Writers and Their Maps: The Construction of a GAO Report on Sexual Harassment

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This article examines a 1994 General Accounting Office (GAO) report on sexual harassment at U.S. service academies to determine how power structures affected the report writers' rhetorical choices. Employing postmodern mapping theories, the article identifies what is valued and devalued in the report's contents. Then it describes Congress's reaction to the report and speculates on the report's impact on public discourse and subsequent social action. It offers postmapping theory as a way of understanding the relationship between discourse and power in policy reports.

The United States General Accounting Office (GAO) is the principal information-gathering arm of the federal government. In response to Congress's and other federal agencies' information requests and specific questions, the GAO's evaluators seek answers and offer possible solutions through investigations, reports, and recommendations. In 1998, GAO's evaluators and auditors issued 1,346 reports, 181 congressional briefings, and 256 testimony statements (*Annual Report* 57). These reports, briefings, and statements recommend actions that inform and shape congressional policy-making decisions and impact legislative and executive actions in virtually every area of the federal government, including, to name a few, national defense, security, international relations, energy, agriculture, environment, housing, tax policy, and education. In 1998 alone, the GAO made recommendations to Congress about such diverse policy issues as U.S. Postal Service labor management, aviation safety, the Year 2000 computing crisis, terrorism defense, Medicare, and mammography services. Of the GAO's recommendations and their scope, the GAO Comptroller General predicts that "if past experience is a good indication, 70% of the key recommendations GAO made in 1998 will be implemented within 4 years" (*Annual Report* 56).

With such widespread impact on U.S. public policy-making decisions, the evaluators who investigate and write GAO reports and the administrators who deliver their findings and recommendations to Congress have a profound responsibility to the American public and its welfare. Their reports provide the grounds from which Congressional debates spring and the foundation upon which public policy decisions are made. Investigating and writing their reports, these evaluators work within various constraints—conflicts in public and private interests, differences arising from partisan politics, and challenges from conflicting economic, social, and institutional concerns and a value system that privileges "objectivity" in knowledge making. The methodological, interpretive, and rhetorical decisions they make as they negotiate these constraints eventually affect national policies. Acknowledging these constraints and recognizing the significance of his evaluators' work, the GAO's Comptroller General has vowed to maintain the office's objectivity, creating "a GAO that is accountable to the Congress—on both sides of the hill and both sides of the aisle" (*Annual Report* 5).

The work of government report writers, like the GAO's evaluators and administrators, has appeared infrequently in technical communication literature, suggesting a need for greater understanding of how government reports are used in policy making. A few studies, however, have offered us a view of the constraints and the choices report writers make given their constraints. One study, for example, describes the balancing act implicit in GAO report writers' work: "government report writers must negotiate . . . rhetorical exigencies while they carefully avoid bureaucratic pitfalls such as entrenched federal policies, overly recursive review practices, and conflicting cultural expectations" (Magnotto 70). Another study examines the goals of environmental impact statements, a specific form of government report, and concludes that the report writers' rhetorical choices seem to be invested more in forestalling legal actions against the government than in promoting informed democratic discourse about the environmental issues under investigation (Killingsworth and Palmer 190).

Report writers' work and its social, historical, and political contexts are featured in three other studies written from feminist perspectives. Beverly Sauer's analysis of a Mine Safety and Health Administration post-accident investigation report examines how report writers valued expertise and evidence within the report. This analysis reveals a predominant power structure that affects report writers' decisions about what to include in the report and how to value what is included. Brenda Orbell examines the Department of Defense's Tailhook 91 report. She positions the report within its writers' political and institutional contexts and demonstrates how these contexts create conditions that allow only certain conclusions while ignoring others. Similarly, Rebecca Sutcliffe's historical examination of Flora Annie

Steele's 1884 government reports finds that its reports were highly influenced by their historical and cultural contexts.

