

# Do Gender Minorities Belong in the Military?

Written by river champion

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

## Do Gender Minorities Belong in the Military?

<https://www.e-ir.info/2018/05/14/do-gender-minorities-belong-in-the-military/>

RIVER CHAMPION, MAY 14 2018

In their book *Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Thinking about Women's Violence in Global Politics* Caron Gentry and Laura Sjoberg talk about the grand narrative of violence that is articulated in relation to political or military violence. They characterise this narrative as depending on a gendered binary between masculinized and feminized agents, with the masculine subject being the rightful protector of feminised "beautiful souls". They state that "women, in these discourses, at once become the victims and the causes of the war [...] the Beautiful Soul/woman is expected to be against war and violence, but to cooperate with wars fought to protect her innocence and virginity" (3). The masculine ideal in the logic of this discourse is a patriotic "citizen protector", they are active "real" men (or masculinized subjects) who find a sexual inverse in the passive "real" woman (or feminised subject). This essential gender binary logic has been linked to a host of other political binaries by scholars and is for feminists an essential structuring tenet of violence. For instance It has been linked to the constructed political binary between east and west in the discourse of Orientalism, has been argued as helping maintain the often quite artificial media distinctions between "front" and "home" in representations of war, and even the concept of war and peace itself as it is talked about political and activist arenas, where war is the domain of "men" while peace is the domain of "women" (Saïd 138, Huppauf 63, Cooke 15).

It is a narrative device that is essential to the discourse of militarism, the way that the military is conceptualised by and for itself and which defines the larger military consciousness. Militarism depends on the gender binary for legitimating its own necessity through realpolitik discourse in the public sphere and for recruiting and disciplining personnel to serve in national militaries. According to Harold Braswell and Howard Kushner in a paper on cultures of masculinity in the US military "It is by emphasizing masculinity – and rigidly separating the male from the female – that the military creates social capital from a group of soldiers whose economic statuses, ethnicities and ideologies might otherwise place them in conflict with one another" (4). The ideal military subject is one who subsumes their individual identity to that of the masculine collective. So we can, therefore, see that when an individual subject in this structure problematizes this dichotomy, they are in a radical way undermining something essential to the functioning of militarism, and run the risk of exposing the internal workings of violence in a way that could interrupt wider held ideas about the societies we live in. Lindsey Feitz and Joanne Nagel state that "Just as there is a military industrial complex that depends on war for profits and growth, war-making depends on a military-sexual complex to recruit, motivate, and retain military personnel" (Feitz and Nagel 201) while Dean Spade and Craig Willse observe that "imperialism and militarism are, among other things, sexual and gender projects that use sexual, gender and family norms as technologies of intervention and violence" (Spade and Willse 7).

In effect, we see that national militaries depend on normative ideas of gender in order to support their very existence and to legitimate their need for (often) large national and international economic and political clout. This logic is then solidified in the hierarchies and systems of social capital in military structures, which themselves mutually inform and are informed by the national social geography they draw on. Disparities between gender norms in the military and in the societies they ostensibly serve can force an evolution of terms in the military consciousness and approach, however, militarism as the ideological foundation of national militaries, dependent as it is in patriarchal binary norms, endures as the arbiter of what is and is not considered legitimate violence.

The question that this essay seeks to examine is to what extent are the interests of gender minorities in conflict with the gendered international narratives of violence that national militaries draw on to give themselves political

# Do Gender Minorities Belong in the Military?

Written by river champion

legitimacy. There has been theoretical work done from a feminist perspective on the inclusion of cis-women in these narratives and the paradoxes these inclusions (or perceived inclusions) exposes in the quest against the international patriarchal symbolic order. That gender minorities have been effectively ignored so far in the hegemonic feminist analysis is not because they are not relevant in the struggle against this symbolic order, but rather can be seen as part of a larger occlusion of minority issues by feminists from largely abled, middle class, white and cisgender backgrounds who find themselves in their struggle to achieve equanimity for a hegemonic idea of women unwittingly invested in certain world views and this tendency is often hampered by a general ignorance of the struggles of those constructed as “outside” the social order. As feminists such as Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Leslie McCall have pointed out in a recent review paper on intersectionality as an alternative practice, power works in diverse interrelated ways and it is imperative to take a wide-angle approach to studies of its operation that take into account the full, direct experiences of oppression when we seek to challenge its abuse (Cho et al.).

