

## WOMEN IN THE SPHERE OF MASCULINITY: THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF WOMEN'S INTEGRATION IN THE MILITARY

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### INTRODUCTION

In one of the opening scenes of the 1998 documentary *Company Jasmine*—a film that documents the prestigious Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) women field officers' course<sup>1</sup>—Noa, one of the cadets, expresses reservation toward her fellow cadets, explaining:

I am really annoyed by the fact that there are only women here, not because I am looking for my future husband or something like that. Too many women together are not a good thing anywhere, especially not in the military.<sup>2</sup>

Noa is one of numerous women who have managed to cross traditional gender lines in the Israeli military in the last decade, assigned to positions that typically had been reserved for men.<sup>3</sup> The inclusion of those women in traditional masculine spheres was the result of legal changes initiated by women and feminist groups in the 1990s.<sup>4</sup> Those changes were designed to promote greater gender equality in the military by opening prestigious combat units to women soldiers.<sup>5</sup> Hence, Noa and all other women whose military experiences were documented in the film *Company Jasmine* were all facilitators of this vision of gender equality. Moreover, those women are usually perceived as role models for what appears to be an on-going gender revolution in the military.<sup>6</sup>

Against this prevailing view of gender reform in the military, this article claims that despite the fact that women soldiers such as Noa manage to cross traditional military gender lines one should question more critically the feminist significance of this process of gender integration in the IDF. In fact, as discussed

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1. COMPANY JASMINE (Yael Katzir 1998). The documentary was filmed between March and July 1998. The filmed material was then edited for almost two years, and the first public screening of the documentary was held in July 2000. For more details on the production process of this film and on the women soldiers documented in it, see [www.company-jasmine.com](http://www.company-jasmine.com). For the director's personal production journal that documents the exact timetable, see Yael Katzir, *Company Jasmine: A Production Journal*, 28 KESHER 114 (Nov. 2000) (Hebrew).

2. *Id.*

3. *See infra* Part III.

4. *Id.*

5. *Id.*

6. *See infra* notes 53–54 and accompanying text.

below, studies examining various aspects of this contemporary process of gender integration in the Israeli Army—including the subjective experience of women soldiers in non-traditional roles—suggest that Noa’s misogynist reference to other women soldiers should not be dismissed as anecdotal.<sup>7</sup> Instead, those studies lead to the conclusion that this reference should be viewed as one manifestation of a larger phenomenon characterizing women’s integration into masculine spheres.<sup>8</sup> In other words, women’s androcentric attitudes toward other women, or toward practices associated with women and femininity, are not unusual among women soldiers serving in non-traditional roles. These women seem to distance themselves from traditional femininity by adopting the masculine perspective and the masculine norm.<sup>9</sup> Hence, while such women cross traditional gender boundaries in the military by assimilating into roles that had been reserved for men, they also preserve the clear hierarchical boundaries between femininity and masculinity that typically characterize masculinized institutions such as the military. Moreover, those boundaries appear to be perpetuated further by sexual harassment of women soldiers, which, according to official sources, continues to be widespread in the military, irrespective of women’s growing integration in non-traditional roles.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, while women’s recent integration into traditionally masculine roles in the military does not seem to undermine the gendered structure of this institution, the subjective experience of those women regarding their military service appears to be quite empowering. For some women, having the equal opportunity to serve as their male counterparts proves to be a meaningful experience that raises their confidence and allows for individual achievements in areas traditionally inaccessible to women.<sup>11</sup>

This article focuses on these seemingly contradictory findings regarding women’s growing integration in the military, using the Israeli experience of gender integration in the IDF as a case study for exploring the ongoing feminist debate on women’s military service. At the heart of this debate lies the question whether women’s equal integration in the military promotes or hinders gender equality. Traditionally this was a theoretical question, since no relevant empirical data existed as long as the general practice of all western militaries was women’s exclusion from combat. Feminist discourse on this issue was therefore based mostly on general normative assumptions regarding the nature of the military on the one hand and the proper definition of gender equality on the other. Those embracing the liberal feminist approach—emphasizing gender sameness and equal treatment—have argued that women’s equal participation in the military is an important manifestation of equal rights, and therefore promotes the vision of gender equality and equal citizenship for men and women.<sup>12</sup> Those analyzing the military as an inherently masculine institution

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7. See *infra* Part IV.A.

8. *Id.*

9. *Id.*

10. See *infra* Part IV.C.(2).

11. See *infra* Part IV.B.

12. See generally Wendy Williams, *The Equality Crisis: Some Reflections on Culture, Courts and Feminism*, 7 WOMEN’S RTS L. REP. 175 (1982).

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have concluded that women's military service only perpetuates masculine concepts of citizenship.<sup>13</sup>

This article seeks to add to this discussion by providing a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which women's growing integration in traditionally masculine spheres in the military impacts gender equality. It argues that, more than a decade after the IDF has formally started to implement programs for gender integration in combat roles, it is time to start evaluating the significance and various consequences of this process. The potential evaluation is no longer theoretical but can be based on actual data that already exists. This data consists of not only sheer statistics regarding women's continuing integration into non-traditional roles in the military, but it also includes documentation of the subjective viewpoints of the women soldiers who are part of this newly established integrationist reality. Hence, in an effort to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the actual nature and implications of women's current integration in combat roles in the military, this article presents and analyzes a complex body of information, including female soldiers' own subjective experience of this process.

Part I of this article sketches the history of women's military service in Israel, highlighting the fact that, despite an officially equal mandatory draft for both men and women, the Israeli military was segregated along gender lines for many years. This segregation was represented by men serving in combat roles and women serving in the less-prestigious administrative and auxiliary roles. Part II explores the various consequences of this regime of gender segregation and the relationship between military service and equal citizenship in Israel. Part III analyzes the legal and structural changes that started to take place in the 1990s as part of an organized feminist struggle to promote greater gender integration within the military. This part further explains that such changes opened up new opportunities for women to serve in the combat roles traditionally reserved for men. Part IV examines and assesses the implications that this proclaimed gender revolution and integration has had on women's equality and status—both within the military and in society at large. Based on various studies, including the military's own research and findings, I argue that, despite formal integrationist policies, informal cultural and ideological barriers continue to hinder women's integration, while creating new forms of gender segregation in the military. The article concludes that the Israeli feminist struggle for gender integration in the military provides an intriguing case study that highlights the complexities and enormous difficulties inherent in women's quest for equality. While the military's critical role in determining status and equal citizenship in society seems to require women to be part of this key important social institute, it is questionable whether the integrationist strategy will ever enable them to win the battle for gender equality from within.

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13. CYNTHIA H. ENLOE, *DOES KHAKI BECOME YOU?: THE MILITARIZATION OF WOMEN'S LIVES* (Pandora Press 1988).

## I. ISRAELI WOMEN AND THE DRAFT: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Israel is unique (certainly in comparison to the U.S.) in its mandatory draft of all citizens—men and women alike. This means that women have been part of the Israeli Defense Forces since the early days of Israeli statehood. As far back as 1949 (one year after the establishment of the State of Israel), the original version of the Defense Service Law mandated military service for both men and women, while differentiating between the sexes in the terms and conditions of service.<sup>14</sup> The original decision to draft women together with men in the early days of statehood is usually attributed to two main factors. First, sexual equality was a key component of the State's founding ethos.<sup>15</sup> A formal commitment to the idea of gender equality can be found in the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, which provides that the State of Israel "will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its citizens irrespective of religion, race, or sex."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, as Nitza Berkowitch explains, this reference to sexual equality should be perceived as more than a mere commitment to the idea of equality.<sup>17</sup> Rather, it was "a self-conscious portrayal of Israel as an example of a new model society founded on principles of justice and equality."<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, when the question of drafting women was raised before the legislature immediately after the establishment of the State, the issue was clearly framed by its proponents in egalitarian terms.<sup>19</sup>

A second relevant factor for the decision to enlist women was Israel's ongoing security concerns.<sup>20</sup> Following the 1948 War of Independence, Israeli leaders came to the conclusion that the Arab countries would not accept the existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East; it was therefore essential to prepare the population for a long period of fighting and sacrifice for the

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14. See *infra* notes 26–31 and accompanying text. For a general overview of the various articles of the Defense Service Law that define the scope and conditions of women's military service as opposed to men's service, see Noya Rimalt, *Equality with a Vengeance: Female Conscientious Objectors in Pursuit of Voice and Substantive Gender Equality*, 16 COLUM. J. GENDER & L. 99, 104–06 (2007) [hereinafter Rimalt, *Equality with a Vengeance*].