Like all writers, government report writers operate within contexts and constraints that influence them as they choose what and how to investigate and how to arrange and prioritize information. For the GAO writers, among the most fundamental influences, according to the GAO *Annual Report*, are three core values: GAO report writers are accountable to the American people; their work must exhibit integrity by taking a "professional, objective, fact-based, non-partisan, non-ideological, fair and balanced approach to all of its activities"; and they must produce reliable work that is considered credible, timely, and accurate by Congress and the American people (53). In addition, GAO writers must strive to produce accurate, cost-efficient, and timely reports of their program reviews, investigations, and audits. Yet, with their institutional focus on accuracy, efficiency, and timeliness and their core values of accountability, integrity, and reliability, are the GAO report writers aware of their reports' often direct social impact on human lives? Do they work with an awareness of their social and ethical responsibility to the public, or are they more likely to be focused on the fiscal and political effects of their investigations? As the Mining Safety and Health Administration and Tailhook reports demonstrate, government writers often do not fully understand their reports' social impact or the consequences of their recommendations, and reports written without an awareness of their social impact can have disturbing consequences—privileging the interests of dominant power structures (Congress, the military, or other powerful institutions) at the expense of the sometimes inarticulate but, nevertheless, significant voices of individuals and their silenced expressions of suffering.

Incidental critiques of individual reports such as the mining and Tailhook reports suggest some gaps in the goals of effective policy making and effective reporting, but comprehensive understanding of these reports requires a concept that spans individual instances. Postmodern mapping theories not only provide a method of analysis and a means of self-reflection on the part of the investigator, but they also provide a concept that could be useful to investigators and report writers as they conceive of their task. Using map theory in the domain of public policy writing could more effectively promote a sophisticated understanding of the problem and suggest policy positions that are more than reinforcements of the status quo—i.e., recommendations that actually solve problems. If technical communication is to move more aggressively into the domain of public policy, postmodern mapping theory can provide a tool that enables a contribution both to the creation of policy-making reports and to their analysis.

Like the analyses of the Mining Safety and Health Administration and Tailhook reports, this article examines how power structures and

social contexts influence report writers' decisions about what to report as well as what actions to recommend. Specifically, I examine the January 1994 Government Accounting Office report on sexual harassment in the military academies to determine the report writers' rhetorical choices and final recommendations. I will argue that the writers' social contexts and their powerful audiences (members of the U.S. Congress and the military) prevented them from producing a report with recommendations that would necessitate change in the military academies' procedures for resolving sexual harassment complaints. Rather than recommending definitive actions to remedy, and possibly eliminate, acts of sexual harassment in the military academies, these writers deferred to the military and to its long-standing chain-of-command policies. The report blurred the distinctions between military and civilian definitions of and policies about sexual harassment; understated the harassment problem in the academies; failed to acknowledge the most common form of sexual harassment, the hostile environment; and did not include follow-up research that might have more definitely linked sexual harassment to the cadet dropout rate. As a result, the report's writers were able to defuse a politically volatile situation and to recommend actions that protected the military's established policies by requiring only improved research and evaluation of harassment incidents. Their final report, consequently, did not recommend nor did the Congress ever undertake any direct measures to improve the confirmed situations of sexual harassment victims in the military academies.

To better understand the writers' rhetorical choices and their consequences, I frame my analysis of the GAO evaluators' report using postmodern mapping theories. These theories allow me to examine the GAO report as a socially-constructed space in which social, political, and military values coincide, interact, and, most importantly for this analysis, conflict. They also allow me to critique how these writers massaged their findings and conclusions in order to minimize or neutralize the inherent conflict among these values. Considering the final report within this theoretical construct, I evaluate Congressional actions following the report's delivery and speculate on the social impact of the report's recommendations and Congress's consequent actions. After this evaluation, I reconstruct the GAO report, suggesting other perspectives from which the investigation's story might have been told and other configurations into which it might have been mapped.

The Report as Postmodern Map

Postmodern map theories provide us with strategies for critiquing power structures' influences in mapmaking and for analyzing the social and ethical significance of mapmakers' (and report writers') presenta-

tional choices. To apply these theories, it is necessary first to define maps as socially-constructed spaces. Socially-constructed spaces, according to Edward Soja, are products of "social translation, transformation, and experience" (*Postmodern* 79). These spaces are neither neutral nor apolitical; they are sites of social struggle in which power is "contextualized and made concrete" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 87). Whenever mapmakers demarcate a boundary or establish a point of interest, they focus our eyes on these sites, giving them a spatial existence on the map. Yet, in this act of selection and arrangement, not all boundaries and points can be represented, and those that are not chosen disappear from our view.

