relatedly, in a study of psychological contracts in combat units in Iraq, Scott et al. (2006) found that military personnel are motivated to pursue organizational goals when there is a match between member's expectations and the organizational reality they experience. When there is a disconnect between expectation and reality, members could either perceive that the organization deliberately acted in bad faith, there was a misunderstanding of the actual contract terms, or the disconnect occurred because of circumstances outside the control of the organization (Scott et al. 2006).

In my research, cadets point to significant differences between their expectations of the Academy experience with what they found in reality, especially concerning institutional and occupational differences (Waring and Do 2012). One unnamed cadet said, "Cynicism stems from the difference between cadet's expectations of USAFA to reality." When I asked him to expand on those expectations, this cadet stated that he honestly expected that USAFA would be much tougher militarily; he expected behavior in line with an institutional paradigm, rather than an occupational paradigm. In a recent group of interviews on cadet life, Helen said:

There are a lot of things I would've done differently if I would have known what I know now. Freshman year I kept saying I would have never applied if I had known what I was getting into. I think I expected a lot more...a lot less cynicism. I expected a lot less of it. When I thought of the Academy, I thought of a bunch of bright, fit, young people who are so proud of wearing the uniform. I don't know, silly crap like that. Everyone thinks when they come here that everyone is super military who loves everything about the Academy.

This theme was common among many of the cadets I interviewed. They expressed dismay during their first year at USAFA, expecting a high standard of behavior in line with institutional values, yet experiencing something quite different along occupational lines. They found it more disconcerting that the misalignment of unofficial patterns of behavior and institutional guidance was often attributed to "tradition".

Tradition as Justification

The USAFA Core Values, "Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do," guide cadet behavior, establishing a foundation for the profession of arms and military leadership. Thus, the espoused values of the institution are clear but not binding, as evidenced by unofficial theories-in-use hidden from official channels and maintained by "tradition." In short, while the institution preaches accountability and high standards of conduct, cadets live by vastly different rules. Kim (first-year) observed:

So the kind of the things no one really explains and this is why you're doing this and it's a good enough reason, those things that they're just like "We did it before so that's why we're doing it now." Or the upperclassmen say, "I had to do it my freshmen year, why aren't they doing it now? Let's make them do it.

Kelly (third-year) has also seen the perpetuation of theories-in-use for the sake of "tradition":

I talk to people about the Academy and we're like, why do we do certain things we do? Because it was done in the past. Did it help you? In fact, when you were a freshman you complained about all this stuff. This is stupid, this is stupid, and this is

stupid. Then when you become an upperclassman, you forget about all that stuff and you become the jerk you hated when you were a freshman. Why do you do that? It doesn't really help anybody. It just turns other people into jerks.

Only a few cadets, usually first-years, spoke out against cadet behavior that was not in line with official guidance. Dave (first-year) said:

A lot of things they do here they just say that they've been doing it for this many years. Well, tradition is not always right. We talked about this in behavioral science. Sometimes they don't know why they're doing it just because the person who trained them did it and the person who trained them did it. So I think sometimes step back and take a look at what you're actually doing. Study it and improve certain things here.

While a few cadets were outspoken about this topic, many focused on reasons to justify the behavior. Kim explained that cadets rely on shortcuts because it is impossible to live up to the standards of the institution:

There are a lot of unwritten rules. If you're a freshman running on the strips and you're actually running, people tell you to slow down. They're saying, "Why are you showing up your classmates like that? You're not taking care of your classmates." I'm obeying the rules, I'm doing it in excellence, I'm having integrity. I'm doing what you want me to do and, yet more often than not, the majority of the cadet wing is mediocre. Let's just do it mediocre, doing it excellent all the time is impossible.

When pressed to explain why this is an unachievable goal, Kim stated:

People get so worn down on not being excellent in things they want to be excellent in because they just can't. A lot of people want to be really good at academics but the ability to be really good at academics is so hard. So much so that you either don't sleep or you don't have a social life. So people go with the mediocre because if I can't be excellent in things I want to be excellent in, then I'm just going to be mediocre in everything so I can at least get through here.

Bill believes this attitude arises from the nature of the institution and preservation of its unwritten ways:

But when I look around and everybody is, not everybody, but a lot of people are doing the wrong thing. That's where the cynicism starts coming into play. People are starting to get angry that they're trying to do the right thing but there are all these people around them doing the wrong thing. So what do they start doing? They stop caring, they stop doing the right thing, and then they join it. They join

that bandwagon. You're so beat down from trying to do the right thing and people around you not doing the right thing. That's where that expectation, when I came to USAFA, was not met.

Although organizational culture in any setting strives to keep a balance between espoused values and theories-in-use, the unique environment at USAFA and other federal service academies is a fundamental aspect of cadet behavior. Consequently, the dynamics of espoused values and theories-in-use must be seen within the context of a total institution.

TOTAL OR REINVENTIVE INSTITUTION?

In cadet life, every aspect falls under the single authority of the Superintendent (a three-star Air Force general, the second-highest rank a military officer can achieve). Sleep, play, academics, physical fitness, military training, meals, dress and appearance, and relationships between cadets are major areas of cadet life directed by the USAFA system. Standard military regulations seem lax compared to the authoritarian nature of the service academy. The daily schedule is packed, and governed by strict requirements; all members of the institution carry out their daily activities together, and every action in this busy schedule takes place for the sole purpose of fulfilling the institutional mission of creating leaders of character for the U.S. Air Force. Thus, in many ways, the federal service academies approximate Goffman's vision of a total institution; however, Scott (2011) argues they represent a *reinventive* institution, one members enter voluntarily for resocialization and self-improvement.

Containing aspects of a total institution and accepting willing participants, USAFA resocializes incoming cadets in the military way of life. Upon arrival, cadets become completely depersonalized. They trade in their street clothes for uniforms and receive the

exact same issued uniform and personal items down to toothbrushes and socks. Cadets give up unique lives for total control, endure degradation ceremonies, and are subject to various means of control, resocialization, deindividuation, and harsh training and treatment. Upperclass cadets are responsible for instructing the basic cadets in the ways of USAFA, ensuring conformity to the institution's formal and informal rules, values, and beliefs.

Training

Resocialization at USAFA involves mental and physical harassment on a daily basis. During "training sessions," upperclass cadets "train" or harass first-years with physical workouts and recitations of memorized military knowledge. Many upperclass cadets and former cadets justify this abusive supervision and harassment as empowering and motivational for the first-years, a tool used to depersonalize and remold cadets into a polished product guided by institutional ideals. Characteristic of total institutions, means of control include sign-out logs that track a cadet's whereabouts outside the immediate area, identification badges for access in the restricted cadet area, uniforms, and memorization of military quotes and knowledge. These are explicit symbols of domination, demonstrating outward use of power over cadets, serving to manifest and reinforce a hierarchical order (Scott 1990).

Immediately upon entrance to USAFA, cadets begin Basic Cadet Training (BCT), a program ostensibly designed to fundamentally alter their individual sense of identity and create a bond of cohesion among military members. However, cadets hold a different perception of the purpose of BCT. Callahan (2009) recalls being told by senior cadets in

BCT that the training she was experiencing aimed to break them down so that they could build them back up, a theory-in-use of BCT that has persisted over many years. In my own experience as a first-year going through BCT and as a fourth-year cadre member running the program, I repeated what I learned and taught other cadets the same message: that we were required to break down the first-years to build them back up. In my mind, we acted in the best interest of the institution and its goals of developing and training the best Air Force officers to lead our military. Steve also recalls hearing about the purpose of BCT training, but does not remember the source of this information:

I'm not sure if there is a reason you have to be physically broken down and supposedly built back up. I'm not sure how that works. I don't think upperclassmen or the BCT cadre even know. It's like, this is how we've always done it. We're supposed to yell in their faces.

Similarly, Logan (third-year) relates this well-known fact about training at USAFA:

There were a lot of cadets saying that we went through this, it was tough and now you're making it easy for them. They relate it to their past and how they experienced it. They were wanting to do the same thing to them, they see it as a tradition. I would say that starts from when you were a freshman. You were always told why they did it and this is what we're doing. "We're going to break you down and build you back up into something better." You just get that mentality and you see it all around you and then your upperclass endorse it so that's the way. That's how it's supposed to be. It's the norm.

Behavior becomes institutionalized as tradition when cadets repeat it enough times and believe it as true. They believe that breaking the mental and physical will of new cadets to remold them into a military image through training frequently bordering on hazing is an espoused value of the institution; however, an examination of the regulation governing BCT (COCI 36-101) shows no mention of this "break them down to build them up" strategy. Steve questioned, "A lot of people say we need to break them down and build them back up. No one really stops and critically thinks and asks if this is really effective." Additional

interviews showed that although cadets disagreed with and disliked abrasive training methods, they simply accepted this theory-in-use and did not attempt to reconcile it with espoused values on how cadets should train and develop as officers.

Selective rebellion as secondary adjustment

Alongside the formal system of military rules and regulations, cadets learn the informal negotiated order of rule-bending, which teaches them what it “really” means to be a member of the cadet wing (Scott 2011). I found that some cadets prided themselves on the ability to prioritize rules worth following, separating themselves from the other cadets who tried their best to follow the rules down to the letter. When confronted by an immovable policy or stubborn leadership, these cadets learned to skirt the rules. For example, rules that govern the wear of the uniform and personal appearance are usually the first to be ignored. The members of the in-group, in this case cadets who decide which rules to follow, develop a culture of indifference toward dress and personal appearance, such as long sideburns and unkempt hair, and keep other in-group member in check by sanctioning those who attempt to correct their peers. Cadets then become reluctant to fix problems and address infractions because of sanctions, which include verbal harassment and threats to categorize them as part of the out-group of rule-followers.

Goffman (1961) used the term “secondary adjustments” to refer to the tactics and strategies that asylum inmates acquired once they had made the “primary adjustment” of learning the official rules. (I return to these concepts in Chapter 6.) Once inmates learned the ropes, they developed an understanding of how some rules could be bent, also known as “working the system” (Scott 2011). Cadets participate in secondary adjustments, or

selective rebellion and non-compliance, against the rules and regulations governing military life at USAFA. Their secondary adjustments do not directly challenge staff but allow cadets to obtain forbidden satisfactions or to obtain permitted ones by forbidden means (Goffman 1961). Breaking the rules provide cadets with important evidence that they are still their own person, with some control of their environment. Kim told me that there is no possible way to obey every single rule at USAFA and this is a purposeful design flaw in the system. She told me, "At a certain point, if you can't do one rule why not just disobey two rules. Why not disobey five rules or six rules and pretend like we're not and don't tell anyone that we're not? There are a lot of unwritten rules like that." Haley (first-year) has also learned this dynamic, telling me that cadets break rules to release stress:

It's a sticky slope because I'm not going to sit here and tell you that I haven't done that stuff, but I'm also not going to sit here and tell you that it's okay because I have done that stuff. I don't think it's okay to break small rules but I guess I can understand it.

I asked Haley to explain which rules were okay to break and which rules were off-limits.

I'll never break any of the big rules, I guess. There isn't a small or big rule, but there is. There's a scale here, I guess. I would say underage drinking is a bigger one but I know a lot of people still do it.

Haley's answers piqued my interest and I continued to ask for clarification about prioritizing rules.

Haley: We're supposed to be all integrity and honor and you would think that the small rules, even the stupid ones, fall under that. But when you're actually having to live by it, it's hard to make yourself follow the stupid rules, I guess.

JD: So there are stupid rules and good rules?

Haley: See, I don't know. I feel like with a lot of those types of rules, it's a matter about being smart about breaking them. Which is sad to say, but I feel is true.

Matt told me about a quote painted on one of the walls in his squadron, saying “It’s along the lines of ‘Follow people, don’t follow rules’. When the rules get ridiculous, you don’t have to follow them as much.”

One of the main tasks in power interactions is the establishment of a definition of the situation; individuals can establish a definition of a situation by behaving consistent with their identity, influencing the behavior of others, and by resisting the identities that others seek to impose on them (Cast 2003). In Logan’s case, his institutional identity lines up with his own behavior and expectations of others:

Kids come here and think it’s college. This isn’t college. This is a military institution. We’re here to prepare ourselves for something greater than ourselves. A search for self. We’re joining something bigger than this. They need to figure that out. This is not just a college where you play around. You need to do your best and show that you’re worthy.

Other cadets realize that multiple identities require equal consideration, especially when the institution pulls them toward the directions of military personnel, student, and athlete. Mary stated, “I guess here we’re so focused on public reception and pageantry and we’re just perfect military people, but we’re also college students at the same time.” Haley struggled with this power dynamic and worried about the person she might become, “For me, though, the hardest thing this year is just trying to find a balance between who I am and who they want me to be.” Jim (first-year) is a football player and upset that he has been identified as a player who is on the practice squad. He believes the team has overlooked his extraordinary abilities and mistakenly kept him from playing during the season:

You go from being where I was [back home], where everybody knew who I was and I was the man, to coming here and just be another person. I never really cared about the spotlight, but it was nice having that attention. Your hard work was being respected but here you’re just another number and everyone treats you like crap

from the get go, so I hated it. Hated it. I was talking to my dad – he was talking about and saying that the Air Force is trying to create officers and not football players down here. Well, if we're at football I want to be doing football stuff.

Jim's identity as a football player takes priority over the institutional goal of officer development. This prioritization of an identity hierarchy is understandable, considering Jim was recruited to play Division I football at USAFA. Helen contemplates the process of identity formation and her own experience:

I was thinking about this the other day, that I lost a part of who I was from coming here. I used to be a really happy person all the time and always bubbly and friendly and this place has made me task-oriented. It definitely squashes part of individuality that you had that helped us get into this place. I talked with a lot of my friends about this that this is perceived among all the cadets that they lost who they are being here. I don't think that's an Air Force thing – that's an Academy thing. I'm sure that once we get into the real [active duty] Air Force and we have a life as well as our job that it won't really be that way. I think that's a part of what the Academy intrinsically is, making us all into a bunch of robots.

Cadets exist at the bottom of the military hierarchy with little power, actively rebelling against the dominating powers of the institution in the form of rule-breaking or following rules on their own terms, a failure to follow or uphold the standards, and a resistance to enforcing the rules. They strive to strike a balance between the identities imposed upon them by the institution and who they were or want to become, selectively rebelling against USAFA and attempting to limit its power over them (Barbalet 1985). Rick (third-year) provides his explanation for selective rebellion, based on unmet expectations:

I hear a lot of people say, and I would agree, that you have this perception coming in that everyone here is going to be a god. That everyone is going to be super motivated, really on board with this place and what's going on. That's not the case. A lot of people expected more people to be real enthusiastic and on board with everything here. It's now a cynical nature, sometimes the culture of non-compliance.

Even Ronnie, who appeared very enthusiastic and professed that he was happy to be a cadet at USAFA, admitted he resisted rules as part of a game or fight against an oppressor:

I think a lot of it comes from being mandated to do so many things that you don't want to. If you could kind of get away with something that's even small, it's a little victory. I know I've felt that before, even recently. Even if it wasn't directly breaking a rule, it's kind of like, feel like I'm getting away with something so I won in that instance.

Damain (third-year) passionately spoke about many issues in the cadet wing. He was upset at a lot of these issues of compliance, but remained positive and upbeat about most topics.

One particular incident was very frustrating for him, and for other cadets in the same situation, regarding mandatory attendance at football games⁶. Many cadets purchased tickets to a weekday country music concert, anticipating that the next home football game would take place on a Saturday. Since Air Force football was scheduled to play Wyoming, a highly publicized game, television network scheduling changed at the last minute and the game moved to the same night of the concert. Cadets rapidly submitted a request for official permission to miss the football game, which was initially granted by military leadership but rescinded prior to the game. Damian lost his composure while speaking about this and expressed his irritation:

Mandatory attendance, at what cost? You got my mandatory attendance but did you get what you really wanted? I wasn't there mentally. You want me to be there and cheer on my team? I sat down the entire game and just sat there. If you go there now, you have two rows that are standing up. Everyone else is sitting down. You got what you wanted. All the cadets are there. You can make us show up but you can't make us care.

