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UNCLE SAM'S LESBIANS:
POWER, EMPOWERMENT, AND THE MILITARY EXPERIENCE

by

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B.S. May 1974, Arizona State University

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Approved by:

MaryAnn Tetreault (Chair)

ABSTRACT

UNCLE SAM'S LESBIANS: POWER, EMPOWERMENT, AND THE MILITARY EXPERIENCE

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Why would a lesbian choose to go into an androcentric, misogynist environment, and, once there, choose to stay? This study examines the military experience of lesbians as represented by a group of twenty-two lesbian veterans and active duty military personnel. This research concentrates on three basic areas of concern: recruitment, retention, and the structure and function of personal networks.

The results show many similarities between this group of women and those in other studies on women in the military with regard to reasons for joining the military and background information. However, these results also indicate a connection between being gay and joining the military, and a very strong correlation between sexual orientation and forming exclusive networks in the military.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The association of lesbians with the military is a strong and persistent one that is supported by both fact and fallacy. On the one hand is the fallacy that military service doesn't appeal to "real" women. On the other hand is the very real fact that prior to the All Volunteer Force (AVF), the military was both a ghetto and a refuge for nonconformist women in this society. Certainly not all women who joined the military were lesbians but there are some reasons for concluding that many of them were.

Despite official denial and the perfunctory treatment of lesbianism in the literature on women in the military, many military people and former military people, several of whom are openly lesbian, maintain that a significant proportion of women in the military are lesbians. The assumption that there is a significant number of lesbians in the military brings up several questions. The most obvious question which arises is how large are the numbers? Is the proportion of lesbians in the military higher than it is in the general population? If the proportion of lesbians is higher in the military, why? Why would a lesbian choose to go into an androcentric, misogynist environment, and, once there, choose to stay? What

are the implications of this for the military? What are the implications for lesbians?

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Methodological challenges shaped the results of this study. Obviously the percentage of lesbians in the military is impossible to measure accurately because military regulations officially prohibit homosexuality. Lesbians in the military are, by necessity, invisible. This enforced suppression of their identity presents a host of ethical as well as methodological problems to anyone wishing to study them. As is the case with doing research on any population labelled as deviant whose members are forced to go underground to protect themselves, a random sample is impossible to obtain and the population cannot even be reliably identified. It is highly likely that lesbians have participated in earlier studies about women's military service. However, they have done so as military women and were not identified as lesbians. Clear distinctions, if any exist, between the experience of lesbians and non-lesbians in the military have not been made.

In short, it remains at present impossible to conduct a comparison study of lesbians and non-lesbians in the military using conventional methods. Nonetheless, a credible, interesting, and valuable study can be done using alternative methods. This study explores the experiences of a small group

of lesbians to see if there are patterns which might enlarge our knowledge of two issues: (1) the relationship between lesbians and the military and (2) military women's experiences in general.

This study concentrates on three basic areas of concern. The first concern is recruitment. What are the specific characteristics and attributes of women who go into the military? Why do they join the service? What is it about the military that might be especially attractive to lesbians? The second area of concern is retention. What are the personal and institutional factors that contribute to adjustment and re-enlistment? Why do some women "fit" the military better than others? Is this fit related to a lesbian identity? The third area of concern is the structure and function of personal networks. What is the role of lesbian networks in countering the military's androcentric and misogynist value structure?

Answering these questions adequately and credibly requires information about a broad range of women's military experiences. My sample includes several generations of military women; women who were "out" as lesbians when they joined and those who "came out" in the service; women who filled both traditional and non-traditional jobs; women who served a year or two and those who served much longer. For clarity of definition, I included in my analysis only those women who could openly acknowledge their sexual orientation.

Primary concerns included how to reach the women I needed to find in order to do this project well, and how to protect them and their friends after they participated. Protection of the participants is the primary concern. No names or other identifying information was sought on questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed with a stamped return envelope so they could be returned directly to the researcher. No one has had access to the completed questionnaires except the researcher.

Getting the word out to potential participants while keeping a low profile as far as the military is concerned necessitated using word of mouth as the primary method of locating potential respondents. The technique of "snowballing" or "friendship pyramiding" was chosen for selecting respondents (Campbell 1980, 14; Sevy 1986, 98). Respondents who agreed to participate were asked to find out whether their friends and acquaintances would participate as well. Besides serving as a way to enlist people for this study, the snowball technique resulted in "maps" of particular networks. The questionnaires were color coded so that the method itself provided valuable information about lesbian networks of both active duty personnel and veterans. As a result, I have been able to make inferences about the size and strength of various networks even when some of their members declined to participate.

My initial problem was how to find and enlist

participants. During the spring of 1988, I attended three events where I expected to meet women who would agree to participate in this study: the Second National Conference on Women in the Military in Boston, Massachusetts; the Women's Army Corps reunion at Ft. McClellan, Alabama; and the National Women's Studies Association National Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. From these starting points, I distributed sixty-four questionnaires and received twenty-two back. Five other women agreed to participate in interviews.

My ability to present myself as a military veteran proved to be crucial in recruiting respondents. Many women told me they were willing to participate in this study only because I am a veteran and because they believed that a study of this kind should be done by a military woman. What is unique about my study is the candor with which respondents spoke of their experiences and feelings as lesbians. All of the women to whom I personally spoke and who agreed to participate returned their questionnaires promptly, often with additional comments on the questions, letters of encouragement and suggestions about the study. Many of them asked or offered to take questionnaires to friends. None of the networks went very far, however, and many of the questionnaires were not returned. Even so, I was able to get some idea of where they were distributed from the contact person. Seven women were able to involve their personal networks to a small degree. The networks I found included few

non-lesbians. Because of this, my intention to compare the experiences of lesbians with those of non-lesbians was not possible. Therefore, I concentrated on the experiences of lesbians using the information gathered from these twenty-two women as the core of my data.

Of the twenty-two women whose experiences constitute this study, only one is still on active duty. While several women who are still on active duty did discuss their experiences with me and expressed an interest in the survey, most declined to participate for fear of risking their military jobs or careers. The risks of being "out" in the military cannot be overstated. This selection bias is likely to have had an impact on the results of this research, but neither the direction nor the degree of bias in the results can be determined. Thus, these results should be interpreted cautiously.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Men, Women, and the Military

Women in the military were seldom studied by military or civilian analysts until the Vietnam era draft ended and the United States moved to an All Volunteer Force (AVF). The attraction of women to the military then became critical as the need to fill enlistment quotas increased and the size of birth cohorts first stabilized and then declined. As a result, women were no longer seen merely as replacements for men who were sent to the front, as they had been previously, but as "replacements for men who preferred to remain civilians" (Stiehm 1985, 160). Interest in military women has increased with the recognition of their importance to the maintenance of the military's standing force.

To understand the U. S. military woman, it is necessary to see her enlistment in the context of her role in this society. At the center of the issue are this society's ideas about sex roles. What does it mean to be a man in this society? What does it mean to be a woman in this society? What does it mean to be a woman who does not conform to the social and sexual roles that this society expects her to fulfill?

Military service has always had different meanings for men and women. War is a man's province; the military is his domain. The normal function of the military is to protect the state to which it belongs from assault by other states; military men must stand ready to kill the people and destroy the property of enemies of the country. But the military has a little noted informal function as well, which is to be the guardian of sex roles. The military institution depends on a rigid adherence to those sex roles for its survival (Enloe 1983, 212; Stiehm 1989, 225-226). Men are protectors and women are to be protected. The military "is a society built around a philosophy of male superiority and female inferiority" (Tetreault 1988, 45).

Military service is compatible with social expectations for men. It reinforces masculine sex role behavior. Because the military has traditionally been for men only, the inclusion of women has been regarded as an intrusion, and has met with resistance and hostility. This is reflected in military policy as well as in the treatment of individual women by individual men in the military (Tetreault 1988, 45).

The end of the draft meant the disappearance of a primary incentive for young men from a variety of backgrounds to enter military service. With the cessation of compulsory military service, young men were given the choice of whether or not to serve. For those with more attractive opportunities available to them, military service has little or no appeal.

As a result, today's services are filled with "economic conscripts" of both sexes (Rustad 1982, 119). Men and women enlist for many of the same reasons: job opportunities, training, and education benefits (Moskos 1985, 29; Rogan 1981, 49; Rustad 1982, 121). However, a young man's decision to join the military is a "normal" choice. He enjoys the support of his family and friends. "For many . . . men, the decision to join the army seem[s] to follow the path of least resistance" (Moskos 1985, 29).

Women and the Military

Throughout this century, as the United States has engaged in military conflicts, women have been mobilized to offset manpower shortages in the civilian workplace and in the military (Enloe 1983, 123). At each war's end, both women and men in the military were quickly demobilized, and women war workers in the civilian economy were also "demobilized." They were sent home to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers, their high paying jobs given to the returning men or lost entirely in post-war economic contractions. Historically, women have been called to serve only in cases of national emergency when all other alternatives have been exhausted; women are the army of last resort (Rustad 1982, 31). Until very recently, peacetime military service for women has been severely limited at best.

World War II was the turning point for women's formal military service. The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was

officially established in May 1942. The bill to establish the WAAC, introduced in 1941, recognized a need for women to fill certain military jobs, but resistance from the War Department prevented its passage until after Pearl Harbor (Holm 1982, 22-23). Shortly thereafter came the establishment of the Navy's Women's Reserve (WAVES), the Marine Corps Women's Reserve, and the Coast Guard Women's Reserve (SPARS) (Holm 1982, 21-27). However, the women's components of these latter three branches were established with full military status rather than as auxiliary organizations. In May 1943, the WAAC was dissolved and the Women's Army Corps (WAC) finally created, giving Army women full military status too (Holm 1982, 81; Rustad 1982, 29).

World War II mobilized the country. It was a popular war, "the good war" (Terkel, 1984). Everyone was expected to do his or her part. Yet there was great ambivalence toward the idea of women doing their part in the military. Public opinion polls going back to the period shortly before the United States entered World War II show "that the U. S. public has consistently expected women to share in national defense" (Stiehm 1984, 142). However, the implementation of women's military service drew strong negative reactions from many fronts. The women's services faced resistance from male military leaders, resentment from enlisted men who were being replaced in the rear and sent to the front, and recrimination from the public, many of whom believed that the women who

joined were either whores or lesbians (Allen 1986, 77-83; Holm 1982, 50-53; Rustad 1982, 27-34).

Despite the problems, 350,000 women served in the military during the war. Who were these women? What attracted them to the military? According to most of the literature available, their primary motivation was patriotism. "Each had joined to contribute to the war effort" (Holm 1982, 29).

[T]hese same women today, in the decade of the 80s, consistently identify patriotism and their personal obligation to 'do something worthwhile' for the war effort as the prime reason for their joining the WAAC. (Allen 1986, 80).

Undoubtedly patriotism was a strong force in people's lives during this period. However, in personal accounts of their service experience, military women from this era, as from others, give a variety of reasons for enlisting: a desire for travel, adventure, education, a good job; and often boredom with their lives (Abed 1985, 103; Allen 1986, 80; Alsmeyer 1981, 13; Stoddard 1986, 123). When World War II opened up opportunities for women in military and civilian work, giving women "official" permission to do something different from what they had been socialized to do, 350,000 of them chose the military. Patriotism offered an acceptable reason to do something as radical as joining the service.

A military career was not an option for women during the war. They enlisted for "the duration and six months" (Alsmeyer 1981, 2; Holm 1982, 29). "When it was all over, the

women, like most of the men, were expected to go back to pick up their lives where they had left off" (Holm 1982, 29). At the war's end most of these women did go home as part of "the largest and most rapid demobilization in U. S. history" (Binkin and Bach 1977, 10). From 1945 to 1948, women's service personnel shrank in numbers from 266,000 to around 14,000 (Binkin and Bach 1977, 10).

Amid controversy and debate, the women's services survived. In 1948, the Women's Armed Services Act was passed, establishing a permanent place for women in the military services (Binkin and Bach 1977, 10; Holm 1982, 113; Rustad 1982, 39). While this small step forward for women's military service did confer official status on military women, their entitlements were severely limited. For example, a woman could only claim her husband and children as dependents if she could prove that they actually were dependent upon her for support. By contrast any man's spouse and children automatically had dependent status. The law also limited the number of officers in the women's services and restricted the number of women who could serve to a mere two percent of total military strength (Holm 1982, 120). But even that two percent ceiling was never reached. In fact, until the late 1960s, women rarely exceeded one percent of the service strengths (Binkin and Bach 1977, 12; Holm 1982, 122; Rustad 1982, 142).