15. Nitza Berkowitch, *Motherhood as a National Mission: The Construction of Womanhood in the Legal Discourse in Israel*, 20 WOMEN'S STUD. INT'L F. 605, 608 (1997).

16. The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel, 5708-1948, 1 LSI 3 (1948) (Isr.), translation available at [http://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/megilat\\_eng.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/megilat_eng.htm).

17. Berkowitch, *supra* note 15, at 608.

18. *Id.*

19. David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, was particularly explicit on the issue of drafting women:

Women have been equal partners with regard to all rights and duties in the Zionist movement and in the State of Israel, in all of the State's projects, whether in construction or in defense, whether in the founding of the State or in the establishment of the Israel Defense Forces, and they have done their share in our War of Independence.

DK (1949) 1336, 1569 (statement of Prime Minister and Minister of Defense David Ben-Gurion).

20. Orna Sasson-Levy, *Feminism and Military Gender Practices: Israeli Women Soldiers in Masculine Roles*, 73 SOC. INQUIRY 440, 444 (2003) [hereinafter Sasson-Levy, *Feminism and Military Gender Practices*].

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country's defense.<sup>21</sup> The vision of a "people's army"<sup>22</sup> was integral to this purpose. A draft of men and women alike had both practical and symbolic significance: It was an important expression of the idea that the military and the security needs of the country belonged to "all."<sup>23</sup>

The Defense Service Law, presented to the Israeli parliament (the Knesset) in 1949, was the first attempt to legally formalize women's military service.<sup>24</sup> The legal framework ultimately adopted by the legislature was based on two general principles: (1) some women—namely Jewish, single females—would be drafted; and (2) women would not fight in combat. Thus, the state created a model of "semi-inclusion"<sup>25</sup> that reflected an ambivalent concept of participation on the one hand and of marginality on the other hand. While women were allowed to participate, they were considered an auxiliary force of relatively marginal importance. In contrast, men were assigned to fill the military's primary roles of fighters and defenders.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the law created different provisions for men and women in three main areas relating to their compulsory service: (1) duration of regular service; (2) scope of annual reserve duty; and (3) exemption from service: Women's compulsory service would be shorter than men's,<sup>27</sup> a lower age limit was set for women's annual reserve duty,<sup>28</sup> and an exemption from service was granted to many groups of women.<sup>29</sup> In addition, women's potential roles in the military were determined by the Minister of Defense in regulations enacted in 1952.<sup>30</sup> These regulations, designed to implement the decision to exclude women from the battlefield, explicitly listed the positions

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21. Joyce Robbins & Uri Ben-Eliezer, "New Roles or "New Times"? Gender Inequality and Militarism in Israel's Nation-in-Arms, 7 SOC. POLITICS: INT'L STUD. GENDER, STATE & SOC'Y 309, 317 (2000).

22. *Id.*

23. *Id.*

24. Defense Service Law, 5709-1949, 25 LSI 271 (1949) (Isr.).

25. Robbins & Ben-Eliezer, *supra* note 21, at 317.

26. Rimalt, *Equality with a Vengeance*, *supra* note 14, at 106-11

27. Defense Service Law, 5709-1949, 25 LSI 271 (1949) (Isr.), art. 6.

28. *Id.* at arts. 1, 8. The Israeli Army has a tripartite organizational structure composed of the regular army (based on the principle of compulsory service), a large reserve army, and a smaller framework of professional soldiers. In principle and by law, all able males are summoned to the reserves once a year for a period that lasts, on average, thirty-five days. These men serve in the reserves from the end of their regular service, generally at twenty-one-years-old, until they are approximately fifty-five-years-old. The reserve system also applies in principle to women, who can be summoned to the reserves until they are thirty-nine-years-old if they do not marry. However, the participation of women in the reserve system has been marginal throughout the years. See Sara Helman, *Militarism and the Construction of Community*, 25 J. POLITICAL & MILITARY SOC. 305, 310 (1997). For the present legal framework that applies to men and women's military service, see Defense Service Law (Consolidated Version), 5746-1986, 40 LSI 112 (1985-86) (Isr.).

29. Defense Service Law, 5709-1949, 25 LSI 271 (1949) (Isr.), art. 11 (allowing exemptions for married women, mothers, pregnant women, religious women, and conscientious objectors, among others). For a more detailed discussion of the scope of those exemptions and their significance, see generally Rimalt, *Equality with a Vengeance*, *supra* note 14.

30. Defense Service Regulations (The Roles of a Woman in Regular [Military] Service), 5712-1952, 254 KT (Administrative Regulations of Israel) 650 (1952).

that women could fill within the armed services. Out of the specified twenty-five possible positions for women, none involved combat-related tasks.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, contrary to its common image as an army that had broken the classic combat/non-combat division of labor between the sexes,<sup>32</sup> the Israeli military created and preserved clear gender lines in this context from the very beginning. The battlefield remained the place where masculinity was defined and where men had the opportunity to be decorated as heroes. In that respect, the Israeli ideal of a woman soldier followed the long historical pattern of linking masculinity with military service.<sup>33</sup> Contrary to the founding ethos of the state of sexual equality, stereotypical perceptions of gender difference were, in reality, the norm.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, a careful analysis of the legislative history of the Defense Service Law reveals that, in the early days of statehood, women were perceived by many parliament members first and foremost as mothers; the common understanding was that military service should not interfere with this unique aspect of women's lives.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the notion of equal draft was restricted to only a subclass of women who were neither potential nor actual mothers. David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, summarized this position during the legislative deliberations over the Defense Service Law: "[W]omen are not disqualified from any kind of service, they are not barred from any right and they are not exempt from any duty unless it interferes with their motherhood."<sup>36</sup>

This perception of gender difference guided the army leaders in their establishment of the Women's Corps (the "Chen") in 1949. The official goal was to assist the IDF in recruiting women and managing personnel issues emanating from perceived differences between men and women.<sup>37</sup> The first head of the Women's Corps clarified this notion when she explained shortly after she was appointed that the army had "no intention of destroying the 'woman' in the woman soldier and turning her into a gloomy barracks creature."<sup>38</sup>

Women were, therefore, integrated into the military as "women" with the assumption that the prevailing ideas regarding their difference from men should serve as effective constraints on their military service. By the 1980s, approximately sixty-five percent of all women in the IDF were clerical workers.<sup>39</sup> The remaining thirty-five percent performed technical, mechanical, and

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31. Assigning a woman to a job that is not mentioned in the list was permitted under the regulations only "if the woman consented thereto in a written declaration." *Id.* at art. 1.