A few cadets I spoke with went so far as breaking the cadet Honor Code in their acts of rebellion and resistance. Cadets are expected to report themselves or other cadets for violations of the Honor Code, creating an environment of accountability of and trust; however, differing interpretations of the Honor Code create ambiguity. Jim told me

⁶ Cadets are required to attend home football games and are charged general admission for each game, which is automatically deducted from their pay account.

“everyone is lying all the time” at USAFA and that if “lying was really enforced, everyone would have an honor violation here.” In his eyes, this fact helped justify “at one point last year, I didn’t fake a SSS⁷ to go home, but I put a good story together just so I could go home two weeks early for Thanksgiving because I had to leave.” In another example, Kim and her upperclass mentor lied about accomplishing work for, ironically, a character development seminar:

My coach came to me and we have to do that Mosaic character report. It’s like character development stuff, so I have to speak with him about it. He came to me and said, “Okay, we have to do another meeting about this. But we’re not going to do it but we’ll say we did” and just walked off. And I’m like, I’m fine with that, okay, but you’re the one who is going to get in trouble if it’s not done.

Monty seemed comfortable with covering up Honor Code violations:

If you know someone, a cheater or someone, you’re supposed to report them. But cadets don’t like it because, what is it, I guess it’s frowned upon to rat out a good friend of yours. If your best friend is here and you see him cheat or lie or something, you don’t want to rat him out because obviously he would be pissed off at you. If you’re good friends with someone and you see them stealing, cheating, or lying, or something, for the most part I feel like you won’t report them.

For many cadets, remaining loyal to friends held more significance than upholding USAFA’s foundation of moral and character development.

Playing it cool

Goffman (1961) observed a version of the dynamics of espoused values and theories-in-use in what he called “playing it cool.” This involves a combination of secondary adjustments and loyalty to the collective so that an individual will have a good chance of emerging physically and psychologically undamaged from an institution. Several cadets stated that

⁷ A Staff Summary Sheet (SSS) is an official request form requiring signatures from each member in a leadership hierarchy. In this case, Jim needed to file a SSS in order to inform his chain of command as ask their permission to leave early.

they break rules and decide not to enforce standards to stay sane, show allegiance to their peers, and maintain their identity. Hans (third-year) shared his frustration with this attitude:

That threw me off, that the lack of effort was cool. Being less military was a cool thing. It's just kind of weird in the fact that these cadets, not doing cadet-like things, is what is normal. Cadets now don't really follow what the standards are, which is weird. Over time people start slipping and it's harder to correct it so people just let small things slip. Pretty soon it gets to a point where you're hating on everything you do here. It's the norm. Not being a cadet is what is cool. The less of a cadet you are, the cooler it is. And not caring about the military side is the norm.

Chris expanded on being part of the in-crowd and behaving cool:

People don't want to hold their peers accountable because you look like a toolbag, which is a big dilemma here. I guess you don't want to be perceived as the tool to your buddies. You want to be in the cool crowd, [like cadets] who don't button their pocket. It's a stupid example but it's really that simple. People just have a thing about upholding people who adhere to the standards and there is almost this code of "if you want to be in the in-crowd don't follow X, Y, and Z."

Kim was straightforward in her assessment of overachievers at USAFA, telling me "If you go above and beyond, nobody likes you."

I frequently heard cadets rationalize this in-group and out-group dynamic of being a cool cadet by stating they did not correct infractions due to a sense of honor and not behaving as hypocrites do. Clint says, "If you're going to correct people, you need to be perfect." Monty (third-year) refuses to correct other cadets because he does not want to be known as a hypocrite. Since everyone makes mistakes, in his eyes, correcting someone else is not possible because he has also made the same or similar mistakes. "For me, I don't really like hypocrites and I don't want to be a hypocrite. It's hard to call people out on a proxy because of my proxy⁸." Kelly has no love for cadets who are hypocrites:

⁸ Entry in and around the cadet area requires the display of a restricted access badge, also known as a proximity or proxy badge. Badges are clipped onto clothing or worn around the neck with a lanyard.

Oh, you're going to tell me to do this but I see you over there doing that. Stop being a tool, man. You know, stop pretending you're this great person and that you care when you're over there, I don't know, fratting with a freshman."

Bill finds another explanation for playing it cool, although he falls back on the collective narrative of hypocrisy. I asked him why cadets do not hold each other accountable and he replied:

I think that's a very simple answer – they don't care and it's hard. It's never been done for them or they're tired. I get it, we have long days, their mind is on other things. "Why should I care about this tiny infraction?" You know what I mean? "This tiny little infraction doesn't bother me." And then they're just too tired to do it in a lot of instances. Don't get me wrong, it's exhausting especially correcting your peers. It's one thing to correct freshmen. Don't get me wrong, it takes balls to correct upperclassmen. The hardest thing is if you're trying to correct someone, you better be sure your shit is squared away. Are they going to be like, "I remember that one time you were talking in formation." You know? "I remember that one time your hair was out of regs." You know what I mean? I don't want to be embarrassed. No one does. You know, you just kind of look like an asshole now that you tried to call someone else out and you weren't upholding the standard yourself.

Cadets may want to do the right thing but consider the implications of developing a certain identity as a result of their actions; cadets want to be cool and do not want to be labeled as tools or hypocrites.

The few cadets who do the right thing, by following and actively enforcing the rules, face criticism and ridicule from their peers and are considered the cadet out-group. It is difficult for cadets to follow the standards and even more difficult for them to uphold standards among peers, but playing it cool and not complying with rules is effortless. Petra nonchalantly declared, "I feel guilty when I break a rule, but I do it anyway." Cadets want to do the right thing, and many cadets likely do the right thing most of the time, but the pressure of playing it cool leads to certain decisions about which rules to follow and which ones to break. If cadets are doing the right thing, what is "right" in their eyes? I believe this distinction is based on personal interpretation. Cadets act on their own belief there is

nothing wrong with breaking the rules because, to them, they are still doing the right thing.

Mary told me about a recent USAFA campaign that urged cadets to behave accordingly:

At Mitch's they play a powerpoint and one of the slides says, "You know what right looks like." I always think that's interesting because people have different ideas of what right is.

In cases of "doing the right thing," rule-breaking cadets use a variety of verbal sanctions to influence behavior and bring the upstanding cadets back into the fold. NARP (Non-Athletic Regular Person), tool, cadet, try-hard, and phrases like "calm down" work to penalize cadets who fail to demonstrate their loyalty to the Cadet Wing by participating in secondary adjustments. Intercollegiate athletes have recently adopted the term NARP to label any cadet who is not an intercollegiate athlete, although cadets hold differing opinions about its definition. Damian uses the most-accepted definition as "anyone who isn't an intercollegiate athlete." I asked Whitney (third-year), who recently quit her intercollegiate team, if she was now a NARP. She laughed and agreed, "I am a NARP. It stands for non-athletic regular person, but it really just means anybody who follows the rules." Cadets also use the term "tool" to label and ostracize cadets. Chris defined a tool as "somebody who upholds the standards and calls people out, basically." Kelly describes how cadets have appropriated the general descriptor "cadet" and turned it into something undesirable:

I feel the stigma with being a "cadet" is like you actually care. You at least uphold the standards and things like that, and then when you tell them they're doing something wrong they say, "Stop being a cadet, man. Don't be a cadet."

To the collective, it's imperative that they "get out," or graduate, physically and psychologically undamaged. The only way to maintain some semblance of humanity, hold onto their identity, and emerge as unscathed as possible is to stick together and fight against the common enemy, which is the institution itself. Self-policing behavior ensures

the collective follows group norms and maintains loyalty, protecting their identities from institutional attempts at resocialization. “It is thus *against something* that the self can emerge” (Goffman 1961:280). Cadets volunteer to go to USAFA, endure a rigorous application process, and endure four years of grueling academics and physically demanding training for the prize of graduation. For many cadets, USAFA is a means to an end and the easiest way to get what they want for their future. Unfortunately USAFA just might strip them of their personal identities away in the process, something cadets realize and combat by fighting against the system and its rules.

RECONCILING REBELLION AND CONFORMITY

The federal service academies, where cadets train to be military leaders of character, ostensibly foster a complete sense of commitment, discipline, and integrity. If this were the whole story, we should expect cadets to proudly stand against any deviation from the rules and regulations in place and openly support each other in the mission to commission as the nation’s finest military officers. However, my research revealed a different reality. Cadets flaunted regulations, complained about rules and restrictions, and criticized those who failed to measure up to their standards. Because cadets exist on the bottom of a complex hierarchy, they lack the power to challenge the status quo. Selective rebellion is a strategy that the powerless use in an institution created around domination (Scott 1990). As my research reveals, although the military prizes conformity, resistance plays a prominent role in a restrictive environment such as USAFA.

In this chapter, I have shown how some cadets, some of the time, rebel against some of USAFA’s stated values. In an occupationally oriented military, theories-in-use can trump

espoused values, with tradition providing the justification. In the next chapter, I examine another set of values and traditions, which prove much less conducive to rebellion and resistance.

CHAPTER 5

FITNESS TESTING AND THE MILITARY MASCULINE-WARRIOR

Camouflaged formations of cadets covered in mud adjust their Kevlar helmets as they slowly advance toward their targets. Shouting in cadence, the formation explodes with battle cries as rifles repeatedly lunge forward, smashing in the faces and torsos of the training dummies. Directly behind the formation, explosions boom and smoke covers a group of cadets low-crawling up a hill under barbed wire through the Assault Course. The sounds and sights of battle set the backdrop for the mentally and physically demanding Basic Cadet Training (BCT) in Jack's Valley. Eventually, the noise and dust settle. Basic cadets march back up to the cadet area to be accepted into the cadet wing and begin their academic year, but memories of BCT stay with them. Exactly what lessons and experiences does this indoctrination instill in cadets toward their development as future USAF officers? More importantly, what does this training mean in the development of masculinity and what it means to be a man or woman and masculine or feminine?

In this chapter, I examine how, despite an institutional intention of non-sexism, individual men nevertheless construct a highly masculinized culture. Using the example of physical fitness standards that are intended to reflect equitable measurement of fitness levels for women and men, I explore how a vocal minority of men create and perpetuate a biased gender norm. As the privileged group, men can thus retain power by upholding "fair," i.e., masculine, fitness standards. I begin by discussing the influence of the masculine-warrior paradigm, along with the combat narrative, in the military and at USAFA. Next, I examine physical fitness testing and show how the differing standards for men and women threaten this paradigm. I argue that the combat narrative becomes an

acceptable way for cadets to express their gender biases, overriding the actual reason for the existence of fitness testing. I conclude by discussing how acknowledging the lived experience of active duty in the Air Force would allow for gender equality.

THE MILITARY MASCULINE-WARRIOR

Throughout history, many cultures have seen military service as a rite of passage to adulthood where men learn toughness, transform bodies, construct masculinities, and eliminate what is considered effeminate (Kimmel 1994; Klein 1999; Brown 2004; Fiala 2008; Hinojosa 2010; Hale 2012). Military training is tough and physically demanding, requiring high fitness levels. According to the rhetoric, joining the armed forces and going off to foreign lands to fight against the enemies of the homeland will make a man out of you. Not only is entering the military an opportunity for boys to become men, but a time for the military to make men out of boys (Arkin and Dobrovsky 1978; Woodward and Winter 2004; Sion 2007). Military training exists to put its members through mental and physical hardships, for which the “proper” response is to exhibit a desired masculinity through aggressiveness, courage, endurance, and resilience (Barrett 1996). Military culture is shaped by men and, as a socializing institution, its masculine norms and values are reinforced and rewarded from the beginning of basic training throughout a military career (Dunivin 1994). Mary (third-year) deftly picked up on this:

Sometimes I see things here at the Academy that, it's just very masculine. Masculinity is associated with power. Feminine stuff you don't really see here. I can't really think of anything that shows we're feminine here. We have more of an idea of what is powerful and those traits and how it relates to masculinity. With feminine stuff, it's harder to define, I feel. We're not really surrounded by that.

She mentioned signs of masculinity and their prevalence around the cadet area, especially in the library, including a painting of a man swimming through a sea of naked women, phallic symbols such as the display of military rifles and the new Center for Character and Leadership Development glass skylight tower unofficially dubbed the “Phallus Palace.”

The masculine-warrior ideology also portrays warriors as existing above “ordinary” citizens. In military socialization, this appears in the philosophy that the military differs from the civilian sector in that it sets higher standards for its members, who are set apart from others by virtue of a higher calling to sacrifice their lives for their country and perform jobs that civilians cannot do. As Jason (first year) put it, “In times of combat, you might have certain situations where you need to be in shape and need to do things that a normal person couldn’t do.” Similarly, Farouk (first-year) proudly noted the following about military standards:

It separate us from other colleges, because a lot of other college campuses, a lot of people are walking around who are just students. So they’re either out of shape or they’re not healthy. It’s just natural, you know that your classmates are at least up to a bare minimum of athletic abilities.

Having a skillset unique to the profession, along with the training and authority to fight and kill other human beings in combat, further separates military from civilian mindset.

Combat and the “hero”

The paradigm of the masculine-warrior obviously includes combat. The primary function and core activities of the military involve training and organizing around combat roles. Images of the military are synonymous with those of combat, which include uniforms, firearms, and conflicts in foreign lands (Dunivin 1994). The warrior role, played by military personnel engaging in combat, offers a way to prove one’s manhood (Arkin and

Dobrovsky 1978; Dunivin 1994; Morgan 1994; Sion 2007; Hale 2012). Participation in combat constitutes the main test through which military masculinity is achieved, providing men the opportunity to demonstrate not only masculinity but also heroism.

The “hero” trope has an ancient history, harkening back to Greek mythology. In more recent terms, heroism is part of our official national narrative, widespread and deeply rooted in popular culture (Morgan 1994). Since 9/11, this trope has been part of nearly every political speech and has thus become engrained in our official narrative as Americans (Boyle 2011). Everyone wants to see the heroic equation play out in war; narratives of war assure aspiring combatants they will behave heroically and honorably.

The hero trope is implicit in displays of public gratitude to members of the military, which include “thank you for your service.” It also appears when retail stores and restaurants offer military discounts on merchandise and service. Television, film, and the power of social media also propagate this trope. *Band of Brothers*, *The Hurt Locker*, and *American Sniper* are just several of many films that glorify the military and portray its members as heroes. This treatment of military personnel, along with basic socialization into gender roles through their own cultural influences, contributes to the preconceived notions cadets hold regarding military heroism and masculinity when they arrive at USAFA. Throughout my research, I found that cadets readily demonstrated the power and influence of the hero trope. For example, Monty (third-year) claims he is “not afraid of dying for my country.” “We’re all going to eventually going to die,” he explained, “and it would be pretty honorable to die for your country.” Bill (third-year) refers to his bond with his classmates as motivation to behave heroically when the time comes:

I will gladly, I really do believe this, gladly lay down my life for one of my friends one day if they ask of it from me or if it meant saving ten of my buddies. That’s the really

really cool thing about the military. We're all part of this really awesome organization where I may have never met you in my entire life but I know you're going to do the right thing and that if need be, go into that battle with me and we may both lose our lives or you may give your life for me or vice versa.

The Faux-Warrior Ethos

Despite the power of the warrior and hero tropes, the reality of daily life in the Air Force poses a dramatic contrast. In the unofficial hierarchy that exists among the military branches, the Army and Marines pride themselves on physical fitness exceeding that of either the Navy or the Air Force. The Air Force boasts of its technological prowess, but is the subject of joking as the military prima donnas. For example, while deployed in combat zones or temporary assignments on Army installations, the Air Force has a reputation for desiring the accommodations of a five-star hotel. Service branches have also constructed a narrative of a masculine-warrior façade in the Air Force, referring to them as the *Chair Force*. This tongue-in-cheek and derogatory term describes the relatively sedentary lifestyle of the Air Force, which highlights what I call the “faux warrior ethos.”

