



**SPORT IN HELLENIC MILITARY ACADEMIES:  
BRIDGING GENDER THEORIES IN HELLENIC  
MILITARY ACADEMIES THROUGH SPORT**

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**Abstract:**

The presence of women in the Hellenic Armed Forces is the continuation of a historical path that has been erased by the contribution of women to the struggles of the Hellenic people. At the same time, it is the practical confirmation of the position and role of women in Greek society. Where they serve, at all levels, perform in full their mission (Deputy Minister of Defence, Panagiotis Rigas). The purpose of this article is to bridge gender in Hellenic Military Academies through the study of the theories on gender, using the theoretical approaches to gender of Judith Butler (1999), Jay Coakley (2009) and the Dominant ideology (Marx theory). Following by the changes made through struggles of the feminist movement on both the Society and Sport Society. Whereas sport, is one of the most controversial field in our society, since it has been used for both recreational and social purposes such as improving moral development, leadership and philosophical athletic behaviors (Appleby & Foster, 2013). As for a military environment, sport (coed sports, volleyball, basketball, swimming) is important for gender integration in Hellenic Military Academies as it is an important factor, of high strategic military effectiveness.

**Keywords:** gender theories, sport, gender, Hellenic Military Academies

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## 1. Introduction

The terms biological sex and gender are often used like communicating pots, that the one complements the other. In more detail, biological sex refers to a person's biological condition and can be identified with “*chromosomes, internal reproductive organs and external genitalia, while gender refers to emotions and social-cultural behaviors*” (Beauvoir, 1993; Butler, 1999; Pantelidou-Malloutas, 2002; Giddens, 1999; Mischel, 1970; Chodorow, 1989).

Gender, according to Judith Butler, in her work *Gender trouble. Feminism and the supervision of identity* (1990/1999) is formulated as a social construct which is used to define a number of appropriate behaviors in women's or male sex. It is a social structure that changes during the period of time. Based on the theories of gender, it is a running behavior that is aligned with how society expects the action of men and women. This gender performance is fluid and can change over time, space and speech (discourse). Since it is influenced by the way we present ourselves, it varies from culture to culture as well as from the culture of society (such as schools, malls, the media, the Internet and sports).

An example that is relevant to this research is gender participation in a sports context, examining-choosing which sports are for men and women, as well as reanimating the sexes from their childhood age (family, school, society) for the most sport is best suited. Namely sports that are suitable for boys are football or wrestling or boxing and for girls' ideal sports is dance, or gymnastics, or rhythmic (Béki & Gál, 2013). There is no biological reason according to which a girl should not play football or a boy cannot be practiced in gymnastics and especially the event: Floor (Kamberidou, Tsopani, Dallas & Patsantaras, 2009).

Butler (1990/1999) extending critical thinking about gender, stipulates that gender is "performative". Confirming in her work that in reality biological sex is the existence of a subject-person who "performs" his/her gender identity. According to Butler, gender identity is about how sex is dressed, how it plays and how it talks. As she says, gender norms determine what the chances of gender are occurring and how they are executed. In particular, Butler believed that the subjects identified with a specific version of gender, which is outside the accepted cultural norms, and that are rejected by most members of society. Continuing Butler (1990/1999) points out, that the sovereign masculinity and femininity are likely to be the strongest internalizations of the sexes. Each gender is linked to its own ways of action and reaction within society. In more detail, the traditional way of reacting for males in society is non-responsiveness, reassurance and aggression. On the contrary, the traditional way of responding to females is patience, restraint, restraint and passivity. Based on the theory of Butler and the bibliographic review of gender in the armed forces (Kefi-Chatzichamperi, 2018), it could be said that in military society and in particular in military academies there appears to be still the traditional gender roles. The military environment is the combination of biological and social sex, constituting an advantage in the male sex. As Karabelias (2013) notes, the military environment has a positive effect on the male gender, in which it can without hesitation and prejudices

express its dynamism (physical strength), its aggression (participation in battles that require Power) and its identity (the use of a communication language).

More generally, according to Butler (1990/1999), both male (sex) and female (sex) maintain not only one, but multiple gender identities and each linked to its own unique ways of acting and reacting to the gender relationship in society. For example, a woman can be a girl, mother, husband, employee, athlete, soldier, officer, depending on the social environment she is experiencing.

When the man serves in the Armed Forces according to Karabelias (2013), the period of basic education is confronted with practical military training, in which the program of activities is a miniature battle. It is the period of time in which the man displays his female identity, that is, his inability to pass an obstacle, not being able to perform within limited time limits what is requested, shows reduced physical strength (speed, Endurance, muscular strength) and reduced ability to target (scar, grenade casting). An identity, which is altered over the military training. As Butler emphasizes, the gender experience is not stable at an age or at each stage of development, but is altered on the basis of evolving sets of developing relationships (gender and society). In other words, gender develops in relation to the social environment.