We know only a little about the personal motivations of the women in World War II military service and we know even

less about the motivations of the women who served during the two decades that followed the war. Who were the women who lingered after demobilization? Why did they stay? Who were the women who joined in the 1950s and 1960s? Why did they join? Why did they stay?

The WAC was composed entirely of women and run by women. The women who joined the WAC found both identity and support in their chosen careers. The women who discuss their membership in the WAC during those years talk about it with pride and love:

The identity of being a member of the Women's Army Corps was very important to me. . . . Originally, we had the Women's Army Corps Training Center and we had Women's Army Corps Recruiters. From the very first day, a woman was recruited by another member of the Women's Army Corps. She was brought into the Women's Army Corps, trained by the Women's Army Corps Training Center and then went somewhere else. But she always maintained her identity as a member of the Women's Army Corps. (Abed 1985, 121-123)

Helen Rogan's book, Mixed Company, provides some interesting insights about the WAC. Rogan spent six weeks with a mixed Army training company at Ft. McClellan, Alabama in 1979. During her stay, she talked with many of the training personnel who had been members of the WAC prior to its dissolution in 1978. These women shared with Rogan their thoughts and memories about the WAC.

The structure had a unique power, that of a chain of women protecting, encouraging, and looking out for other women in a world of men. . . . They used the chain of command for promotions; the women's careers were assessed and guided. With the WAC attending to its own promotions list, deserving women were unlikely to be passed over, and of course they could never be passed over in favor

of men. (Rogan 1981, 156)

In the early 1970s, two events sparked dramatic changes in the way the military related to women: Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment in March 1972 and the draft ended in June 1973. The push for equal opportunity and the military's need for personnel to fill jobs formerly filled by male draftees resulted in the dismantling of the WAC and the eventual integration of the services. While these changes looked like progress to feminists and policy makers, the integration of the services resulted in the disintegration of the strong women's networks that had flourished in the women's services, particularly the WAC. "[W]omen were expected to adapt to male culture without a support structure" (Rustad 1982, 147).

Gay Women and the Military

World War II was a turning point in gay history as well as for women in the military. As the country mobilized, thousands of gay people came to the cities and developed communities in which they supported and validated each other's experiences (Berube 1983, 89). For countless women who knew that they did not fit into the traditional female role, the war and women's services provided the opportunity, as well as permission, to be different. Countless lesbians joined the service: "I just knew the army was full of lesbians, so I ran off and joined the army" (Bond 1986, 164). Undoubtedly patriotism was a major factor for lesbians as it was for other

women, but the military seems to have had an especially great appeal to lesbians.

The recent efforts to document gay history in the United States have provided important information about the experiences of gay people in World War II. In the Emmy Award winning film, "Before Stonewall," a former WAC sergeant recounts a particularly interesting incident:

The battalion that I was in was probably about 97% lesbian. We were all over the place. And one day, I got called into my commanding general's office--and it happened to be Eisenhower at the time--and he said, "It's come to my attention that there may be some lesbians in the WAC battalion. I'm giving you an order to ferret those lesbians out and we're going to get rid of them."

And I looked at him and then I looked at his secretary who was standing next to me and I said, "Well, Sir, if the General pleases, Sir, I'll be happy to do this investigation for you but you have to know that the first name on the list will be mine." And he was kinda taken aback a bit, and then this woman standing next to me said, "Sir, if the General pleases, you must be aware that Sergeant Phelps' name may be second, but mine will be first."

And then I looked at him and then I said, "Sir, you're right, there are lesbians in the WAC battalion. And, if the General is prepared to replace all the file clerks, all the section commanders, all of the drivers, every woman in the WAC detachment"--and there were about nine hundred and eighty something of us--"then I'll be happy to make that list but I think the General should be aware that among those women are the most highly decorated women in the war. There have been no cases of illegal pregnancies, there have been no cases of AWOL, there have been no cases of misconduct and, as a matter of fact, every six months since we've been here, Sir, the General has awarded us a commendation for meritorious service." And he said, "Forget the order." It was a good battalion to be in. (Phelps, 1984)

Unfortunately, meritorious service was not enough to counter the homophobia of the McCarthy era. A "homosexual scare" arose in the early 1950s as a "side effect of Cold War

tensions and American fears about national security" (Berube and D'Emilio 1984, 279). Ironically, it was President Eisenhower who, in 1953, issued Executive Order 10450, which prohibited gays from serving in the military or holding federal jobs (Berube and D'Emilio 1984, 280n).

Despite the fact that there is no evidence to support an anti-homosexual policy, the military has steadfastly refused to accept gay people in its ranks. The theoretical basis for the current Department of Defense policy prohibiting gay people from serving in the Armed Forces is set forth in DoD Directive 1332.14 Enclosure 3, Part 1, Section H:

Homosexuality is incompatible with military service. The presence in the military environment of persons who engage in homosexual conduct or who, by their statements, demonstrate a propensity to engage in homosexual conduct, seriously impairs the accomplishment of the military mission. The presence of such members adversely affects the ability of the Military Services to maintain discipline, good order, and morale; to foster mutual trust and confidence among servicemembers; to ensure the integrity of the system of rank and command; to facilitate assignment and worldwide deployment of servicemembers who frequently must live and work under close conditions affording minimal privacy; to recruit and retain members of the Military Services; to maintain the public acceptability of military service; and to prevent breaches of security. (Schuman and Gilberd 1985, 18)

The vagueness of the DoD definition of a homosexual as being a person "regardless of sex, who engages in, desires to engage in or intends to engage in homosexual acts" is difficult to defend against (Schuman and Gilberd 1985, 19). Therefore, the anti-homosexuality policy can be used against any military woman, and enlisted women seem to be primary

targets (Stiehm 1989, 129). Throughout the history of women's peacetime military service, lesbians have been plagued by periodic purges and witch hunts (Berube 1983, 88; Enloe 1983, 143-146; Lewis 1979, 51; Stiehm 1989, 129).

In her discussion of the peacetime esprit of the old Women's Army Corps, Helen Rogan characterized it as "overwhelmingly gay" (154). "It was desirable to be gay. . . . Life was also hard for the straight women who wanted to stay in the Army. There was no way they could be part of the inner cliques of power" because of the power of the lesbian network operating within the WAC (154-156). When the decision was made to dissolve the WAC and integrate the services,

[t]he gays felt particular dread. . . . Gay women saw the bad days ahead, and they began to withdraw, to live discreetly as they never had before. There was new caution in their lives, personal and professional, for in the Army they are intertwined. (Rogan 1981, 158-159)

While issues of equal opportunity and sexual harassment have been addressed by policy makers since integration and the beginning of the All Volunteer Force, the prohibition against homosexuality has not been recognized as a vehicle for the harassment of all women. In the Spring 1989 meeting of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) members heard, for the first time, testimony regarding the use of accusations of lesbianism to harass military women.

The harassment of military women by labeling them 'lesbian', 'dyke' and 'queer' is not just a gay issue. It affects all women in uniform and is less an issue of sexual orientation than of gender. (National NOW Times, April 1989)

As a result of this testimony, the panel drafted a recommendation that the Department of Defense address such harassment (National NOW Times, April 1989).

Since the inauguration of the All Volunteer Force (AVF) there have been major changes in military policy which have resulted in a military environment more accomodating to "traditional" women (Stiehm 1985, 170-174). Most of these changes occurred in the early 1970s. For example, in a relatively short period of time, 1973-1978, women in the army went from serving in the WAC, an all-woman branch of the army in which they were prohibited from having children and required to prove their husbands' dependency to receive benefits automatically granted to wives and children of military men, to a mixed service with provisions for marriage, pregnancy, and families (Holm 1982, 289-303; Stiehm 1985, 170-174). Today's military may be less appealing to lesbians than it was before those reforms were instituted.

Despite the fact that these changes have made the military less accomodating to gay women, a substantial proportion of women in the military still are gay. Gay networks have also survived, though they have become less visible (Rogan 1981, 235-236).

Recruitment

Since the early 1970s and the beginning of the All Volunteer Force, women in the military have been the focus of numerous studies, commentaries, and controversies. The

studies most germane to this thesis are those that are concerned with the characteristics of the women who choose the military and their reasons for doing so; the reasons why they do or do not re-enlist; and the nature and structure of the informal and formal systems that support them emotionally and help them to advance in their careers. These have been the most useful: Helen Rogan's observations of a mixed training company in 1979; Michael Rustad's 1978 study of the enlisted women in an Army installation in Germany (which he calls "Khaki Town"); Jack Hicks's 1978 survey of enlisted people at Forts Jackson, Gordon, Hood, Bragg, and Carson; Grace Sevy's 1986 work on women Vietnam veterans; and Charles Moskos's 1985 report of his observations of female GIs in the field in Honduras.

The findings of these studies show that patriotism is reported as a reason for enlistment much less often than more immediate utilitarian reasons such as a desire for job training and education (Hicks 1978, 649-650; Moskos 1985, 29). Perhaps because choosing the military means choosing not to fulfill social expectations, women take longer to make the decision to enlist than men do (Hicks 1978, 649). They talk to more people about it before deciding (Hicks 1978, 649), and generally do not receive the parental support enjoyed by men (Moskos 1985, 29; Rustad 1982, 124-127).

Background information gives insights into motivation. Studies show that military women come primarily from rural

communities and small towns (Moskos 1985, 29; Phillips 1972, 54; Rogan 1981, 49). They are from the middle to lower middle, or "working class" (Phillips 1972, 54; Rustad 1982, 121; Sevy 1986, 99). Women who enlist generally come from large families and many are the oldest child (Phillips 1972, 54; Sevy 1986, 100). They characterize their families as patriotic and Christian. They were reared in an "authoritarian, sexist atmosphere" and were brought up to respect authority (Sevy 1986, 99-100). Many of these women describe themselves as active and adventurous and report that, as children, they were tomboys who enjoyed sports and playing "boys' games" (Sevy 1986, 101).

It is culture which assigns meanings to things. Culture tells people what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman; what peace means and what war means; who is a citizen; who is a patriot; who is a warrior. The relationship between a woman and the military begins with her relationship with her culture: how does she see herself within the society, and how does she see the role which the military plays in that society as well?

For an American woman, joining the military is a radical choice, one involving a conscious, deliberate decision not to meet social expectations. The reasons driving her choice must be strong enough to withstand societal and parental disapproval as well as whatever hostility she may encounter from the military. What are those reasons? Where

do women's needs and values coincide with those of the military, or where do they overlap and accomodate each other?

Enlisted servicewomen consistently report a desire for economic security, education, and training as reasons for joining the military (Hicks 1978; Moskos 1985; Rogan 1981; Rustad 1982). Women enlist to get out of small towns, to avoid unwanted marriages, to travel, to begin new lives. While these are good reasons for joining the military, many of the needs or desires expressed by respondents could conceivably be fulfilled in some other way and do not fully explain the choice of a military enlistment.

However, the consistent emphasis on economic security and on education and training does indicate that women see the peacetime military as a workplace. It is a workplace which, at least on the surface, offers equal pay and advancement as well as retirement benefits. These benefits have great appeal to a woman who expects to support herself for her entire life, as most lesbians do.

Work is not merely a means to an end; it is an identity, a source of self worth. In choosing the military, a woman is not simply choosing a job; she is placing the military at the center of her identity. But the military is not like any other workplace; its function is to define, protect, and defend the social order, the very social order from which she may be trying to escape. Therein lies the conflict any woman, especially a lesbian, must resolve when

she enters the service.

Adjustment

The choice to join the military is also influenced by forces which are not generally articulated and may not be consciously appreciated. These factors are also bound up with the identity of the enlistee and help to explain the intrinsic appeal of the military. They also help to explain why some women adjust more easily to the military environment than others.

Once a woman enters the service, she faces the task of reconciling her identity as a woman with her new role of sailor, soldier, marine, or airman. How well she does this depends on how she sees herself in relation to her prescribed sex role as well as with respect to the characteristics she ascribes to the role of military member. Joining the military may be her way of dealing with the disparity between who she is expected to be--and how she is expected to behave--and who she feels herself to be. A woman who enlists in the military is consciously choosing to live and work in a male milieu, often in what the larger society defines as a masculine role. What makes this a comfortable arrangement for her?