Military personnel argue that the Air Force has far less demanding physical requirements than the more traditional combat branches. To be fair, the Air Force participates in combat in a fundamentally different manner than do the other services. Most of their duties involve support to the warfighter, where most jobs are non-combat and most combat jobs do not engage an adversary one-on-one. The Air Force makes up about 23% of the entire Department of Defense, about 258,000 personnel in 1.1 million, as of December 2014 (DMDC 2015). Instead of patrolling areas on the ground, the Air Force flies overhead or engages in combat remotely using remotely piloted aircraft (RPA). When people think of warfighters in the AF, fighter pilots come to mind. Yet, only about 4% of the

total AF are pilots, and an even smaller percentage of that percentage are fighter pilots. Thus, direct or hand-to-hand combat is a stretch for almost all the career fields in the AF; even fighter pilots attack from a distance. Although the AF does deploy to combat zones, about 7% of the entire force was in a deployed status in 2014. Less than 1% (or about 3000 total personnel) of the AF hold an occupational designation for direct combat on the ground.

In sum, a duality exists between the warrior-focused training and the lived experience of active duty. Accounts from Candace and Mary summarize this duality well. In describing training, Candace emphasizes how “you’ve got gear, you’ve got all of your uniform and heavy boots and sometimes, maybe, you know, you’re going through a creek or whatever and you’re wet.” Mary looks at the warrior focus differently, saying “Some of my friends complain and say that it doesn’t feel like we’re in the military.” She continued:

I wear a uniform but I just go to class all the time and I’m surrounded by people who don’t really show what a warrior is. We’re all just people who work in an office, basically. I feel like we’re people who sit at a desk. Well, the Air Force is not really about kicking down doors and boots on the ground. Sometimes they are and it would be cool if we had that more but I feel like they go about it sometimes in the wrong way with the Jack’s Valley training. Nobody really enjoyed it. They don’t do that in the real Air Force.

Similarly, Erica (third-year) adds, “How many AF officers actually go into combat? The STO/CROs and ALOs⁹, they’re going to be there. A lot of people in missiles or computer science, they’re not going to be there.”

Despite the reality, cadets bring an awareness of the hero trope and expectations of combat readiness to USAFA. Basic Cadet Training builds on this foundation by legitimating the connections between masculinity and the warrior. Military socialization at USAFA is

⁹ Special Tactics Officer, Combat Rescue Officer, Air Liaison Officer

unlike what enlistees and other officer accession sources experience in Officer Training School (OTS) and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). OTS is the smallest commissioning program for the Air Force, indoctrinating and preparing non-prior service college graduates in a ten-week period. ROTC is the oldest and largest commissioning program, where students attend college but also receive basic military training and officer development during regular drills and field training exercises in the summer. USAFA is unique because cadets wear their uniform every day, live and train in the same buildings, and indoctrination and officer development occur daily over the course of four years. Moreover, resistance is difficult, as the nature of cadet life and organizational structure of USAFA aims at rapid and thorough socialization.

SUSTAINING THE USAFA MASCULINE-WARRIOR PARADIGM

USAFA constitutes what Goffman (1961) calls a “total institution,” a setting that depersonalizes and resocializes individuals. Moreover, USAFA employs an adversative method of training, deliberately introducing emotional and psychological stress to create a mindset conducive to institutional values (Kimmel 1994; Callahan 2009). Within this isolated crucible, solidarity among cadets becomes intense and alumni loyalty becomes powerful. Hans (third-year) told me that he lived in fear during the first year:

I think there is definitely an interaction between freshmen and upperclassmen that is pretty unique. I think there’s an intimidation factor. Do what they say and don’t challenge. I think that’s the scare tactic, but hardship really brought us together, which made freshmen year more enjoyable and beneficial.

In BCT, the assimilation of “warrior culture” and “warrior ethos” is constant.

Dominic (first-year) describes his first encounter with the warrior ethos:

First BCT, we're taught to be airmen, gentlemen, and officers. Second BCT they try to transform us into warriors and that we can accomplish anything, no matter what was put in our way we would get through it. That's the warrior ethos.

While a few first-years have prior military experience and some come from military families and even USAFA alumni families, most have no military experience when they arrive on their first day, called Inprocessing or I-Day. Cadets arrive on I-Day and are bombarded with aggressive, screaming cadre who flex muscles under shirts purposely purchased two sizes too small. They enter a basic training program designed, in part, to fundamentally alter their individual sense of identity to create a bond of cohesion among military members (Callahan 2010). First-years endure six-weeks of BCT, modeled after active duty basic training, which delivers military socialization in a mentally and physically challenging environment of endurance, stress, and combat training.

The first three weeks of BCT take place in the cadet area where first-years learn to be subordinates, relying on the upper three classes of cadets for all of their basic military indoctrination including customs and courtesies, dress and appearance, and decorum. After the first phase of basic cadet training, they are ready to suit up for the second phase, Second BCT, located on campus at a military field training complex called Jack's Valley. First-years encounter simulated gunfire, barbed wire, explosions, and smoke as they tackle the assault, confidence, obstacle, and leadership reaction courses to test first-year mettle. This training site is a construction of masculine work, which include themes of danger combined with hardship and dirt, where cadets become "hyper-invested" in the warrior identity through training conditions simulating combat (Sion 2007). Rifle drills, low-crawling through mud, barbed wire, search and destroy missions, obstacle courses, evasion and escape are just a few scenarios cadets experience. In practice, few Air Force personnel

will engage in these activities in their entire career; however, basic training is designed to socialize new recruits under conditions similar to a laboratory, not train in occupational or combat skills (Arkin and Dobrovsky 1978). Militarization socializes cadets into what men “should” be. As Logan (third-year), who worked cadre for First BCT, said:

I took a bunch of kids that were civilians, yelled at them, put them in their place, taught them the military way. Some of them come in, they talk back and show disrespect when someone tells them what to do because they’re not used to someone telling them what to do. I’m higher ranking and you’re supposed to follow what I say. I just have to tell them that there is a certain order to things.

One combat training scenario during Second BCT involves drills with “rubber ducks.” Many cadets have never held a weapon in their life up to this point. They are issued non-functioning M16 training rifles, coated in rubber, with the moving parts removed. Cadre initiate the first-years in proper firearm care, as they will be expected to keep their “rubber duck” with them at all times. Like clockwork, smoke and explosions go off in the background while first-years hug their rifle tightly and make their way through the assault course. Part of the course involves hand-to-hand rifle combat, where first-years learn to attack dummies using various strikes. Emphasis is placed on making a “war face”, which involves grimacing as fiercely as possible and screaming at the top of the lungs while stabbing the target with the front end of the barrel where one would attach a bayonet (Stone 2012).

Bayonet training was used as a psychological tool to eliminate the reluctance of human beings to kill each other and develop in soldiers aggressiveness and preparation for close combat (Engen 2006; Grossman 2009; Stone 2012). In 2010, the Army eliminated the bayonet assault course from basic training. Our armed forces had not launched a bayonet charge since the Korean War and basic training was the only place it remained in existence.

Although recognized as a traditional military socialization practice, the Army dropped the bayonet drills in favor of more practical skills like hand-to-hand combatives based on the martial arts. While the Army had dropped this event from their training, USAFA cadets just finished running bayonet drills this past summer. Understanding the perceived importance and rationale of these drills, as well as other military training at USAFA, begins with understanding the development of a military masculine-warrior.

The perception by cadets regarding the purpose of BCT is to mentally and physically break down the first-years so the upper class cadets could build them back up into leaders for the Air Force. This common theory-in-use was regularly passed from upper class cadre to first-year cadets and we were never aware of the actual organizational purpose of BCT. Officially, the organizational purpose of BCT is to provide a professional leadership experience for upper class cadets and a challenging and motivating introduction to the Academy and the military profession for basic cadets (USAFA 2011). The espoused values listed in the governing document for BCT are “to develop upper class cadets into responsive, decisive leaders of character and to develop basic cadets into highly trained, disciplined, physically fit and mission-ready fourth class cadets” (USAFA 2011:6). This indoctrination is meant to initiate the cadet into desired cultural norms that reinforce qualities such as power, toughness, dominance, aggressiveness, and competitiveness, resulting in an image of a “combat, masculine warrior” (Dunivin 1994).

Cadets undergo militarization in other ways, too. According to institutional correspondence and guidance, USAFA defines the “warrior ethos” as the embodiment of the warrior spirit; tough mindedness, tireless motivation, unceasing vigilance, willingness to sacrifice one’s life for the country, and commitment to be the world’s premier air, space

and cyberspace force are the main aspects of the warrior ethos from an official viewpoint (USAFA 2009). This warrior ethos is affirmed on a systematic basis through daily affirmations and institutional guidance. For example, as part of their militarization, first-year cadets memorize quotes about the military. They need to be able to recall these quotes and verbally repeat them on demand as part of their first-year indoctrination. One such piece of knowledge is the Code of Conduct for Members of the Armed Forces of the United States, commonly referred to as the Code of Conduct, which is the guide for behavior of military personnel in combat and captivity. The Code of Conduct begins, "I am an American, fighting in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense." For the first-years, repeated recitations of military quotes remind them that they are training as warriors, preparing for battle and sacrifice.

Institutional guidance in the warrior ethos comes in a variety of forms, but most significantly shows up in labeling of terms to describe USAFA life. The warrior way of life does not end with training courses in BCT, but follows cadets throughout their career. Faculty and staff constantly refer to cadets as warriors. Many events and locations have also been changed to incorporate the term, such as the Warrior Run, Warrior Ramp (also known as the Bring Me Men Ramp and Core Values Ramp), Warrior's Code of the Cadet Wing, Operation Warrior, Polaris Warrior, Warrior March, and Warrior Luncheon. USAFA created many of these warrior-focused programs and curricula to demonstrate real world expeditionary skills in tactical warfighting. One USAFA Commandant was known for swinging a military saber during lectures while cadets in the audience placed bets to see how many times he would reference the term "warrior."

The process of militarization not only socializes cadets into USAFA; it also socializes them into gendered roles based on assumptions about what women and men can and cannot do, especially when it comes to military jobs. Military rank structure, branch rivalries, and occupations ensure that some men maintain domination over other men and women. Naturally, domination is inherent in a rank hierarchy. Inter and intra-branch rivalries structure masculine hierarchies by marginalizing groups of men in an effort to negate their power (Hinojosa 2010). The types of jobs, as related to combat and using lethal force, place certain individuals (men) above others, especially those who are in direct combat fields. Traditionally, combat and military experience separate men from women while binding men to men (Morgan 1994). Prior to the integration of women, this was easy to do because only men could join the military. Yet, since women joined the ranks of the armed forces in 1948, and 1976 for USAFA, the military experience continues to separate men from women and even women from other women. Kanter (1977) refers to this phenomenon as “queen bee syndrome,” where token women in a setting dominated by men are rewarded for denigrating other women and actively work to keep other women from joining them. Mary has experienced this first-hand, saying, “I’ve noticed that women here do not help other women. I just feel like the teachers [who are women] know what it’s like, so they have higher expectations of cadets who are women.” As Mary has discovered, this pecking order extends to the daily activities of cadets in training and in the classroom.

My research revealed other means by which BCT reinforces not only the masculine-warrior ethos but also gender inequality, despite stated intentions to do otherwise. In particular, competition and physical fitness testing stood out as especially strong and enduring mechanisms.

Competition

USAFA uses a combination of scores from Grade Point Average (GPA), Physical Education Average (PEA), Military Performance Average (MPA), and peer-rankings to “rack and stack” cadets against one another in a hierarchy of the first-ranked cadet to the last-ranked. The collective averages factor into an Overall Performance Average (OPA), which determines a cadet’s Board Order of Merit (BOA), or class ranking, and ultimately affects a cadet’s choice in available AF occupations and locations. Dominic describes experiencing the competitive nature of USAFA on a daily basis:

The competition is real. You see it. You see people trying to get an edge on each other. When you see other kids trying to cutthroat each other, it just makes you wonder why. You’re supposed to be together, a team. We’re all one fight. We’re all doing the same thing. We’re all trying to get out of here and serve the United States. We’re not trying to get a one up on each other. I don’t think you need to backstab each other to get to where you need to go.

Cadets will eventually depend on each other, and other personnel, when they graduate and enter active duty; however, competition only intensifies as officers jockey for top stratification marks on performance reports and fight for key positions throughout their careers.

Competition ultimately exists to differentiate high-achieving cadets from subordinate performers. When cadets compete with each other and receive a ranking based on their BOM, the hierarchy becomes evident, allowing cadets to visualize their subordination to and dominance over their peers. In this military hegemony, competition exists to differentiate superordinate cadets from subordinate or “insufficient” or “deviant” cadets. From first day of basic training, competition creates boundaries of inclusion around

those who exhibit strength, endurance, and competence, signaling that one is capable of toughness and manliness. Bill reflects on the dichotomy of teamwork and competition:

One of the biggest problems I see with the Academy now is it's such a stratifying process in everything that we do that it almost impedes the ability to have good teamwork in everything we do. I'm constantly trying to foster cohesion and stuff but it's hard because everyone is out to beat everyone else out. How do you bring people together who are, constantly in the back of their minds, trying to beat other guys out and not having them on my team? I think one of the biggest problems we have is that everybody is out to serve themselves and it's just really really hard to build good team cohesion when everybody wants the highest grade in the class or to beat everybody else out for that pilot slot or for that intel slot.

Competitions sustain masculine values, allowing men to strive for masculine identity by beating "lesser men" in contests of manhood (Kerfoot and Knights 1993; Kimmel 1994; Ely and Meyerson 2010). These contests promote and reinforce independence, aggression, and competition, and can be official or unofficial. Prior to the integration of women at USAFA, it was easy for the men to participate in these contests of manhood, since they pitted men against other men. After integration, women found that, to succeed in the military, they must be considered just as capable of fitting in as the men are (Hale 2012). Women became critical of other women to gain a competitive edge (Ely 1994). For example, Mary complains "to do really well, I have to be better at a guy equivalent. As a girl, you have more of an identity. You're 'that girl.' If you're a guy, you blend into the mass of cadets more easily, but girls are more noticeable here." I asked Mary to clarify her comment about the identity of women at USAFA. "There are all kinds," she explains. "You have high-speed girls who have their shit together. You have girls who struggle. You have girls who rely on a lot of people. I don't really see them as independent. There are different kinds." To participate in competition with men and be taken seriously, women must "have their shit together," adapt to the hierarchy, and relate to men as

“honorary males” (Ely 1995; Carreiras 2008), even while diminishing their own status and that of other women by using the term “girls.” Sexism is subtle and entrenched within the organization, as evidenced by the verbal infantilization of women and how even women adopt and use gendered language to describe themselves.

A man’s efforts to prove his manliness – to himself and to others – are as central to enacting a masculine identity as the particular traits he displays (Ely and Meyerson 2010). Military men who fail tests of masculinity often receive penalties and are routinely discredited as “girls, pussies, weenies, and wimps” (Barrett 1996:133). When Monty jokes around with his friends, he says, ““Man, you’re such a girl.” I mean, in reality you’re a dude but you’re joking around.” I asked Monty why he would call his friend a “girl” and he replied, “To make fun of them. You know what guys do.” He quickly went on the defensive and continued, “I mean, I personally don’t do it but I know people who do. If they do something and pressure them to do something, like going out instead of doing homework, “Oh, you’re such a girl!””

At USAFA, cadets have the opportunity to prove their manliness in front of their peers in numerous contests of manhood. Many of these competitions constitute what Goffman (1967) called “scenes of action,” or “occasions that allow the display of ‘character,’ in the sense of establishing one’s degree of ‘courage, gameness, integrity, and composure” (1967: 229; see also Scheff 2006). Scenes of action involve risks taken purely for their own sake. Ultimately, scenes of action “determine which actor has the most character” (Scheff 2006: 2) and thereby establish individual men within the masculine hierarchy.

Cadets participate in several scenes of action, such as First Shirt/First Snow and spirit missions. For the sake of tradition, cadets participate in these activities regularly,

with substantial encouragement from alumni on the faculty and staff. Last winter, twenty-seven cadets were injured during the hazing ritual called First Shirt/First Snow, with visits to the emergency room for injuries ranging from concussions to bite marks. The First Sergeant, or First Shirt, is a third-year cadet who holds the top leadership position among the third-years in each cadet squadron. On the first snowfall of the year, the first-years locate the First Shirt and drag her or him out into the snow to celebrate. Usually good-natured wrestling occurs, but in some instances, the upper class cadets do their best to stop the first-years, and light wrestling turns into all-out brawls. Spirit missions are pranks accomplished by first-years to impress the upper class cadets with the most creative acts of daring and skill. Although unofficial rule-breaking, in the guise of competition, is an entrenched approach to displaying masculinity in USAFA culture, spirit missions have a controversial status. As Dominic states, “Personally, I believe that’s a part of Academy culture. But some people think that if it’s breaking the rules it’s not right, even though people have done it for the past fifty years.”