Gender, according to the theory of the dominant ideology (Dominant ideology-Marx theory), indicates the attitudes, beliefs and values of the population, of a society. The theory of dominant ideology surrounds how the majority of sex thinks about nature and its position in society. Ideologies, which are deeply entrenched in our societies and we rarely question them, take them for granted and use them as forms of cultural logic to understand the world (Butler, 1990/1999). Regarding the Armed Forces and the military faculties, as documented by Karabelias (2013), historically it is a leading-dominant environment exclusively for male (sex). Of course, historical, social and political changes have increased the presence of women in the military environment, resulting in a change in gender roles.

Gender roles refer to the rights and responsibilities of women and men in society (economic, family, legal and political section). According to Serra as she noted in her work *The sociology of sport* (2015) traditional gender ideologies underline the value of separate roles for women and men namely men fulfill their family roles through activities such as working outside the house and they are the persons who brings money to sustain the family and women fulfill their role through caring, household and parental care activities. In other words, Serra pointed out that gender is based on the binary classification model. Consort with this model, Serra said that all people are classified into two sex categories: male and female. These categories are defined by the biological and social differences of gender (emotions, appearance, thoughts and behaviors). These expectations shape the ways in which people name and define gender —namely, what is considered masculine and what is considered feminine in a group or society.

As Jay Coakley (2009) points out, gender is what a society believes about what is a "male" or "feminine". In this two-sex binary system, all are classified into only two biological sex categories: a) males and b) females. Meaning that when a baby is born a

boy, it will be masculine and when a baby is born girl, it will be feminine. According to the same researcher, biological sex and gender are integral linked and merged into a binary sex system. At the same time, the two above categories are not only "opposites", but are interpreted as "natural" categories, where male and female, are better than feminine and masculine (p. 258). This is particularly true in societies such as the United States of America, where males control-hold high-paid leadership positions in contrast to the female (Coakley, 2009).

As for the environment of the Armed Forces and more analytically in the military academies, in which emphasizes the doctoral thesis, the man traditionally has the leading role, while the Women the Auxiliary (medical, nursing). However, from the late 18th century onwards, as Karabelas (2013) points out, the technological evolution and the new pattern of the wars enable women to enter the military environment, emerging in the role of officer. This contributes to the acquisition of the female leadership role. As the Portuguese military sociologist Helena Carreiras emphasizes, the more professional a troop is, the easier it is to upgrade the role of women and access it to the military hierarchy (2006).

## **2. Feminist movement in the field of sport and Armed Forces**

Undoubtedly, these changes made through struggles of the feminist movement (also known as the female liberation movement, the women's movement, or just feminism). Struggles, which were supported by political reform changes (i.e. reproductive rights, sexual harassment and violence, equal pay at work and equal right to vote). More generally, feminist movements (feminist movement, radical feminism, socialist feminism, black feminism and postmodern feminism) contributed to promote gender equality and oppose the perpetuation of discrimination Economic, political, legal and social structures. With the ultimate purpose, the integration and socialization of women, in a male-dominated society and a patriarchal social order (Swingewood, 1976; Papageorgiou, 2010; Kohrs-Amissah 2002; Mavropoulou, 2016).

Regarding the armed forces and the military academies Karabelas (2013) emphasizes that according to the literature, the feminist movement presents two conflicting views. The first point of view is liberal feminists, which support the West's policy of equality (i.e. the right of citizens to bear arms to defend their community) and at the same time women's participation in the military environment. While the second view is of radical feminists, who are opposed to the involvement of women in the Special Forces, arguing that the military environment strengthens the perpetuation of male domination (through the leading role) and the woman's auxiliary role.

Accordingly, the feminist movement influenced the field of sport. In more detail Pirkko Markula in his book *Feminist Sport Studies: Sharing Experiences of joy and Pain* (2005), the feminist movements led to the establishment of feminist sports studies, which approach many athletic fields. Feminist sports Studies during 1960 onwards, aimed at an increase in the consciousness 'of others', on women's issues. For example, the

empowerment of sport for the female gender and the promotion of personal, collective and institutional political change for women. During the decade of 1960 in North America, the course of physical education resulted in sports studies, often called kinesiology and academic programs with scholarships to the field of feminist sports studies (Markula, 2005). Through the decades of 1980 onwards, the feminist research involving the female sport was removed from the study of the psychological differences between the two sexes. On the contrary, sporting sociological studies focused on the patriarchal role prevailing in societies at that time, in gender relations and in the biological sex and gender social role (Markula, 2005). In patriarchal societies, women had less power than men, and in addition they are not very often represented in institutions such as sport, high-ranking jobs etc. Markula confirms that feminist research in the field of sports studies is called postmodern or transformative. And that their fields focus on the power of sex, the representation of female sex, the identity of the female gender and social gender differences in sport.