However the purpose of this essay is not to expose absences in academic feminist analysis but rather to draw attention to the place that gender minorities play in these debates and highlight how the struggles for autonomy within military frameworks for trans, non binary, two-spirit, or intersex<sup>[1]</sup> individuals serve the common and supportive purpose of trying to free people from coercive and narrow gender roles that serve a patriarchal world order. As outlined so far the framework we will be using to examine this will be how these subjectivities conflict with gendered military ideals. To show this we will look at the paradoxes attempts at inclusion have exposed which we will then use to reframe the question. We will look at the treatment and trial of PFC Chelsea Manning, a case which created schism between the mainstream LGBT rights movements and grassroots activists, and became a rallying point for many critical of the hegemony of US militarism and its impact on trans subjectivities which they saw as overwhelmingly negative (Spade and Willse 6, Fischer 569 “Contingent Belonging”, Devon Douglas Bowers 130). We will then move onto a trans feminist dissection of what this case demonstrates how the relationship between violence and gender is discursively constructed. We will do this while acknowledging that as Chloe Enloe has argued “the personal is international and the international is personal”, that the everyday struggles of those on the margins matter and can have a real impact on international relations in the ways that they find ways to “talk back” (hooks 28).

## Do gender minorities “belong” in national militaries?

The question of whether women and gender minorities can be part of military life is an anachronism. Women and gender minorities throughout military history and cross-culturally have served roles either in, or supporting the military, whether that be in direct support roles, as political actors, or as frontline combatants. Regarding women in recent military maneuvers, in the Iraq occupation women made up one in ten troops and regarding transgender combatants, Chelsea Manning quotes in an article for her column in the online US version of The Guardian newspaper, a recent study that shows that “trans people serve in the [US] military at double the rate of the general population” and that in 2015 “15,500 trans people [were] currently serving overseas or at home” (Manning “Transgender People’s Inclusion in the Military”). Reasons for the higher numbers of transgender people entering the military are varied and theorising why runs the risk of psycho-pathologizing transgender people and denying them agency in their own reasons for joining the military. For instance, George R. Brown’s influential study “Transsexuals in the Military: Flight into Hypermasculinity” suggests that trans women join the military in order to “purge their cross-gender identifications” (543, emphasis mine). This study plays into larger transmisogynistic<sup>[2]</sup> tropes about “tragic” trans women fetishising femininity which causes them distress because they are in effect wanting to be the “inferior” gender.

Studies that take into account the voices of a range of transgender people have shown that they join for “many of the same reasons that nontransgender (sic)<sup>[3]</sup> people join” (Dietart and Dentice 6) and Manning has stated that her primary motivation for enlisting was for the college tuition benefits that came with service and to escape her then living situation (Savage). So perhaps the only reasonable thing that can be said is if higher degrees of transgender people enlist, it must be because they experience more poverty and higher degrees of social alienation, as this is statistically true and these are typically the reasons most US citizens enlist in the military (Fischer 572). Questions over “why” women or gender minorities would want to be part of the military also risk creating an artificial distance between them and violence or the theatre of war, Sjoberg and Gentry have pointed out that the consistently framing questions around “why do women commit violence” detracts from the question of “why is violence committed” (135).

# Do Gender Minorities Belong in the Military?

Written by river champion

So it is pertinent to ask when there is an obsession with an identity, the policing of that identity, or what role that identity has played in the committing of violence, whose interests does this protect? And if this denial, this policing, this suspicion, continues after you have been “included” in the terms of debate, what is it about this identity that troubles these core ideas about the nature of violence? In relation to ‘do gender minorities belong in the military?’, a more pertinent question seems to be to what extent women and gender minorities are allowed to flourish in these structures whose cohesion depends on certain ways of performing gender. Specifically, this essay aims this question of who is allowed to flourish at the formalised militaries of western nation-states that often legitimate their existence as protectors of the democratic project, as defenders of the democratic ideals of the nation, and arbiters of human rights.