Physical Fitness Tests

A major sanctioned scene of action at USAFA involves the Overall Performance Average and a race to the top, combining academic, military, and fitness grades that determine your BOM, or class rank at graduation. Of the grading criteria factoring into class rank, fitness testing is the most visible and contentious scene of action or character contest. Zed (first-year) goes straight to the point and discloses his thoughts about fitness testing, stating, “I think it’s another competition between cadets. I think it’s something else to strive for, something else to be the best at. Just like a lot of other things here.”

Competition also occurs through physical fitness testing, which not only pits men against other men, but also involves pits women against men, once every semester. An immediate differentiation of position on the hierarchy develops. Because fitness testing occurs regularly, cadets can readily notice changes in how they perform and how they stack against their peers using their test scores. Having studied gender bias in fitness testing, I was curious to learn how and why cadets' attitudes and behaviors about fitness testing developed the way they did. According to the USAFA Catalog (2014), the stated purpose of fitness testing includes "promoting maximum fitness among the cadet wing, developing a foundation for a lifetime of fitness, and recognizing cadets who excel in maintaining their personal fitness." The specific standards of measurement, while equitable, differ for women and men based on physiology. Prior to the admission of women, USAFA's Department of Physical Education determined physiological differences between women and men and adjusted the existing fitness test as necessary. Without any cadet job-related performance to focus on, the goal was to create equitable standards of physical fitness for both women and men. That is, because no fundamental physical skills exist for the job of "cadet," the only standard was a "general state of fitness." Upon completion of the Women's Integration Research Project, the Department of Physical Education established fitness standards based on these initial results of physiological differences (Baldi 1991). The standards, as they appear in the USAFA Catalog (2014) are as follows:

Minimum and Maximum Limits For Fitness Tests

	Minimum		Maximum	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Pull-ups	7	1	21	8
Long Jump	7'00"	5 '9"	8'8"	7'2"
Sit-ups	58	58	95	95
Push-ups	35	18	72	48
600 Yard Run	2:03	2:23	1:35	1:53
1.5 Mile Run ^a	12:25	14:17	7:45	8:55

Note. Values for the runs are in minutes.

^aThe 1.5 Mile Run for USAFA is called the Aerobic Fitness Test (AFT). Cadets take this test separately, on a different day, from the Physical Fitness Test (PFT).

Performing well on these tests and competing against other cadets results in a higher score and higher ranking, as well as respect from peers, or as Scheff (2006) stated, the chance to outperform and negate others. "It's another way to judge how you go to certain jobs after you graduate from here, another way to rank you," states Quan (first-year).

Although women at USAFA perform higher than their peers at the national level, they have always been under scrutiny from men in this area; as the privileged group, men identify and devalue feminine individuals, traits, actions, and objects (Drake 2006). As McCone and Scott (2009) revealed, many men appear to seek support for their beliefs that women at USAFA are not "good enough." A vocal minority of men interpret the disparities in fitness standards as favoritism toward women or weakness, which reinforces gender-based resentment. Michael (third-year) complains, "Women are not working as hard for that score, so it needs to be harder for them." John (third-year) chimed in, "The female standards need to be a little bit higher than they are. I feel like they're geared more towards females doing well." John and Michael articulate one of the invisible advantages of

privilege, namely, the ability to define the very foundations of success versus failure. The privileged can retain their power by creating “fair” standards that marginalized groups have less chance of reaching.

Equality and equity in physical fitness testing

Since the integration of women in the military, the protests about physical fitness testing have attempted to put women in their place. To many men, the lower standards of fitness testing for women purportedly “proved” that they were not good enough to do the job or make it in the military. Even in recent times, many cadets ask for equality of standards, implying that women have it easy and cannot keep up with the men. For example, Charlie (first-year) recounts a conversation with his roommate:

My roommate thinks that female cadets should be held up to the same standard just because we have to be going into the same Air Force. We have to be working in, and especially hand-to-hand combat or something ever occurs the female cadets wouldn't be able to hold off on their own as well as male cadets.

This would make sense if fitness testing measured occupational qualification; however, as military leaders admitted during a Congressional hearing, no link exists between fitness tests and occupations (1999). Despite this official position, theories-in-use perpetuate the attitude that fitness standards must be equal for women and men. For instance, Florian (first year) said, “Why can't they have standards the same as ours? I've heard that comment numerous times.” Candace (fourth-year) tells me about constant criticism she faces when performing well on the fitness test:

They're like, oh well, maybe next time you should just try and do the guy's PFT, just because you know that's the *real* standard. Your standards are the same as one of us doing mediocre.

When men view fairness from their own standards, wanting equal rights means having equal standards.

A few cadets realize that equal standards should only apply in particular occupations. When asked about this, Lamar (third-year) said:

The only time standards should be equal is when you're in a hand-to-hand combat environment where you can't have one person on your team not meeting the same requirements as everyone. But obviously we're not in that type of environment. The mission isn't being hurt because the standards are lower for females than it is for males.

Hans agreed and used a practical approach based on his career aspirations:

Look, I'm not going to be kicking down doors. I want to be a doctor or an acquisitions officer. I don't need any of this. So I can see where the disconnect, the dislike toward the PFT and AFT come from because not everyone is going to be kicking down doors and saving children.

Physiological equity

Cadets initially understood and supported fitness standards as empirically based and physiologically equitable for women and men. Candace states, "I think that the research shows that women and men proportionally perform the same on their given PFTs."

Andrew endorsed that statement by declaring, "Obviously the bodies of a male and female are pretty different and what they're expected to do also varies." A group of first-years discussed the fairness of standards and came to this understanding:

Nathan: I believe, just like everyone else said, that it's pretty equal, because when the scores were initially formulated, they were set to the specifications for females and males. So it's not like they just put up random scores up there.

Ivan: I also agree that if you made them the same it would put the female cadets at a disadvantage, because of biological reasons.

Max: I agree with everybody else on this one. Guys are prone to having more muscle mass and less fat and if you change the standards then women would be at a significant disadvantage.

Ryan: I agree with everyone as well. I think that people knew what they were doing when they chose the standards for both males and females.

Most cadets accept that standards were created from research; however, a few still do not accept certain events like pull-ups and pushups, where they can see the greatest disparity in repetitions. Earlier in our conversation, Lamar agreed that different standards were fair and would not hinder the mission. When pressed for more information about each event, he said this:

I personally think that for the most part the standards are pretty fair. But I do think the pull-ups for the women should be a little bit higher than what it is now. I think one pull-up minimum to pass is not enough. I don't know exactly what the numbers should be, but I think that one is not enough.

Will, a third-year, acknowledges psychological differences in the test, but falls back on his belief of unfairness:

It's understandable that females and males will have different standards for physical fitness due to genetic differences. But this huge difference in pull-up standards should be fixed in order to make it fair for everybody. We know that genetics require different standards for men and women but we should study that more in depth, you know, what exactly the difference needs to be in order to make these standards fair for everybody.

Cadets assign measures of fairness subjectively and off the cuff, using them to justify various narratives and beliefs, even after recognizing that the fitness standards were validated through methodical testing. Although cadets may think about the possibility of prior research in the determination of standards, they do not accept the standards because they are still unfair in their eyes based on their privileged position. Cadets view equal rights and fairness from the standard of men. In fact, "male standards" is an oxymoron: men *are* the standard.

Many men also switched positions and claimed that women had it “easier,” often ascribing this belief to unnamed “other cadets” rather than taking personal responsibility. This became especially apparent when the entire focus group consisted of men. This sense of “women having it easier” emerged when cadets discussed overall cadet standing/ranking. Groups of men did not resist the stereotyping, and appeared to accept these sexist pseudo-norms readily. Their straightforward commentary, degrading toward women, met with no protest. For instance:

I definitely agree that it is favored towards females, though there is a definitely a physiological difference between males and females. So it is understandable for it to favor them slightly, I just think it's definitely favored a little too much. I think there needs to be more research into the proper amount of pull ups that females should be expected to do. Zach (first-year)

Mario bluntly put it this way: “If I was a girl I’d score a 550 every time and probably could do it smoking.” His classmate, Scott, agreed and added, “I could literally fall asleep, roll over and fart and get a 450 on the girl’s test, without even trying. That’s what really gets to me because we get racked and stacked on the same scale as far as the BOM points go.” In an environment where everyone competes directly with one another, cadets strive to achieve dominance over their classmates in any way and emerge at the top of the hierarchy. Threats to this competition are met with dismissive comments about physical capabilities.

Hinojosa (2010) spoke to military personnel who constructed narratives of physically able and fit bodies, ranking themselves over civilians and other military members who they believed were not as physically able or disciplined. Members of the military place an emphasis on fitness, implying that service members have the ability to handle the physical demands of the military, including discipline, combat, and physical training, whereas civilians are not able to handle physical requirements of military service.

The protest against differing fitness standards implies more than just gender-normed standards and arguments about the capabilities of men and women; it constitutes a socially and institutionally acceptable way of expressing negative feelings about women, feelings that are no longer as acceptable to state directly (Cohn 2000). As Whitney (first year) explained, the most common negative feelings are framed around equality. She said, "People complain a lot about, like if we're going to the same Academy and fighting the same war, why can't we have the same standards for certain things?" Women fail to meet the men's standards, which, for some men, points to the inferiority of women.

The discussion about standards gradually becomes one about occupational qualifications, raising the question of whether women deserve an equal place if they cannot perform equally with men. Much of the work on fitness testing standards has lacked first-hand accounts where men saw preferential treatment of women. Often based on hearsay, it usually involved stories about how "they had heard about something that someone else said had happened somewhere else to someone else at some other time" (Cohn 2000:146). Ivory (first-year) says "it's common to hear whispering about how unequal it is, but I don't think there are enough that have the correct information to even call it unequal." Although lacking in evidence, the power of these stories comes from their ability to condense and symbolize something that people believe is important.

The integration of women poses a challenge to the warrior image. If competition separates the men from boys, what does it mean if a woman can pass them? The women who manage to fit in with men by achieving similar fitness numbers achieve "honorary male" status while becoming an anomaly among women. Ben (third-year) delivers this backhanded compliment, where women do not deserve respect until they reach the

standard set for men, “I know several girls, those girls are just *monsters* and they can easily max either [PFT and AFT]. Everyone has a lot higher respect for the girls that can do just as much or more than the guys.” Ruben (first-year) denigrates both men and women, saying, “If you expect a female to be able to, I guess you could say, perform at the same level as a guy, then either she’s got to be a *beast* to do it, or the guy’s got to be a *wimp*.” These men do not expect women to achieve the same standards as men, but when they are surprised by a few cases, they make it clear that this is a threat to their warrior image. Although Isaiah (first-year) performs well on the PFT, he constantly checks his status within the hierarchy and says:

Only a wimp would express anything towards women because then you also have to think about, like, a male role, a male identity. If you were to say something about women, you would be comparing yourself to them in terms of physical ability and you would look bad. You’d look weak. You don’t want to do that.

The achievement of masculinity in the military is never secured and must be continually confirmed and exhibited (Barrett 1996). In Isaiah’s case, he does not compare himself to women but places himself in competition with other men. Mario and Jason, third and first-year cadets, subordinate their classmates who are at the bottom:

Mario: I think you’re kind of worthless as a human being if you can’t pass that. I think that the people that fail would probably feel a lot stronger about the test.

Jason: What I’ve come to realize is that most people complaining are the weaker of the guys. They get the lower scores and complain that if they had the same standards as girls, they would rank higher.

According to this hierarchy of masculinity and performance on the fitness tests, men who perform well are in a privileged position. Women who perform well still have to deal with sexist cadets; the sexism is more pronounced from the vocal minority and men who are lower in the hierarchy. Steve (first-year) can tell, from his experience, that the cadet wing

would individually hold the same opinions about testing “but not voice it publicly” with the exception of this vocal minority. If men cannot exclude women from the military, they can exclude women from combat. If men cannot eliminate women from participating in combat, men can make the case that they are not able to handle combat. Men do this by coming up with a way to show that women cannot handle the rigors of combat. Fitness testing provides one means to do that, turning a personal challenge and bonding experience into a site for the assertion of difference.

Gender Inequality and the Combat Narrative

When asked about fitness testing, Kim admitted that “around the cadet wing, the purpose isn’t very well defined or communicated to the cadets.” In the absence of any direct instruction about the purpose of their training, cadets create their own reasons based on their socialization into the military and USAFA culture. As mentioned previously, fitness testing purportedly exists to keep cadets in good health and to meet graduation standards for entry into active duty. Almost every focus group used a combat narrative as the reason behind fitness testing. For instance, Kamal (first-year) believes:

When you’re out on the battlefield, we’re all going to have to be doing the same thing. When you’re running across an open field trying to avoid enemy fire, the requirement for women isn’t going to be less than males.

James (third-year) summarizes how many cadets feel about testing, in general, in saying that “the purpose of fitness testing is to make sure we’re capable of performing in wartime.” In sum, many if not most cadets believed that testing was a way to prepare for combat. Fitness testing thus supports and is supported by the combat narrative.

The differing fitness standards for men and women threaten the combat narrative by compromising the images of the masculine-warrior and the hero. For example, although testing ensures that even women will have the requisite strength to carry wounded men to safety, John has no confidence in the physical abilities of his classmates:

I mean, if I were put in a position [of] combat on the frontlines, I want to feel comfortable that girl beside me or woman, if you will, is...if I get wounded, is she going to carry me out of there?

Charlie echoed this in saying, “If hand-to-hand combat ever occurs the females wouldn’t be able to hold off on their own as well as male cadets.” The differing standards, designed to *increase* overall gender equality by allowing women to succeed in the military, nevertheless serve to legitimate *inequality*. By giving women lower, albeit physiologically legitimate, expectations, fitness testing supports the notion that women do not belong in the military.

In light of the reality of the “faux warrior,” the combat narrative borders on absurdity. Yet, many cadets, particularly males, cling to a false perception. Ian (first-year) illustrated this when he explored an extreme option:

If we do go to war with a larger nation such as China or Russia, we’re going to need more men on the front lines and they will be coming from offices. So you need people just to be with the warrior ethos and ready for combat.

For many cadets, testing prepares them to “kill people” and “take out enemies” while “leading in the front lines.” It allows them to wade through creeks with heavy gear and “do the job when lives are at stake.” By creating justifications for fitness based on non-existent masculine-heroic actions during combat, cadets create a sexist hierarchy where those who score well, mostly men, rise to the top, while those who score poorly, women and “lesser men” drift to the bottom. This hierarchy can only be justified if, in fact, everyone participates in hand-to-hand combat and needs to run across battlefields while carrying the

wounded. Although only a small number of USAF personnel might engage in such activities, the training perpetuates the masculine-warrior ethos and combat mentality. In reality, the lived experience of active duty could easily sustain gender equality.

The masculine-warrior ethos of USAFA relies on assertions by a vocal minority of sexist men who help create an environment of pluralistic ignorance and construction of a gender bias norm. As Shaun (first-year) explains, “there is a small minority, a minority of cadets who do resent the lower standards of the female PFT.” His classmates, Nick and Hannah, agree and have heard from a few cadets who think women should not be in the military but state that, “it’s not that prevalent, just a few people here and there” and “a small minority think the standards aren’t fair.” Not only is fitness testing just another competition at USAFA; rather, it shows how hegemonic masculinity is produced and perpetuated. It is not actually about combat, but about men discounting women in the military. In this view, women do not belong if they cannot perform up to a standard, which exists for one reason—fitness—but is used for another—combat qualification.

In this chapter, I have analyzed socialization, or militarization, as a thorough and complete process. I have portrayed cadets as adopting wholesale the masculine-warrior ethos and the combat narrative, in particular, among other elements of USAFA culture. As a total institution, USAFA offers few opportunities for resistance to and modification of the culture. Nevertheless, resistance and negotiation do occur. In the next chapter, I examine one setting in which they not only occur, but flourish.