Those in power may use boundaries and mapping strategies to marginalize ideas and people who do not fit within their mainstream perspective, especially when these ideas and people "raise questions about central social values. . . . [and] challenge white, heterosexual male domination of the western knowledge industry" (Sibley 116). In this way, a map's boundaries can be used to separate insiders from outsiders and to make unrepresented people, objects, places, and institutions invisible and silent. Mapmakers' perspectives and their decisions about what to include and what to exclude on maps, consequently, can have profound effects on those who are excluded or silenced.

The purposes of an analysis using postmodern mapping theories, therefore, are to identify the mapmaker's perspective; to critique the map's privileged boundaries and points of interest; to determine what has been included and what has been excluded as a result of this perspective; and, by reconstructing new maps of the same socially-constructed spaces from different perspectives, to "give voice to the previously excluded" (Massey 214). Such an analysis, then, is both a deconstruction of the original map and a reconstruction of other maps from alternative, and perhaps newly emancipated, perspectives. Through this reconstruction, the totalizing vision of the original map is displaced, and the socially-constructed space can be re-envisioned from different perspectives complete with new boundaries and new points of interest.

In technical communication literature, such postmodern mapping strategies have been applied for similar purposes. Arguing that postmodern map theories have direct application for information designers and other technical communicators, especially those who use maps and other visual representations to construct meaning, Ben Barton and Marthalee Barton connect postmodern geography methods with information design in "Ideology and the Map." The construction of meaning, they note, results from the communicators' choices of what to foreground and what to background in their representations. These choices most often privilege the powerful and dominant in society while, at the same time, overshadowing the powerless and weak: "Ultimately, the map in particular and, by implication, visual repre-

sentations in general are seen as complicit with social-control mecha-
nisms inextricably linked to power and authority" (53).

Mapping theories have also been applied to research methodolo-
gies and to technical communication documents. Using a postmodern
mapping frame as a methodology, Patricia Sullivan and James Porter
argue, can provide us with an inlet to "the relationships established/
sought among . . . components of place, writers, readers, texts and
institutions" (172). Drawing maps to understand the research scene
can provide researchers with a more balanced perspective and aware-
ness of their research's social impact. Such a perspective can make
researchers "conscious of the role of power, politics, and ideology in
any setting" (186). Similarly, Johndan Johnson-Eilola argues that
postmodern mapping strategies can offer us a method for considering
the social and ethical impact of any technical communication docu-
ment. He echoes postmodern geographers when he writes:
"Mapmaking isn't a neutral and objective reflection of an external
reality. . . . [It] is a powerful act, and that power often operates oppres-
sively when both mapmaker and map user fail to acknowledge the
politics of cartography." He argues that technical communicators, like
mapmakers, must consider how choices and organization of informa-
tion impact human interactions and relationships, or they risk in-
creased chances of ethical blunders from lack of consideration.

Just as mapping theories have opened new spaces for viewing how
technical communicators employ visual designs, conduct their re-
search, and consider the ethical impact of their documents, these
theories can also allow us to see reports as socially-constructed spaces.
From a postmodern mapping perspective, reports are not simply inert
containers for investigative findings and recommendations; they are
dynamic spaces shaped or formed by their writers' social interactions.

Reports written for decision makers, such as the U.S. Congress,
provide their readers with a map into a problem and suggest, through
their content and arrangement, a route to a possible solution. Like
mapmakers, report writers make choices as they create their reports:
they investigate the various routes available between a report's point
of departure (the problem) and its destination (the solution or recom-
mendations). They identify routes that best move their audiences
between these points, and they make choices about how to represent
these routes to their audiences. In making these choices, report
writers constantly consider their audiences—typically, decision
makers—and recommend actions or decisions that promote tenable
solutions. Such audience awareness affects the writers' decisions about
what to represent or privilege in their maps and what to ignore. It also
requires report writers constantly to negotiate and balance their
documents' contents with their audience's perceived needs and wants.
The report that results from these exchanges is socially-constructed
(through negotiations between writer and audience), and because it is
socially driven, it is both political and ideological, no matter how

objective its writers may think they are. Like maps, reports can be neither neutral nor completely objective; they are determined by power, perspective, and socio-politics.