32. ENCLOE, *supra* note 13, at 155.

33. Robbins & Ben-Eliezer, *supra* note 21, at 321.

34. Rimalt, *Equality with a Vengeance*, *supra* note 14, at 106–11.

35. Berkowitch, *supra* note 15, at 609–11; Rimalt, *Equality with a Vengeance*, *supra* note 14, at 106–111.

36. DK (1949) 1569 (statement of Prime Minister and Minister of Defense David Ben-Gurion) (alteration added).

37. The Chen was modeled after the Auxiliary Territorial Services (ATS), the women's corps of the British army during World War II. Until 1970, the commanding officers of the Chen were former ATS officers. Ann Bloom, *Israel the Longest War*, in *FEMALE SOLDIERS—COMBATANTS OR NONCOMBATANTS?: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES* 137, 151–53 (Nancy Lorig Goldman ed., 1982).

38. Robbins & Ben-Eliezer, *supra* note 21, at 317 (quoting Interview with Head of Women's Corps officer Shoshana Werner, by the official Israeli Army Weekly, *Bamachane* (Mar. 9, 1950), at 7).

39. Bloom, *supra* note 37, at 154; ENCLOE, *supra* note 13, at 155.

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operational roles, with some female soldiers even carrying out civilian community tasks in the areas of education and social work.<sup>40</sup> This reality of clear separation between femininity and masculinity in the military was vividly portrayed in one of the official publications of the IDF in the early 1980s:

Sorry to disappoint you if you have been influenced by the Hollywood image of Israeli girl soldiers being Amazon-type warriors accoutered in ill-fitting male combat fatigues and toting sub-machine guns. Today's women soldiers are trim girls, clothed in uniforms that bring out their youthful femininity. They play a wide variety of noncombatant, though thoroughly essential roles within the IDF framework and within certain sectors of the civilian community.<sup>41</sup>

This gendered structure of clear division of labor between men and women that was created by the military and enforced for many years had far-reaching consequences for Israeli women.

## II. WOMEN: BETWEEN SEMI-INCLUSION AND MARGINAL CITIZENSHIP

In Israel, military service is recognized as a hallmark of citizenship.<sup>42</sup> The special link between military service and full citizenship is usually attributed to the prolonged Arab-Israeli conflict that has heightened the centrality of the military and national security considerations as organizational principles of the collectivity.<sup>43</sup> Kimmerling characterizes this situation as a form of "civilian militarism" and explains that it is exemplified by two major factors: the social significance of military service in delineating the boundaries of the collectivity, and the way in which the whole society orients itself toward constant preparation for war.<sup>44</sup>

Within this militaristic discourse of citizenship, the soldier has emerged as the ideal Israeli citizen. Military service became not only a fundamental expression of the individual's commitments to the state but also an essential proof of the willingness to make a personal sacrifice for the sake of one's country. Moreover, it was not only military service in general, but rather the position one holds during this period that ultimately defined the degree of loyalty to the state. Therefore, as men were assigned the primary role in the nation's defense throughout the years, militarized masculinity became an integral aspect of the normative definition of citizenship. While the Jewish male who served in combat roles and risked his life for the collective was marked as the ultimate patriot, the Jewish woman in her auxiliary roles was only "freeing a man for combat."<sup>45</sup> The highest prestige and glorification was therefore always reserved to the male soldier.

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40. Robbins & Ben-Eliezer, *supra* note 21, at 319–20.

41. Bloom, *supra* note 37, at 156 (quoting ISR. DEF. FORCES SPOKESMAN (official publication of the Israeli armed forces), Feb. 27, 1980).

42. Baruch Kimmerling, *Patterns of Militarism in Israel*, 34 EUROPEAN J. SOC. 196, 216–17 (1993); Berkovitch, *supra* note 15, at 610–11.

43. Kimmerling, *supra* note 42, at 199.

44. *Id.* at 207.

45. Bloom, *supra* note 37, at 155. It is important to note that in addition to its gendered implications, military service and the central role of the military in Israeli Society sustain other grave inequalities in society especially along ethnic lines. Due to the prolonged Arab-Israeli conflict, the

This militarized perception of citizenship coupled with the hierarchical gendered division of labor in the military had far-reaching implications for women, both symbolically and materially. Once the military was marked as one of the most important public institutions, the marginalization of women within the army had tremendous consequences on their status. Since prestigious combat positions are virtually the only path to top military positions (and to the symbolic rewards and glory associated with those positions), women's exclusion from combat means that they were excluded from the higher echelons of military leadership.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, due to its prestige, the "masculine" military experience became an important channel for political recruitment as well as a recruitment pool for civilian managers in business and industry.<sup>47</sup> In fact, high-ranking military officers were a major source for the formation of the Israeli political and economic elite. The fact that only men were regarded as potential military combatants intensified the symbolic glorification of masculinity in the public sphere and, as a practical matter, excluded women from positions of power and influence inside and outside the military.

This reality gave rise to a growing awareness that women would not be perceived as equal citizens unless they become fully integrated in all spheres of the military including combat roles.

### III. ALICE MILLER AND THE QUEST FOR EQUAL PARTICIPATION

In 1994, Alice Miller, together with the feminist organization "The Women's Network," took the IDF to court for excluding women from pilot training courses.<sup>48</sup> The plaintiffs, assisted by the Association for Civil Rights, claimed that the exclusion of women from all military aviation positions violated women's right to equal treatment. The *Miller* case signaled the beginning of an organized feminist legal struggle to challenge the traditional gendered division of labor in the military and its detrimental consequences for women. In their effort to undermine the gendered structure of the military, the plaintiffs referred to an integrationist strategy.<sup>49</sup> Their goal was to equalize women's military contribution to that of men's by opening combat positions to women, thereby strengthening women's claim for full citizenship. In other words, women's equal integration in the military was perceived both as an end and as a means. In addition to guaranteeing women's right to equal service, the

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Arab citizens of Israel are not required to perform military service. This in turn serves as an explicit and implicit justification for their construction in public and legal discourse as lesser citizens deserving of lesser rights and privileges. See generally Gershon Shafir & Yoav Peled, *Citizenship and Stratification in an Ethnic Democracy*, 21 *ETHNIC & RACIAL STUD.* 408 (1998); Kimmerling, *supra* note 42.

46. Dafna Izraeli, *Gendering Military Service in the Israeli Defense Forces*, 12 *SOC. SCI. RES.* 129, 142 (1997); RUTH HALPERIN-KADDARI, *WOMEN IN ISRAEL* 155 (2004).

47. *Id.*

48. See generally H CJ 4541/94 Miller v. Minister of Def. [1995] IsrSC 49(4) 94. For an English translation of the decision, see [http://elyon1.court.gov.il/files\\_eng/94/410/045/z01/94045410.z01.pdf](http://elyon1.court.gov.il/files_eng/94/410/045/z01/94045410.z01.pdf).

49. Noya Rimalt, *When a Feminist Struggle Becomes a Symbol of the Agenda as a Whole: The Example of Women in the Military*, 6 *NASHIM, J. JEWISH WOMEN'S STUD. & GENDER ISSUES* 148, 153-54 (2003) [hereinafter Rimalt, *When a Feminist Struggle Becomes a Symbol*].