Here although liberal LGBT organisations that push for inclusion in the military for gender and sexual minorities disagree exists a key conflict. As Judith Butler has pointed out in an essay on the limits of sexual autonomy; “we are, as a community, subjected to violence, even if some of us individually have not been. And this means that we are constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies” (Butler 18). Or to put it another way, a part of what creates communities of sexual or gender minorities is the knowledge that by virtue of who one is, one is part of an international subset that can be arbitrarily exposed to violence, cross-culturally and often without recognition for that violence. This vulnerability has the ability to create ties that subsume those to the nation-state, which can often be the source of this violence. What is more, the experience of phobic violence against one’s body opens up the possibility of a relation to others on the basis that they too experience phobic violence as part of a hegemonic normalising strategy. Witnessing such violence can help break down artificial boundaries of ethnicity and nationality, which is dangerous for an organisation founded on principles of national cohesion. As much as the mainstream push for rights for certain members of the international LGBT community would like to assert that to be a gender or sexual minority is not a political identity, the lived experiences of violence, and the state’s response, or lack thereof, to such violence, often shows this to be a falsehood.

To suggest conflict is not to suggest that gender minorities are somehow inherently at odds with militarism, or that as some trans-feminists<sup>[4]</sup> have asserted that, the transgender body is a social abject, that which “disturbs identity, system, order, [that] does not respect borders, positions, rules” (Kristeva, 4), because as Laurel Westbrook has pointed out “by labelling trans people as abject [...] scholars blind themselves to moments of successful construction of trans subjecthood” (57). The fact that trans subjectivities are open to assimilation into the military framework is evidenced in the campaigns for military inclusion ran by prominent liberal LGBT organisations, or their open inclusion in militaries such as the British or Israeli Army or, as of 2016, the US military (although only if they are “stable in their identified [binary] gender for 18 months, as certified by their doctor” (Manning “It’s Right to End the Ban”)).

These moves are often presented as a natural next step in democratic progress or as part of the liberal expanse of “rights” to so far unseen parties. However, they are not outside the process of disciplining these subjectivities even as they move to “include” them and make them part of national military strategic narratives. The inclusion of certain narratives comes at the expense of the exclusion of other narratives, in effect, using processes of othering to split the transgender subject into a “good” trans soldier, one worthy of protection, able to be part of the unified masculine consciousness of a military unit, and one trusted with the protection of the interests of their nation state above any other personal or political interests, and a “bad” trans subject, one that must be disciplined and subjected to scrutiny, who must be attacked as an enemy of the nation, and expelled as abject to the maintenance of western militaries white-supremacist patriarchal symbolic order.

To show how this process is enacted, this essay will look at the case of PFC Chelsea Manning, in our theoretical approach to her treatment by the state this essay will build on the theoretical foundations laid out by Mia Fischer in her essay on binary trans peoples inclusion in the US military and the treatment of Chelsea Manning, “Contingent Belonging: Chelsea Manning, Transpatriotism and Iterations of Empire”. In this essay Fischer’s central contention is that “inclusion” (and by proxy protection) is only ever contingent on the performing of a gendered form of patriotism “characterised by an unwavering devotion to the state and an adherence to the gender binary”, implicit in which is a rejection of those subjects (trans or cis-gender) whose interests conflict with the nation states, or who trouble the gender binary with their identities or how they perform their gender. By splitting the trans subject the US military is able to “include” trans people while simultaneously rearticulating gendered narratives of violence and affecting the

# Do Gender Minorities Belong in the Military?

Written by river champion

“construction of a community [which] relies on the logics of the gender binary as well as the implicit whiteness bestowed on those who help to further the hegemony of US empire” (Fischer 574-575 “Contingent Belonging”).