The GAO Report on Sexual Harassment

To illustrate how seemingly objective report writers can be influenced by powerful audiences (specifically, the Congress and the military) and their social contexts, I turn now to an analysis of the GAO report writers' choices in the 1994 GAO report on sexual harassment at the military academies. I'll consider the report and its production as a map, deconstructing the map by analyzing five points of particular interest:

- **Its point of departure**: the problem and the Congressional question that initiated the GAO's investigation
- **The social and political landscape**: contexts that bounded solution alternatives
- **The writer's mapped route**: investigative information chosen to be included in the report as well as information transformed or left unmapped
- **Detours**: hearings and requests that affected the report writers' final recommendations
- **Destinations**: the report's social, political, and ethical implications

Following this deconstruction of the report writers' work, I will reconstruct the GAO report from another perspective, offering alternative readings and inscribing different boundaries and points of interest.

Point of Departure

In 1990, the Senate Committee on Armed Services asked the GAO to investigate allegations of sexual harassment at the Air Force, Naval, and Military Academies. The request arose from a 1990 Naval Academy incident in which a second-year female midshipman was stripped, chained to a urinal, and photographed by other midshipmen. From the time of this request until completion, the GAO evaluation team took almost four years to investigate and report its findings. The report, *DOD Service Academies: More Actions Needed to Eliminate Sexual Harassment*, reveals a continuing sexual harassment problem at the academies.

The sexual harassment problem exists, the report finds, despite the fact that the academies generally meet the Department of Defense's (DOD) minimum standards for sexual harassment eradication pro-

grams. The report, therefore, recommends a more systematic approach to create sexual-harassment-free environments in the military academies. Specifically, it calls for

- more extensive and methodical research on the reported and unreported incidents of sexual harassment,
- more systematic evaluation of sexual harassment eradication programs, and
- more research into different approaches to solving the problem of sexual harassment—if the records and evaluation reveal that current approaches are ineffective.

The Social and Political Landscape

Planning and implementing their investigation into sexual harassment at the military academies, the GAO report writers most likely found themselves working within a landscape in which public, Congressional, and military interests and values clashed. These conflicts appear to have influenced their investigative methodology and shaped their report's findings and recommendations. Deconstructing the report's social contexts, specifically examining the GAO's mission and the influence of its primary and secondary audiences, can illustrate how the report writers may have viewed the political and social landscape in which they worked and, perhaps, help us to understand more fully why the investigators made the choices they did.

The GAO's Mission

The GAO's primary audience is identified in its mission statement: to provide "members of Congress and others who make policy with accurate information, unbiased analysis, and objective recommendations on how to best use public resources in support of the security and well-being of the American people" (National Academy of Public Administration 13). To fulfill this mission, the GAO is sectioned into several divisions that individually conduct interviews, investigations, and evaluations upon Congressional request and publish their findings either as reports or as direct Congressional testimony. To fulfill its investigative request, the Senate Committee on Armed Services called upon its GAO division, the National Security and International Affairs Division (NSIAD). This division, interestingly, most commonly investigates budgeting and arms technology issues of concern to the Armed Forces Committee, not human relations issues. For this reason, the report's chief investigator, Marti Dey, stated that the request and the report that followed it were atypical for NSIAD because of the investigation's controversial human-relations topic and the length and complexity of the investigation.

Perhaps because budgeting and arms technology issues were familiar territory to the NSIAD investigators and because questions about these issues are most often answered using quantitative research practices, the investigators relied on quantitative research strategies to determine whether a sexual harassment problem existed at the academies. In its report, the division's stated objectives focused on the information-gathering nature of its work: "The objectives of the review were to (1) determine the extent to which sexual harassment occurred at the academies, the forms it took, and its effects on those subjected to it and (2) evaluate the academies' efforts to eradicate sexual harassment" (*Service Academies: More Actions* 2).

The evaluators' focus on data and information gathering is not unusual, according to Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline Palmer, who explain that "government experts require huge compilations of information, from which base they are able to assert their own authority (ethos)" and that these experts' primary objectives "are directed . . . to sustaining government control and perpetuating a rational social order" (164). It is likely then that the NSIAD investigators' rhetorical aims were two-fold: referential (the stated aim—to gather and report information about sexual harassment in the academies) and persuasive (the unstated aim—to sustain the military and governmental traditional practices).