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integrationist strategy sought to enable women a public manifestation of courage and skills that were a prerequisite for status and power in the public sphere. Alice Miller's petition against the military clearly articulated this feminist rationale of integration when she demanded not only the "equal right" to serve in the army as a pilot, but also the equal opportunity "to make her contribution to the defense of the state."<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, in her petition, Miller also explained how the prevailing regime of gender segregation harms women's social image and blocks their professional prospects inside and outside the military.<sup>51</sup>

Miller's legal battle continued until 1995 when the Supreme Court of Israel ruled in her favor in a three-to-two decision. Specifically, the Court held that military authorities must summon Alice Miller for aviation aptitude examinations and, if found suitable, allow her to participate in the military aviation course. Embracing the ethos of gender equality and applying it to the military, Justice Mazza wrote:

Declarations supporting equality of the sexes are insufficient, for the real test of equality lies in its realization, *de facto*, as an accepted social norm. This obligation also applies to the IDF. It is a well known fact that the policies of the army have a very major effect on our life styles. In strengthening the recognition of the importance of basic rights, the IDF cannot be left out of the picture. It too must make its contribution.<sup>52</sup>

The *Miller* decision was hailed by many feminists as a landmark decision.<sup>53</sup> Dafna Izraeli summarized the sentiments of many when she concluded: "The Supreme Court decision in the case of *Alice Miller v. the Minister of Defence* struck a blow to the ideological underpinnings of the gendered regime of the military."<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the decision facilitated structural and legal reforms regarding women's formal participation in the military. The IDF has taken steps to implement the decision's conclusions within the air force, and female candidates have since joined all pilot-training courses. By 2001, one female

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50. HCJ 4541/94 Miller v. Minister of Def., at 106. For the English translation, see *supra* note 48, at 8.

51. Justice Mazza summarized the full scope of the petitioner's position:

The petitioner claims that this policy is a discriminatory one. Its implementation violates her right (and the right of all women) to equality. This violation is expressed first and foremost, in denying a woman the equal right opportunity to serve in the army as a pilot if she is found to have the requisite qualifications, and thereby to make her contribution to the defence of the State, to achieve her aspirations and to make the most of her potential. But denying the possibility of serving as a pilot has additional ramifications. The disqualification *in limine* of women for positions, even when they are suitable and have the necessary qualifications harms their social images. It also blocks their prospects of promotion to senior positions in the air force and in the army as a whole. Being in a combat unit is, usually a precondition for promotion in the army. For this reason, most positions of senior staff officers in the IDF are *de facto*, closed to women. But this is not all: it is usual in Israel that having a professional position in the army constitutes a springboard for obtaining employment in the civil sector.

*Id.* at 8–9.

52. *Id.* at 23–24 (citation omitted).

53. HALPERIN-KADDARI, *supra* note 46, at 157.

54. Izraeli, *supra* note 46, at 157 (italics added).

combat pilot and three navigators were already in service.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, guidelines were established to adapt IDF policy to the potential reality of women combat pilots.<sup>56</sup> Similar moves were made by the navy, artillery units, and border units.<sup>57</sup> In 1999, women began training in combat-related tasks, such as border surveillance, task officers, and some armored divisions. The training for these positions is identical for men and women, and women who volunteer for such occupations have to sign up for an extended period of service beyond the regular woman's obligation to the IDF.<sup>58</sup>

In addition to structural changes within the military, the legislature has taken some legal measures to guarantee the full implementation of the principle of sex-based equality in the military. In 2000, a bill that amended the 1986 Defense Service law was passed by the Israeli legislature.<sup>59</sup> The bill provided for equal military service for men and women unless the nature or substance of a position precluded women's participation.<sup>60</sup> A similar provision was included in the amended Women's Equal Rights Law,<sup>61</sup> and the Minister of Defense supplemented those legal reforms with regulations that list the new military positions that are now open for women.<sup>62</sup>

Hence, since the mid-1990s, the traditional gendered division of labor in the military has been under constant attack, with women gradually entering new spheres and fulfilling roles that were once reserved for men. These dynamics are not unique to Israel. A similar process occurred at nearly at the same time in the United States.<sup>63</sup> In both countries, the formal legal rhetoric justifying those reforms was one of gender equality, based on the assumption that women's equal integration in the military would promote their right to equal service while also contributing significantly to women's status in society.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, some Israeli feminists, like their American counterparts, believed that the integrationist process had the potential to transform the military's masculine

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55. HELPERIN-KADDARI, *supra* note 46, at 158.

56. *Id.*

57. *Id.*

58. *Id.*

59. Defense Service Law (Amendment No. 11) 2000, S.H. 64 (codified at Defense Service Law (Consolidated Version) 5746-1986, 40 LSI 112 (1985-86) (Isr.), § 16A).

60. *Id.*

61. Women's Equal Rights Law (Amendment No. 2) 2000, S.H. 167, § 6D.

62. Defense Service Regulations (Determining Voluntary Roles for Women's Service), 5761-2001, 6074 KT (Administrative Regulations of Israel) 230 (2001)

63. Melissa Herbert notes that, in 1993, Sheila Windall became the first woman appointed to head one of the branches of the military. See MELISSA HERBERT, CAMOUFLAGE ISN'T ONLY FOR COMBAT 8 (1998). Also during 1993, women first attended combat pilot training, and in 1994, women received their first permanent assignments to Navy warships. *Id.* In 1997, the first woman was promoted to the rank of lieutenant general. *Id.* In addition, in 1996, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that women should be admitted to the all-male Virginia Military Institute. See *United States v. Virginia*, 518 U.S. 515 (1996).

64. For a detailed account of the arguments defining the issue of women participation in combat as an equality issue, see Lucinda Peach, *Women at War: The Ethics of Women in Combat*, 15 HAMLIN J. PUB. L. & POL'Y 199, 227-34 (1994). For a comparative analysis of Israeli and American feminist struggles for women's integration in the military, see Noya Rimalt, *When a Feminist Struggle Becomes a Symbol*, *supra* note 49.

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culture and undermine the hierarchical separation between femininity and masculinity that is produced and perpetuated by that institute.<sup>65</sup>

However, recent data regarding the actual experiences of women soldiers serving in the newly available masculine roles casts doubt on those optimistic forecasts of equality and calls for a more critical analysis of what is usually portrayed as the contemporary gender reform in the military. This data and its significance will be discussed in the following part.

## IV. WOMEN IN THE SPHERE OF MASCULINITY

## A. The Gendered Construction of Soldiering

The first encounter with the women soldiers portrayed in the documentary *Company Jasmine* is an encounter with their femininity. The link between the female body and the feminine gender is evident in the female soldiers' bodily and discursive practices and leaves no room for doubt that they are women. However, as the film proceeds, gender lines seem to blur, and eventually the gendered identity of the soldiers is no longer clear. Their heads are covered with large hats that show no hair. They wear large uniforms that conceal the feminine body. They even lower their voices and adopt different bodily practices that make them look gawky. In sum, they move, look, and talk differently, and they no longer look like women. For a moment you wonder: have they become men or have they become real soldiers? A third option that comes to mind is that they have become "male soldiers," because masculinity and "real soldiering" are perceived as synonymous. This puzzle emerges in another scene in the documentary, when Tal, one of the cadets, goes home for a short weekend leave. Sitting on the table with spread legs, she attracts the curious attention of her mother who then quietly observes: "There is this kind of firmness, maybe to the masculine side."<sup>66</sup> When her daughter resists her labeling as a man, the mother adds hesitantly: "You don't walk like a boy, but there is something militaristic in you."<sup>67</sup>

*Company Jasmine* provides a unique documentation of the real subjective experiences of women soldiers serving in non-traditional roles. The filmmaker, Yael Katzir, received the special permission of the army spokesperson to spend the entire training period of five months with a group of women cadets to interview them freely, and to document every aspect of their field officer training. Therefore, the visual images presented by the film are both powerful and rare.<sup>68</sup> They provide the viewers a real look into a world usually concealed from the public eye.

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65. Judith Stiehm explained in this context: "If the military does depend on women's absence, it can be subverted or radically altered by joining it, especially by joining it in large numbers and as full partners." JUDITH STIEHM, *ARMS AND THE ENLISTED WOMAN* 225 (1989).

66. *Company Jasmine*, *supra* note 1.

67. *Id.*

68. Military bases are restricted areas that are closed to the public and press. In order to document a particular military activity, one needs the special permission of the Military Spokesperson. Yael Katzir, the director of *Company Jasmine*, was permitted the unprecedented opportunity to document five months of women soldiers' field officer training.

