

Report on the Workshop ‘Advances in Gender and Military Studies’, ISA Convention 2013

Introduction

The workshop took place on Tuesday 2nd April and all those who participated felt that it was of great benefit to all those who participated. The organisers would like to thank ISA for their support and particularly Jeanne White for all her practical assistance.

The presenters represented a good mix of senior academics and junior scholars including a PhD student and there were a number of additional students in the audience. There was also a good mix of different nationalities and experiences. There were a few late absentees because of various reasons - family, health and visa issues – but a substitute speaker was able to fill in drawing on conversations with the planned speakers. The work that will follow will include all the planned participants as well as our accomplished substitute. We are grateful that Professor Marybeth Ulrich from the US Army War College was able to join us at short notice and find a workaround sequestration.

Session overview

In Session One we reflected on what was meant in the term “critical military studies” and how gender has fitted into this newest development in the field of “military studies”. The discussion was excellent and saw a debate about intersectionality and epistemology. We discussed the extent to which mainstream elements of our different disciplines excluded or marginalised the study of gender and women in the military.

In Sessions Two and Three, Drs Penttinen and Wibben began by expertly talking about their research and research methodologies. This drew out some surprising observations and one of our conclusions was that for future work and research the question of methodology (as opposed to method) needs to be worked through. Here the ontology of our subject came into question, how gender and the military are both institutions and discourses. In addition through papers on identities and violence, we discussed the importance of individual military bodies, and civilian bodies, and the role these play as fractured and corporeal in furthering our understanding of both gender and the military. One area which needed further development was how to incorporate the study of non-traditional militaries into this discussion.

Over lunch a series of discussions were had that touched on issues of technology as well as sub-disciplinary foci. However we also as a group discussed how best to take the ideas presented forward and to work with the diversity of perspectives offered. As a result a special edition of a journal was favoured over an edited volume by the significant majority of participants.

In the final session we wanted to reflect on what all this meant for us as scholars in the classroom. We engaged in a comparison of traditional university department approaches with those of the war colleges and junior officer entry levels. Reflections on how to discuss and teach were found to be complex when “who you teach is who you study, and vice-versa”. Dr Stiehm presented some work on curricula design and also the creation of on-line support and toolkit ideas for those teaching military and gender studies. Questions of research ethics came to the fore again, issues of disclosure, access, responsibility to readership, and impact of one’s research came up in Professor King’s and Drs Penttinen, Wibben, and Duncanson presentations.

The workshop set out to answer the following questions.

- 1) How has gender/sex been conceptualized by researchers and by militaries over time?
- 2) How have advances in knowledge and understanding about gender impacted on policies and practices of militaries and vice-versa?
- 3) How have different sub-disciplines approached the study and research of gender and militaries?

This was done iteratively throughout the programme. In particular it was felt that changes in military practice were in part a reflection of changes in scholarly and activist understandings of gender and sexuality. Dr Duncanson’s insights on this were really useful. Gender and Sexuality by militaries remain seen as linked to “sexed bodies” and this was something that the gender studies and feminist scholars, including some of those in the workshop questioned. Professor King and Belkin in particular talked about

how changes in understanding of military practice led to changes in their understanding of sociological concepts such as cohesion and gender identities. The different disciplinary approaches were discussed as issues of methodology and ontology were really debated by the participants. The question of changes and developments in the research and conceptualization were really brought about by Ms Welland's innovative and exciting PhD work, and also through my introduction were I traced some of the early debates.

Actual Programme

The programme that ultimately was delivered was as follows:

0900-1000: Gender in the Military

Chair and quick intro: Katherine E. Brown (King's College London) - Welcome and introduction.

*Aaron Belkin (Palm Centre, San Francisco State University) – Critical Military Studies and Gender

1030-1245: Military Operations and Gender

Chair: Julia Welland (Manchester University)

*Elina Penttinen (Tampereen University) – Security Agents and Ethical Conduct

*Annick Wibben (University of San Francisco) – COIN/Insurgencies

*Tony King (Exeter University, UK) – Women and Combat Exclusion

1245-1400: Lunch

We had a working lunch at an Italian Restaurant. We discussed future outcomes of the project.

1400-1530: Military Genders

Chair Elina Penttinen (Tampereen University)

*Claire Duncanson (Edinburgh University) – Herographies and Military Identities

*Julia Welland (Manchester University) – Military Masculinities, Military Bodies and Violence

1540-1700: Researching and Teaching Gender and Military Issues

Chair: Tony King

*Judith Hicks Stiehm (Florida International University) – Curricula in Military and Gender Issues

*Katherine E. Brown (King's College London) – Research and Teaching Ethics: an ethics of care in military studies.

*MaryBeth Ulrich, (US Army War College) – Reflections on changes in military pedagogy and gender

Budget

As a result of the various programme changes the budget was underspent by \$1996. The detailed costings are below. The main reason for underspend was a number of participants chose to reside in San Francisco with family, lived in the city already, or had alternative source of funding for the accommodation.

Costings

Accommodation and per diems: \$1981.07

Room Hire: \$200

Coffee: \$252

Planned output

All agreed that this was an exciting project that had no real competitors in the field at present. The outputs will consist of a panel and a roundtable at the 2014 ISA convention and a special edition of a journal to follow from each participant's refinements.

ISA proposed panels:

Advances in Gender and Military Studies: reflections on pedagogy and research practice

This panel will address issues relating to teaching and researching gender and military studies. Key concerns in this panel are regarding “insider/outsider” knowledge constructions, research ethics, professional military education and the academy's relationship to policy and practitioners.

Advances in Gender and Military Studies II: trends and new directions

This roundtable will expose cutting edge research on gender and military studies by bringing together different disciplinary perspectives. It will also bring together those who study “unconventional militaries” as well as those who study traditional armed forces.

Journal Special Edition.

The participants felt the need to define more clearly how advances in the field can be translated into a special edition depended more on bringing together the participants with for fully formed papers. Therefore it was decided to use ISA 2014 as a refinement of the ideas.

Katherine Brown,
King's College London
10th May 2013

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