The Report's Primary Audience

The primary audience for the final report, the Senate's Committee on Armed Services, provides another piece of the report's political context. This audience is addressed only once, briefly in the report's executive summary. Referring to the incident which prompted the report, the executive summary's first paragraph states: "This and other incidents at the Naval Academy in 1989 and 1990 increased congressional interests in the treatment of students at the service academies" (*Service Academies: More Actions* 2).

Despite the brevity of this acknowledgment, the Senate Committee on Armed Services actually had a complex interest in these incidents because whatever affects the midshipmen and cadets at the service academies directly impacts the senators' constituencies. Members of this committee, like all members of Congress, make appointments to the service academies; therefore, many of them have had personal contact with academy appointees. Even when they do not have personal contact, they must still answer to their constituents, including the parents, relatives, and friends of these appointees.

To further complicate its position, the committee determines the armed forces' annual appropriations. The report's findings and recommended actions, consequently, could have potentially impacted DOD funding, yet the committee's interest did not end with budgetary matters. Because of their committee service, the members were also

well versed in national security matters and the military's role in it. All were aware, undoubtedly, of the chief military values of preserving the chain of command and maintaining strict command procedures, values that can directly conflict with sexual harassment investigations.

These committee members, as a highly motivated primary audience, had genuine concerns but somewhat conflicting interests in asking questions about sexual harassment at the academies. On a personal and political level, their request reflected their need to answer to the allegedly harassed cadets and midshipmen, to the parents of these young people, and to the women and men, throughout the country, who voice concern about sexual harassment in the armed forces. On a national defense level, the requested report could also provide them with documentation of a problem that might affect their oversight of military funding and procedures.

The Report's Secondary Audience

Understanding the secondary audience—the DOD, including the armed forces and the military academies—is equally as important to contextualize the GAO's report. According to the testimony of Sagawa and Duff Campbell of the National Women's Law Center before the House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services on March 9, 1994, the DOD had known about rampant sexual harassment in its ranks since the early 1980s (*Sexual Harassment* 78). Sagawa and Duff Campbell's written testimony identified four different investigations that verify the DOD's knowledge of the existence of sexual harassment in the armed forces: a navy study in 1980, the Study Group on the Progress of Women in the Navy in 1987, the Department of Defense Task Force Survey on Women in 1988, and the Defense Manpower Center study in 1990. In 1992, the Tailhook scandal had also shaken the navy and the DOD. By the time of the GAO investigation, the DOD, the armed forces, and the service academies had all declared a zero tolerance sexual harassment policy.

Yet in 1994, when the GAO report was published, the armed forces still had different sexual harassment definitions and complaint resolution policies and procedures. Despite these differences and the public outcry surrounding the Tailhook incident, Sagawa and Duff Campbell maintain that the DOD had "decreed that the chain of command is the 'primary and preferred channel for correcting discriminatory practices,' and complaints are to be resolved at the lowest possible level of command" (*Sexual Harassment* 78). This reliance on chain of command "often turns the procedures on the personality and leadership of the individual in command . . . " and can actually create a more complex problem if the officers in charge are implicated in the harassment, as was the case with Tailhook (*Sexual Harassment* 79). Yet in spite of its awareness of the sexual harassment problems, chain-of-command investigation complications, and the multiple definitions of sexual harassment held by various armed forces, the DOD contin-

ued to value its established policies when handling sexual harassment complaints and when developing new policies. This well-known valuing of established command policies over more effective complaint resolution alternatives further constrained the investigators' abilities to research the problem and to find new and acceptable solutions.

Audience Influences

The armed forces' policies and their leadership focus narrowed the GAO's recommendations to a specific context of acceptable and unacceptable solutions to eliminate sexual harassment at the service academies. The GAO's report, consequently, had to place its findings within recognized and rather narrow boundaries. It had to balance Congressional committee members' concerns with those of the DOD. Once its investigation had established that a problem existed, the report writers had to

- define the specific types of harassment found in the service academies without having a consistent definition of these behaviors across the various armed forces,
- suggest methods for solving that problem within acceptable military and Congressional frameworks, and
- meet these requirements in such a way that its audiences, the Senate Committee on Armed Services and the DOD, would be persuaded to follow its recommendations.