Moreover, this documentary appears to corroborate initial findings regarding the gendered dynamics that characterize women's gradual integration into masculine roles in the military. Orna Sasson-Levy, a sociologist who conducted the first of only three studies of women soldiers in masculine roles in the IDF, provides important data that sheds some light on the visual gendered images and dynamics documented in *Company Jasmine*.<sup>69</sup> Sasson-Levy's study of women soldiers was part of a larger study of the construction of masculine identities within the Israeli military.<sup>70</sup> As part of this larger study, Sasson-Levy conducted in-depth interviews from 1996 through 1999 with fifty-two male soldiers and forty-seven female soldiers within the year of their release from military service. Out of the forty-seven women interviewed, twelve served in traditionally masculine positions.<sup>71</sup> Based on those interviews, Sasson-Levy argued that during their military service those women adopted various discursive and bodily practices characteristic of male combat soldiers. Her primary thesis is that this is a theme that broadly characterizes women soldiers in masculine roles.<sup>72</sup> One of Sasson-Levy's interviewees was very clear about this point. Describing herself during her military service, when she served as a commanding officer in men's basic training courses, she observed: "I used to look like a guy."<sup>73</sup> This woman soldier later explained:

You don't wear a uniform that is tight on your body. And you walk with a rifle and then your voice drops. I didn't talk to people like this [in her regular voice]; I would speak like this [in a lower voice].<sup>74</sup>

Rotem, the female commanding officer who is in charge of the cadets during the training session documented in the film *Company Jasmine*, provides a clear example of the bodily and discursive practices described by Sasson-Levy's interviewees. In light of the fact that the Hebrew language distinguishes between feminine and masculine forms of speech for verbs, nouns, adjectives,

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69. Sasson-Levy, *Feminism and Military Gender Practices*, *supra* note 20; Sasson-Levy, *Constructing Identities at the Margins: Masculinities and Citizenship in the Israeli Military*, 43 *Soc. Q.* 357 (2002).

70. Orna Sasson-Levy, *Constructing Gender Identities Within the Israeli Army* (2000) (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Hebrew University) (on file with the Hebrew University Library). A second study was conducted by Yuval Zur, who served at the time as the sociologist of the Air Force's Pilots Training School. His Ph.D dissertation dealt with the integration of women in the military pilots training courses during the years 1996 to 1999. See Yuval Zur, *The Integration of Women in Aviation Course in the Israeli Air Force: An Organizational Culture and Cross Cultures Perspective* (2004) (unpublished Ph.D dissertation) (on file with Ben Gurion University Library). A third study was conducted more recently by the IDF itself. See Sarit Amram-Katz, Head of Research at the Advisor for Women's Issues Office, "Combat is the Best Sister": Gender Integration in Combat Training Programs in the IDF, 2003, <http://www.aka.idf.il/yohalan/> (Hebrew) [hereinafter Amram-Katz, *Combat is the Best Sister*. For a detailed analysis of this latter study and its findings see *infra* notes 95-96, 130-37 and accompanying text.

71. The military occupational distribution of those women was as follows: three infantry instructors, three commanders in men's non-combat basic training, one headquarters officer, one tank instructor, one medic instructor for male soldiers on reserve duty, one army police investigator, one intelligence noncommissioned officer (NCO), and one intelligence officer. Sasson-Levy, *Feminism and Military Gender Practices*, *supra* note 20, at 461 n.1.

72. *Id.*

73. *Id.* at 448.

74. *Id.*

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pronouns etc., it is especially revealing to discover that Rotem consistently uses the masculine form of speech when she describes the nature and responsibilities of being an officer in the military and when referring to herself in this context.<sup>75</sup> Noa, one of her cadets, whose misogynist reference to her fellow cadets was quoted at the beginning of this article, adopts the masculine self-reference as well. In a moment of self reflection when leading a training session involving live ammunition, she says, "You [masculine form] say [masculine form] to yourself [masculine form], you [masculine form] actually train [masculine form] them to kill."<sup>76</sup>

The women soldiers documented in the film appear to provide a powerful visual manifestation of the process of masculinization, identified by Sasson-Levy as an essential aspect of women's integration in masculine roles. However, it seems that the ultimate affirmation of the gendered nature of this process comes from the men's side. While Tal's mother hesitates when she defines her daughter's new bodily practices,<sup>77</sup> one of Sasson-Levy's male interviewees has no doubts as to the gendered aspects of the phenomenon. The man, who served in an elite combat unit, described his first encounter with the new type of female soldiers:

We arrived at the training base really early in the morning. We had no idea where we were or where we should go. Just then, a group of women soldiers in an infantry training course woke up. On their way to the showers, with just towels [wrapped] around them, they stood in line about 20–30 meters from us with their guns between their legs, barrels pointing upwards, and shouted "We want to fuck." . . . We were embarrassed, we were in shock. We didn't understand what we'd done to deserve it. It was kind of like seeing ourselves in the mirror at other times, to see how embarrassing it is. Because there was something so masculine about them, it was shocking to see.<sup>78</sup>

Sasson-Levy suggests that women soldiers in non-traditional roles embrace those masculine bodily and discursive practices because they associate masculinity with military authority.<sup>79</sup> In this respect, it appears that masculinity gives them power and legitimizes them as "real soldiers." However, she rightly notes that, by accepting the link between masculinity and military authority, they ultimately reaffirm masculinity as the exclusive source of military authority.<sup>80</sup>

Despite Sasson Levy's conclusive arguments regarding the straightforward manner in which women in masculine roles embrace masculinity, *Company Jasmine* tells a more complicated story. Rotem, the female commanding officer,

75. The format of a sentence in Hebrew is determined by the feminine or masculine characterization of its subjects. In addition to differentiating between men and women, all nouns in Hebrew are divided into masculine and feminine categories. Hence, when a woman says I go, the verb "go" would be formed differently for a man saying the same thing. The same rule applies if we refer to a masculine noun (such as a "table") as opposed to a feminine noun (such as "doll"). Verbs and adjectives describing those feminine or masculine subjects would also vary.

76. *Company Jasmine*, *supra* note 1.

77. See *supra* notes 66–67 and accompanying text.

78. Sasson-Levy, *Feminism and Military Gender Practices*, *supra* note 20, at 450.

79. *Id.* at 453.

80. *Id.*

clearly follows the masculine model described by Sasson-Levy. The visual image of her throughout the film is striking: She does look “like a guy,” and as noted above, she naturally adopts the masculine form of speech. On the other hand, Tal, one of the female cadets, is clearly struggling. When her mother suggests that she is becoming a man, she strongly objects and later explains:

The fact that I am here does not fracture my femininity, certainly not. It is far from that. We are doing here something active, intensive and it doesn't fracture our femininity at all. I don't need to remind myself, I feel all the time a woman and there is nothing that interferes with it.<sup>81</sup>

Hence, it appears that Tal feels threatened when she is directly confronted with the idea that she has been masculinized. This response highlights the inherent conflict involved in the process of breaking gender boundaries. While masculinity is the norm for soldiering, women who become men clearly violate gender norms and this violation can entail both symbolic and material penalties. One should therefore realize that, within this militaristic, gendered regime, (where the masculine is clearly preferred over the feminine), women are encouraged to adopt masculinity as the norm. At the same time, the prevailing gendered ideology that also penalizes gender-deviant behaviors clearly discourages women from crossing the lines.