It is possible to get a clearer understanding of the relationship between women and the military by developing and utilizing different ways of looking at it. For this purpose, I am drawing heavily from Barrie Thorne's work, "Crossing the

Gender Divide: What 'Tomboys' Can Teach Us About Processes of Gender Separation Among Children" and Mary Ann Tetreault's work, "Gender Belief Systems and the Integration of Women into the U. S. Military."

Thorne argues that "gender is best understood not as a matter of essential dichotomies and social types like 'the tomboy,' but as fluid and situated, taking shape through social relations rather than differences" (24). This particular work of Thorne's is based on the observation of the interactions of nine to eleven year old children who cross over the boundaries between boys and girls. She specifically discussed one girl who successfully crossed back and forth between the boys and the girls:

. . . the gender of the company she kept also affected her style of interaction. Jessie was, in some ways, gender bilingual. When she crossed between groups of girls and groups of boys, she did some shifting of her patterns of talk, touch, solidarity, and conflict. Girls less conversant with the "ways of boys" had more difficulty gaining acceptance in their groups. (Thorne, 18)

The idea of gender behaviors as languages provides a key to understanding women in the military. It may simply be that women who are fluent in the "ways of boys" adjust readily to a military environment. However, I think this concept can be taken further and used to help explain the strong attraction of the military for some young women. Gender language includes touch, talk, walk, gesture, style, appearance, clothing. It is the way one presents oneself to and moves through the world. A girl who adopts the

"masculine" language as her own is more likely to view herself as a protector rather than someone who needs protection and may identify more easily with military values.

Crossing gender boundaries is acceptable for female children. However, upon reaching adolescence, they are expected to re-cross the gender boundary, adopt behaviors that are socially defined as appropriate for young women, and give up the world that is more comfortable and more familiar to them. Heterosexual meanings are placed on relationships and boys are no longer seen as appropriate peers for girls. It is no surprise that many women remember adolescence as a "painful time when they were pushed away from boys' activities" (Thorne 1986, 181).

For many girls, adolescence is brutal because it involves more than being "pushed away from boys' activities." Being a tomboy allows a child the freedom to choose who she wants to be and to construct an identity that is suitable to her temperament. By adolescence, many girls have already established strong identities. For some, adolescence is a devastating experience because they are pushed into a prescribed social, and often sexual, role that does not fit their identities (Lewis 1979, 23-24).

Women who "identify with the values and roles that their culture reserves to men" are what Tetreault calls "male identifiers" (50). Her work on gender belief systems explains how an individual woman reconciles living in a cultural

framework which limits her options and assigns women an inferior status.

American culture embodies a polarized gender system based on a male superior gender ideology, the belief that "men are different from and superior to women" (48-49). An individual--in this case a woman--develops a personal gender belief system which enables her "to reconcile personal needs and desires with social expectations" (46).

Women who adjust well to the military must have gender belief systems which include both the male superior belief system embraced by both society and the military, and one which defines her role within it.

A woman has to have a male superior belief system in order to accommodate herself to the dominant value structure of the organization. She must be willing to adjust to permanently inferior status or see herself as exceptional. (Tetreault 1988, 56)

A young woman who grew up conversant in the language of the masculine gender and never became comfortable with that of her own (assigned) gender, might reconcile this conflict by developing a gender belief system which gives her status as an exceptional woman in a male superior world. For such a woman, regardless of her sexual orientation, attraction to the military would not be unusual, and joining the military might even be described as a liberating experience. This helps explain why some women adjust more readily to the military environment than others.

Motivations for joining the military and the

experiences for lesbians who are "out" when they join are likely to be different from those of women who "come out" in the military. Coming out is the process of constructing a lesbian identity; acknowledging it to oneself and to others. Barbara Ponse describes several elements of the coming out process in what she calls the "gay trajectory" (124).

The first element is that the individual has a subjective sense of being different from heterosexual persons and identifies this difference as feelings of sexual-emotional attraction to her own sex. Second, an understanding of the homosexual or lesbian significance of these feelings is acquired. Third, the individual accepts these feelings and their implications for identity - that is, the individual comes out or accepts the identity of lesbian. Fourth, the individual seeks a community of like persons. Fifth, the individual becomes involved in a sexual-emotional lesbian relationship. (125)

Ponse points out that these elements need not be taken in this order but that this is a trajectory of identities and that any one of the elements can be a starting point leading to the assumption of a lesbian identity (124). Conceivably, the military could appeal to women at any point on this trajectory if their personal values are conducive to military service. I would argue that there is also an element of simply being aware of difference but not having identified it in terms of sexuality, and that this feeling of "differentness" makes the choice of a non-traditional military lifestyle appealing.

Networks

Formal and, most importantly, informal networks or support systems are a significant factor in any woman's

successful adjustment to the military. These networks play a crucial role in helping women to reconcile their military identities with their gay identities. Gay servicewomen's networks validate both identities as well as provide ongoing support and help in times of crisis. Networks also help gay women to protect themselves since homosexuality is formally prohibited by the military for its members.

As Helen Rogan and others have pointed out, the dismantling of the WAC and the integration of the services resulted in the disintegration of extensive and powerful women's networks. Prior to integration, the command structure of the women's branches provided opportunities for and encouraged mentor relationships (Rogan 1981, 156; Stiehm 1985, 171-172). Senior women looked out for the careers of junior women. Women's networks in the women's services were active, powerful, and visible. Changes in the structures of the women's services inevitably affected the structure of women's networks. They obliterated the old power structure and isolated women in male commands where they were excluded from the socialization process (Rustad 1982, 147). This necessitated the development of different kinds of networks.

It was probably at the point of integration of the services that the military experiences of gay women and straight women began to diverge. Straight military women, who were now permitted to marry and have children, developed external social ties. Their primary support networks are

likely to include family members, especially spouses, and these extend outside the military structure. Gay women, whose networks are no longer insulated by an essentially all female environment, went underground but continued to develop their primary ties inside the military, especially with other gay military women (Rogan 1981, 235-236).

Predictions

I began this study with several tentative predictions. I expected my study to show that both gay and straight women enlist in the military for a variety of economic and instrumental purposes. I expected to find patterns in the experiences and in the attitudes expressed by respondents that explain, at least in part, why some women fit in the military better than others. I expected to find a connection between being gay and joining the military. I expected to find that sexual orientation was a significant factor in the networking among gay servicewomen.

CHAPTER 4

THE STUDY AND ITS RESULTS

Every woman who participated in this study believed that joining the service had been the right choice for her, although often this assertion was amended by the phrase, "at the time." For many women, participation in this study was an opportunity to reflect on and interpret the military experience and its meaning in their individual lives. The majority of the women were over thirty years old and had been separated from the military for more than five years, some for much longer. Nineteen of the women enlisted. Three went in as officers: one in the nurse corps, one through the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), one through Officer Training School. Two of the enlisted women later became officers. For a brief service profile of each woman, see Appendix 1.

Recruitment

The relationship between a woman and the military begins even before she enters basic training, with her expectations and motivations for joining. The first part of this study focuses on the enlistment process and background information in order to explore those expectations and motivations. Previously cited studies about military

women have compared the reasons women give for joining the service with those given by men. Although women and men do give many of the same reasons for joining, there are differences.

In his comparison of the men and women of "Khaki Town," Michael Rustad found that the three major reasons the women joined were instrumental: education and training, money or job, and travel (121). For the men, the top three reasons were patriotism, money or job, and peer pressure (133). Patriotism was mentioned as often as money or job by the men but was seldom mentioned at all by the women.

Charles Moskos found that non-economic instrumental reasons were mentioned most often by women and economic reasons by men. Generally, however, for the men he interviewed, joining the military was "the path of least resistance"; for the women, it was a "way station to a better life" (29).

In Jack Hicks's study, women respondents expressed the desire for college benefits and training which would be useful in civilian life as the primary motivations for joining the military. These two reasons were also the two most frequently given by male respondents, but to a lesser degree (650). The women chose "to serve [their] country" less often than the men (649). Those studies which compare the enlistment experiences of men and women support Hicks's conclusion that "women tended to present a general enlistment configuration of more rational

long range planning, clarity of goals, goal direction and higher personal aspirations than men" (649).

The reasons for joining the military given by all the women who participated in my study are divided into five basic categories and are shown in Table 1. As the table indicates, several women gave more than one reason for joining.

Table 1.--Reasons for Joining the Military, Given by Respondents, Grouped According to Whether They Were First, Only, or Subsequent Reasons Given

(N=22)

	Only	First	Subsequent	Total
Instrumental Reasons	5	10	7	22
Patriotic Values	0	3	1	4
Social/Lesbian	2	0	3	5
Non-traditional Lifestyle	0	0	1	1
Other	0	1	4	5

As expected, instrumental reasons were mentioned much more frequently than any other type of reason by this group of women. Fifteen of the twenty-two respondents cited instrumental reasons as their only or first motivation for joining the military. This appears to be consistent with the findings of the previously cited studies on military women.

However, a closer look at the specific instrumental reasons mentioned by my respondents is enlightening. Table 2 lists the specific instrumental reasons given by my respondents for joining the military.

The most frequently given reason of all was to get away from home--either from parents or from a hometown. Three of the six women who listed this as a reason were "out" as lesbians when they enlisted. Two of those also listed meeting other lesbians as a reason for joining the service. Over a third of the twenty-two women in this study listed getting away from home or meeting other lesbians as their first or only reason for joining the military.

Table 2.--Specific Instrumental Reasons, Given by Respondents, Grouped According to Whether They Were First, Only, or Subsequent Reasons Given

(N=22)

	Only	First	Subsequent	Total
To Get Away from Home	3	3	0	6
Money for School	1	1	2	4
Training	1	3	0	4
Travel	0	2	2	4
Employment	0	1	3	4

Money for school, training, travel, and the need for

employment were also mentioned frequently by the respondents. Note that employment is mentioned as the primary reason for joining the service by only one woman. Less than 25 percent of the respondents mentioned it at all. This indicates that the military was seldom seen by these women as only another job. This result supports the findings of Moskos, Hicks, and Rustad, all of whom showed that young women use the military as a way to a better life, not as a job or even a career in and of itself.

Following instrumental reasons, the second greatest in number were social reasons. All the social reasons given by the women in this study were directly related to their being lesbians. They were seeking the company of other lesbians. Of the twenty-two lesbians in this study, eight were "out" when they joined. Five of those joined the military to find other lesbians. This finding is significant because it indicates a widely held belief among lesbians that the military is a good place in which to meet other lesbians. It also supports the popular belief in a connection between lesbians and the military.

Fourteen of my respondents "came out" while they were in the military.

I just knew I was different . . . I just knew I had to go, although I didn't really know why. I was "out" 2 months after entering the military. (C)

I think of my time in the military as my first being able to express and experience that. (F)

This suggests that military service may be part of the coming

out process for many young gay women. For my respondents, their lesbian experience in the military was not simply situational, but a recognition of their sexual orientation and a conscious choice to alter their lifestyles accordingly.

For four women, a belief in democracy, freedom, or some other variation of patriotic values was cited as influencing their decision to enter military service. While this is a small number, it is important to note that it was mentioned as often as any other single reason except getting away from home and meeting other lesbians. This also lends further support to the evidence that joining the military is seldom primarily an economic choice for women.

Nearly all of the women in this study recruited themselves. Table 3 shows the amount of influence that parents, friends, and recruiters were reported to have had on the respondents' decision to join the military. Most reported that parents, friends, and recruiters had little or no influence on their decision to join the military. Recruiters had the least influence and where they had any at all, it was to help the women decide which branch of the service to join. Over half (14) of the respondents did discuss their decision with other people, primarily family and friends. One reported talking to a guidance counselor and one to a military woman.

Hicks found in his study that female respondents reported talking to more people about their decision to join

than men did, although one fourth of his female respondents reported talking to no one (649). The participants in this study conform somewhat to that pattern except that a higher proportion of the women in my study did not discuss their decision with anyone. The majority of my respondents reported talking to other people about their decision to enlist but said that other people had little or no influence on that decision. This brings up the question of whether they were actually seeking advice or felt compelled to explain or justify their decision to join.