CHAPTER 6

THE DODO

Erving Goffman famously referred to total institutions as “forcing houses for changing persons” (1961: 12). Goffman argued that the change occurs by depriving individuals of the resources ordinarily used to construct an image of the self. Coupled with this, the organizational structure of total institutions, including the intensity of participation and commitment required of members, “overwhelm[s] the individual's ability to defend or even retain his or her pre-institutional conception of self” (McCorkel 1998: 228). In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how USAFA’s claims on member identity, which draw heavily on a narrative of heroism and combat readiness, perpetuate sexist stereotypes among the cadets. I showed how these beliefs play out in the conflict over differing standards for physical fitness testing, defeating attempts by USAFA to change the culture regarding women’s capabilities. Although many cadets *did not* subscribe to stereotypes about women’s lack of ability, pluralistic ignorance allowed sexism to prevail, thus legitimating the longstanding, if outmoded, culture at USAFA. In this chapter, I analyze how cadets actively challenge and undermine USAFA’s definitions of its members’ identity. I show how humor, particularly comics, constitutes a form of what Goffman called “secondary adjustments,” the practices that members engage in to “get around the organization's assumptions of what he should do and what he should be” (Goffman 1961: 107). I discuss how humor allows cadets and grads to resist and conform to USAFA culture, express unacceptable emotions, create boundaries for appropriate norms and behavior, and navigate femininity and masculinity at USAFA.

THE DODO

Humor exists within every culture, reflecting the group's interpretation of reality and intended to elicit amusement or have that result (Fine 1984; Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2001; Rothwell, Siharath, Bell, Nguyen, and Baker 2011). USAFA is no exception. The humor magazine *The Dodo* was first published at USAFA in 1957. Purposefully named after the extinct flightless bird, playing on USAFA's mascot of the Falcon, *The Dodo* responded to the cadets' desire to flaunt authority in a humorous and irreverent manner. Created for and by cadets, this magazine of articles and comics evolved into a quasi-official publication that underwent a strict vetting process by the Academy leadership. The reviewers in charge of authorizing each issue of *The Dodo* subjectively censored its content, at times being lenient with the approval process and at other times, rejecting even the mildest jokes.

This practice of censorship recently became so drawn-out and severe in its bureaucratic process that a few grads created an online version called *eDodo*, continuing the tradition of *The Dodo* online and underground. Since its existence, the internet has developed into a significant arena for the creation and dissemination of humor (Shifman and Lemish 2010). While the first graduating class at USAFA published *The Dodo*, *eDodo* emerged more than four decades later, taking advantage of technological advances. Free of censorship and institutional constraints, *eDodo* became the electronic medium for criticism of the cadet way of life, rejection of institutional mandates, and cynical mouthpiece for cadet and grad contributors. In 2002, the USAFA leadership banned publication of the print *Dodo* and blocked website access to *eDodo*, citing them as unprofessional and counter to the strict military image of USAFA. Attempts to revive *The Dodo* have been unsuccessful, but the online *eDodo* lives on.

eDodo followed a format comparable to a late-night comedy routine, using current events for most of its irreverent content. Artists who contributed material for publication possessed the ability, as trendsetters and pulse of the Cadet Wing, to tell the institution and its members what was important and worth their attention. This highlights the tension discussed in Chapter 4, between espoused values and theories-in-use. At one level, because *eDodo* constitutes a public record, it acknowledges and reproduces the espoused values and dominant ideologies and embraces views that justify the social order at USAFA (Sue and Golash-Boza 2013). At another level, because it uses humor to mock and joke about this order, *eDodo* exposes theories-in-use, or “what everyone knows” about life at USAFA. To be sure, this joking culture is not unique to USAFA; other organizations are also characterized by resistance, cynicism, apathy, and related cultural elements. However, the military culture of USAFA offers a unique environment for the use of humor as a response.

A Safe Space to Vent

Cadets and grads have a saying about USAFA: “It’s a great place to be from, but a terrible place to be at.” This phrase has remained relatively untouched throughout the history of USAFA. Kim (first-year) recalls hearing this phrase from her classmates and cadre:

Everyone says, “It’s a great place to be from but not a great place to be at.” So then the whole time you were here you were bitching and moaning and griping about being here. But you graduate from here and you’re so happy to say I graduated from USAFA. Maybe it’s so difficult and you’re proud of it but a lot of it is because I want to be a part of, I want to be a part of that. Kind of like a jealousy, envy type of thing.

They summarize this feeling with a noteworthy motto – IHTFP – “I Hate This Fucking Place” or “I’m Here to Fly Planes”. Most of the time cadets will agree with one or the other. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology shares responsibility for originating the popularity

of this phrase with the military service academies, crediting USAFA as the earliest known origin of IHTFP in 1956.¹⁰

Some cadets I spoke with did not mention IHTFP directly, but were affected by its influence. Helen (third-year) seems to have thoughts on both sides of the spectrum, claiming, “I feel proud of this place. I hate it, I hate it so much, but I feel proud of this place all the time.” Glen (third-year) puts it more bluntly and says, “There are days I hate it here. It’s like, damn, why did I come here?” First-years are quick to pick up on this attitude from the upper-class cadets. Haley (first-year) describes her thoughts on the matter:

I mean, the thing that surprises me a lot is the negativity associated here. When you’re here. Everyone just hates it. People just talk so bad about it. “Oh my god, I hate this place, blah blah blah. Like you know the seniors will tell you “I’m so glad I’m almost done with this place.” They’re like, “Look at the freshmen, I can’t believe you have four more years, good luck.” They just say how it’s awful, I guess. I’ve heard that so much. For me, I don’t really think of it that badly. I’ve said that and they’ll say, “just wait until you’re here longer.”

This adage also describes similar experiences in other contexts, such as graduate students lamenting about trying to teach their undergraduate students or office workers criticizing the inefficient bureaucracy of the corporate world. What makes this attitude unique at USAFA is its juxtaposition with the image of disciplined and motivated cadets on the path to professional military service.

¹⁰ <http://www.mit.edu/people/mjbauer/ihtfp.html>



Figure 1: Cadet Wing formation. Liz Copan, April 2014.

Publically, we see a vastly different picture of cadets in neat, flag-bearing formations wearing sharp uniforms (Figure 1). While on display, during formal ceremonies and official functions, cadets display acceptable behaviors associated with military professionalism expected by the public. Privately, cadets express IHTFP through *eDodo*, a safe space to vent their frustrations. Humor, flippant and tongue-in-cheek, masks the socially unacceptable nature of certain topics and can address serious social messages (Emerson 1969; Crawford 2003; Hughes 2003).

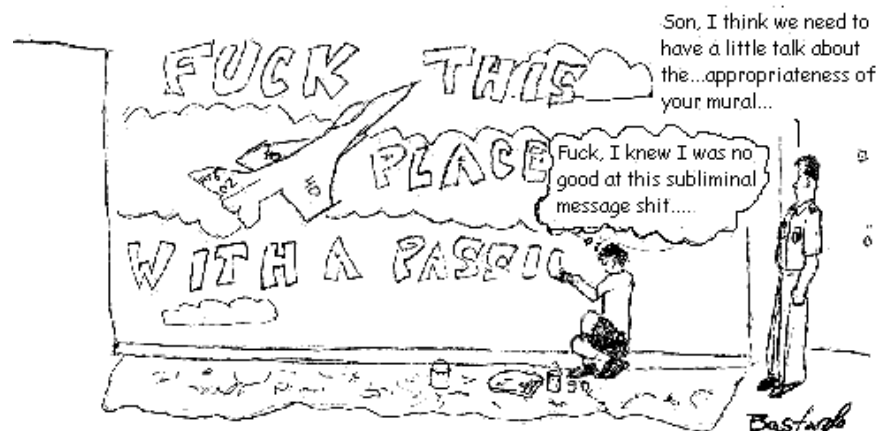


Figure 2: Demotivational mural. Bastardo, February 2001.

On the surface, this doodled image could be about any organization (Figure 2). Like Dilbert, an American comic satirizing office work, the artist Bastardo conveys his feelings about the

institution in which he works and, in this case, lives. Murals, which plaster dorm hallways and stairwells at USAFA, usually depict military logos, inspirational military quotes and mottos, aircraft, bald eagles, or any combination that is meant to inspire cadets and foster military identity and esprit de corps. Instead of an inspirational quote, this cadet decides to use a mural to publicize a viewpoint many cadets hold privately: “Fuck this place with a passion.” Unable to publically acknowledge these feelings, particularly on a dorm mural, Bastardo safely vents his frustration on *eDodo*. Resistance is a common theme found on *eDodo*, commonly positioning cadets against the institution. I discuss this in-group and out-group mentality in more detail later.

The cartoonist known as She-Devil uses *eDodo* as a safe space to satirize the commonly offered explanations for cadets’ behavior, from the viewpoint of USAFA leadership, active duty Air Force, and the cadet herself (see Figure 3).

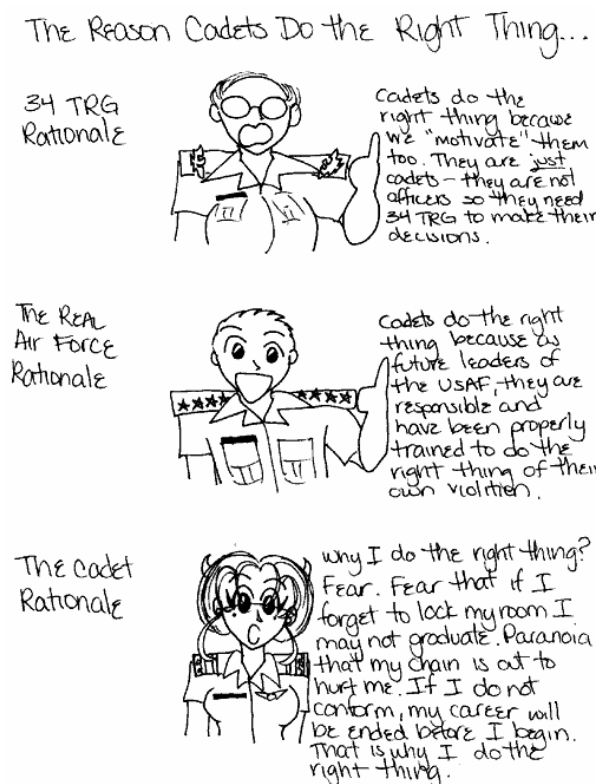


Figure 3: Why cadets do the right thing. She-Devil, March 2002.

First, according to USAFA leadership, cadets “do the right thing” because they are not mature enough to make their own decisions and need the institution to tell them what to do. Second, the active duty Air Force claims that cadets “do the right thing” because of proper training and intrinsic motivation. Cadets find this humorous because, as Chris said, “Cadets graduate with a lower level of maturity than they started with. Cadets are treated like kids. We have a bedtime for crying out loud. I’m a junior in college.” Finally, from the cadets’ perspective, they “do the right thing” out of fear and paranoia that the institution will punish them and end their career before they graduate. I turn now to a discussion of how humor helps cadets manage these emotions.

Managing Unacceptable Emotions

In addition to using *eDodo* as a safe space to vent their frustrations, cadets also rely on it to convey emotions considered negative and thus rejected and suppressed in the military in general and especially at USAFA. Stereotypically masculine emotions such as anger, aggression, and violence become acceptable while fear, anxiety, powerlessness, and shame are considered incompatible with military service. As a total institution, USAFA deliberately employs intense and sometimes demeaning training in its efforts at “changing persons,” which involve depersonalizing and resocializing civilians into officers. During this time of military socialization, truly “masculine” men are encouraged to display emotions such as anger and aggression, which are sanctioned in civilian culture (Stearns 1994). Emotions incompatible with masculinity, such as fear, anxiety, powerlessness, shame, compassion, and guilt, are tamped out during basic training, as young recruits are taught to despise any signs of weakness (Drake 2006).

In an emotionally unyielding military culture, attention to the expression of unacceptable emotions is possible when done in jest. This is consistent with research on the management of emotions considered negative, which finds that it often involves replacing them with acceptable emotions or non-emotional substitutes (Irvine 1997). Through humor, behavioral norms and taboo topics are implicitly communicated without having to seriously and explicitly address them (Kotthoff 2006). *eDodo* deals with unacceptable emotions in a unique way, allowing cadets and grads to convey vulnerability without actually being vulnerable. Joking about USAFA produces cohesion among its members by poking fun at shared experiences, experiences that are very private and localized within an exclusive group (Fine 1976). Cadets and grads are connected by the collective pain and suffering they experienced, rites of passage, and common experiences which validated their time at USAFA.



Figure 4: Water haze. Zero, June 2000.

The humor surrounding the mandatory water survival training provides a good example. Taken in the second year, this class teaches the skills needed to survive a water emergency, and possibly assist others in need of aid. These skills involve swimming long

distances, navigating underwater obstacles, and jumping off a ten-meter diving board wearing the full battle uniform. Cadets manage the dread for water survival training by using humor to organize a shared commentary about the course, nicknamed “Water Haze” (Figure 4). Helen recounts her experience with the ten-meter jump in private conversation:

Now, it’s like, can I jump off this ten-meter platform? It took me all eight lessons to be able to do it and the only reason I ended up being able to do it was because...I mean, I was absolutely terrified. I could not get myself to go off the ten. I stood up there every single class and could not get myself off of it. Then I ended up reading a Class of 2004 yearbook and it said how it used to be a grad requirement. You couldn’t graduate. Yeah. I found that out and was like, okay. It’s not a grad requirement anymore but I feel like I would be doing all the other graduates a disservice if I didn’t get myself off this because they all had to. So I did it.

Admitting fear and anxiety about this course becomes acceptable by communicating these unacceptable private feelings in a public forum through humor (Paolucci and Richarson 2006).

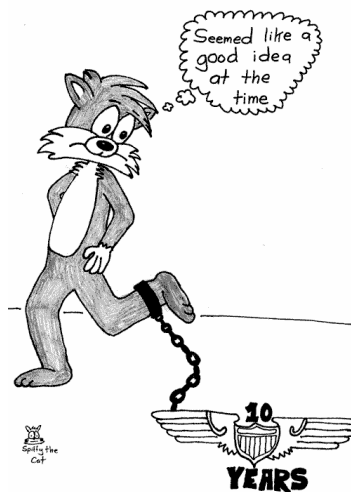


Figure 5: Pilot training commitment regret. Spiffy the Cat, February 2002.

In an illustration of disappointment, the character in Figure 5 lampoons the regret a newly graduated cadet faces after completing pilot training. Officers who complete pilot training receive their wings and must fulfill a ten-year service obligation to the Air Force,

whereas the obligation is only five years for USAFA graduates who do not go to pilot training. Initial optimism of the achievement fades away once this heavy realization sets in. But even cadets who face only the five-year commitment experience remorse. As Figure 6 shows, after the fanfare of graduation has waned, cadets may experience feelings of regret and disappointment.



Figure 6: Graduation. PING!, October 2002.

They may question if their tremendous effort at USAFA was worth the diploma, and wonder what lies ahead.

Although unacceptable emotions about the pilot training service commitment apply to many cadets (about half of the cadet population enter pilot training upon graduation), all cadets can relate to thoughts on water survival and graduation. Unacceptable emotions, such as pain and suffering, appear in comics as unique visual representations of a common bond shared by cadets and grads.

In-group Knowledge and Humor

Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of cultural reproduction and social and cultural capital may explain how USAFA culture persists over time. To acquire cultural capital, one must be immersed in the culture from the earliest days of life and inculcate the institution's norms (Bourdieu 1984). The cultural capital of USAFA includes the language of cadets, their mannerisms, and other non-financial social assets that promote social mobility at USAFA and in the Air Force as a graduate. This concept is apparent in the classroom, where instructors and professors use specific cadet-related stories in order to break the ice with new students. For example, while teaching at USAFA, a colleague remarked that, even on the first day of the semester, with one small story of a shared cadet experience, I established immediate credibility with my class, something she was unable to do after teaching there for fifteen years. An incredibly strong bond ties cadets and grads to each other, over time and distance. Repeating stories about USAFA helps educate current cadets on in-group norms and behavior and attitudinal expectations.