However, the intriguing aspect of the documentary is that, eventually, even women like Tal—who formally resist masculinization as a crucial step in the process of integrating in non-traditional military roles—still adopt the masculine ideology of soldiering. In a different scene in the film, when a fellow cadet purposely mentions on camera that Tal carries around “a beauty pack” that contains creams and various lipsticks, Tal is clearly embarrassed. Tal's embarrassment, together with her friend's conscious effort to embarrass her by publicly associating her with one of the ultimate symbols of femininity, highlights a common understanding of soldiering shared by both women: They clearly perceive soldiering and femininity as antithetical. Moreover, if masculine soldiering is the ideal, distancing from traditional femininity becomes integral to the process of becoming a “real soldier.” Thus, while formally insisting on her preserved femininity in the military sphere, Tal clearly accepts the perception that marginalizes traditional womanhood and views the military as an arena in which the masculine should be preferred over the feminine.

This marginalizing attitude toward women and femininity is shared by other cadets. Noa, the cadet who was quoted at the beginning of this article, adds and explains her misogynist attitude towards the other women:

On the one hand it can be fun, only girls together and girls' conversations. But on the other hand, girls like to “eat” each other and to stab [a knife] to each other and girls are [like a] hornet's nest.<sup>82</sup>

Sivan, another cadet clearly takes the same approach: “I don't feel good about the fact that there are only women here. It seems to me an unnatural situation.

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81. *Company Jasmine*, *supra* note 1.

82. *See Company Jasmine*, *supra* note 1.

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There are also all kinds of [negative] norms and standards that developed here.”<sup>83</sup>

Sasson-Levy’s study argues that misogynist attitudes among women in masculine roles are inherent to the process by which those women shape their gendered identities to conform to the hegemonic masculinity of the combat soldier. In fact, the interviews she conducted revealed similar andro-centric themes. Besides imitating chauvinistic rituals such as the “We want to fuck” routine described above,<sup>84</sup> many of the women soldiers who “made it” in the military and entered traditional masculine spheres expressed sheer hostility towards other women and especially towards practices associated with femininity. One of her female interviewees plainly echoed Noa, Sivan, and Tal’s sentiments when she described her basic military training with other women:

It was like a kindergarten. Seven hundred thousand girls. . . . My saying for the whole time of basic training was that a girl can’t see worse nightmares. Everyone had creams, lipsticks, all sorts of . . . disgusting . . . seven hundred thousand makeups. Pathetic. I felt like nothing, like one of seven hundred thousand other tits.<sup>85</sup>

Another interviewer simply admitted: “[G]enerally I’m quite chauvinistic. Look, I think that women don’t function well under pressure. . . . And it’s not just in the army; you can also see it driving on the highway.”<sup>86</sup>

Hence, both Sasson-Levy’s female interviewees and some of the women cadets in the documentary naturally associated femininity with inferiority and marginality. Within this paradigm, the military domain was clearly identified with the hegemonic masculinity of the combat soldier. Therefore, inherent to the process of integration in the military domain was a rejection of every traditional aspect of femininity. Rather than undermine the link between soldiering and masculinity, the female soldiers occupying these roles embraced it and preserved a concept of soldiering that is essentially hostile to women.

What emerges from the above discussion is a complex picture under which women’s greater integration into the military has had a paradoxical effect. While those women who occupy newly available combat roles manage to cross traditional gender lines on an individual basis, their presence and involvement in masculine roles in the military does not seem to bear any impact on the gendered culture of the institution. Therefore, equality of opportunity on the individual level means cooperating with a chauvinistic structure and reproducing its norms. However, this gap between the individual woman and women as a class produces another paradox that characterizes women’s military service in masculine roles and in fact complicates the picture even further.

## B. The Empowerment of Masculinity

One of the more interesting findings of Sasson-Levy’s study is the positive manner in which the women soldiers who served in masculine roles defined

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83. See *Company Jasmine*, *supra* note 1.

84. See *supra* note 76 and accompanying text.

85. Sasson-Levy, *Feminism and Military Gender Practices*, *supra* note 20, at 452

86. *Id.* at 451.

their military experience. “Very good,” “great,” and “very positive” are some of the descriptions she quotes in this context.<sup>87</sup> The women documented in *Company Jasmine* clearly corroborate those findings and add an important perspective. Efrat, another one of the cadets interviewed in the film, explains the link between her newly acquired masculinity and its empowering benefits:

It raises your confidence automatically. You just stand in front of a group of men and teach them how to use a particular weapon and many times it is hard for them to accept this. But many times they also look at you admiringly and really appreciate that you know your work and that you are very professional and this raises your confidence.<sup>88</sup>

Rotem, the cadet’s commanding officer who constantly refers to herself in a masculine form of speech, elaborates on the issue of empowerment in the military:

When you work with people and you have your own company and the place to say what you want—that’s the [best] thing.<sup>89</sup>

Tal clearly goes through a process of change during the weeks of officer training. When the film begins, Tal is still hesitant and doubts women’s ability to be “real” fighters: “I am not one of those who think that girls should be [and fight] in Lebanon, I don’t know if I can.”<sup>90</sup> However, fifteen weeks of intensive military training apparently changed her mind. Toward the end of the Field Officers’ Course she expressed a different position:

“We don’t get a chance to be combatants like men. . . . However, to reach the same level—I’m sure that girls can reach the same level [of performance] exactly as men, and if we are given the chance we can prove it. I think because there is no chance this cannot be proved . . . [L]et us [decide] if we want to be in this place or not.”<sup>91</sup>

It seems, then, that those women soldiers in masculine roles do not perceive their location within the army as marginal. On the individual level, they truly break gender boundaries within the army and their personal gains cannot be underestimated. Yet, viewed against the broader gendered regime in which those gains are achieved, one can clearly see the paradoxical link between women’s individual empowerment in the military and the simultaneous preservation of gender inequality.

This paradox is further intensified in light of women’s more general experience in the military, which, as will be discussed in the next section, is still shaped by both institutional and interpersonal barriers.

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87. *Id.* at 447.

88. See *Company Jasmine*, *supra* note 1.

89. *Id.*

90. *Id.*

91. *Id.*



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## C. Institutional and Interpersonal Barriers

1. *The Ongoing Gendered Division of Labor*

In 2005, the Military Chief of Staff's Advisor for Women's Issues published a report summarizing trends and directions in women's military service in the decade since the Israeli Supreme Court's ruling in *Miller*.<sup>92</sup> The report discloses that in 2005, 2.5% of women soldiers served in combat roles.<sup>93</sup> Although this number signifies a gradual change since the late 1990s,<sup>94</sup> one cannot ignore the fact that ten years after the Alice Miller proclaimed gender revolution in the military, the presence of women in masculine roles remains a symbolic rather than a significant phenomenon. Moreover, other official data published by the office of the Advisor for Women's Issues indicates that even those few women who have managed to cross gender boundaries have not been integrated into all combat roles, given that most combat positions remain formally closed for women.<sup>95</sup> In fact, it turns out that those combat positions that were redefined as gender-integrated are the ones that are perceived as marginal and therefore as less prestigious within the combat sphere. Thus, while women are formally allowed to serve in some combat roles, their participation remains marginal both in absolute numbers and in prestige. The current official prediction is that women will be excluded from front-line infantry and artillery roles for the foreseeable future.<sup>96</sup> In practical terms, there is an on-going exclusion of women from traditional paths of advancement to top commanding positions in the military.

Another significant piece of information is the fact that the military remains highly segregated along gender lines. In 2005, sixty-three percent of all military rolls were preformed exclusively by men and twenty-one percent of all military roles were preformed exclusively by women.<sup>97</sup> Being a secretary in the military is still a predominantly feminine experience; one in every five women soldiers still serves in this traditionally feminine role.<sup>98</sup> In contrast, being a commanding high-ranking officer is still a primarily masculine role. In 2006, the Advisor on Women Issues disclosed that ninety-seven percent of the highest decision-

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92. The Military Chief of Staff's Advisor on Women's Issues, Trends in Women's Service 1995–2005, [http://www.aka.idf.il/SIP\\_STORAGE/files/8/57978.pdf](http://www.aka.idf.il/SIP_STORAGE/files/8/57978.pdf) (2005) (Hebrew). This report was published for the 10th anniversary of *Miller*.