## The Case of PFC Manning

The treatment of Chelsea Manning, by the state and the media, is illustrative of “how contingent and fragile exceptionalist modes of belonging actually are” (Fischer 575 “Contingent Belonging”) when there is a perceived “insider threat” to the military order (Manning “When Will the US Government”). On Oct 22 the website WikiLeaks released the largest classified military leak in history. These files which have become known as the “war logs” had come from whistle-blower Chelsea Manning, then serving as a First Class army intelligence officer. These logs became a cause for international embarrassment for the US army over their operations in Iraq as they exposed among other things how the US was ignoring systematic and widespread human rights abuses<sup>[5]</sup> in areas under their control, had a callous disregard for civilian lives and were engaged in “ruthless and ineffective military actions” (Fischer 186 “Under the Ban”). Of particular concern was the fact that systemic torture was being carried out by Iraqi forces with the silent approval of western militaries in the area. This was not new information, as one western journalist who had previously reported on the issue commented “who in Iraq did not know about the killing and torture? About the police death squads?” (Beaumont), but the source of the reports (the US military’s own intelligence service) way it was released (by a white western political organisation) forced the issue into the white western liberal consciousness.

The US defended their interests by characterising the war logs as a military threat and creating hysteria over how it exposed military personnel to reprisals calling it a “security breach could very well get our troops and those they are fighting with killed”. However, they were later forced to admit that “no direct harm had been identified” (Davies et al.). Perhaps most importantly the leak put in sharp relief that in matters of foreign policy the US military had unapologetically acted with a heavy hand to secure its interests in the Middle East without concern for any human or political cost. The culture of intimidation and secrecy which surrounded US foreign diplomacy in the middle east was dealt a sharp blow and it seemed that their seeming immunity to public scrutiny had come to an end.

The state’s response was to attack those involved in the leak and hold them up to intense scrutiny. In order to restore the legitimacy of its own interests on the world stage, the US administration sought to expose those involved as traitors to American ideals of family and nationhood. By framing Chelsea as a “highly-individualised” (Fischer 573 “Contingent Belonging”) symbolic betrayer of her family they opened space to question the subjectivity of her identity rather than the content of her actions. Rather than putting on trial the value of the leak, its potential human cost, or its moral implications, what was put on trial was how to deal with people who don’t conform to the status quo and how to deal with private voices who publicly air collective failings.

The answer was to make a public spectacle out of the condemned, to use them as an example for any other potential subversive. They would affect the moral imperative for this action by a process of othering, by constructing Manning in abject terms they would secure public consent, if not approval, for whatever actions they would use against her. Mainstream media painted a “severely pathologized” image of her actions even though Manning denied that she had leaked the documents due to “pacifist” or “anti-war inclinations” but had sought to stimulate “public debate about freedom of information and transparency” (Fischer 573 “Contingent Belonging”). In the case of western nations involvement in torture of Iraqi citizens and the US states treatment Manning follow how Foucault has conceptualized the political function of torture as a public spectacle that is “an opportunity of affirming the dissymmetry of forces” where “the body of the condemned” becomes the “anchoring point for the manifestation of power”. This is not to suggest a moral equivalency of any sort, but rather to try to draw attention again to the nature of violence, how some bodies become inhuman and how violence against them is seen as legitimate. As Fischer puts it “the story of Manning reflects how contemporary neoliberal societies link freedom to the notion of legitimate state violence [...] she became the non-subject against whom the liberal state enacts legitimized violence” however it is also important to acknowledge that her “whiteness still provides her with privileges, recognition, and media visibility” (580 “Contingent Belonging”).

Chelsea was caught through her contact with ex-hacker Adrian Lamo, who motivated by his concerns about “US

## Do Gender Minorities Belong in the Military?

Written by river champion

lives" being put "at risk" logged his chat room conversations with Manning and gave them to US authorities (Fischer 186 "Under the Ban"). In these chat room conversations, they explicitly talk about Manning's gender identity and her desire to undergo hormone replacement therapy but also a well quoted excerpt where she says "I wouldn't mind going to prison for the rest of my life, or being executed so much, if it wasn't for the possibility of having pictures of me. . . plastered all over the world press. . . as boy (sic). . ." (Spade and Willse 16). Even at this stage, we see the conflation of a non-normative gender desires with a threat to the national "family" and an automatic betrayal of patriotic interests, and also the fear of state and media violence against the body as a trans person, as a form of internalised self-disciplining by Manning. There was a deeper idea that to be gender non-conforming and to take an action against the state would be to risk becoming a public spectacle, with the most intimate parts of one's identity held up for public scrutiny.