Table 3.--Outside Influence on Military Choice
(N=22)

	Little to None	Some	A Lot	Total
Parents	16	4	2	22
Friends	19	2	1	22
Recruiters	21	1	0	22

According to Moskos, women typically do not enjoy parental support for the decision to join the military (29). This is supported by Rustad's findings in his study of the women of "Khaki Town." Only one quarter of Rustad's respondents reported positive reactions from both parents. Nearly half reported positive reactions from only one parent,

and more than a quarter reported negative reactions from both parents (124).

Table 4 lists parental reactions to the decision to join made by my respondents.

Table 4.--Parental Reactions to Respondents' Decisions to Join Military

(N=22)

Both Parents Positive	8
Father Positive, Mother Negative	1
Mother Positive, Father Negative	1
Both Parents Neutral	4
Both Parents Negative	5
Father Positive, Mother not in Home	1
Mother Negative, Father not in Home	1
Not Living with Parents	<u>1</u>
Total	22

More than a third of my respondents reported positive reactions from both parents. This is higher than Rustad's finding but still indicates that more than half did not enjoy complete support, and of those, nine had no support. My finding also differs from Rustad's in the number of neutral reactions of parents. He found none. However, my findings fit the general configurations reported in other studies.

Parents who were supportive saw it as an opportunity for their daughters to improve their lives. Those parents who disapproved of their daughters' choices saw joining the military as something women should not do or believed their daughters to be too "smart" for the military.

Table 5.--Length of Time to Decide, by Status at Time of Enlistment

(N=22)

	Out as Lesbian		Not Out as Lesbian		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
A Month or Less	4	50	4	28.6	8	36.4
3 to 6 Months	1	12.5	2	14.2	3	13.6
7 Months to 1 Year	1	12.5	3	21.4	4	18.2
More than 1 Year	1	12.5	1	7.1	2	9.1
Knew in High School or Before	1	12.5	3	21.4	4	18.2
No Answer	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>7.1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4.5</u>
	8		14		22	

According to Hicks's findings, women generally take longer to make the decision to enlist than men do. One of the initial questions to be answered in this study was whether or not lesbians would take less time to decide to enlist than

straight women. Table 5 enables a preliminary judgement to be made but neither my findings nor those of Hicks adequately address the question.

The majority of women in Hicks's study reported taking several months to a year to decide to join, but Hicks also reported that 29 percent of the women in his sample joined on impulse. My results, with fewer than the number of cases necessary to make findings about an entire population, nevertheless show a substantially higher rate of impulsive decisions by women already out as lesbians than for those not out. Women who are out have made a radical change in their lifestyle, and perhaps have less need to justify subsequent choices.

The questionnaire used in this study included many background items. The purpose for this was twofold: first, to enable me to look for patterns which might indicate motivations for joining that are not generally articulated or examined, and also to elicit information about factors which might influence gender belief systems, especially those which would support or refute the idea that women who join the military are male identifiers (Tetreault 1988, 51). Second, I wanted to compare the background information given by my respondents with that given by women in other studies.

As Table 6 indicates, the greatest number of participants (9) were the oldest child in their families. The majority came from large families. This is similar to the

findings of other studies of military women (Phillips 1972, 54; Sevy 1985, 100). "Many of the women also came from large families . . . where they learned to get along in groups: 'I grew up in a barracks'" (Sevy 1985, 100).

Table 6.--Family Size by Birth Order

(N=22)

	Oldest Child	Middle Child	Youngest Child
Only Child	0	-	-
1 or 2 Siblings	7	2	2
3 or More Siblings	2	7	2

The women in this study are also similar to women in other studies in their religious upbringing. They come from predominantly traditional Protestant and Catholic backgrounds; ten were Protestant, six were Catholics, two were Jewish. This differs slightly from other studies. The greatest number of Rustad's respondents reported non-denominational religious backgrounds (113). Sevy's study showed a majority with Catholic backgrounds (99).

Table 7.--Religion of Respondents at Age 16
(N=22)

Catholic	6
Protestant	10
Jewish	2
Non-denominational	0
Other	1
None	<u>3</u>
Total	22

Most of the women in my study were white and thus not ethnically similar to the samples drawn in other studies with the possible exception of Sevy's in which the ethnic origins of the respondents are not given. It is important to note that both this study and Sevy's had very small, self-selected populations. Nineteen of twenty-two were white, two were Hispanic, and one was Metis (French Indian/Irish American). This ethnic distribution corresponds to what appears to be a slightly higher social class. It is difficult to measure social class in a study such as this. However, Table 8 shows the occupations of both parents of the respondents.

The large number of mothers who were homemakers indicates that most women in this study came from homes where the sex roles were "polarized"--that is, that these set "roles . . . prescribe[d] distinct and different activities

for men and women" (Stiehm 1989, 235). However, it was not unusual for the mothers to work, especially when the children were grown. This may indicate some flexibility in the role of women in the respondents' families. However, it may be less a matter of flexibility than the horror of being "just a housewife" that may have increased the attraction of the military.

Table 8.--Occupations of Parents of Respondents

(N=22)

Father Professional, Mother Homemaker	6
Father White Collar, Mother Homemaker	2
Father Blue Collar, Mother Homemaker	3
Father in Military, Mother Homemaker	2
Father not in Home, Mother White Collar	1
Father not in Home, Mother Blue Collar	1
Both Parents White Collar	1
Mother Professional, Father White Collar	1
Both Parents Blue Collar	3
Mother Professional, Father in Military	1
Mother White Collar, Father Blue Collar	<u>1</u>
Total	22

Table 9 shows which parent women felt closer to, as

well as the reason.

Table 9.--Parent to Which Respondent Felt Closer, by Reason
(N=22)

	Mother	Father	Neither
Spending Time	2	1	0
Easier to Talk to	4	2	0
More Affectionate	0	1	0
Close to Neither Parent	-	-	6
Absence of Other Parent	3	0	0
Other	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Totals	10	6	6

Initially, I had expected that the women who could be categorized as male identifiers would tend to be closer to their fathers and perhaps want to emulate them. That was not the case with my respondents. The largest proportion of respondents reported being closer to their mothers than their fathers. However, there are many things to consider. Their mothers might have been male identifiers. Respondents might have felt close to their mothers but wanted to emulate their fathers. Women who are close to their mothers don't necessarily want to make the same choices for their own lives.

All but one of my respondents reported that they had

been tomboys as children and thus had had some experience in "crossing the gender divide." This plus the fact that many came from homes where the roles of men and women were polarized, could have resulted in many, if not all of my respondents becoming male identifiers. This does not mean that all lesbians are male identifiers or that all male identifiers are lesbians. It does help to explain why some women are attracted to and can adjust to the military environment.

Military Experience

Every women in the military holds a non-traditional job. However, career fields, ratings and military occupation specialties (MOSs) further divide military jobs for women into traditional and non-traditional categories. The specific job specialty held by a woman in the military has a direct influence on the quality of her military experience (Rustad 1982, 143-144; Stiehm 1989, 15). Women who experience the most satisfaction are those in jobs traditionally seen as female (Hicks 1978, 651; Stiehm 1989, 15). Several factors account for this. Because women tend to be concentrated in traditional jobs (Rustad 1982, 145), support networks are more likely to form. This would be true for lesbians as well as for straight women. Women in traditionally female jobs are also less likely to be labelled as deviant (Hicks 1978, 655) and thus may experience less harassment. They also may be

more likely to receive training which they perceive as potentially useful later in civilian life (Rogan 1982, 320).

The literature also indicates that women in non-traditional jobs are more likely to "migrate" to a different job specialty than women in traditional jobs. Women migrate from non-traditional jobs for several reasons. Sometimes a person will sign up for a job simply to get into the service rather than because of a desire to do that particular job. Such a person may try to switch jobs later on. Shiftwork and alert status are more common in the non-traditional fields, which make them unattractive to both men and women (Stiehm 1989, 15). There are at least two significant reasons for migration that are specific to women. First, women are generally isolated in non-traditional jobs where there are few other women and they get little or no support from male co-workers. Second, some women are assigned outside their primary MOSs by supervisors who believe such jobs are inappropriate for women (Rogan 1981, 233; Rustad 1982, 114, 155).

Job satisfaction also depends on who a woman works for and with, as well as what she does. Table 10 shows the distribution of jobs and levels of job satisfaction of the women in this study.

Most of the women in this study held what are considered to be non-traditional jobs. There appears to be some distinction in job satisfaction between those in

traditional and those in non-traditional jobs. The most important distinction to be drawn is that only women in non-traditional jobs reported that they disliked these jobs. However, the majority of the women in both categories expressed satisfaction with their jobs.

Table 10.--Jobs, by Job Satisfaction, as Reported by Respondents

(N=22)

	Liked Job	Ambivalent	Disliked Job
Traditional			
Health Care	1	1	0
Administration	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Totals	6 (66.7%)	3 (33.3%)	0 (0%)
Non-Traditional			
Technical	2	3	0
Mechanical	3	0	1
Security	1	1	0
Communications	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
Totals	7 (53.8%)	4 (30.8%)	2 (15.4%)

Only two "migrated" to different jobs during their service. Six reported that their assigned duties changed but their career fields did not. This includes women in both

traditional and non-traditional job fields. Fourteen of the women felt that they had some control over their rating, MOS, career field, or subspecialty assignments and were satisfied with them.

Eight said that all of their advancements came easily, four had mixed experiences, and ten found all advancements to be difficult. Nearly half of my respondents reported having difficulty with all of their advancements. These were enlisted women in both traditional and non-traditional job fields. Most of the women attributed this difficulty to quotas on the numbers of people who could be advanced to certain rates and within certain jobs. Whether these quotas made advancement difficult for everyone or just for women can't be determined in this study. However, it is significant that over half of the women in this study reported experiencing difficulty in advancing at some point in their military service.

Getting desirable duty assignments is another factor affecting a woman's satisfaction with the military. Nine women found it to be easy while eleven found it to be difficult and two had had mixed experiences. Those who reported encountering difficulty in getting the duty assignments they wanted attributed it to the needs of the service being more important than the needs of the individual, or to not knowing the system or the right people. Those who found it easy to get the duty assignments that they wanted

attributed it to luck, knowing the system, or knowing the right people. Thus, the perceptions of both groups regarding what is necessary to get desirable duty assignments are very similar and underscore the importance of networking in the military.

Only one of the participants stayed in the service for more than ten years. Only four stayed longer than one enlistment period. Three women extended for a year or more beyond their initial enlistment periods in order to change duty stations; two extended in order to go overseas and one extended because she was afraid to get out overseas. Two continued or resumed their service in the active reserves. Table 11 shows the reasons that the respondents discontinued their military service.

Table 11.--Reasons Given by Respondents for Leaving the Military

(N=22)

Dissatisfied with the Military Organization	2
Incompatible with Lesbian Lifestyle	7
Opportunities on Outside	5
Could not get Desired Job/Assignment/Advancement	5
Other	4
No Answer	2

Many more women are pushed out by institutional factors

than are pulled out by opportunities on the outside. Only five were pulled out by opportunities such as going to school or a better job on the outside. Most left because the military was not compatible with their needs. Seven got out because the military was incompatible with their lesbian lifestyle. Six of these had "come out" in the service.

A comparison of the reasons women enlist with the reasons they leave the military shows a great disparity between women's expectations for their military experience and their actual experiences. It also shows that women who come out in the military find that there is no place for them there. Women who join the military are generally not prepared for the discrimination and hostility which they encounter both institutionally and from individual military men. It is the Department of Defense policy that all military personnel receive equal treatment "regardless of race, color, religion, gender, age, or national origin" (U. S. Department of Defense, 1988). Despite this, institutional discrimination, primarily in the form of combat exclusion regulations, fosters the attitude that women are second class citizens in the military. Therefore, it is no surprise that sexual harassment is pervasive in the military. Women in other studies reported extensive sexual harassment (Hicks 1978, 653; Rustad 1982, 145-146; Stiehm 1989, 150-151).

Harassment of women in the military takes many forms. Some of the more blatant forms are: demand for sexual favors

by a superior; harassment in the workplace by male "peers"; entertainment influenced by and done for the male audience (Stiehm 1989, 17-18). Women constantly face sexism. They are subjected to the negative attitudes of men, and they are often excluded from socialization into the customs and practices of their job specialties, especially when they are in non-traditional jobs (Hicks 1978; Rogan 1981; Rustad 1982; Stiehm 1989).