93. *Id.*

94. Another report published by the Advisor's office in 2003 discloses that, in 1997, only 0.2% of women soldiers served in combat roles. See The Military Chief of Staff's Advisor on Women's Issues, Women's Service in the IDF: Facts and Trends, 2003, <http://www.aka.idf.il/yohalan/main/asp?catID=22348> (Hebrew).

95. Sarit Amram-Katz, Combat is the Best Sister, *supra* note 70.

96. *Id.*

97. Trends in Women's Service 1995–2005, *supra* note 92.

98. The Military Chief of Staff's Advisor on Women's Issues, Lowering the Numbers of Women Secretaries in the IDF, 2006, <http://www.aka.idf.il/yohalan/main/main.asp?catID=52679&docID=52682> (Hebrew).

making positions in the military were filled by men.<sup>99</sup> Currently, no woman is of high enough rank to participate in General Staff meetings on a regular basis.<sup>100</sup>

In addition to the perpetuation of old institutional barriers to women's full integration in the military, it turns out that new barriers are produced as part of the integration process. In 2002, the Office of the Advisor for Women's Issues conducted an in-depth study of the process of gender integration in the military.<sup>101</sup> In order to better understand how the integration of women in combat positions is carried out in practice, the researchers examined five training courses for different combat roles that have become gender-integrated in recent years. The research was based on participant observation during frequent visits to the military bases where the training took place and included interviews with both male and female soldiers who participated in the different training courses as well as with their commanders. One of the main findings of the study was that, despite the formal integrationist nature of those training programs, gender-segregation was reproduced by two types of practices—exclusionary practices and over-protective practices—enforced primarily by the commanding staff. Women were still excluded from all kinds of combat or physical assignments such as guarding settlements near the border or securing the military base.<sup>102</sup> Moreover as the study noted, exclusionary practices were mostly apparent in “real time” incidents, implying that gender integration was perceived more as a “game” than as a genuine structural change within the military.<sup>103</sup> At the time of the study, women combatants in the military police were teamed only with men when they were assigned real security missions. Women have not guarded Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories since the commanding officer of the region declared he did not want women combatants in his region. Female combatants were not allowed to guard a detention center. In addition, the presence of women in the gender integrated programs led to the creation of some over-protective measures designed to protect women from strenuous physical efforts, sexual harassment, or severe punishment.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, women were not assigned to kitchen duties in order to protect them from sexual harassment and hard labor.<sup>105</sup> They were also exempt from performing some physical exercises that were part of the official combat-related training program, even though the specific criteria for exemptions were not necessarily related to actual physical differences between men and women.<sup>106</sup> Instead, it appears that the protective measures described above were derived from implied stereotypical assumptions about women's relative weakness compared to men, and their implementation seemed to have had the effect of perpetuating women's image as second-rate combatants.<sup>107</sup>

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99. Stav Fisher, *A Sexist Remark in My Presence? No Chance*, BAMACHANE, Mar. 2006, available at <http://www1.idf/DOVER/site/mainpage.asp?sl=HE&id=7&docid=50805.HE> (Hebrew).

100. Halperin-Kaddari, *supra* note 46, at 155.

101. See Amram-Katz, *supra* note 70.

102. *Id.*

103. *Id.*

104. *Id.*

105. *Id.*

106. See *infra* notes 134–136 and accompanying text.

107. *Id.*

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It seems clear that both formal and informal institutional barriers continue to shape the experience of women in the military. While the official declarative goal is gender equality, in reality many institutional barriers impede the realization of this goal. Moreover, although some barriers were removed, new barriers have been created, depicting an overall picture of an institution that is still highly segregated along gender lines.

## 2. *Sexual Harassment*

In addition to the institutional barriers described above, sexual harassment of women soldiers plays a significant role in shaping the reality of women in the military. A 2004 survey conducted by the head of the research at the office of the Advisor for Women's Issues revealed that approximately one-fifth of women soldiers reported they have been sexually harassed during their military service.<sup>108</sup> A similar figure was found two years earlier in the first official military study of sexual harassment.<sup>109</sup> Hence, irrespective of policy measures taken by the military during those years with regard to the status of women in the military in general and the prevention of sexual harassment in particular,<sup>110</sup> sexual harassment has remained a steady phenomenon. The most striking finding of the survey is the actual scope of sexual harassment of women soldiers. When the survey asked women about specific examples of harassment such as humiliating innuendo or unwanted sexual proposals, without labeling those as sexual harassment, the figures rose substantially. Seventy-six percent of female officers and sixty-six percent of regular female soldiers reported they were subjected to hostile environment sexual harassment.<sup>111</sup> Similar high figures of sixty-eight percent and fifty-five percent, respectively, were discovered with regard to sexual innuendo.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, the survey found that the more prestigious a position a woman had in the military, the higher the odds were of her being harassed. In addition to the fact that female officers were more likely to be harassed compared to "regular" female soldiers,<sup>113</sup> women combatants reported higher rates of harassment compared to non-combatants.<sup>114</sup>

Despite the high number of women soldiers and officers who have been harassed at least once during their military service, very few have taken action,<sup>115</sup> and even fewer have filed an official complaint.<sup>116</sup> The primary reason for lack of

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108. SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE IDF, REPORT NO. 2 (2005), available at <http://www.aka.idf.il/yohalan> (Hebrew).

109. INA LEVY, BEN DAVID SARA & SARIT AMRAM-KATZ, THE PHENOMENON OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE IDF (2003) (Hebrew).

110. In 2003, the Military Chief of Staff issued an official order in which he declared the Army's commitment to preventing sexual harassment and required the commanding staff to provide a personal example in this regard. See SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE IDF, *supra* note 108, at app. 4.

111. *Id.* at 26.

112. *Id.*

113. *Id.*

114. *Id.* at 27.

115. Only thirty percent of women took some kind of action like approaching the harasser, a family member, or a commander. *Id.* at 31, 36.

116. In 2002, only 217 soldiers filed a sexual-harassment complaint with the military police. Women's Service in the IDF: Facts and Trends 2003, *supra* note 94. By 2005, the number rose to 344. See Fisher, *supra* note 99.

action in this context was the fact that most women did not “name” the incident as sexual harassment.<sup>117</sup> Moreover, even among the women who identified the incident as harassment, a majority refrained from taking any positive actions in response.<sup>118</sup> The reasons articulated for non-action were related to the structural and normative aspects of the military: In addition to fear of the harasser, a common theme in the survey was the tendency either to mistrust the system or to perceive sexual harassment as an inherent aspect of military culture.<sup>119</sup> Additionally, when asked directly whether the highest commanding staff is doing a sincere effort to prevent harassment in the military, fewer than one-third agreed.<sup>120</sup>

These official records regarding the scope and nature of sexual harassment in the military are troubling. They highlight the fact that, irrespective of women’s growing integration in the military, the military culture is still one of endemic sexual harassment. As part of this culture, most female soldiers not only experience harassment, but are also conditioned not to view it as such or not to take any actions even when they manage to “name” the phenomenon properly. Furthermore, the contemporary scope and nature of sexual harassment in the military complicates the above-discussed subjective experience of empowerment reported by women in masculine roles. In fact, this new data highlights to a greater extent the paradoxical nature of women’s growing integration in the military.