The comics in *eDodo* often rely on in-group knowledge for their humor. For example, Figure 7 depicts the most noteworthy course requirement for Water Haze: jumping from the ten-meter diving platform wearing full battle uniform. In this comic, the artist depicts the result of combining the ten-meter jump with freefall training, amusing only to other cadets.



Figure 7: Combining free-fall and water haze can be disastrous. D. Daggett and J. Sanchez, February 2000.

USAF has the only parachuting training school in the nation authorized to allow its students to perform unassisted freefall on their first jump, which means cadets must rely on instinctual training when they perform their solo jumps out of the aircraft.¹¹ The cadet in this comic mistakenly applies freefall training during the jump portion of Water Haze, conflating two unique situations into a joke that only cadets and grads will understand.

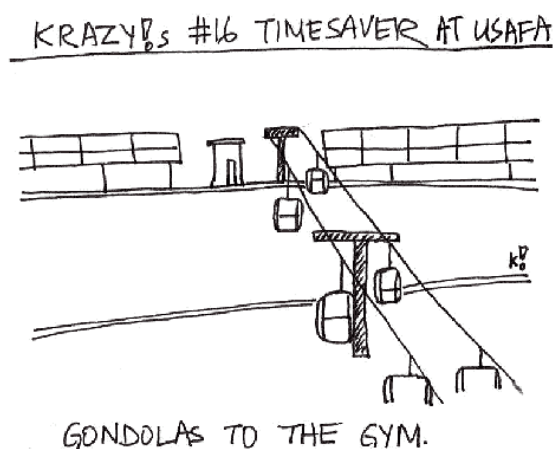


Figure 8: Gondolas to the gym. k!, March 2000.

¹¹ <http://www.usafa.af.mil/information/factsheets/factsheet.asp?fsID=9423> (retrieved March 11, 2015)

Other examples of in-group humor play on the range of grievances among cadets, from the quality of food at Mitchell Hall to the overbearing and micromanaging leadership style to which they are subjected. What seems inconsequential to an outsider, such as the need to walk up and down several flights of stairs to get to and from the cadet area and gymnasium, becomes a subject of criticism and ridicule. Cadets make this journey several times each day, traveling to physical education courses, intramural and intercollegiate sports, personal fitness time, and the cadet parking lots. Figure 8 depicts an easy solution to their collective misery.

Reading and drawing comics gives cadets and grads a sense of community and connection to the institution in which they live, particularly if they participate in active resistance. The humor in *eDodo* is a mechanism for developing social cohesion and strengthening the bonds of the cadet in-group against out-groups; bonding against a common out-group is what makes cadets and grads a part of an in-group (Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997; Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2001). Upon entering the armed forces, military members swear an oath to protect and defend their nation from its enemies. Based on this culture of having an enemy, cadets create their own targets of resistance in the absence of a foreign adversary. When disparaging humor is focused on an out-group, it solidifies relations between the in-group and fosters hostility toward the out-group (Hughes 2003).

HYPERMASCULINITY

Thus far, the comics outlined in this chapter have pitted cadets, as a collective, against an out-group, such as the institution or others who have not attended USAFA. A dominant

theme on *eDodo* involves the hypermasculine culture of the military, creating and maintaining bonds among cadets who consider themselves masculine while promoting opposition against others who do not. My analysis of the comics revealed that the theme of hypermasculinity often overlaps with in-group humor and emotion management. USAFA culture includes not only feeling rules, determining which emotions are acceptable, but also expression rules, defining who can show emotion (Hochschild 1979, 1990). Expression rules overlap with norms of hypermasculinity and in-group knowledge in much of the humor on *eDodo*. Figure 9 illustrates this confluence of themes well.



Figure 9: Basic Cadet Ixchu receives a stern lecture from Cadet Second Class Bratka on Inprocessing Day.
Susannah Kay, June 2012.

This image highlights how, to create a stressful environment and strike fear and anxiety into the first-years during their introductory military socialization, the cadre demonstrate physical strength and exhibit hypermasculine behavior, specifically aggressive mannerisms and overbearing speech.



Figure 10: Home for the holidays. Zero, November 2000.

In another comic that combines the three themes (Figure 10), a first-year cadet returns home to find that his girlfriend has ended their relationship and replaced him with a civilian college fraternity president. This plays on the in-group knowledge that long-distance relationships usually do not last long for USAFA cadets. Cadets refer to those in successful relationships as part of the “2% Club”; anecdotally, only 2% of these long-distance relationships survive at USAFA. This comic also points to a role-reversal between two men, cadet and civilian, who model acceptable and unacceptable masculinities. The change in Ed’s behavior and appearance exemplifies a desired masculinity, one achieved by graduating from USAFA and becoming a fighter pilot.



Figure 11: Home for the holidays (brutal reality mix). Spoon and Zero, November 2000.

Brutal Reality Mix (Figure 11) shows another outcome of progression after USAFA, parodying *Home For The Holidays*. Displays of masculinity are now attributed to the civilian fraternity leader, who has achieved financial success and is starting a family with Ted's ex-girlfriend. This comic downplays Ted's masculinity by dressing him up in standard Air Force blues attire (in contrast to a utility uniform, such as the flight suit), military-issued glasses, and a thin frame. Through humor, this artist constructs Kip and Ed as masculine men, bringing hegemonic and subordinated masculinities to the center of attention (Crawford 2003; Kotthoff 2006).



Figure 12: First-years on the prowl. Zero, March 2000.

Figure 12 offers a commentary on the awkward behavior of men who venture outside USAFA during their first year. Although the Air Force service dress uniform exudes professionalism and the discipline of the military, with the exception of first-years, cadets do not normally wear the formal attire outside of official military functions. Adding to the awkwardness of wearing the formal uniform outside USAFA, the artist characterizes these cadets as men with a subordinated masculinity, wearing thick glasses, abysmal haircuts, ill-fitting uniforms, and lacking confidence. The contrast between the first-years in Figure 12 and the men in Figures 10 and 11 show the acceptable and unacceptable versions of men at USAFA, down to their appearance and behavior. This artist uses peer pressure to compel men to uphold group values and conform outwardly to norms, especially about being a man, to fit in and be accepted (Rosen, Knudson, and Fancher 2003).

Becoming an Honorary Male

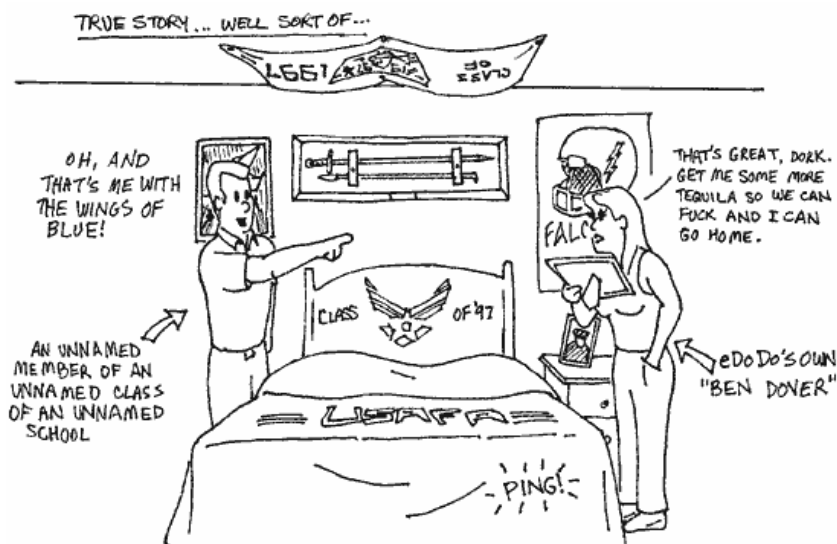


Figure 13: Priorities. PING!, June 2001.

In this comic by PING! (Figure 13), an anonymous grad exhibits unacceptable behavior, while the female character, *eDodo* contributor Ben Dover, demonstrates typical masculine aggressiveness. This mostly accurate account suggests “honorary male” status for Ben Dover, who ridicules her date for his atypical masculinity, while the artist highlights what not to do as a man. Likewise, Figure 14 illustrates honorary male status for a woman berating other women during a training session.



Figure 14: First-year indoctrination through boot-camp style yelling. TSgt Ken Wright, March 2004.

Gendered organizations, like USAFA, place constraints on women’s ability to adapt

and succeed within them, forcing women to adapt to the organization to “fit in” instead of the other way around (Drake 2006; McCone and Scott 2009). Whether emphasizing their rights as women or adopting masculine characteristics, women use several strategies to work and live among men in a hypermasculine culture. In her work on organizations dominated by men, Ely (1995) noted the unique roles that women enacted. *Resisters* rejected the masculine culture of an organization, *self-blamers* internalized the devaluation of women and felt unable to live up to masculine ideals, *minimizers* observed gendered differences but found them to be irrelevant to their experiences, and *accommodators* did not question the culture and assimilated by adopting masculine characteristics as honorary males.

In the military, analogous archetypes of servicewomen exist, although much more derogatory in nature (Miller 1997; Sasson-Levy 2003; Archer 2012). Women in the Marine Corps are told in boot camp that there are three typologies or identities for women:

[Drill instructors] tell us...you're [either] a bitch, a slut, or a dyke. It's one or other so [if you're a bitch]...you're mean and nobody likes you...and usually these are the female Marines that do well in the Marine Corps. There's ones that sleep around and [they get labeled the slut]. And then there's...dyke[s] who are basically like the men. They tell you which one you wanna be and...you wanna be the bitch. (Archer 2012:370).

Carreiras (2008) and McCone and Scott (2009) explained that women might adopt four responses to the hypermasculine culture of USAFA: women are *assertive* when they question the culture and push their rights as women, women are *complicit* when they are not critical of the organization but emphasize their femininity, women *conform* if they do not emphasize their femininity and suffer in silence, and some women *assimilate* and become honorary males when they do not question the organization and relate to men in traditional and stereotyped ways. Women in the military and at USAFA access a continuum

of possible gender identities, struggling to “choose” an identity or striking a balance between femininity and masculinity to meet the gendered norms of the organization (Sasson-Levy 2003; McCone and Scott 2009).

She-Devil

Humor offers a way for women to engage with USAFA’s culture of hypermasculinity by disparaging other women. The internet provides unique opportunities for marginalized groups, in this case women at USAFA, to express their unique voice in serious and humorous ways (Shifman and Lemish 2010). A popular comic artist named She-Devil, however, used *eDodo* to flaunt her honorary male status at USAFA. Owing to her regular contributions depicting various archetypes of women, she garnered the acceptance of men while gaining notoriety with women. Although women make up about 22% of the Cadet Wing, they were underrepresented as comic artists; in my personal experience on *eDodo*, I knew of only two women who regularly contributed content. Proficient in illustration and harnessing the power of *eDodo* as a creative platform, She-Devil drew an average of three comics per month over a three-year period and held substantial influence over cadets and grads.

McGhee and Duffey (1983) found that while men found it funnier to see women mistreated than men, women actually claimed to enjoy the denigration of women far more than did men. About a third of She-Devil’s comics addressed masculinity and femininity, especially painting an undesirable image of women at USAFA.



Figure 15: Cheap computer-drawn whores. She-Devil, December 2002.

Sexist humor has played a major role in patriarchal cultures, based on beliefs about the inferiority of women, their sexual objectification (see Figure 15), and portraying them with characteristics such as stupidity and ignorance (Kotthoff 2006; Shifman and Lemish 2010). She-Devil used humor to reduce the status of women and expressed aggression toward them through ridicule, ultimately solidifying relations between the in-group of men and fostering hostility toward the out-group of women (Middleton and Molan 1959; Fine 1976; Lyman 1987; Hughes 2003). Through her work, She-Devil became an honorary male who related to men in stereotyped ways and adopted masculine characteristics.

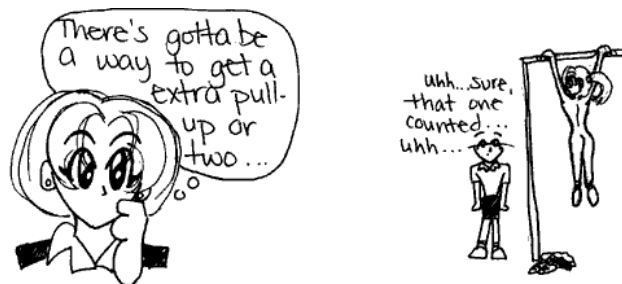


Figure 16: Easier pull-ups. She-Devil, February 2001.

Lyman (1987) notes that sexist jokes are the mechanism by which gender domination is sustained. She-Devil maintained this gender domination by joking at the expense of women, thereby reassuring men of their shared values and perspectives (Kotthoff 2006). As “one of the guys”, she understood that sexual objectification of women at USAFA is commonplace. Figure 16 demonstrates that, while men can increase the number of their pull-ups by having a physiological advantage in upper body strength, women can resort to using their sexuality to gain the upper hand in fitness testing. This comic delineates desirable behavior and reinforces the belief that women at USAFA will be rewarded for using their sexuality and get ahead in cadet rankings.



Figure 17: Upperclassmen morale and welfare. She-Devil, April 2000.

Figure 17 is an example of aggressive humor used to victimize, belittle, and cause others some type of vilification through ridicule (Romero and Cruthirds 2006). She-Devil drew this comic in the defense of a first-year friend who was unceremoniously dumped by his girlfriend for an upper-class cadet. The artist’s target of derision is a woman who makes it clear her job as a first-year is “upperclassman morale and welfare”; the ‘dirty joke’ relegates this woman, and all other cadet women, to the status of sex object and perpetuates this part of men’s humorous culture at USAFA and in society (Waterhouse

1996). The meaning derived from this shared experience reflects the values and interpretations of a masculine in-group and sets up an out-group of promiscuous women at USAFA. The artist places herself with the in-group, aligned with men in opposition to women.

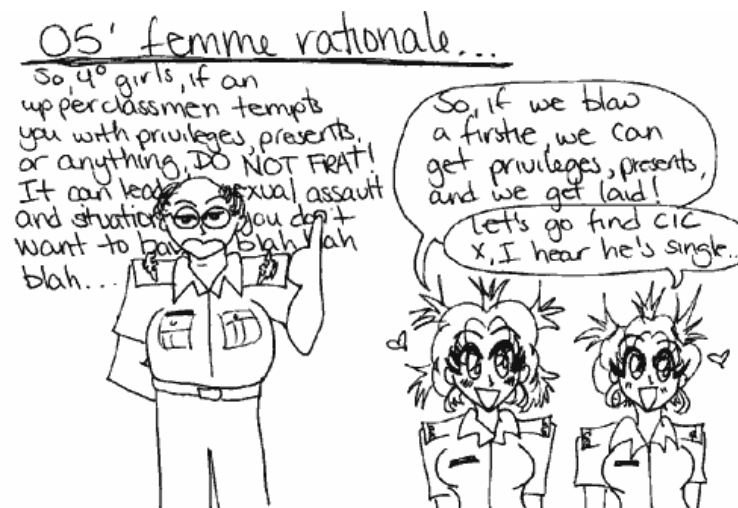


Figure 18: Fraternization and favors. She-Devil, October 2001.

In another comic (Figure 18), She-Devil draws attention to the existing power and authority relationships between first-years and upper-class cadets and the sexual objectification of women (Holmes and Marra 2002). Rules prohibit fraternization of first-years with any upper-class cadet (although there is room for interpretation at times). She-Devil uses comics as a socially acceptable form of aggression against what she sees as improper conduct: first-year women using their sexuality as a tool to gain privileges (Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2001; Romero and Cruthirds 2006).



Figure 19: How She-Devil interprets her toons. She-Devil, October 2001.

Finally, in Figure 19, She-Devil recognizes that, by blurring the line between acceptable and unacceptable content, she gains acceptance from men who enjoy sexist humor and earns the scorn of women who feel victimized. Taking advantage of the vulnerability of those who “can’t take a joke,” She-Devil provides an example of how men enjoy comics disparaging women, women can’t take a joke, and the artist aligns herself with men by reporting the “truth” (Sue and Golash-Boza 2013). Generally, artists are not held responsible for her or his jokes to the same degree they would in a serious discussion (unless they dare to portray Mohammed). However, when humor socializes members into the sexist norms of a group, the jokes must not be underestimated (Emerson 1969; Fine 1976).