She was immediately imprisoned in a military prison in Kuwait, where she was put on a "reverse sleep cycle" in indefinite solitary confinement, where she suffered from severe deterioration of her mental health due to the conditions in which she was being kept (Fischer 190). After a month she was transferred to a military prison in the US and put on "suicide prevention" which meant she was subjected to techniques of "constant observation and frequent interruptions" that were then widely used against detainees in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay. The reason given to put her in this situation was by using comments she had made to her supervising officer who she had come out to as trans prior to her arrest. The conditions she was being kept in led to a 2011 UN special report on her condition stating she was subjected to "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment" (Pilkington qtd in Fischer 191 "Under the Ban"). Many defenders of Chelsea Manning felt that prior to, during and after the trial she was being unfairly treated not because of what she did, but because of who she was, her "'sexual deviance' rendered her an Othered alien enemy who was denied access to civil and human rights" (Fischer 575 "Contingent Belonging"). After nine months of this treatment, Manning was transferred to a regular (male) military prison in the US where she was continued to be kept isolated from other prisoners.

Prior to her trial the media picked up on an image of Chelsea as an out gay soldier and sought to paint a picture of a failed man who was reacting to her lack of masculine social capital in a display of protest masculinity. Those in the media sympathetic to Manning, paradoxically, also sought to paint her as a troubled gay soldier with, for illustrative purposes, a typical op-ed in the New York Times stating, "Manning is 'the child of a severed home [...] bullied for his (sic) conflicted sexuality'" (Broder and Thompson). Although from this perspective, showing Manning as a gay man was perhaps meant to evoke pathos rather than derision underlying both approaches is a discourse of being gay as a type of failed manhood, Fischer picks up on this and states "Manning's failure to sacrifice herself for her nation was portrayed by the media as a failure to properly perform heterosexuality and heteromascularity" (Fischer 573 "Contingent Belonging"). Again, the effect of this focus is to detract from the actual content of her actions, it takes away the context of imperial violence against Iraqi citizens and reignites tired military tropes of homosexuality as being a symptom of moral weakness (Douglas-Bowers 132). Because of her gender nonconformity, Manning could not be a citizen protector for either her defenders or detractors, they took that subject position from her. Also, the media and advocates both refused to engage with her trans status, something that would trouble this story of protest masculinity although there was ample evidence to suggest this was part of her story. Rather they sought to give a simple logic to her "crime" that is easily digestible and therefore containable without bringing up uncomfortable societal double standards around gendered violence. This willful ignorance forced a revelation narrative on Manning when she eventually decided to publicly announce her trans status.

In the summer of 2013, over 1,000 days after she was first imprisoned, she finally stood trial and was sentenced to 35 years in prison. Manning "came out" as a woman on the Today Show in a prepared statement the day after her sentencing. After this her trans status was undeniable and the media's response "exposed a deep-seated transphobic attitude toward gender nonconforming people and continued the longstanding tradition of pathologizing and medicalising transgender as a psychological disease" (Fischer 574 "Contingent Belonging"). This despite several "positive" stories and moves towards trans "inclusion" in the years between Manning's arrest and trial, such as a much publicised memoir by former Navy Seal Kristin Beck and the coming out of Col. Jennifer Pritzker who Forbes hailed as the "first transgender billionaire" (Spade and Willse 5-6). In reporting on Manning's "desire to transition" the media got caught up in a clear case of transmisogyny, the social obsession with the identities and bodies of trans feminine people, with a perverse fascination on the medical transitions some undergo. By portraying

# Do Gender Minorities Belong in the Military?

Written by river champion

Manning as engaging in leaking the documents for male attention “news reports undermined the credibility of her actions as a product of her mental health, portraying her as a sexual deviant” (Fischer 574 “Contingent Belonging”).