Sasson-Levy’s study of women in masculine roles in the military touches upon this paradox and provides an interesting explanation as to how women can be harassed and empowered at the same time. The study concludes that those women trivialize sexual harassment in a manner that either undermines its significance or completely denies its true meaning.<sup>121</sup> In fact, while most of the women interviewed for her study told stories of what could be described as sexual harassment, only a scant number labeled these events as such.<sup>122</sup> In this regard, Sasson-Levy’s findings correlates the military’s more recent survey discussed above, which also uncovers a substantial gap between the actual occurrence of the phenomenon and women’s willingness to identify themselves as victims of sexual harassment.<sup>123</sup> Other studies have also concluded that ignoring sexual harassment or undermining its significance is women’s most prevalent reaction to sexual harassment, unless there is significant public and legal support for naming the phenomenon and blaming the harassers.<sup>124</sup>

Sasson-Levy further argues that sexual harassment places women who serve in masculine roles in an especially delicate situation. Whereas their official role allows them to resemble “the guys,” sexual harassment pushes them back

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117. SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE IDF, *supra* note 108.

118. *Id.*

119. *Id.* at 32–35.

120. *Id.* at 44.

121. Sasson-Levy, *Feminism and Military Gender Practices*, *supra* note 20, at 453–55.

122. *Id.*

123. SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE IDF, *supra* note 108.

124. Alison Thomas & Ceila Kitzinger, “It’s Just Something that Happens”: *The Invisibility of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*, 1 GENDER, WORK & ORG. 151, 156 (1994).

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to their proper place. If they react to sexual harassment by being insulted, they confirm the discourse that the harassment itself is trying to enforce. They also risk being labeled as victims—a label that has no place in the army. Hence, the trivialization of sexual harassment in this context can also be interpreted as a strategic refusal to submit to the army's definition of femininity.

Nevertheless, as Sasson-Levy herself admits, one cannot ignore the fact that those women do experience sexual harassment, and simply choosing not to define it as such does not bring an end to the phenomenon. In fact, as the more recent military data indicates, women in masculine roles still experience sexual harassment in great numbers, a reality that has persisted in the period since Sasson-Levy's study. Furthermore, the fact that most women soldiers and officers ignore actual incidents of sexual harassment that are part of their military service appears to sustain the preservation of this phenomenon as an integral aspect of military culture.

#### D. Masculinity as an Institutionalized Ideology

Melissa Herbert, a professor of sociology with prior service as a soldier, surveyed 285 American women soldiers (active duty and veterans) in the late 1990s in an effort to explore how women in the male-dominated world of the military manage sexuality and gender.<sup>125</sup> Her conclusion was that women shape their gendered identity in light of the military's masculine ideology—an ideology that constantly penalizes women because it forces them to camouflage their behavior to “fit” into the gendered expectations of a male-dominated institution.<sup>126</sup>

Thus, in Herbert's view, the real difficulty of women's integration into the military lies more in the broader gendered ideology that plays a significant and effective role in limiting the participation of women in the military than any specific institutional or interpersonal constraint.<sup>127</sup> In other words, women in the military face a much more difficult task than simply changing regulations or policies. The greatest obstacle to their equal integration is the institutional, gendered ideology that prioritizes the masculine over the feminine—and men over women.

This conclusion echoes Cynthia Enloe's strong observation that the military is “more than just one more patriarchal institution.”<sup>128</sup> More specifically, Enloe explains that the notion of combat plays such a central role not only in the construction of concepts of manhood, but also in justifying the superiority of maleness in the social order.<sup>129</sup> Hence, this gives the military a unique role in the ideological structure of patriarchy and creates a strong barrier for women's equal integration.

The IDF's own findings regarding the actual aspects of women's integration into combat roles in recent years may suggest that both Enloe and

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125. HERBERT, *supra* note 63, at 23.

126. *Id.* at 21.

127. *Id.* at 6.

128. ENLOE, *supra* note 13, at 10.

129. *Id.* at 12–13.

Herbert are correct in identifying the ideological barrier as the greatest barrier of all.

The study published by the Advisor for Women's Issues in 2003 highlights the significance of cultural and ideological perceptions in shaping the manner in which the process of gender integration in combat roles is carried out in practice.<sup>130</sup> One example is the apparent devaluation of the newly gender-integrated combat professions. The study reports that some male soldiers admitted they were too embarrassed to tell family members and friends that they were assigned to a gender-integrated unit.<sup>131</sup> Some of those men asked for a transfer to another unit and some indicated they felt deprived of the real "masculine experience" of the military.<sup>132</sup> This subjective sense of devaluation was further sustained by incidents in which gender-integrated companies attracted humiliating labeling by other soldiers such as "the pussy's company."<sup>133</sup>

Another interesting example that brings to light the power of gender ideology in shaping the process of integration has to do with the physical requirements that were set for those programs. The study reports that following the integration of women in combat roles the military developed a system of comparable training that recognizes actual physiological differences between men and women.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, men and women are practically subjected to different physical requirements as part of those combat training programs. But, despite the seemingly objective justification for differentiating between men and women, the study critically determines that it appears that gender bias plays a role both in the initial process of defining the physical requirements necessary for each training program and in the latter process of setting different standards for women.<sup>135</sup> A revealing expression of this bias can be found in the comparison between two training courses for artillery combatants. In the first course, the male combatants were required to perform a march of eighteen kilometers whereas the women were required to march only fourteen kilometers. In the next course, the requirement was heightened: Men were required to march thirty-two kilometers and women only twenty-six.<sup>136</sup> Hence, this example may suggest that gender-differentiation is often done only for the sake of differentiation. It has no objective ground, and it has the effect of perpetuating women's image as both different and inferior.

Finally, another example for gender bias can be found in the initial process of defining the physical requirements necessary for each training program. The Advisor's study points out that in many of the newly gender-integrated roles there is no reasonable correlation between the physical requirements during the training programs and the actual physical fitness that is necessary for carrying

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130. See Amram-Katz, *supra* note 70.

131. *Id.*

132. *Id.*

133. *Id.*

134. *Id.*

135. *Id.*

136. *Id.*

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out the job.<sup>137</sup> In other words, while some training programs are very demanding physically, the actual performance of the job requires much less physical effort. Regardless of the actual nature of the job, “combat”—as a distinct category—is preserved by associating it with extreme physical firmness. What’s more, the physical criteria for proper soldiering further intensifies the significance of the physical differences between men and women, and, consequently, the inherent hierarchy between the masculine body and the feminine body.

## CONCLUSION

The very last scene of the documentary *Combat Jasmine* is the graduation ceremony. The female cadets who successfully finished the training course for field officers are awarded the rank of officer alongside a group of male cadets who went through a separate course. If gender lines were blurred throughout most of the documentary, those lines are now redrawn. The women cadets are dressed in relatively short uniform skirts, on their heads they wear the women’s military cap that exposes their hair, and there is no longer room for confusion as the two groups march together.

This powerful visual image of the manner in which gender difference becomes apparent has a symbolic significance: It highlights the power of military practices in distinguishing between men and women and in constructing them along traditional gender lines. It also signifies the boundaries of the new gendered identity embraced by those women throughout the five months of their military training for the role of field officers. For a while they could pretend they were men, but at the end of the day, those women were re-feminized.

So, can women become citizen-soldiers alongside men if they engage in the same set of martial practices? This article concludes that there are no simple answers to this question. In fact, the data and analysis presented above appear to provide ample support to the claim that merely inserting some women into a misogynist warrior culture does not eliminate the conflation of soldiering with masculinity.<sup>138</sup> The armed masculinity of contemporary soldiering remains a cultural construct constituted in hostile opposition to femininity.

The question that is left for future feminist debate is therefore a difficult one. Undermining the gendered structure of the military might be almost an impossible mission. However, in light of its centrality and enormous social importance, one wonders if women really have the option of not even trying to make a difference from within.

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137. *Id.*

138. R. CLAIR SNYDER, *CITIZEN SOLDIERS AND MANLY WARRIORS* 156 (1999).