The Mapped Route

The report's organization offers further clues about the choices the investigators made in fashioning it. An investigation of this scope and length, without doubt, resulted in a mountain of information. How to map this data into a report—what to include and where to include this information—must have concerned the report writers. Unfortunately, Dey, the report's chief investigator, could not discuss how these decisions were made. She stated by telephone that "it is office policy not to share information about our internal deliberations concerning the audit and report's development." Although this GAO internal policy prevented direct access to the investigator's records, deconstructing the report's organization and content provides insight into the investigators' decisions about what information was valuable and best met their audiences' needs.

Recognizing what is valued in a report may be as simple as noting what information is contained within it; what is more challenging, however, is uncovering what has been devalued or excluded. Uncovering the excluded can mean viewing the map in reverse, bringing forward what is invisible and placing it in context (Barton and Barton

53-54). To make what is invisible visible, Susan Wells recommends that readers question the text, inquiring about "the silence that such a text presents" (225) and asking "what is gained and what is lost by the arrangement that this text undertakes" (228). Raymond Williams similarly suggests that in maps "certain means and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded, . . . reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the dominant culture" (9). Using these recommendations for content recovery, then, this analysis focuses on what is emphasized or included as well as what seems to be repressed or excluded from the document. In this way, the choices made by the investigators in writing the report may be re-vealed. What follows is an examination of the report's introduction, findings, and conclusions, focusing on what is foregrounded and what is backgrounded in each of the report's major sections.

Introduction

The introduction provides background and definitions on sexual harassment, citing the EEOC, court cases, and civilian studies on sexual harassment in educational institutions. Interestingly, the cited information has almost no application and very little similarity to military sexual harassment policy. This fact is indirectly mentioned in the middle of the introduction's fourth paragraph: "The prohibitions against sexual harassment for civilian workers are contained in federal law and guidelines, while the prohibitions for military personnel are contained in DOD policy statements, directives, and instructions on equal opportunity" (*Service Academies: More Actions* 10). By weaving inapplicable federal laws and guidelines into this discussion, however, the report tends to blur distinctions between federal and military policies and, therefore, reveals a tension between civilian and military remedial actions in cases of sexual harassment.

For example, the introduction relies upon Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits sexual discrimination in the workplace, and the EEOC guidelines prohibiting sexual harassment to define sexual harassment and identify methods of redress. This use of civilian guidelines to define sexual harassment is complicated by the report's omission of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which protects students in educational settings from discrimination, including sexual harassment. Title IX's exclusion from the introduc-tion is significant because civilians harassed in university settings (like the service academies) most commonly seek compensation for such harassment under Title IX provisions. Yet, unlike civilian students, service academy students have no such avenues of redress or compen-sation. Excluding Title IX thus allows the report to ignore civilian students' most powerful redress against sexual harassment in academic settings and to avoid mentioning that military students have no such avenues, a statement that would implicate the military status quo.

Similarly, in a section defining sexual harassment, the report recounts the Supreme Court's 1993 *Harris v. Forklift Systems, Inc.* decision, in which the standard for determining whether an act is actually sexual harassment is no longer based on "a reasonable person's" perception of a behavior as harassment but on "a reasonable woman's" perception of the behavior. This point hardly relates to military harassment since the determination of whether an act is harassing or not is, by policy, determined by the male-dominated chain of command. This difference between civilian legal determination of harassment and military determination is never mentioned.

Later in the introduction, the report writers more directly connect the DOD to EEOC standards: "EEOC provides policy guidance on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. DOD provisions on sexual harassment are largely based on this guidance" (*Service Academies: More Actions* 14). Yet in this brief statement, the writers offer no detailed comparison between civilian and military policies, confining their discussion of the DOD's sexual harassment provisions to a single paragraph:

> DOD's equal opportunity directive states that it is DOD policy to "provide for an environment that is free from sexual harassment by eliminating this form of discrimination in the Department of Defense." The directive further states that it is DOD policy to support the military equal opportunity program and to use the chain of command to promote, support, and enforce the program. The directive contains a definition that is consistent with EEOC guidelines. (*Service Academies: More Actions* 15)

Such a brief summary of DOD guidelines provides very little specific information about military policies, and, without explicit comparison, readers are left to assume that there are direct and active connections between military and civilian standards, when, in fact, these connections are tenuous.