Sport, as confirmed by Karen Appleby and Elaine Foster in their work *Gender and Sport participation* (2013), is one of the most controversial institutions in our society. In antiquity, it served various social functions such as preparing citizens for war. Historically, it has been used for both recreational and social purposes. It also provides professional opportunities for athletes and coaches. Regardless of its purpose or presentation, sport is a crucial element of our modern social fabric. In more detail, the recreational purpose of sports, is a way where the subject (Man/boy, Woman/girl) amuses and enjoys a positive social interaction with peers and other competitors. Then, in the context of athletic leadership, it can help athletes gain positive personal features such as moral development, leadership and philosophical athletic behaviors. According to the researchers above, in recent years, sport has been a catalyst for social change.

In a sports environment, as Appleby and Foster (2013) say, there is a breaking of racial differences, the significant reduction of gender differences and the questioning of inequality issues related to the socio-economic situation. Unfortunately, the sport environment does not always lead to positive results, as there is a more complex side to it. For example, it strengthens harmful and dangerous social standards such as racism, homophobia and excessive violence. Researchers in sports sociology have revealed how sport strengthens and provokes dominant ideologies leading to discrimination. Through this visual angle, sport can work, as a powerful tool for social change.

As for a military environment, sport (coed sports, volleyball, basketball, swimming, etc.) is important for gender integration, as the students of military academies come closer in this way. Undoubtedly, the need for integration is an important factor, of high strategic importance, for the gender dimension in political-national strategies, in action programmes against racism, in racial discrimination in order to multiple forms of discrimination (Kefi-Chatzichamperi, 2015, 2017; Kefi-Chatzichamperi, Kamperidou & Patsantaras, 2018). It also has an important role to play in social gender relations within a local-national society. Integration is one of the fundamental social functional theories, which pushes to avoid disruption of the social system, while promoting the proper

functioning of the local community as a group. In addition, it is associated with the mutual interaction of members of a social structure, irrespective of whether their relationships are harmonious or not. Integration covers perceptions of both social conflicts and the social integration of gender-based subjects (Stanescu, 2000).

Whereas, the athletic environment, according to Gordon W. Allport (1954) in the chapter *Formation of in-Groups* in the book *The nature of Prejudice*, promotes men and women to perceive and adapt in the rules, laws and cultural elements of the society that they act and how important are: i) the communication of the members of the sports team, ii) the consolidation of sports rules, iii) the democratic (fairness, equality, respect, communication) activity of sports teams and iv) gender integration. The implementation of theoretical approaches to integrating sports, and the coed (male and female) athletic activity in the military environment, according to Kefi-Chatzichamperi in her research *Sport activity and conditions for assurance women's integration in Higher Military Education Institutions in Greece* (2017), highlighted the positive role of sport in integrating women into Greek Military Academies. As a Greek female officer said to the researcher, in a personal interview that they had on May 2017: "team sports enhance interpersonal relationships and gender integration" (p. 45) (researcher personal archive, 2017).

### **3. Sport and Hellenic Military Academies**

The contribution of common sports activities to Supreme Military Education Academies, not only improves their physical condition, mental and cognitive health, but promotes their social characteristics. Particular emphasis is placed on discipline, respect, self-control, organization, communication, teamwork and strengthening leadership skills. Equality and fairness between the sexes. Values that the officers of the Armed Forces need, so that they can integrate and evolve within the military society. Undoubtedly, the ultimate goal of sport is for women to acquire new roles in the military environment, such as the role of leadership (military environment) (Kefi- Chatzichamperi, 2018). Finally, on the basis of the aforementioned characteristics, a new social chapter is created for the effective success of a military operation, with the contribution of female participation.

More generally, Durkheim (Turner, 1981) believed that society exerts a strong force on its people. The standards of people, their beliefs and values compose a collective conscience, or a common path of understanding and conduct. As Durkheim argued, human beings realize each other as social beings and not as animals (Turner, 1981). In light of this, strengthening social inclusion can be seen as promoting harmonious interaction and solidarity at all levels of society, as is done in the Armed Forces.

