PREFACE

Fieldwork

This book is based on ethnographic fieldwork work carried out from September 2007 to August 2008, primarily with severely injured soldiers and their family members (including spouses, parents, siblings, children, or some shifting combination thereof) rehabilitating at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., and living for some time at the communal Fisher House there. My ethnographic work at Walter Reed was spread throughout the year but concentrated in September–November 2007 and May–August 2008. From March to June 2008 I did a good deal of work with Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), both at their Winter Soldier testimonial event and with members of their D.C. chapter. From December 2007 to February 2008 I was primarily focused on Ft. Dix, a large mobilization base in New Jersey, where I learned about mental and behavioral health programs and the role of the chaplaincy and sat in on suicide-prevention training and other briefings for deploying soldiers. Throughout the year I attended congressional hearings related to the "war on terror," talked to think-tank affiliates who worked on relevant topics, and interviewed a small number of 9/11 survivors and first responders in New York and D.C. This multisited work yielded rich insights, many of which are embedded in this book, but I have found myself continually drawn back to the lives of those I'd met at Walter Reed. Those lives are the substance of this book.

Women

That this book addresses masculinity is not only a function of the fact that the soldiers I worked with were men. It is also a function of the essential masculinity of the generic figure of the soldier in the United States. Of course, those facts are related. Because of this, when I write of soldiers in this book—both the ones I worked with and the ones iconically conjured in the American imaginary—I write in a specific, rather than "generic" masculine (see also MacLeish 2010: 27–31). But I also acknowledge that this has the effect of obscuring the experiences and even the existence of soldiers who are not men. In ways that do not entirely overlap with their unmarked male-gendered counterparts, being a "female soldier" is a profoundly complex subject position, as is being an *injured* female soldier.[1] Former major Tammy Duckworth and former lieutenant Dawn Halfaker have both spoken publicly about their experiences as woman amputees,[2] and there is an increasing attention to women in the military in general, for example the widely screened documentary *Lioness* (McLagan and Sommers 2008), and nonfiction books like *Soldier Girls* (Thorpe 2014) and *Undaunted: The Real Story of America's Servicewomen in Today's Military* (Biank 2014). Some of these complexities are being made more apparent through the public problematization of sexualized violence against women in the military and the rise of a special category of military sexual trauma, an intensely gendered category of victimhood.[3] The specific masculine in which I write here, and the explanation of it under the heading "Women," also performs a double erasure of transgendered members of the military, of whom there were an estimated 15,450 in active service in 2014 (Elders and Steinman 2014), even though they are effectively banned from the military. As of this writing, the army is revising that ban. Rather than give these issues only the incidental attention I could offer them here, I have left them aside for others more well equipped than I to address.

Almost all of the women who do appear in this book are the wives, girlfriends, and mothers of soldiers. As I have revised chapters, their own lives have receded into the background, and they appear here through their connections to injured soldier husbands or sons. In order to make space for the experiences of soldiers at the center of this book, I have pushed their wives and mothers to the margins, and occasionally off the page altogether. But, as I hope will be clear, their lives are no less complex and no less marked

by the violence of war than the lives of their soldier sons and husbands and boyfriends and are certainly worthy of a book all their own.

The Unsaid

Throughout the book, as I write of the violence of war, I am also keenly aware of the violence I do not note. I think in particular of the civilians whose worlds and lives these soldiers have invaded in the course of their work and whose deaths have made up an estimated 90 percent of war casualties since the 1990s.[4] This is a direct consequence of the array of technologies of modern warfare, from Predator drones to car bombs, and of the rationales and logistics of modern war that have not admitted the contained space of the battlefield since at least the total war of World War II. I hope this silence will not be read to suggest that these unwritten lives and deaths and sufferings are, in Judith Butler's (2009) sense, ungrieveable, or somehow less human or less worthy than those I do describe, though it is important to acknowledge that my silence is itself structurally enabled by such ideas and that the attention given those lives in most of the United States remains grossly impoverished. Accounts of Iraqi civilian experiences contemporary with those of the U.S. soldiers I describe here can be found in *Voices from Iraq* (Kukis 2011), *Baghdad Burning* (Riverbend 2005), and *Collateral Damage* (Hedges and Al-Arian 2009).

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