Comics as Adaptation Alignment

Humor can provide an understanding of invisible social structures by revealing the non-threatening critiques of social interactions (Robinson and Smith-Lovin 2001). Unfortunately, humor is a double-edged sword because what one person perceives as humorous another might find quite offensive (Romero and Pescosolido 2008). By drawing comics about USAFA, cadets and grads resist the official institutional culture, repress emotions

inconsistent with military masculinity, and compel their peers to behave within the restrictions of norms and boundaries for masculinity. As humor propagates through group interaction, a joking culture arises, which most participants perceive as amusing (Holmes and Marra 2002). However, when jokes about USAFA begin with shared frustrations and collective suffering about the institution and eventually subordinate women with sexist humor, amusement can quickly turn sour as humor reinforces sexist norms and maintains the performance of a military masculinity.

This analysis shows how humor serves as a “secondary adjustment” (Goffman 1961), which allows cadets to resist the pressures of USAFA’s institutional world. Cadets experience “primary adjustment,” or acceptance of the role granted by the institution, through socialization in BCT. Gradually, however—and quickly, in some cases—cadets seek to “stand[] apart from the role and the self that were taken for granted for him [*sic*] by the institution” (Goffman 1961: 172). The content of *eDodo* illustrates a *contained* secondary adjustment, which does not openly challenge the organizational structure but still usurps institutional authority. In contrast to *disruptive* secondary adjustments, contained secondary adjustments allow individuals to “make do,” “work the system,” and engage in other strategies that constitute the “underlife” of the total institution (Goffman 1961: 55). In the context of institutional demands for conformity, contained secondary adjustments provide space for a sense of self and individuality while leaving the rules and regulations intact. Thus, by allowing cadets to criticize and challenge some elements of USAFA’s culture while sustaining others, *eDodo*’s humor highlights the central role of masculinity in the development of cadet identity.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, I explored the construction of cadet identity and how cadets make sense of their experiences. These contributions will foster dialogue regarding the effectiveness and assessment of education, training, and character development at USAFA. I discussed how cadets attend to occupational values and rely on theories-in-use, weakening their commitment to the institution and its espoused principles. USAFA has experienced a shift from an institutional to an occupational paradigm, contributing to a decline in commitment to institutional values and the proliferation of a culture of non-compliance. I examined the military masculine warrior and how cadets have constructed a highly masculinized culture, drawing on a narrative of heroism and combat readiness. Pluralistic ignorance creates and perpetuates sexist stereotypes, and the combat narrative becomes an acceptable way to express gender biases. I illustrated how cadets use humor to resist and conform to USAFA culture, express unacceptable emotions, and create boundaries for appropriate behavior and norms regarding femininity and masculinity. Editorial comics furtively challenged the institution and appropriated its authority. In closing, I consider the relationship of my findings and incorporate them into a framework for understanding cadet attitudes and behavior. I conclude with a discussion about policy, implications for practice, and further research.

CONTRIBUTIONS

This dissertation engages with two distinct audiences. One consists of researchers within USAFA who study the Academy's culture and climate, mostly through quantitative

methods. The other consists of sociologists of gender and organizations. In the first instance, this dissertation addresses the shortage of qualitative research at USAFA while complementing extant quantitative studies about cadet culture. Asiu et al. (1998) showed low participation and respondent disinterest in annual cadet surveys. These surveys show trends and changes in cadet attitudes over time, but we need to know about the processes behind these changes and how cadets think about their behavior. Data aggregation through repeated surveys leads to powerful and statistically significant results; however, results hold more meaning if we understand how trends and shifts happen. Through qualitative methods, I have shed light on processes that create and sustain cadet culture.

In particular, my research reveals that cadets participate in selective rebellion and contribute to a culture of non-compliance in several ways. Primarily, they attempt to maintain their own identity and some control over their environment by resisting military socialization. By challenging the organization, of which they belong as a powerless member on the bottom of the hierarchy, cadets use this strategy to emerge physically and psychologically undamaged from the domination of a total institution. This is a consequence of weakened commitment to the institution and its principles, as cadets shift their attention toward occupational values and rely on theories-in-use. Secondly, the military as an institution has an overwhelming deluge of regulations and requirements that are impossible to execute to standard (Wong and Gerras 2015). Cadets rely on theories-in-use to prioritize rules and requirements, interpreting rules differently and making decisions to follow “good” rules and ignore “stupid” rules. In an occupational paradigm, they favor theories-in-use opposed to espoused values. Finally, the fear of sanctions and social isolation, categorizing the in-group and out-group, also drives the participation in

non-compliance and rebellion against USAFA. Cadets remain loyal to themselves or their friends instead of institutional values, offering compliance over commitment. I believe this culture of non-compliance exists at other federal service academies such as West Point and Annapolis. Federal service academies train cadets to be military leaders of character and foster commitment, discipline, and integrity; however, non-compliance opposes the mission of USAFA as cadets craft narratives and construct a culture of misbehavior.

Cadets construct and sustain gender stereotypes, undermining official policies on the inclusion of women in the military and actual lived experience of women. This duality also exists in warrior-focused training and occupational duties of the Air Force. Despite the reality of experiences, military socialization invests cadets in a combat narrative that justifies keeping women out of combat roles and the military itself. Men create justifications for fitness testing based on non-existent masculine-heroic actions during combat, even though a small fraction of Air Force occupations participates in physical combat. Although most cadets were not sexist, a few who were extremely vocal with stereotypes about women allowed sexism to reign, maintained by pluralistic ignorance and legitimating the longstanding culture of gender bias at USAFA. The focus on pluralistic ignorance contributes to the sociological research on gender bias, particularly in male-dominated settings (e.g., Acker 1990, 1992; Ely 1995; Segal 1995; Sasson-Levy 2003; McCone and Scott 2009; and Hinojosa 2010)

I also contribute to the sociology of gender by showing how cadets actively challenge and undercut the USAFA's definitions of member identity through humor, specifically comics. Humor allows cadets to resist and conform to USAFA culture, express unacceptable emotions, create boundaries for appropriate norms and behavior, and

navigate femininity and masculinity. Comics criticize aspects of USAFA culture while reinforcing others, providing a creative space where cadets can maintain self and individuality while living within the rules and regulations of the institution. Taboo topics are implicitly communicated and cadets' interpretations of reality are expressed in an amusing way. Sexist humor plays a major role in cadet humor, where objectification of women at USAFA is routine and aggressive humor is used to victimize and belittle women. Gendered organizations limit the ability of women to adapt and succeed, forcing them to adapt to the organization and "fit in" instead of the other way around. Consistent with existing research on gender in organizations (e.g., Kanter 1977), I found that women use several tactics to work within gendered organizations, one of which is accommodating to the culture by becoming an honorary male. This dissertation adds to the research by presenting a noteworthy instance in which an honorary male exemplified accommodation, assimilation, and maintained gender domination by solidifying relations between men and fostering hostility toward women through jokes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This dissertation acknowledges problematic issues of importance to USAFA and its mission of producing officers of character. Although historical studies have previously acknowledged these or similar issues, cadet culture is slow to correct itself and is perhaps guilty of organizational amnesia. Acknowledging areas of concern is the first step, followed by standardization, enforcement, and absolute support of gender integration.

Standardization and enforcement

Enhancing credibility in the execution of the Academy's mission results from consistent standardization and enforcement of rules and regulations. Enforcement should be constant and expected throughout both the Academy and military service in general; however, in practice, the art and necessity of correcting peers, and occasionally leaders, remains an elusive and uncomfortable art. Superiors should act as examples or mentors in their instruction of officer development and expect standardization enforcement and full compliance as a minimum standard of measurement. Cadets expect the officers above them to set and abide by the principles expected of their subordinates. Specifically, institutional focus needs to come from senior leadership and permeate down through the ranks. Leadership by example remains an effective motivator, and cadets thirst for such exemplars in the women and men charged with instilling lasting values. The officer or cadet who ignores obvious infractions, or corrects discrepancies while displaying the same violation creates a culture of acceptable negligence and disregard for established protocols. Worse, the attitude of non-compliance is infectious and spreads rapidly. Peer leadership and exemplary corrective actions represent a necessary, albeit difficult, focus area for USAFA to redouble its efforts in officer training.

Additionally, credibility must contain consequences. Cadets admit a lack of significant consequences that contribute to a culture of non-compliance. The lack of a credible threat of reprisal or consequences emboldens those who would push the limits of regulatory guidance and policy. Rehabilitation versus expulsion remains a significant challenge for military leaders confronted with subordinates who test the limits of authority. USAFA lies at a particularly precarious position, as it must balance the natural

tendencies of youth battling emotional, psychological, and physical passions alongside the demands of officership and a regimented lifestyle within a total institution. The acceptance and realization of consequences directly affects the development of responsibility within cadets; officer and cadet alike must realize and accept the consequences associated with a failure to comply with established guidance, with a credible threat of disenrollment maintained for those who fail to adhere to established standards.

Finally, USAFA needs to reassess how to train and educate cadets. Instead of continuing to use training for the sake of perpetuating tradition, we should examine the types of missions the Air Force is most likely to face and how we can best prepare our cadets for their future as officers. I believe that cadets require explicit guidance on the purpose of training. With a daunting academic workload, strenuous fitness regimes, and overwhelming military exercises, cadets often fail to comprehend the objectives of every policy, regulation, and training event placed upon them. Whether it is basic cadet training or the physical fitness test, cadets construct their own interpretation in the absence of guidance. Cadets must be fully informed and educated about policy and changes within the organization to minimize opportunities to fill in the blanks with misinformation.

Gender integration

Samuels and Samuels (2003) stated that regardless of simple orders by service academy leadership for gender integration to go smoothly, the lack of buy-in by faculty, staff, and cadets led to an awkward and tense integration process. Authentic support from leadership plays a fundamental role in shaping the attitude and behavior of cadets. Without major changes to the culture and training at USAFA, gender integration will

continue to meet opposition from men who espouse traditional gender roles. This is perhaps most evidenced by recent sexual assault scandals at the service academies and more recent widespread issues with sexual assault and the military as a whole.

It is difficult to transform attitudes toward women at USAFA, especially when cultural norms of masculinity are passed on to each new generation of cadets. DeFleur et al. (1985) stated that it is possible to transform traditional norms only over a long period of time through a combination of changes in programs, including efforts to recruit men with diverse social backgrounds, increase the numbers of women in positions of power, and increase numbers of women in the cadet wing. We should conduct a thorough examination of areas in the cadet wing where differences between men and women are intensified. Differences in performance cannot be eradicated but USAFA leadership should recognize that as men observe and learn that women do not perform identically in some areas, specifically fitness testing, “there is an immediate decline in favorable orientations toward women” (DeFleur et al. 1985:168). A concentrated focus on changing gender attitudes through education is the next step in providing cadets with a diverse and equitable climate. Such focus will be paramount with the lifting on the ban of women in combat, opening critical front-line positions to women and incorporating them in combat training. As women formally move into previously all-male units, and the Department of Defense eventually opens the remainder of combat positions to women, continuing education and understanding will be needed to avoid pitfalls we have seen in the course of this dissertation.

FUTURE RESEARCH

I approached my dissertation as a compilation of articles about sense-making and identity construction at USAFA, motivated to publish qualitative research and increase traction with similar research. Future research primarily rests on continued entrée and access to the cadet wing; because the site and its participants are restricted and only accessible to faculty and staff who have cleared background security checks, the best course of action is to conduct research as an insider. I have thematically organized research objectives under two categories: methodological considerations and cadet culture.

Methodological Considerations

Qualitative research can only happen if insiders are able and willing. Insiders can gain entrée and access to groups inside a restricted area, including cadets, faculty, and staff, which resolves the most significant obstacle to conducting research at USAFA. The next step in conducting qualitative research requires the motivation of willing personnel, who will need to set aside a considerable amount of resources. Most of the faculty consists of military personnel who are assigned to USAFA for a length of three to four years. Due to this short stint and eventual departure, extensive studies are not feasible for military personnel who may end up assigned elsewhere in the Air Force with no chance of returning to USAFA. Civilian faculty members have a higher likelihood of remaining on faculty; however, many civilians are not alumni and do not possess an established background of insider knowledge. Efforts must be made to introduce more studies using qualitative methods, combining the expertise of seasoned professors with a passion for research and alumni faculty who rely on their experiences for subject material. If a military faculty

member happens to possess both traits, they are better suited to use qualitative methods to complement current quantitative efforts, and yield better data to explain the processes behind trends in cadet attitudes and behavior.

Another consideration for future research is conducting a quasi-ethnography of cadet life, following cadets throughout their time at USAFA from the day they step off the bus on I-day through graduation. Building rapport over four years would allow researchers to develop lasting and trustworthy relationships with cadets, leading to in-depth and detailed accounts of cadet life. Initially, I considered participant observation as part of my research, in order to immerse myself within the population as an insider in a natural setting, but was unable to obtain approval from the IRB. Data collection and direct observation within the walls of the restricted cadet area was not possible due to privacy concerns and was seen as a potential threat to national security. In situ observations and recording in the cadet area were and will be forbidden for the foreseeable future. If I am able to remain at USAFA for an extensive career in teaching, I will pursue longitudinal studies to better understand the process of socialization into cadet culture.

Additionally, I intend to include faculty and staff in focus groups and interviews in order to present a diverse perspective on cadet culture and officer development. Because cadets are able to volunteer for research through established participant pools, the recruiting process is streamlined and supported by the IRB. Faculty and staff are not represented in research participant pools due to the bureaucracy involved in recruitment; the IRB will only authorize research involving human subjects at USAFA, for subjects other than cadets, with permission from the Dean of Faculty and the Commandant of Cadets, the command authorities governing faculty and staff. I planned to interview faculty and staff

for this dissertation, however, I did not have the time to manage official requests through these two channels. Requests such as this will be reasonable to achieve once I return to the faculty and possess more resources than I currently have.

Cadet Culture

In her work among evangelical Christians, Wilkins found that group culture “is created, sustained, and made meaningful through community participation” (2008:281). Similarly, I found that cadets teach each other certain ways to feel, think, talk, and behave in their new setting; non-compliance, combat narratives, and humor, are meaningful aspects of cadet identity that run counter to the USAFA mission. Further research is warranted to understand cadet culture and how it is sustained.

Wong and Gerras (2015) recently acknowledged a culture of dishonesty in the U.S. Army, outlining several ethical offenses across the military including widespread cheating on Air Force missile launch system testing, Navy nuclear reactor operations testing, and fabricating Army personnel evaluation forms. The authors argue that acknowledging this serious issue of integrity is difficult and painful but necessary as the first step in cultural change. Similarly, I plan to acknowledge specific aspects of cadet culture that demonstrate systematic non-compliance at USAFA. Following publication of these dissertation chapters, I intend to highlight the relationship between unit performance and social or task cohesion, expand on the institutional and occupational thesis, and address sexual assault and workplace aggression.

I will also add to existing works investigating the relationship between unit performance, military effectiveness, social cohesion, and task cohesion. MacCoun, Kier, and

Belkin (2006) argue that social cohesion has no reliable relationship with performance whereas task cohesion is a critical factor in motivation and effectiveness. I propose to qualitatively examine this dynamic at USAFA based on findings from this dissertation. Cadets were complacent in upholding standards and correcting their peers, operating in the mindset of social cohesion; cadets wanted to remain friends and likeable to each other, and were not bound by shared goals, undermining officer development and commitment to the institution. Relatedly, I plan to expand on the institutional and occupational thesis and focus on commitment to the institution, expanding on past efforts (Janowitz 1964; Moskos 1986; Segal and DeAngelis 2009). Since the military moved from a draft to an all-volunteer force, numerous incentives are in place for recruiting and retention allowing for a more occupational mentality.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The body of research at USAFA, specifically about cadets, has addressed discernible institutional structures and expanded our understanding of attitudes through data aggregation; however, the investigation of sense-making and personal identity have proved challenging due to restrictive access and lack of emphasis on qualitative research. Massive surveys about cadet climate, for example, take place annually and are compiled in a repository in order to track changes in attitude over time. Following up with cadets to understand attitude formation is difficult to accomplish with limited resources, however, quite possible. The inclination of military protocol, for constant and frequent status updates shown on line graphs, remains an impediment but is not insurmountable.