Charles Moskos found that enlisted women defined sexual harassment much more narrowly than female officers did. Enlisted women defined sexual harassment primarily in terms of sexual propositions. Officers expressed a broader understanding which included "sexual definitions of suitable work, the combat exclusion rule and so on" (32-33). In order to increase the scope of my investigation of the harassment of military women, I phrased the question to ask respondents if they had ever been mistreated because they were women.

Fifteen of my respondents reported that they had been mistreated because they were women. Most of the complaints were of sex discrimination, both institutional and by individuals.

I was trained in a specialty unique to combat zone activity. Whenever it was time to go to the "war games," I was left behind and told that my training was a man's job. Reminded that women were not allowed within 50 miles of the "combat zone." (B)

[I] was asked to leave a briefing that I was required to attend because having a female present would spoil the Major's delivery of his presentation. (F)

Table 12 illustrates the kinds of mistreatment the women experienced.

Table 12.--Types of Unfair Treatment Reported by Respondents
(N=22)

Institutional Sex Discrimination	3
Sex Discrimination by Individuals	7
Intimidation	1
Coercion to have Sex or Date	2
Attempted Rape	1
Other	1

All the incidents of mistreatment reported by my respondents related specifically to their gender. However, none mentioned experiencing harassment as lesbians until they were asked if they had known anyone who had been harassed, investigated, or kicked out of the service on charges of lesbianism. All but one of my respondents reported knowing someone, generally a close friend or friends, who had experienced this. The separation of gender issues from issues of sexual orientation is a common one in the military. However, the selective enforcement of the Department of Defense policy prohibiting homosexuality against groups of women indicates that sexual orientation is very much a gender issue. Primary targets are usually enlisted women in non-

traditional jobs (Harrison 1989; Stiehm 1989, 129). My findings lend support to charges that use of this policy against military women is pervasive.

In spite of these negative aspects, most of my respondents liked their jobs. They were proud of their performance and felt that they had made a contribution to the military. However, they also believed that they had been pushed out of military service by institutional factors directly related to their gender or sexual orientation.

Networks

I expected to find a strong connection between sexual orientation and networking in the military. The pattern of responses indicates that there is such a connection. Many of my respondents reported having large supportive networks. Thirteen reported that sexual orientation was the primary factor in their development of personal support networks:

Lesbians have to network for their own protection--to share information and opportunities. (F)

It is less complicated to network with all dykes and definitely safer. (C)

Individual support systems consisted of a number of lesbian friends who participated together in activities unrelated to work. Many women made distinctions between their work networks and their social groups:

[I]f they were straight I usually developed a professional relationship with them, if they were gay, I developed a deeper friendship i.e. doing things together outside of work. (L)

Social groups seemed to be primarily horizontal; that is, they consisted primarily of peers. Few respondents gave evidence of mentoring or vertical networking.

I wanted to see if respondents were aware of the existence of an "old girls network" in the military. Half of the respondents stated that they believed that such an old girls network exists. However, most had only heard about it. Only three of the women reported any first hand knowledge of what they believed to be the old girls network.

Looking back now you see . . . the old girls network among the lesbian women. That's where you see the old girls network--I mean old gals. They hang out and are tight and nobody's going to turn anybody in and I think the longer they were in, the tighter they got and the more careful they were about who they let in their circles. (III)

Respondents were asked to draw pictures of how they think the networks in the military look and to include themselves in the picture. Eleven chose to draw them. (See Appendix 3 for reproductions of these drawings.) These pictures present a variety of perceptions of an individual's military experience. They are striking in their representation of the conflicting groups and power relationships which respondents believe exist in the military. In these diagrams enlisted women are shown as having the least power. These pictures show homosexuals and heterosexuals as separate groups, men and women as separate groups, and officers as separate from enlisted people. The women who chose to put themselves in the drawings showed that they

either belonged in all the groups or were totally isolated.

Responses to questions about the women's own networks indicate the existence of a community consisting of a number of intersecting and tangentially related lesbian networks in the military. Because of the transience inherent in military service, the composition of these networks fluctuates as individuals transfer from one duty station and locale to another. Indeed, it is the shifting of network members that connects the different networks to one another. These networks are important in providing support, protection, information, and resources to lesbians, as well as constituting the matrices of their social lives. Many respondents reported their experiences in lesbian networks to be the most positive aspect of their military service.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between lesbians and the military. I began this study with four tentative predictions: that this study would show first, that gay women as well as straight women enlist in the military for a variety of economic and instrumental reasons; second, that a connection exists between being gay and joining the military; third, that sexual orientation was a significant factor in the networking among gay servicewomen; and fourth, that patterns in the experiences and in the attitudes expressed by respondents would explain, at least in part, why some women fit in the military better than others. The results of this study support some of those predictions. Furthermore, patterns have emerged which suggest directions for future research.

Lesbians and the Military

The respondents in this study comprise a small, self-selected group of women who participated as lesbians and do not represent a random sample. However, their family backgrounds, reasons for joining, and enlistment experiences

correspond with patterns found in other studies. My study examines the lesbian military experience represented by the members of this group and the results point out some differences between lesbians and straight women. They also underscore the similarities in the experiences and characteristics of military women in general, especially in the enlistment profile.

This study shows a connection between being gay and joining the military. Most of the women who were out as lesbians joined with the expectation that they would meet other lesbians. This motive indicates a belief among lesbians that the military is a good place to meet other lesbians and lends credence to the popular belief that there is a connection between lesbians and the military. If lesbians perceive that the military is a place where lesbians are or want to be, it will become, if it is not already, a place where lesbians are or want to be.

For some gay women who join the service, the military plays a part in the coming out process. It is likely that the women who come out in the military are, when they enlist, at that stage in the process of acknowledging to themselves that they are different from other people. A woman who knows or feels herself to be different from everyone else in her hometown would be likely to seek a new life. The military may be especially attractive to a male identifier who grew up in a community with traditional American values. For a male

identifier, the military presents not only an opportunity for escape, but also permission to be non-traditional.

The military as an institution and lesbians as a group have the potential for a mutually beneficial relationship. When it decided that the deployment of women would be useful, the military at first recruited single, childless women and its policy restricted participation in the women's services to unmarried women without dependents. While official policy has changed step by step to accommodate women who may also be wives and mothers, a review of recruiting ads indicates that unmarried, childless women are still preferred (Davis 1987). Single military personnel are more cost effective and easier to mobilize. They are also likely to be more focused or committed to their jobs than persons facing the distraction of family responsibilities such as childcare. Lesbians, as represented by the women in this study, are a cost effective as well as a willing workforce for the military.

There is a strong connection between sexual orientation and forming exclusive networks in the military. This is directly related to the military policy which prohibits homosexuals from serving in the military. Lesbians form closed networks and communities in which non-lesbians are not welcome. There is no available evidence that non-lesbians form the same kind of networks based on their heterosexual orientation.

The fourth prediction is the most difficult to

address. This study shows that whether or not women fit in the military, they are pushed out by institutional factors. Most of the women reported having been tomboys and enjoying boys' activities as children. Many also reported having enjoyed many aspects of their military experience. However, most of my respondents left the service after one enlistment period primarily due to gender-based discrimination or because the military was incompatible with their lesbian lifestyle. It may be as simple as choosing one's identity as a lesbian over one's identity as a military woman.

Policy Implications

The purpose of the peacetime military is to maintain a ready, effective fighting force which can be mobilized quickly should the need arise. In that event, the military's own policies concerning women and gay people will tend to prevent rapid and effective mobilization. Policies which form the basis of the relationship between lesbians and the military are detrimental to the military's mission and reflect ideological disarray at the core of the U.S. military establishment. The military is caught in a dilemma between the need for cost-effective, efficient fighting forces, now mandated to include women, and traditional policies protecting the old heterosexualist, sexist social order, policies that illogically reward the military's existence as a male-only organization.

Two specific policies directly affect the lives and

experiences of lesbians in the military. First, because they are women, lesbians are excluded from full membership in the military. The military's combat exclusion policy makes it illegal for women to participate in the primary function of the military--combat. Second, because they are lesbians, they are legally denied the right to serve in their country's military, and thus must suppress their lesbian identity when they do serve.

The definition of combat fluctuates but the stability of this policy keeps women from "first class citizenship" in the armed forces. It makes a clear distinction between the military experiences of men and those of women. The privilege, or burden--depending upon one's point of view--of national defense is placed on men. However, the military has also recognized the need for women to fill its necessary "manpower" requirements. Numerous studies have shown that women perform as well as men in combat jobs and under field conditions (Goodman 1979; Moskos 1985; Stiehm 1989). Even so, the military establishment refuses to acknowledge women's capabilities and is constantly recommending further studies before any significant changes in policy are made (Goodman 1979, 256). At the same time, institutional factors continue to push trained female personnel out of the service. There are continuous cycles in the lower enlisted rates or ranks of women: they come into the military, they are trained, and then they are pushed out. The perpetuation of these cycles ensure

that few enlisted women achieve senior enlisted leadership positions.

Institutional discrimination separates men from women and greatly affects unit cohesion and morale. Policy makers constantly point out that the presence of women in the military is detrimental to male bonding and the formation of effective fighting units. However, no effort has been made to investigate female bonding or to try to understand how men and women can effectively and comfortably form cohesive, gender-integrated units. Yet we do know that the relative rarity of women in the field and the institutional discrimination arising from the perception of female incompetence is not justified by unbiased studies (Devilbiss 1985; Moskos 1985). However, the participation of U. S. servicewomen in combat situations such as the recent American invasion of Panama is providing impetus for legislative changes in policy regarding women in combat.

Gender-based policies permit and excuse the sexist treatment and abuse of women by mandating separate treatment and a double standard. The military does recognize the connection between sexual harassment and attrition, and consequently promotes equal opportunity programs and educates command personnel about sexual harassment. Current regulations prohibit sexual harassment and more women are using the system to report instances of it. Though policies and practices against sexual harassment have been

strengthened, one legal way to harass women remains. That is by exploiting the policy prohibiting homosexuals from military service.

According to Defense Department figures, women are three times more likely than men to be discharged from the military for homosexuality (Willis 1988, 29). These figures may support the assumption that a significant proportion of military women are lesbians or they may suggest that the military is tougher on women and uses charges of lesbianism to push them out--or both! Regardless of which way these statistics are interpreted, both lead to the conclusion that the military is hostile to women in general and to lesbians in particular. My results also support these conclusions.

The results of my study also make it clear that the military's policy of prohibiting gay men and women from serving in the armed forces is ineffective in keeping lesbians from joining the service. However, the prohibition against homosexuality creates problems for both straight and gay military women as well as for the military organization itself. The responses of the women in this study show clearly that this policy promotes high levels of insecurity and thus exclusive networking as a means of self-protection. As a result, unit cohesion is impaired.

In 1986, the DoD commissioned a study from the Defense Personnel Security Research and Education Center (PERSEREC) on security risks posed by homosexuals in the military. The

report, Nonconforming Sexual Orientations and Military Suitability, was completed and submitted to the Pentagon in December 1988. The results of this study gave a very favorable report on the performance of military duties by homosexuals and recommended that the Department of Defense rescind its policy prohibiting homosexuals from serving. Pentagon officials refused to accept the report and tried to keep it confidential. Despite their efforts to suppress it and their refusal to make it public, information on the report was leaked to the press in October 1989 (Dyer 1989).

In the face of objective evidence that women and gay people are suitable, capable, and desirable personnel, the military establishment continues to fight the inclusion of women in its primary mission of combat and to deny lesbians and gay men any legal place in the military. These exclusions cannot just be raised and forgotten. They reflect our society's confusion about the role of women and underscore the fact that there really is no place for lesbians in our society. It seems ironic that many lesbians look for their place in the military but it is not illogical. The real irony is the disparity between the ideals of individual freedom and equality upon which our democracy is founded and the values that the military actually defends: sexism, heterosexualism, and misogyny.