What is missing consistently throughout the report's introduction, then, is the distinction between civilian and military recourse in the event of sexual harassment. Unlike civilian harassment victims, military victims are not covered by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, EEOC guidelines, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, or the Supreme Court's 1993 *Harris v. Forklift* decision. Because this distinction is not clearly stated, the differences between civilian and military sexual harassment definitions and procedures imply a similarity and a connection between the two that is actually negligible. Furthermore, the writers' research, so reliant upon civilian guidelines, creates a tension in the report: their introduction with its focus on civilian sexual harassment policies also has to privilege the military's valued chain of command. To relieve this tension, the report seems intentionally to blur these civilian and military distinctions.

Yet because of these differences, the writers were compelled to ignore certain information and to avoid interpretation and comparison when such activities might lead them to unsatisfactory solutions that destabilize military traditions. As a result, negative comparisons between military and civilian guidelines—comparisons which might compromise the military's valued chain-of-command policy—were suppressed and blurred, maintaining the military's power and silencing destabilizing questions about these differences. Destabilizing questions, according to Sibley, "have particular potency if they raise questions about central social values"; therefore, those in power consider them dangerous and work to keep them silenced (116). To silence such questions, the writers softened the differences between civilian and military guidelines by omission.

Findings

Following the introduction, the report's middle three chapters specifically recount the investigation's principal findings as indicated by their titles:

Chapter 2: Many Academy Women Experience Sexual Harassment on a Regular Basis
Chapter 3: Women at the Academies Tend to Deal with Sexual Harassment Informally
Chapter 4: Sexual Harassment Can Produce Stress

The investigators employ statistics to support these findings, and eleven figures are used within these three chapters to illustrate their findings, reinforcing the investigators' objective stance. A careful examination of the chapters, however, uncovers the authors' mapping decisions—their inclusions and exclusions—and suggests a much less objective point of view.

Chapter 2 reports the number of females who indicated that they had been sexually harassed on a regular basis at the academies: 50% at the Naval Academy, 76% at the Military Academy, and 59% at the Air Force Academy (*Service Academies: More Actions* 20). Of those reporting recurring harassment, most defined it as verbal or hostile environment harassment when words, jokes, or gestures create "an environment so offensive or hostile as to interfere with a person's ability to work" (Sandler 5). Because these behaviors are sometimes interpreted as normal or "boys will be boys" behaviors, hostile environment harassment is more difficult for the dominant culture to recognize and often goes uncorrected. The difficulty of acknowledging or addressing hostile environment harassment, however, is not mentioned in the chapter.

Even more disturbing in Chapter 2 is the number of women who report having experienced sexual harassment at least once during the academic year 1991. The report states that "according to our survey,

93 to 97% of the 1,145 women at the academies experienced some form of sexual harassment during the academic year 1991. However, we found only 26 reported incidents of sexual misconduct during this period" (*Service Academies: More Actions* 26). From these figures, the report concludes that sexual harassment incidents are generally under-reported, not that sexual harassment is a serious problem at the academies.

Despite these findings, the chapter headings understate the problem. Two of the headings state that "academy students experienced various forms of harassment" and "sexual harassment appears to be underreported" (*Service Academies: More Actions* 20, 25). While these headings foreground the fact that harassment and under-reporting occur, they de-emphasize the significance of the numbers. They do not proclaim, for example, that "Ninety-seven percent of the academy women experienced some form of harassment in 1991" or "The academies are a hostile environment for women," although both these statements are as viable as the report's chosen headings. This understatement downplays the seriousness of the problem and obscures the fact that hostile environment harassment, the most difficult to address, is the most prevalent at the academies.

Chapter 3 focuses on how the academies handle sexual harassment complaints. Most complaints, the report indicates, are handled informally rather than formally. The report outlines various channels for resolving complaints but states that "all the academies have a policy of encouraging students to resolve problems at the lowest level possible" (*Service Academies: More Actions* 28). Both informal and formal complaint channels, then, must follow the male-dominated chain of command. The chapter then focuses on the effectiveness of these complaint channels, with only a brief discussion of victims' perceptions of reporting consequences.

What is not included in this chapter is that only the most serious (typically sexual assault cases) are handled at the formal level while hostile environment, the most common complaints, are usually handled informally. In these informal situations, those involved in harassment may also be a part of the chain of command; thus, the chain of command, though implicated in the harassment, must somehow remedy it. Nor does the section on consequence perceptions ever use the term "retaliation" in its discussion, although fear of retaliation is the reason most women choose to handle complaints informally or not at all.