Chelsea Manning was charged with “aiding the enemy” under a 1917 statute of US law that has become associated with the Obama administration’s so-called “war on whistle-blowers”. The word war is apt because it does not seek to just make highly public examples out of prominent whistle-blowers, it is also a strategy of cracking down in the ranks under an environment of fear. After the release of the “War Logs”, a “National Insider Threat Task Force” was set up to deter anyone “who misuses or betrays, wittingly or unwittingly, his or her authorized access to any US Government resource” with “a reliance on “anonymous feedback” which can create endless witch-hunts, “general invitations” to report or file complaints through so-called open door policies, and vagueness about what feedback is expected” (Manning, “When Will the US Government”). These programs invariably target or create a hostile environment for gender minorities, and in 2015, after the much-publicised transition of Chelsea and campaigns to get the military to use the correct pronouns for her and to get a legal name change, they were still using male pronouns and her old name. What is more as quoted by Manning in an article by her on the issue, the task force uses her as an example of a threat and she states on the matter:

The program alleges that I am “disgruntled” based on my perceived sexual orientation and gender identity, questioning my “self-image as a man” while acknowledging that “he [sic] wanted to be an openly accepted female”. It describes me as “an advocate for homosexuals openly serving” in the military, and my concern and advocacy of queer and trans rights as being expressed “obsessively”. (Manning, “When Will the US Government”)

Much of these developments happened while the then President Barack Obama ran on a pro-LGBT lobby in the run-up to his second term and his Secretary of State Hillary Clinton supported him in this in an infamous speech now labeled the “gay rights are human rights” speech. This speech affirmed that the US would aggressively work to affirm the rights of LGBT people abroad against contrary “religious or cultural values” (Clinton qtd. in Spade and Willse 9). The contradiction, of course, is that the military that the US is relying on in order to secure these human rights is actively silencing the voices of critical LGBT voices. Trying to secure the rights of sexual or gender minorities through militarism “occidentalizes pro-gayness and orientalizes homophobia, in the context of perpetual, undeclared war” (12). It also as depends on a normative way of performing one’s gender that fits with the logic of white supremacy.

Manning’s actions were seen as a lack of “gendered patriotic devotion” and “the ultimate betrayal of the homeland and (homonormative) whiteness” (Fischer 570 “Contingent Belonging”). When trans liberation is linked to white supremacy it excuses the abjection of other queer bodies against whom violence is still seen as legitimate. For example, we need only look at the continued criminalisation and abjection of the bodies of trans and gender non-conforming people of color who face vastly disproportionate levels of discrimination, poverty, harassment and murder in the West. This leads many to feel they are living in a society that is at war with them while they simultaneously find themselves excluded from conversations about transphobia (Townes).

## Conclusion

Gentry and Sjoberg identify three main tropes that are used as othering strategies when talking about women who commit violence and that serve to deny women’s agency in relation to violence. Because women, engaging in “illegitimate” violence interrupts the binary ideas of beautiful souls and citizen protectors, they are often othered using identifiable tropes which can be split into three categories, “mothers”, “monsters”, or “whores”<sup>[6]</sup>. “Monsters” are those “who are pathologically damaged and are therefore drawn to violence” while there are “whore narratives that focus on women’s erotic dysfunction emphasize either desperation wrought from the inability to please men (Gentry and Sjoberg 12). The reason for this is to excuse the violence in the larger scale of international relations and to deny its political import.

They are a narrative device that fit neatly into conceptualising how feminine trans and gender non-conforming people’s violence is treated as well. We can see this in the case of Manning, who was treated both as a monstrous “freak” and a sexual “deviant” (though a misplaced mothering desire did not play into this particular case). Importantly in the case of Manning, these narratives helped create an artificial distance between the contradictions of

# Do Gender Minorities Belong in the Military?

Written by river champion

western democracy and the actions that are carried out internationally. They also helped excuse the continuing discrimination she faced in the military penal system when the medical and social needs relating to her gender identity were systematically denied in a process meant to torture her for her transgression of gendered norms. This clearly identity-based violence by the state and by the media against gender minorities is to do with punishing them for troubling the white-supremacist patriarchal status quo.