APPENDIX ONE
SERVICE PROFILES OF THE WOMEN

QUESTIONNAIRES

- A: Enlisted in the Army in 1966 at the age of 26 and was still serving when she participated in the study.
- B: Enlisted in the Army in 1974 at the age of 27 and served for 2 years.
- C: Enlisted in the Army in 1977 at the age of 18 and served for 5 years and 8 months.
- D: Enlisted in the Army in 1970 at the age of 22 and served for 3 years.
- E: Enlisted in the Army in 1964 at the age of 18 and served for 3 years.
- F: Enlisted in the Army in 1964 at the age of 21 and served for 3 years and 8 months.
- G: Enlisted in the Army in 1963 at the age of 20 and served for 4 years.
- H: Enlisted in the Army in 1978 at the age of 21 and served for 3 years.
- J: Enlisted in the Navy in 1978 at the age of 19 and served for 5 years.
- K: Enlisted in the Navy in 1982 at the age of 18 and served for 5 years.
- L: Enlisted in the Navy in 1982 at the age of 20 and served for 5 years.
- M: Enlisted in the Navy in 1978 at the age of 22 and served for 4 years.
- N: Enlisted in the Air Force in 1980 at the age of 19 and served for 4 years.
- O: Enlisted in the Air Force in 1956 at the age of 24 and served for 2 years.
- P: Enlisted in the Air Force in 1963 at the age of 18 and served for 4 years.
- Q: Enlisted in the Air Force in 1983 at the age of 19 and served for 4 years.
- R: Entered Air Force Nurse Corps in 1970 at the age of 22 and served for 3 and 1/2 years.
- S: Air Force Officer. Joined in 1979 at the age of 20 and served for 6 and 1/2 years.

INTERVIEWS

- I: Army Officer (ROTC). Began active duty in 1979 at the age of 21 and served for 4 years.
- II: Enlisted in the Army in 1979 at the age of 20 and served for 2 years.
- III: Enlisted in the Navy in 1963 at the age of 18 and served for 7 years.
- IV: Enlisted in the Air Force in 1980 at the age of 20 and served for 5 and 1/2 years.

APPENDIX TWO
THE QUESTIONNAIRE

TO THE PARTICIPANT:

My name is Patricia Davis and I am working on my master's thesis at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. My goal is to see whether women in the military form networks and support groups to help one another and, if so, what these networks are like. My interest in this topic began with my own experience as a Navy enlisted woman.

I am not currently affiliated with the military. No one but myself will have access to the questionnaires that I am asking you and other women formerly or presently in the military to fill out.

Please be aware that your participation in this study is purely voluntary. You may terminate participation at any time if you so desire. You will not be identified in any way as a result of your participation.

I would appreciate it if you would fill out this questionnaire and return it to me in the enclosed stamped envelope as soon as you possibly can. Please do not put your name or address on the questionnaire. However, if you would like to comment on any of the questions, or if you have information that you would like to add, please feel free to write on the back of the questionnaire or to enclose additional pages.

I would like to involve as many women as possible in this project. If you know other military women or veterans, please ask them to contact me, or, if you can help distribute questionnaires, I would appreciate your help. If you have any questions, or if you would like information about the results of this research, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you very much for volunteering your time and energy.

Sincerely,



Patricia L. Davis
c/o Old Dominion University
Women's Studies Dept.
Rm. 810
Batten Arts and Letters
Norfolk, VA 23529

FIRST, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR MILITARY EXPERIENCE.

1. In which branch of the military did/do you serve?
Army____ Navy____ Air Force____ Marine Corps____ Coast Guard____
2. Why did you join the military?
3. Did you know anyone in the military?
Father____ Sister____
Mother____ Friend____
Brother____ Other____
4. How long did it take you to decide to join?
5. Did you discuss joining the military with anyone before making your decision? Yes____ No____
If so, who did you talk to?____

How much did a recruiter influence your decision to join the military?
6. How did your parents react to your decision to join the military?
7. How much influence did your parents and/or friends have on your decision to join?
8. How old were you when you joined? What year was that?
9. How long were you or have you been in the military?
10. Did you ever re-enlist?

Why or why not?
11. What was your Military Occupation Specialty/Rating/Career Field/Subspecialty?

Did you like it?

Did it ever change?

Did you have any control over your MOS/rating/career field/
subspecialty assignment?

12. What is/was your rate or rank?

Did advancements come easily? If so, which ones?

If not, which were more difficult? Why?

13. Was it easy or difficult to get the duty assignments you wanted?

What made it difficult or easy?

14. What is your age now? _____

15. What is your marital status now?

Married _____ Single _____ Divorced _____ Widowed _____
Living with a female partner _____ Living with a male partner _____

16. How many brothers and sisters do you have? (Please fill in the number).

_____ Older Brothers _____ Older Sisters
_____ Younger Brothers _____ Younger Sisters
_____ Others in household when you were growing up

Please describe: _____

17. Were you a tomboy when you were a child?

18. Who were your childhood heroes (female or male)?

19. What is your race? Black _____ Hispanic _____ Asian _____
White _____ Native American _____ Other _____

20. Religious affiliation at 16 _____

21. Present religious affiliation_____
22. In politics today, how do you think of yourself:
Republican Democrat Independent
And where would you place yourself on this scale:

Liberal Middle of the Road Conservative
23. Do you consider yourself a feminist? Yes_____ No_____
24. Highest Education Level_____Year attained_____
25. Who were the people that had the most influence on you when you were growing up?
26. Which parent did you feel closer to?
Why?
27. When you were growing up, what was your father's occupation?
28. When you were growing up, what was your mother's occupation?
29. How happy was your home when you were growing up?
1. Happy most of the time
 2. About even, happy/unhappy
 3. Neither happy nor unhappy
 4. Unhappy most of the time

NOW I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE AS A WOMAN IN THE MILITARY.

30. Are capable women in the military given the same respect as capable men?
Always_____ Usually_____ Sometimes_____ Seldom_____ Never_____
31. Are incompetent men in the military given more responsibility than competent women?
Always_____ Usually_____ Sometimes_____ Seldom_____ Never_____
32. Do you think women should be able to volunteer for combat specialties? Yes_____ No_____
- Why or why not?
33. Do you think women should be drafted into combat specialties?
Yes_____ No_____
- Why or why not?
34. Do you think that pregnant women should be allowed to stay in the the service? Yes_____ No_____
- Why or why not?
35. On the basis of your experience, would you prefer to work for a woman_____ a man_____ doesn't matter_____
36. Have you ever been treated unfairly in the military because you're a woman?
Yes_____ No_____
- If so, what were the circumstances?
- What did you do?
37. Are you proud of your work performance in the military?
38. Do you feel that joining the military was the right choice for you?

39. Have you ever heard the statement that women in the military are either prostitutes or lesbians? Yes_____ No_____
40. Did you ever worry that your participation in the military would get you accused of being a whore or a lesbian? Yes_____ No_____
41. Did you ever worry that your participation in women's networking would get you accused of being a lesbian? Yes_____ No_____
42. Are you aware of the military policy concerning homosexuality?
43. Do you think it's fair?
44. Did or do you know anyone in the military who was harassed, investigated, or kicked out because of lesbianism?
- If so, was this person:
- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| unknown to you_____ | an acquaintance_____ |
| a friend_____ | a close friend_____ |
45. Were any of your very close friends in the military lesbians? none_____ one or two_____ several_____ many_____ all_____
46. What would you say is the percentage of military women who are lesbians?
47. Are you a lesbian?

If so, were you out as a lesbian when you went into the military?

NOW I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT THE NETWORKS AND SUPPORT GROUPS THAT YOU MAY HAVE ENCOUNTERED DURING YOUR TIME IN THE MILITARY.

48. It's well known that there are "old boy" networks in business as well as in the military. Is there an "old girl" network in the military?
49. When you entered the military, who taught you the ropes?

50. Did/do you have a support network in the military--who are/were the people who advised you, looked out for you, and helped you along during your time in the military?

straight men?

none___ one or two___ several___ many___ all___

gay men?

none___ one or two___ several___ many___ all___

straight women?

none___ one or two___ several___ many___ all___

lesbians?

none___ one or two___ several___ many___ all___

officers?

none___ one or two___ several___ many___ all___

enlisted people?

none___ one or two___ several___ many___ all___

people in your MOS/rating/career field/subspecialty?

none___ one or two___ several___ many___ all___

people in other MOS/ratings/career fields/subspecialties?

none___ one or two___ several___ many___ all___

people in other branches of the service?

none___ one or two___ several___ many___ all___

people stationed in other parts of the country or overseas?

none___ one or two___ several___ many___ all___

civilians?

none___ one or two___ several___ many___ all___

family members?

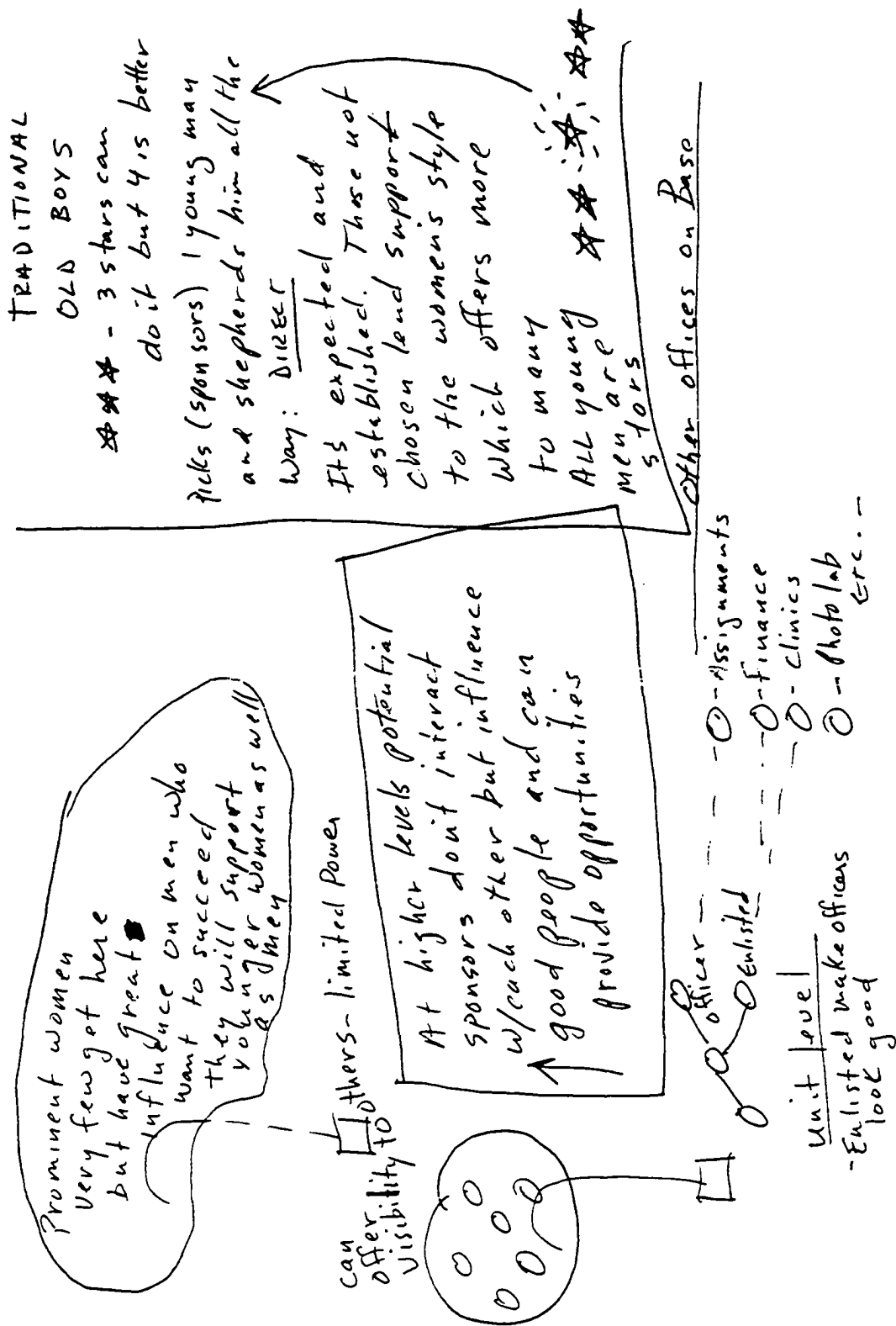
none___ one or two___ several___ many___ all___