This dissertation effectively examines cadets' sense of self in spite of, and thanks to, the institution and its total and reinventive nature. In his work within a total institution, Goffman (1961) recognized how individuals secured an identity through sense of self and as a part of a collective:

Without something to belong to, we have no stable self, and yet total commitment and attachment to any social unit implies a kind of selflessness. Our sense of being a person can come from being drawn into a wider social unit; our sense of selfhood can arise through the little ways in which we resist the pull. Our status is backed by the solid building of the world, while our sense of personal identity often resides in the cracks. (p. 280)

Cadets volunteer to enter military service through USAFA, accepting that they will belong to an exclusive institution for the purpose of becoming an Air Force officer. USAFA pulls cadets into an institutional mindset through military socialization, attempting to earn total commitment to its espoused values of integrity, service, and excellence. Cadets push back on USAFA, resisting its appropriation of their self and identity. This delicate balance has played out over the course of USAFA's history and will continue to exist into the future. I am compelled to explore this balance for the sake of the officer development process and ultimately the security of our nation.

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY 1 (2005)

“Understanding Attitudes of Gender and Training
at the United States Air Force Academy.”

IRB Protocols – USAFA IRB: FAC2006006H. UCCS IRB: 05-076.

Dear Participant,

My name is Jimmy Do and I am currently working on my Sociology Master of Arts thesis at University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Dr. Abby Ferber, associate professor of Sociology and Director of Women’s Studies at UCCS, is overseeing my thesis. Dr. Steve Samuels, USAFA/DFBL Associate Professor, is the principal investigator of this study.

I would like to determine the current attitudes of the cadet wing regarding the influence of women in society, the military, and at the Air Force Academy, and level of understanding regarding the impact of gender on standards for male and female cadets. I am asking for your help in the research I am conducting. Due to the limited access of this population your participation is greatly appreciated.

The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete – please take your time and answer the questions honestly. You are not required to write your name on any of the questionnaires, therefore you and your data will remain anonymous. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty and you have the right to discontinue participation at any time. There is low risk involved with participating in this study. There are direct benefits from your participation in this study. If you are in the DFBL research participant pool, you will receive credit for your participation in this study.

If you have any comments or questions regarding the conduct of this research, your rights as a research subject, or would like to hear more about the study, please contact me at jdo@uccs.edu, or 719-597-6993. You can get in contact with Dr. Abby Ferber at aferber@uccs.edu or 719-262-4153. You can reach Dr. Steve Samuels at steven.samuels@usafa.af.mil or 719-333-9893. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant or any concerns regarding this project, you may report them – confidentially, if you wish – to Dr. Sandy Wurtele, the UCCS Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at 719-262-4150.

Thank you very much for your help.

James J.W. Do

These questions are about the role of women in society. Please answer the following questions and use the following scale to rate how strongly you disagree or agree with each statement.

Strongly <u>Disagree</u>	Somewhat <u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Agree</u>	Strongly <u>Agree</u>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination.
2. It is rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television.
3. Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement.
4. It is easy to understand the anger of women's groups.
5. Over the past few years, the government and news media have been showing more concern about the treatment of women than is warranted by women's actual experiences.
6. Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in this country.
7. On average, people in our society treat husbands and wives equally.
8. It is easy to understand why women's groups are still concerned with societal limitations of women's opportunities.

These next questions are about the role of women in the armed forces. Please use the following scale to rate how strongly you disagree or agree with each statement.

Strongly <u>Disagree</u>	Somewhat <u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Agree</u>	Strongly <u>Agree</u>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. Women would perform as well in combat as men if they were properly trained.
10. Certain civilian and military jobs are so unfeminine that women should be excluded from performing them.
11. Women should be expected to serve in combat on the front line.
12. If women were assigned to direct combat, the military would become less effective.

This is a list of jobs that people might have in the armed forces. Assuming women and men receive the same training, please rate how strongly you disagree or agree with whether women should be assigned to each job.

	Strongly <u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	Somewhat <u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Agree</u>	Strongly <u>Agree</u>
13. Fighter pilot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Transport pilot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Mechanic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Combat zone nurse	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17. Soldier in hand-to-hand combat 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. Base commander 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The following questions are about women at the US Air Force Academy.

In your opinion, what impact do female cadets have on:

- | | Large
Negative
<u>Impact</u> | Small
Negative
<u>Impact</u> | No
<u>Difference</u> | Small
Positive
<u>Impact</u> | Large
Positive
<u>Impact</u> |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 19. Academic standards | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Physical performance standards | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Discipline | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. Overall image of the Academy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. My pride in being part of the Cadet Wing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

24. Do male and female cadets have different standards for academic performance?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Please explain your answer:

25. Do male and female cadets have different standards for military performance?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Please explain your answer:

26. Do male and female cadets have different standards for the physical fitness test?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Please explain your answer:

27. Do you think there should be different standards in academic performance?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Please explain your answer:

28. Do you think there should be different standards in military performance?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Please explain your answer:

29. Do you think there should be different standards in physical fitness performance?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

Please explain your answer:

About yourself.

30. I am: ☐ Male ☐ Female

31. My current rank is: ☐ 4^o ☐ 3^o ☐ 2^o ☐ 1^o

Additional comments:

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX B
SURVEY 2 (2010)

“Gender Bias in the Military: Attitudes Regarding Physical Fitness Testing
at the United States Air Force Academy”

IRB Protocol – USAFA: FAC20100071E

Dear Participant,

We would like to determine the current attitudes of the cadet wing regarding the influence of women in the military and at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA), and level of understanding regarding the impact of gender on physical fitness test (PFT) standards for male and female cadets. Mr. Jimmy Do, USAFA/DFBL Instructor, is the principal investigator of the study. Dr. Steve Samuels, USAFA/DFBL Professor, is an associate investigator of this study.

We are asking for your help with this research. Due to the limited access of the cadet population your participation is greatly appreciated.

The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete – please take your time and answer the questions honestly. Please do not write your name on any portion of the questionnaire, including comments section, so that you and your data will remain anonymous. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty and you have the right to discontinue participation at any time. There is low risk involved with participating in this study. There are direct benefits from your participation in this study. If you are in the DFBL research participant pool, you will receive extra credit, up to 3% of the course grade, for your participation in this study. The alternative to participation on this survey is to not participate or select another study in which to participate.

If you have any comments or questions regarding the conduct of this research, your rights as a research subject, or would like to hear more about the study, please contact us. You can contact Mr. Do at mr.jimmydo@gmail.com or 714-747-9958. You can reach Dr. Steve Samuels at steven.samuels@usafa.af.mil or 719-333-9893. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant or any concerns regarding this project, you may report them – confidentially, if you wish – to Dr. Wil Scott, the USAFA Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board at 719-333-6740.

Thank you very much for your help.

These questions are about the role of women in society. Please answer the following questions and use the following scale to rate how strongly you disagree or agree with each statement.

Strongly <u>Disagree</u>	Somewhat <u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Agree</u>	Strongly <u>Agree</u>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination.
2. It is rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television.
3. Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement.
4. It is easy to understand the anger of women's groups.
5. Over the past few years, the government and news media have been showing more concern about the treatment of women than is warranted by women's actual experiences.
6. Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in this country.
7. On average, people in our society treat husbands and wives equally.
8. It is easy to understand why women's groups are still concerned with societal limitations of women's opportunities.

Strongly <u>Disagree</u>	Somewhat <u>Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Agree</u>	Strongly <u>Agree</u>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

These next questions are about the role of women in the armed forces. Please use the following scale to rate how strongly you disagree or agree with each statement.

9. Women would perform as well in combat as men if they were properly trained.
10. Certain civilian and military jobs are so unfeminine that women should be excluded from performing them.
11. Women should be expected to serve in combat on the front line.
12. If women were assigned to direct combat, the military would become less effective.

These questions are about the role of women in the armed forces.

This is a list of jobs that people might have in the armed forces. Assuming women and men receive the same training, please rate how strongly you disagree or agree with whether women should be assigned to each job.

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>
13. Fighter pilot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Transport pilot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Mechanic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Combat zone nurse	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Soldier in hand- to-hand combat	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Base commander	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The following questions are about the PFT at USAFA.

Please use the following scale to rate how strongly **you** disagree or agree with each with each statement.

<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

19. The level of difficulty on the PFT is equal for male and females.
20. The PFT favors one gender over the other.
21. If you agree with question #20, indicate which gender you believe is favored.
- | | | |
|------|--------|---------------------------------|
| Male | Female | Did not agree with question #20 |
|------|--------|---------------------------------|
22. PFT standards accurately reflect necessary fitness levels for an active duty officer (*explain*).
23. The PFT standards should be changed (*please explain*).
24. The differences in male and female PFT standards are fair and equitable (*please explain*).
25. Male standards should be higher on the PFT (increase in required repetitions)
26. Which male standards should be higher or lower (*please explain*)?
27. Female standards should be higher on the PFT (increase in required repetitions)
28. Which female standards should be higher or lower (*please explain*)?
29. Males and females should be held to the same standards on the PFT (*please explain*).
30. Males currently have a higher PFT average than females.
31. I publicly express negative attitudes toward females because of PFT standards (*for example*):
32. The Active Duty AF fitness test includes a waist measurement. Males under 30 need 35" or less to max their score. Females under 30 need 31.5" or less to max their score. Is this fair and equitable (*please explain*)?

Please use the following scale to rate how strongly **the average cadet** disagrees or agrees with each statement.

<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

33. The level of difficulty on the PFT is equal for male and females.
34. The PFT favors one gender over the other.
35. If you think cadets agree with question #32, indicate which gender they believe is favored.
 Male Female Did not agree with question #34
36. PFT standards accurately reflect necessary fitness levels for an active duty officer.
37. The PFT standards should be changed.
38. The differences in male and female PFT standards are fair and equitable (*please explain*).
39. Male standards should be higher on the PFT (increase in required repetitions)
40. Which male standards should be higher or lower (*please explain*)?
41. Female standards should be higher on the PFT (increase in required repetitions)
42. Which female standards should be higher or lower (*please explain*)?
43. Males and females should be held to the same standards on the PFT.
44. Males currently have a higher PFT average than females.
45. The average cadet openly expresses negative attitudes toward females because of PFT standards (*for example*).
46. The Active Duty AF fitness test includes a waist measurement. Males under 30 need 35" or less to max their score. Females under 30 need 31.5" or less to max their score. Is this fair and equitable (*please explain*)?

About yourself.

47. I am: ___ Male ___ Female
48. I am in the class of: ___ 2011 ___ 2012 ___ 2013 ___ 2014
49. My most recent PFT score is: _____

Additional comments:

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

“Gender Bias in the Military: Attitudes Regarding Physical Fitness Testing at the United States Air Force Academy”

IRB Protocol – USAFA: FAC20100071E

This focus group guide mirrors the 46-item survey taken previously. The results of the survey will not inform the contents of the focus group guide; however, focus group participants will discuss their answers in an open forum, complementing survey findings and illustrating the process by which participants came to choose their answers (Wolff, Knodel, and Sittitrai 1993 – Focus Groups and Surveys as Complementary Research Methods, in David L. Morgan, Successful Focus Groups: Advancing the State of the Art, 118-136).

Prior to beginning focus group, assign numbers to each participant. Record only participant number, gender, class year, and most recent PFT score. Focus group participants will only use their assigned number and will not use their names or any other information that would identify them.

These questions are about the role of women in society.

Do women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination?
Is it rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television?
Has society reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement?
Is it easy to understand the anger of women’s groups?
Over the past few years, has the government and news media showed more concern about the treatment of women than is warranted by women’s actual experiences?
Is discrimination against women still a problem in this country?
On average, do people in our society treat husbands and wives equally?
Is it easy to understand why women’s groups are still concerned with societal limitations of women’s opportunities?

These next questions are about the role of women in the armed forces.

Would women perform as well in combat as men if they were properly trained?
Are certain civilian and military jobs so unfeminine that women should be excluded from performing them?
Should women be expected to serve in combat on the front line?
If women were assigned to direct combat, would the military become less effective?

These questions are about the types of jobs women may have in the armed forces.

Assuming women and men receive the same training, how strongly do you think women should be assigned to these jobs in the military?

[Fighter pilot, Transport pilot, Mechanic, Combat zone nurse, Soldier in hand-to-hand combat, Base commander]

How does the group disagree or agree with the PFT standards at USAFA, from their viewpoint?

Things to consider:

Is the level of difficulty on the PFT equal for male and females.

Does the PFT favor one gender over the other (if so, which gender is favored)?

Do the PFT standards accurately reflect necessary fitness levels for an active duty officer?

Should the PFT standards be changed?

Are the differences in male and female PFT standards fair and equitable?

Should male standards be higher on the PFT (increase in required repetitions)?

If so, which male standards should be higher or lower?

Should female standards be higher on the PFT (increase in required repetitions)?

If so, which female standards should be higher or lower?

Should males and females be held to the same standards on the PFT?

Do males currently have a higher PFT average than females?

Do I publicly express negative attitudes toward females because of PFT standards?

The Active Duty AF fitness test includes a waist measurement. Males under 30 need 35" or less to max their score. Females under 30 need 31.5" or less to max their score. Is this fair and equitable?

How does the group disagree or agree with the PFT standards at USAFA, from the viewpoint of the average cadet?

Consider the same items above; however, be sure to ask the group about their own views then think about the viewpoint of the average cadet. Are these viewpoints different?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE

“Gender Bias in the Military: Attitudes Regarding Physical Fitness Testing at the United States Air Force Academy”

IRB Protocols – USAFA: FAC20130045E. CU: 13-0248

Researcher will read verbatim:

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this project. This session is open for you to share your thoughts about your time at the Air Force Academy (USAFA). You are free to respond to the prompts of the interviewers or tell your own stories about your experiences with regard to the cadet culture, the climate at USAFA, or any miscellaneous information related to your experiences at USAFA. Some topics will be off limits – we will not ask questions about, nor do we want information about, serious violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice or the Cadet Honor Code. While instances of these do occur at times, these topics fall outside the domain of this study. Our conversation will be recorded for analysis, and stored in a safe and secure location. Once collected, the data will only be accessible by three investigators who are committed to this research project and maintaining the anonymity of research participants. So that we can remain anonymous, please do not use names or any other identifying information. You will not be identifiable at all. You are also free to stop participation in this study at any time without repercussion. Do you have any questions about these instructions?

Open-ended questions:

The following list provides examples of questions the researchers may ask during the interview. Researchers will ask follow-up questions to further investigate and conduct deeper exploration into themes that emerge during the interview process. Follow-up questions may involve the following types of questions, keeping with the line of questioning: close-ended (Can you work under pressure?), negative confirmation (Interesting, let’s talk about another time you...), reflexive questions (Wouldn’t you? Aren’t you?), mirror statements (repeat the statement as a question), question layering (who, what, where, when, why, how).

- Tell me about being a cadet.
- Why did you decide to come to USAFA instead of some other college or university?
- How would you characterize your experience at USAFA?
 - o Has it been better or worse than you expected, or, about what you expected? (Prompt: Please explain the expectations you had prior to arriving at USAFA.)
- How did it go in your first year?
 - o If respondent is 3rd, 2nd, or firstie: How has it gone since then?
- What is your daily life like here?
 - o What happens in a typical day?
- What are your thoughts about cadet life?
- How would you describe leadership here at the Academy?
 - o By permanent party?

- By cadets?
- Tell me about a time here when you felt especially frustrated.
- Tell me about a time here when you felt especially proud.
- What can you tell me about the training here?
- How do you feel about the Board Order of Merit?
- How would you describe situations of competitiveness here at the Academy?
- How would you describe or characterize the organizational culture of USAFA?
- Describe a situation where you or someone you know experienced unfairness.
- Describe a situation where you or someone you know experienced fairness.
- What does it mean to you to be a cadet?
- What will it mean to you to be an officer in the U.S. Air Force?
- If you had to do it all over again, would you still come here or would you go somewhere else?