The significance of the incorporation and stay of women in the SS is confirmed by the United States National Action Plan (2011) as: a) in Africa a working group of the two gender (man, woman) was set up, which was designed to integrate the dimension of Gender, in all programmes and commitments with the African Army, b) in Afghanistan, in co-operation with the International NATO Assistance Force (ISAF), established gender

advisers to assist commanders in identifying the different impacts that may have a potential business in the men and women of local Society and c) in the Jams Corps of the women's Marines and in the Cultural Support Group, new perspectives are provided for women Marines and female soldiers.

Society, conservative stereotypes and traditional roles imposed on both sexes proves that the social structure is intertwined with greater presence of men in supreme military education academies and in general the Armed Forces. For example, in 2015, 10.8% of military personnel in NATO were women. A United Nation survey in 2000 stressed the need to involve women in peace-enforcement negotiations. The view of women was very useful in the debates, given that the war affects the female gender in a different way.

Undoubtedly, the non-exclusion of female in Armed Forces is supported and reinforced by NATO (Cook, 2017). As presented by the CSIM International Symposium (2009), the administrators of educational programs studying and examining gender in the army, send directions – directions according to scientific research on how the structure of education should be. Instructions for academic courses and in particular the course of physical education and sporting-military activities, in all military academies, members of NATO. A quick historical flashback demonstrates incidents of women who have been able to cope with men in combat operations, and perhaps in some cases better. Why they were not properly exploited is an issue of gender equality or diversity, based on the recognition of male –dominated institutions and the role of women in society.

In Greece, the Ministry of Defence invested a lot in female military personnel. The presence of women in the military, as has already been mentioned, is a successful institution. That is why the Ministry of Defence is constantly studying and taking new measures, so that this institution is fully accepted and becomes increasingly constructive and efficient for the Special Forces. The Greek army is now followed by a single policy, in terms of handling staff regardless of gender. It is a belief that the distinction of staff in women or men does not contribute to ensuring the necessary coherence in the units and services of the army, as it maintains or causes heterogeneity in the staff and creates difficulties in administration. The adopted policy of overcoming the gender factor in human resources management is part of the concern for balancing a) between the non-negotiable assurance of operational capacity, b) the militant force of Forces and c) the Compliance with the Constitution and the laws of the Hellenic state, which require gender equality and equal treatment, in terms of access and development in employment (H.A.G.S., 2008).

Undoubtedly, women are welcome to the Armed Forces and the evaluation in their education is objective and with the same standards, regardless of sex. As he says in his book "The Art of War", the philosopher Su Chu, simple women can be turned into warriors. They need to undergo proper training and have conscious discipline. In special missions the operational readiness of executives requires training, fitness (achieved through sport), dedication, training, ethos, discipline, belief in ideals and values. Mortars, mines and bullets don't discriminate against men and women.

The issue of strengthening the role of women in Armed Forces is a high priority for the Ministry of Defence on an institutional and substantive level. Ministry's of Defence policy is anthropocentric. Women have the potential to evolve after they are provided with specialization and training through the educational programs consolidating their position and demonstrating their value and professionalism.

#### **4. Conclusion**

To sum up, today's Hellenic women officers have proved that the new role (military leader) and their new identity (officers) are lacking in anything compared to their male colleagues (Stavropoulos, 2015; excerpt from his file Television broadcast 360o, 2014; Blaveris, 2016; Kefi-Chatzichamperi, 2017, 2018). Female officers considering their basic career priority, succeed to distinguish themselves in their employment fields. This is easily ascertained by their performance in the mainstream home and abroad schools that are invited to study. Proof of the above is the fact, that most of the time female students competing on equal footing and worthily of male students, graduate from the military faculties with honors and occupy one of the first positions of the students (Kefi-Chatzichamperi, 2017, 2018).

Sport environment promotes both genders to understand and adapt rules, laws and cultural elements of their working society. Seeking: a) communication among the members of sports teams, b) consolidation of sport rules, c) democratic (equality, equality, respect, communication) activity of sport teams and d) gender mainstreaming. Finally, the application of theoretical approaches to integration through sport, as well as the common (male and female) sporting activity in the military environment, highlighted the positive role of sport in integrating women into military academies.

Thus, the contribution of coed/joint sports activities to Hellenic Military Academy not only improves their physical condition, mental and cognitive health, but also promotes their social characteristics. Particular emphasis is placed on discipline, respect, self-control, organization, communication, teamwork, leadership skills and as well as equality and equality. Values, needed by military officers so as to be able to integrate and evolve within military society. Undoubtedly, the ultimate goal of sport is for women to take on new roles within the military environment, likewise the role of leadership (military environment) (KefiChatzichamperi, 2018). Based on the aforementioned characteristics, a new social capital is created for the effective success of a military operation, with the contribution of women's participation.

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