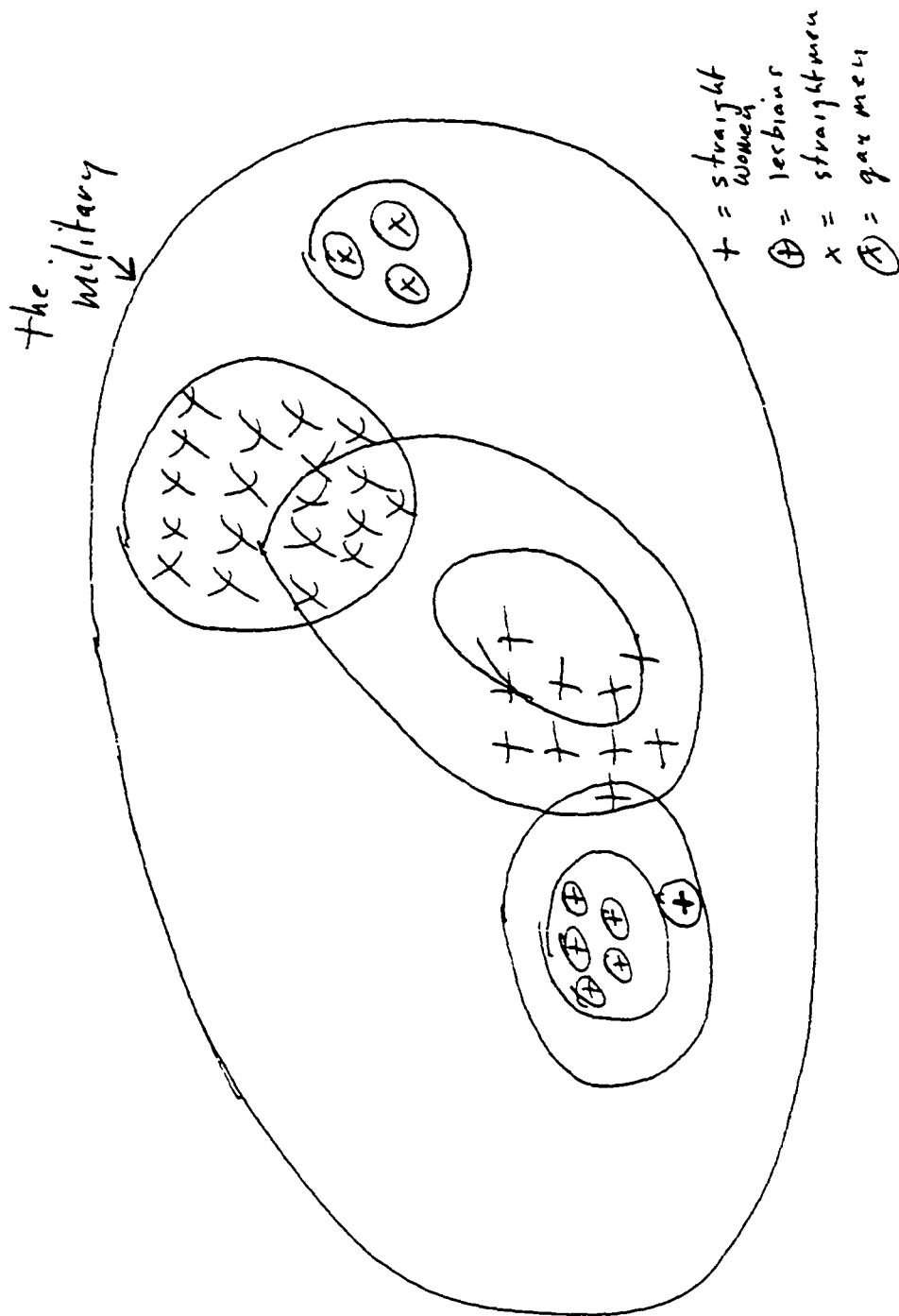
51. Do/did you have a personal support group--who are/were the most important people in your life? Please go back and write "F" to indicate on the list those who are/were your friends.
52. If you are a veteran, how does your current personal support group compare with the one you had during your military service?

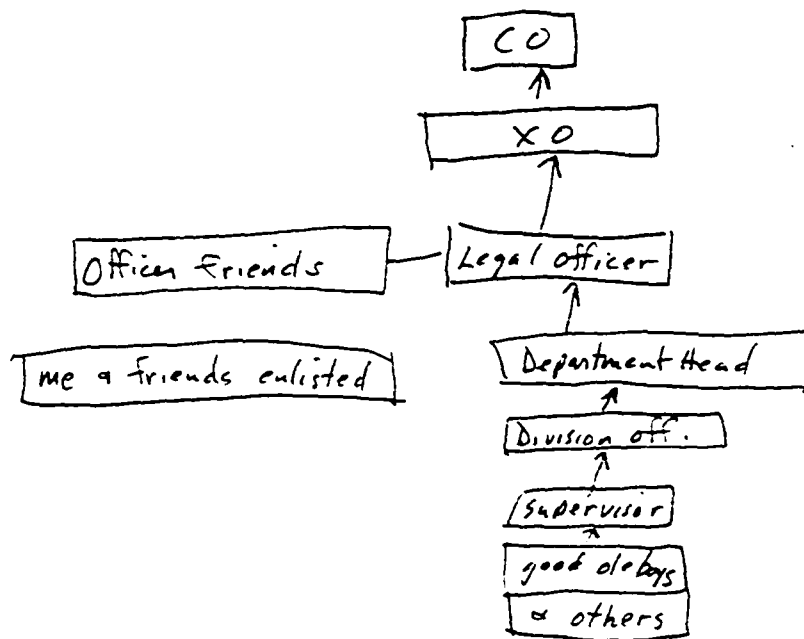
Do you have the same friends that you had when you were in the military?

53. Were/are you aware of the sexual orientation of your women friends?
Always_____ Usually_____ Sometimes_____ Seldom_____ Never_____
- If you were/are aware, how/do did you know?
54. Did/does it make any difference?
55. Did/does it affect your networking?
56. Are you aware of any connection between sexual orientation and networking in the military?
57. Would you please draw a diagram of how you think that networks in the military look? Be as creative as you like and remember to show where you are in these networks.

