

***I know males that kind of do the same thing and they never get any comments for it:***

**Discourse analysis of U.S. military women's perception of their professional performance in the context of the interview**

The applied sociolinguistic research (e.g., Holmes 2006; Mullany 2007; Schnurr 2009; Holmes 2020) has identified various challenges that women who function in highly gendered, masculine professions face and have to manage. For example, women's token status (Yoder 1991) brings their actions into greater scrutiny by men as the dominant members of the organization while women's "beyond reproach" (Shaw 2006: 96) performance is over-scrutinized for possible transgressions (Kanter 1977; Author 2021). As concluded by Schnurr and Mohd Omar (2021: 198), with reference to leadership the same behavior exhibited by women and men "is often evaluated differently".

In this talk I focus on one highly masculine organization, i.e., the U.S. military. I examine qualitatively how U.S. military women at different stages of their professional careers construct their perception of being evaluated differently (and unfairly) compared to men when performing their professional tasks. To this end, using the methods of discourse analysis, I analyze in-depth semi-structured interviews with military women to identify how the talk around women's professional evaluation is invoked and what interactional format it takes. In particular I examine women's accounts and the small stories (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008) that emerge in the midst of the interview interaction and which allow to investigate how women make sense of their gendered experiences.

The discursive analysis demonstrates how U.S. military women construct at the micro level of language (use) and interaction their perception of the professional performance. The analysis reveals that 1.) women's top and most excellent performance is found to be problematic, 2.) they are admonished when they carry out their duties according to the organization's regulations and 3.) overall, their professional conduct is evaluated as inadequate, i.e., worse compared to that of men. I argue that these experiences projected by U.S. military women can be placed on the spectrum of gendered non-belonging in an organization that can be applied to other professional contexts where women function as a minority.

**References**

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