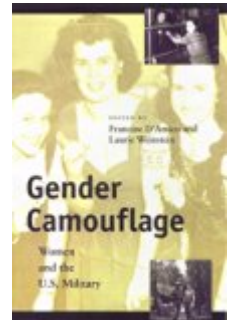


Francine D'Amico, Laurie Weinstein, eds.. *Gender Camouflage: Women and the U. S. Military*. New York and London: New York University Press, 1999. x + 279 pp. \$60.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8147-1906-0.



Reviewed by Donna M. Dean

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D'Amico and Weinstein have addressed various aspects of "militarized women" in this book: Women whose lives are affected by the military in this country. They include military women, military wives, civilian women who work for the Department of Defense as civil servants, sex workers and prostitutes around military bases, and peace activists. One article centers upon the issue of civilian jobs which the author theorizes might go to women in the civilian sector if money spent on the military budget were to be freed for other uses.

The book is organized by a system the editors call locational, based on whether the individual articles concern women who might be considered "insiders," such as military women and veterans, (including the excluded lesbian military women); "fringe" or "at the margins," such as military wives and DOD civilians, and "outsiders," such as peace workers, prostitutes and other women affected somehow by the military. The central premise of the book is that individual women must don a sort of gender camouflage to survive in the hostile male world of the military, while the

military itself must camouflage the ways it depends upon women to accomplish its mission, as well as to provide a contrast against which the hypermasculinity of the system can be justified.

Part I, "Insiders: Women in the Military" contains both personal stories of military women and a brief historical look at women in the military. Part II, "At the Margins: Women With the Military" is a mix of personal stories as well as historical articles on several institutions devoted to women in the military such as the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service (DACOWITS) and the Women In Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc. (WIMSA). Part III, "Outsiders: Women and the Military" consists of the same mix of personal stories and analytical and historical articles. Some of the personal stories address issues of the military treatment of homosexuals, racial prejudices and assumptions.

This book works better in the table of contents than it does in the reading. It is disorienting to move from autobiographical article to cold statistical data and back to personal stories without

some sort of bridging or connecting material. For instance, an article by a civilian DOD employee addressing the issues around working in a military hierarchy would have been interesting, as would an analytical discussion of the interface between the two very different worlds. There is a great deal to be said about this, both on the military side and on the civilian side, and the aspect of gender makes the issues even more complex. The civilianization of the military which saw the massive substitution of military personnel by civil servants and the later tremendous cutbacks in military strength have occurred concomitantly with significant increases in women and minorities which is barely addressed. An article basically presenting statistical data on DOD civilian jobs needs to be put into context.

There are strange gaps in coverage: "Military brats", or children of military personnel are important parts of the military story, both as subjects themselves and in light of the expansion of jobs now open to female military parents, or two-parent military members with the concomitant issues of deployment and combat. Parents of women who enter the military might provide some interesting material as well. One neglected and vital group of women impacted by the military is widows. Surely they should have a place in such a work.

Perhaps this reviewer's discomfort stems from the fact that the book tries to be all things to all people, and thus the impact of the individual articles is stronger than that of the whole work. Perhaps a slightly different structuring and presentation of the material would have helped. I did find myself wishing for more material on issues raised by the presence of women in the military, whether it be experiential or more informational. Of course, entire books can be written about topics touched upon in "Gender Camouflage": Race, social class, sexuality, and a myriad other social issues can be, and have been, written about most of them. It would be absurd to expect any one

book to cover them all. D'Amico and Weinstein have made a good effort to address a lot of issues, and a lot of communities of women have been represented in their book, including some not automatically associated with women and the military.

In the end, "Gender Camouflage" is a very good anthology touching upon some of the aspects of women and the military which are not often found in one volume. Some of the autobiographies themselves are noteworthy for the importance of the individuals and the impact they have had historically in the constantly evolving place of women in the military. The biographies of the contributors contains an impressive list of women whose writings make a substantial contribution to the scholarship around the topic. Last but not least, the selected bibliography contains a valuable list of works which deserve places on the shelves of every person interested in how women exist within, around, and beside the military.

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