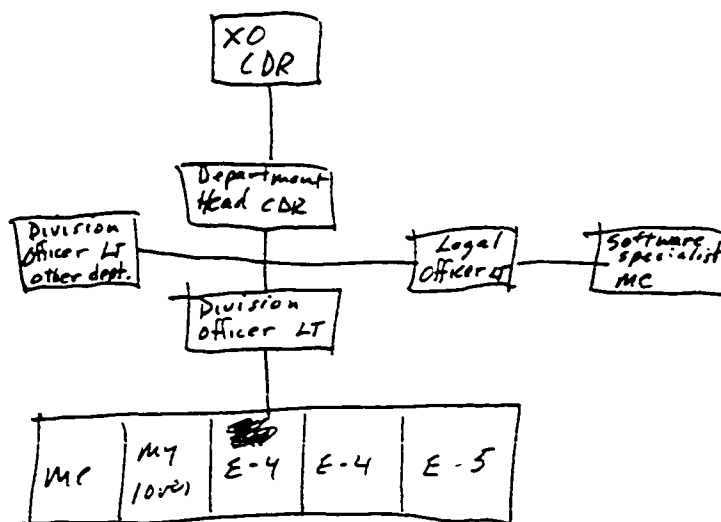
APPENDIX THREE
DIAGRAMS OF THE NETWORKS



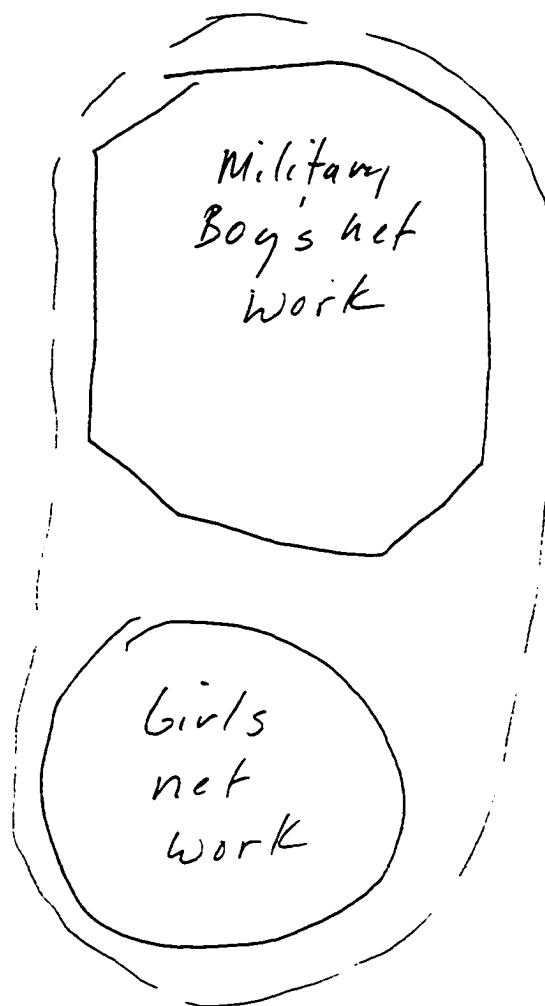


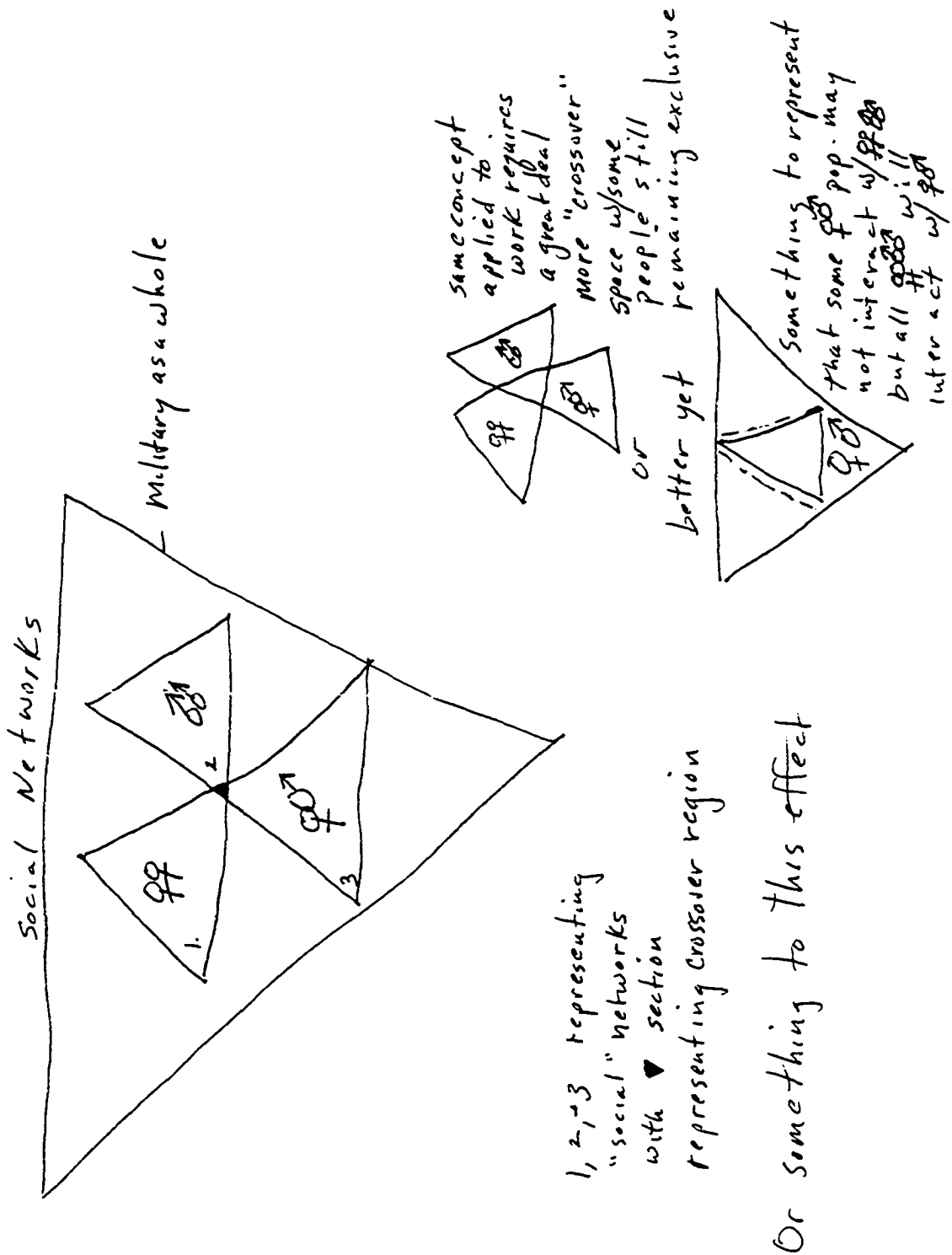


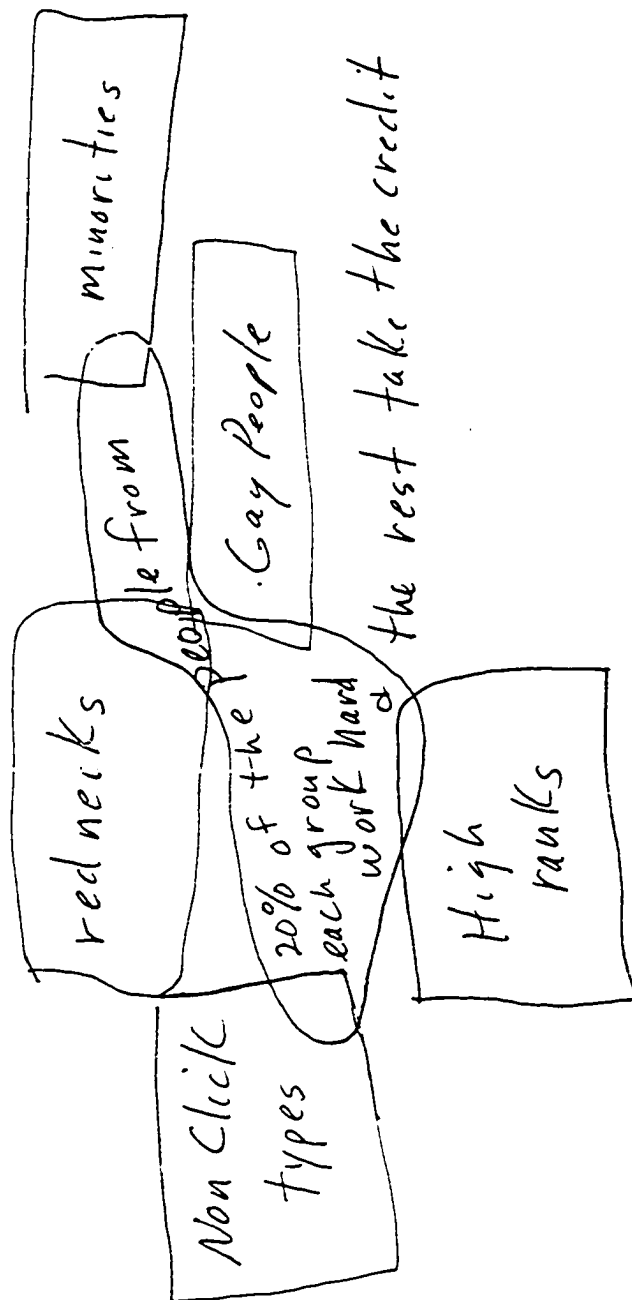
In the ladies network of my last Command:

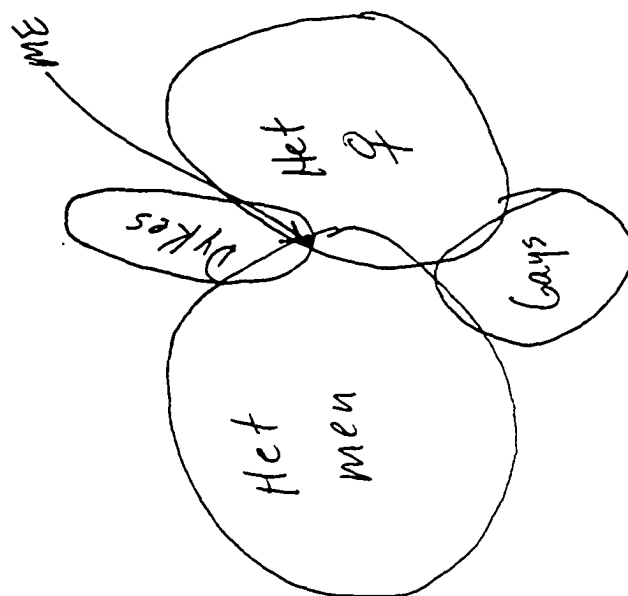


me
↓
♀

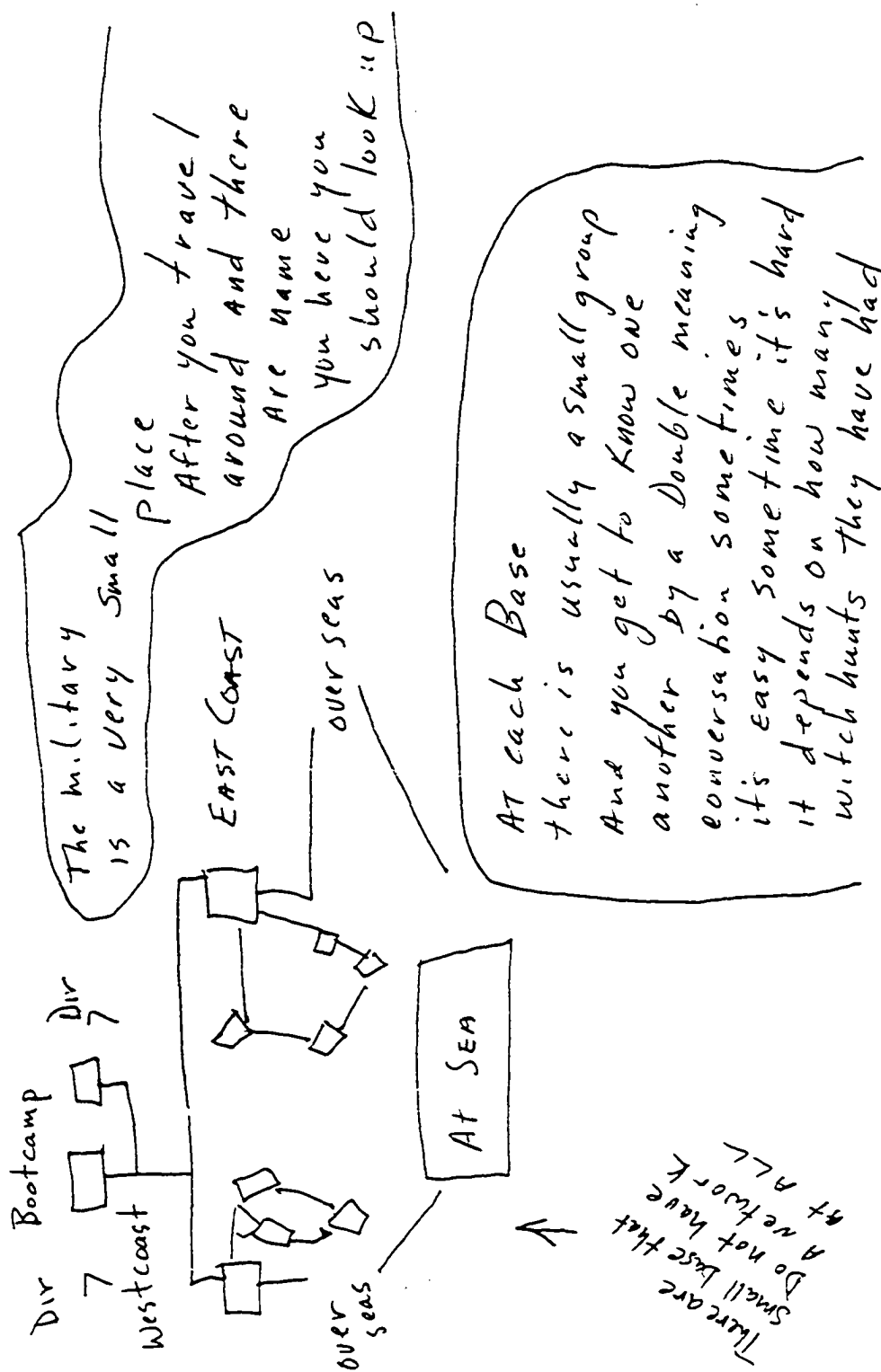


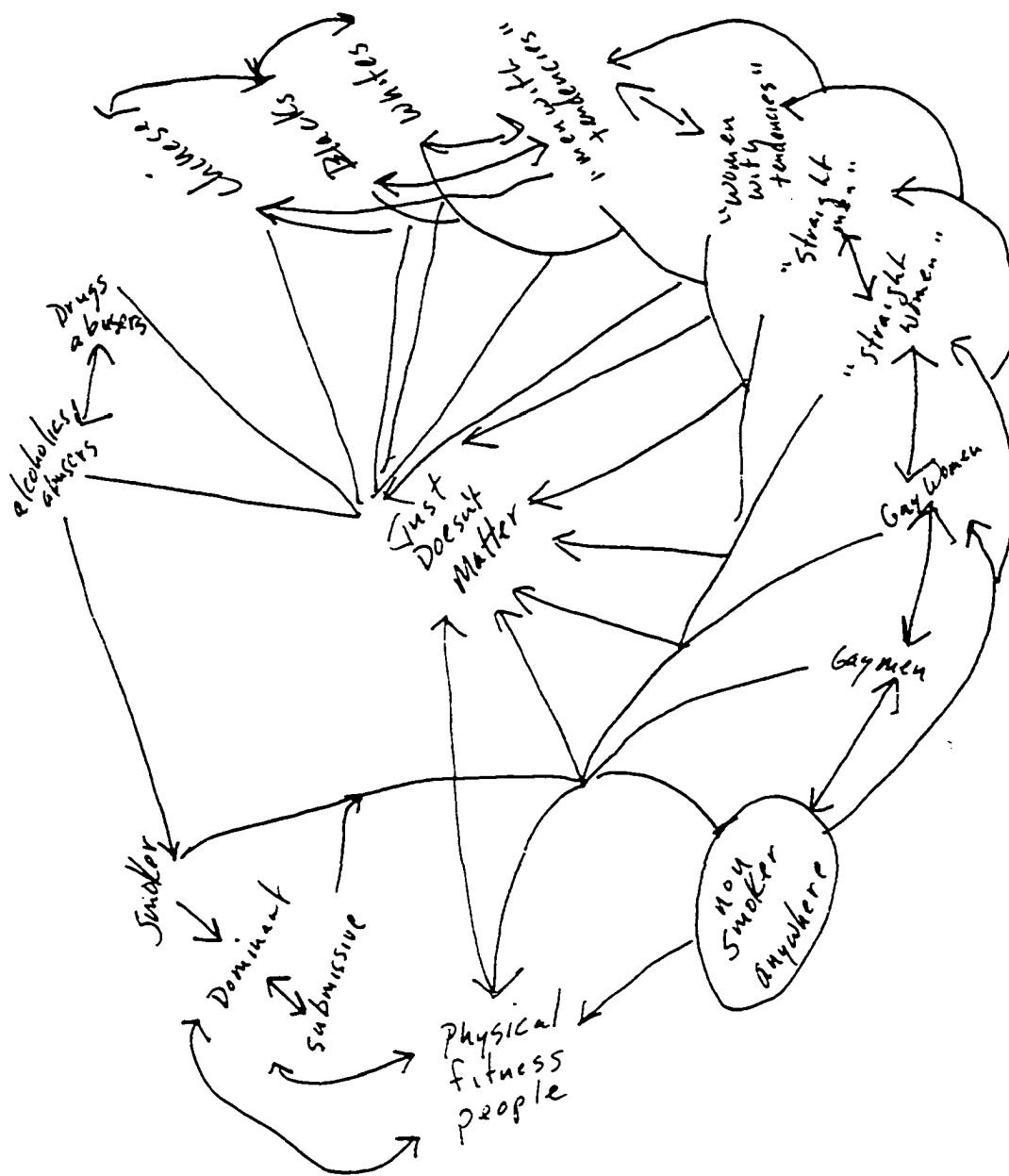






Obviously all groups
overlapped somewhat.
Every group had open-minded
people as well as biggots.
I really feel that all groups
were elitist & had a fear
of each other for one reason
or another.





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