In the case of Manning, there is a definite limit placed on transgender people's "inclusion" in the military. Within the current "inclusion" framework transgender people are still only allowed to perform a limited number of gendered roles, with the military remaining "the gatekeeper of [one's] gender expression and identity" (Manning "It's Right to End the Ban"). In regards to the US push for inclusion Aaron Myracle who served for eight years in Iraq and is affiliated with the group Iraq Veterans Against the War considers it a misguided step and has stated "As someone who cares very deeply about my fellow trans people [...] military enlistment is not the way to go," and that "it's not a push for trans inclusion, it's a push for binary-identified trans people inclusion" (Myracle qtd. in Meronek). Trans people are included, in effect, by their ability and willingness to reinforce the binary narrative structures of women as "beautiful souls" and men as "citizen protectors". In this context, gender minorities are not allowed to flourish, and there remains unresolved tensions between the aims of militarism, and the interests of gender minorities internationally.

The commuting of Manning's sentence as one of the final acts of the Obama administration, while a significant victory for all those who campaigned on her behalf and her own self advocacy, does not resolve this. More worryingly the new Trump administrations return to endorsing torture as a legitimate part of international politics creates a bleak outlook for reconciling democratic ideals with military strategy. Seeing as this seems to have emerged as a central tension in the inclusion of gender minorities does not speak well for resolving tensions there soon. The administration has also moved to push back the "inclusion" of binary identified transgender soldiers in the limited way they are currently allowed to serve by whipping up hysteria about their medical needs. Performing gender, race, and patriotism in a normative way may grant some a degree of protection, but if the case of Manning and the recent actions of the Trump administration shows anything it is how quickly this protection can be stripped away when it does not serve imperial interests.

## Works Cited

"Bell Hooks and Laverne Cox in a Public Dialogue at The New School." Discussion by Bell Hooks, and Laverne Cox, *YouTube*, 13 Oct. 2014, [youtu.be/9oMmZIJjgY](https://youtu.be/9oMmZIJjgY).

Beaumont, Peter. "Iraq War Logs: These Crimes Were Not Secret, They Were Tolerated." *Guardian.com*, Guardian News and Media, 25 Oct. 2010. Web

Braswell, Harold, and Howard I. Kushner. "Suicide, Social Integration, and Masculinity in the U.S. Military." *Social Science & Medicine* 74.4 (2012): 530-36. Web.

Broder, John M. and Ginger Thompson. "Loner Sought A Refuge, And Ended Up In War". *Nytimes.com*. N.p., 2013. Web.

Brown, George R. "Transsexuals in the Military: Flight into Hypermasculinity." Ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle. *The Transgender Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2006. 537-44. Print.

Butler, Judith. "Beside Oneself: On the Limits of Sexual Autonomy." *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004. 17-39. Print.

Cho, Sumi, et al. "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis." *Signs*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2013, pp. 785-810. Web

Cooke, Miriam. *Women and the War Story*. Berkeley: U of California, 1996. Print.

# Do Gender Minorities Belong in the Military?

Written by river champion

Davies, Nick, Jonathan Steele, and David Leigh. "Iraq War Logs: Secret Files Show How US Ignored Torture". *theGuardian.com*. Guardian News and Media LTD., 2010. Web.

Dietert, M., and D. Dentice. "The Transgender Military Experience: Their Battle for Workplace Rights." *SAGE Open* 5.2 (2015): n. pag. Web.

Douglas-Bowers, Devon. "The Politics of Abandonment: Siding with the State and Heteronormativity Against Chelsea Manning." *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2014, pp. 130-138. Web

Eidelson, Josh. "'Whore Phobia' And Ashton Kutcher'S Creepy PSA: The Problem With Banning Prostitution". *Salon.com*. Salon Media Group Inc., 2014. Web.

Feitz, Lindsey, and Joane Nagel. "The Militarization of Gender and Sexuality in the Iraq War." *Women in the Military and in Armed Conflict*. Ed. Helena Carreiras and Gerhard Kummel. Wiesbaden: VS Verl. Für Sozialwiss., 2008. 201-25. Print.

Fischer, Mia. "Contingent Belonging: Chelsea Manning, Transpatriotism, And Iterations Of Empire". *Sexualities* 19.5-6 (2016): 567-586. Web. 2 Feb. 2017

Fischer, Mia. "Under the Ban-Optic Gaze: Chelsea Manning and the State's Surveillance of Transgender Bodies." *Expanding the Gaze: Gender and the Politics of Surveillance*. Ed. Emily Van Der Meulen, Robert Heynen, and Lara Karaian. Toronto: U of Toronto, 2016. 185-209. Web.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin, 1977. Print.

Gentry, Caron E., and Laura Sjoberg. *Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Thinking about Women's Violence in Global Politics*. London: Zed, 2015. Print

Hooks, Bell. "On Self Recovery." *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*, South End Press, 1989, pp. 28-34.

Huppauf, Bernd. "Modernism and the Photographic Representation of War and Destruction." *Fields of Vision: Essays in Film Studies, Visual Anthropology, and Photography*. Ed. Leslie Devereaux and Roger Hillman. Berkeley: U of California, 1995. 94-126. Print.

Jepson, Kris. "Iraq's Secret War Logs: Iraqi Torture." *Channel 4 News*, Channel Four Television Corporation, 22 Oct. 2010. Web

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. Print.

Manning, Chelsea. "It's Right To End The Ban On Trans People In The Military – But Wrong To Set Conditions". *theGuardian.com*. Guardian News and Media LTD., 2016. Web.

Manning, Chelsea. "Transgender People's Inclusion In The Military Is A Key First Step – But Not The Last". *theGuardian.com*. Guardian News and Media LTD., 2016. Web.

Manning, Chelsea. "When will the US government stop persecuting whistleblowers?" *theGuardian.com*. Guardian News and Media LTD., 2016. Web.

Meronek, Toshio. "Transgender Activists Speak Out Against Campaign To End Trans Military Ban". *Truth-out.org*. Truthout, 2014. Web.



# Do Gender Minorities Belong in the Military?

Written by river champion

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. 1st ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. Print.

Savage, Charlie. "Chelsea Manning Tried Committing Suicide A Second Time In October". *Nytimes.com*. The New York Times, 2016. Web. 4 Nov. 2016.

Serano, Julia. *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. Berkeley, CA: Seal, 2007. Print.

Spade, Dean, and Craig Willse. "Sex, Gender, and War in an Age of Multicultural Imperialism." *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 1.1 (2014): 5. Web.

Stryker, Susan. "My Words To Victor Frankenstein Above The Village Of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage". *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1.3 (1994): 237-254. Print.

Townes, Carimah. "Trans Women of Color Are Missing from the Conversation about Transphobia." *ThinkProgress.org*, Center for American Progress Action Fund, 6 Mar. 2017. Web

Westbrook, Laurel. "Becoming Knowingly Gendered." *Transgender Identities: Towards a Social Analysis of Gender Diversity*. Ed. Sally Hines and Tam Sanger. New York: Routledge, 2010. 43-63. Print.

## Notes

[1] Though the struggles of intersex individuals in militaries have so far remained invisible to the academic or media gaze. I include them in the general struggle for gender minorities because although the struggle for bodily autonomy differs among trans and intersex persons, the struggle for recognition of alternative lived realities of gender are linked. Running the risk of constructing the intersex body as outside the terms of the debate I am however forced to talk mostly about trans subjectivities rather than intersex as they are the ones that in my research have caused the most debate and analysis in terms of military inclusion.

[2] The bringing into mainstream use in LGBT and gender minority communities of the term "transmisogyny" is usually attributed to Julia Serano's text *Whipping Girl* (Serano)

[3] Marked as an error as the preferred term is cisgender for people who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. Using terms such as "nontransgender" creates the idea that transgender people's gender identities are abnormal, and that cisgender people's genders are natural and unconstructed and also erases intersex people.

[4] As a notable example Susan Stryker makes this case in her essay *My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix*. She argues that transgender people should use the abject nature of their bodies to perform transgender rage against the (largely medical) establishment in order to destabilise categories of gender. (Stryker)

[5] Such as "industrial scale" killings by "sectarian militia death squads" (Jepson)

[6] This essay recognises the problematic nature of the term "whore", which many sex workers recognise as a slur whose purpose is to police minorities and to reduce all sex work to stereotype (Eidelson). However, in the context it is used as illustrative of a universalising societal logic.'

Written by: river champion  
Written at: Trinity College Dublin  
Written for: Gillian Wylie  
Date written: January 2017