This fear is apparent in some of the report's findings, but the report writers do not comment on it or interpret these findings in any way. For example, the report states that "students saw negative consequences of reporting, such as receiving little support from the chain of command, being viewed as a crybaby or shunned, and receiving lower military performance grades" (*Service Academies: More*

Actions 34). The report also does not indicate whether women who are retaliated against or who face negative consequences have any available recourse.

Chapter 4 concludes the report's middle section with its discussion of the detrimental effects of sexual harassment on its victims. This chapter focuses on one particular effect, stress. To study the relation-ship between sexual harassment, stress, and cadets' and midshipmen's decisions to pursue a military career, report investigators used a questionnaire. They found that a

> correlation exists between a student's reported exposure to sexual harassment and higher levels of stress, and higher levels of stress were correlated with decreased interest in staying at the academy and making the military a career. However, because many factors may contribute to stress, we could not draw a direct link between harassment and decreased interest in staying at the academy and making the military a career. (*Service Academies: More Actions* 39)

The entire fourth chapter is based on a single questionnaire with no follow-up attempts to establish a causal link between sexual harass-ment and stress and between stress and motivation to drop out of the academies. Given the report's four-year time span, matriculation assessment to determine pre-academy stress levels and harassment histories might have been conducted as well as follow-up interviews to assess the victims' perspectives on the relationship between harass-ment, stress, and motivation to continue a military career. Without further investigation, however, direct connections could not be established, and "other factors" could be credited for such stress.

In this chapter, the investigators exhibit the same mapping tension found in the introduction. They ground their assessment in civilian social science research to hypothesize a stress and sexual harassment link, but their narrow research design disallows them from pursuing answers fully. Yet, to appear objective and complete in their data collection, these report writers present their correlative findings, replete with five charts, the highest number found in any of the chapters. Despite this objective stance, however, the report's lack of follow-up illustrates the GAO's non-consideration of the full story of sexual harassment's human impact at the academies. Both the text and the charts, heavily reliant on statistics, hide the lack of direct human contact in attempting to understand the effects of sexual harassment on academy men and women. As Carolyn Rude notes, what is most often valued in government reports is most frequently validated with quantitative measures, statistics that persuade readers that the recommendations are not based on opinions but on objective interpretations of data. Yet these quantitative measures often "[ex-clude] variables that cannot be measured or counted" (Rude 190). Reports that base their decisions entirely on quantitative analyses, consequently, may lose sight of their recommendations' human impact.

Recommendations

In Chapter 5, the investigators discuss academy efforts to elimi-nate sexual harassment and make their recommendations for action. Despite the number of sexual harassment incidents identified in the GAO's survey, investigators found that the academies generally meet or exceed the DOD's criteria for effective sexual harassment programs. Of these criteria, the GAO found only one area in which the acad-emies could improve—their incident tracking records. The report states that the academies' evaluations of their programs "have not been systematic and have not ensured that data are comparable from year to year" (*Service Academies: More Actions* 52). As a result, the report concludes that "the data being collected by the academies is not adequate to judge the progress they are making in eradicating sexual harassment," and "without trend data, the academies cannot effec-tively evaluate their sexual harassment programs, including those efforts to deter harassment from occurring in the first place" (*Service Academies: More Actions* 56). Drawing from this conclusion, the GAO report recommends that the academies improve their sexual harass-ment data collection procedures and establish trend data and that they re-assess their programs once trend data is established. If, at that time, current programs are dysfunctional, they should explore other methods for eradicating sexual harassment.

As with Chapter 4, data and data collection are again foregrounded in the report's recommendations. This emphasis is particularly troubling when one considers how long these recommen-dations would take to implement. If the DOD had immediately directed the academies to implement these data collection and pro-gram evaluation procedures, several years of assessment would be required to establish trend data. In that time, would 93–97% of all academy women still be experiencing some form of sexual harassment every year? Would 50–76% of them still be experiencing sexual harassment on a regular basis, as the report indicates? Where are the recommendations that remedy this immediate problem? They seem to have disappeared into the background like the cadets and midshipmen who have been replaced with charts and statistics.

But why did the cadets and midshipmen disappear from the report's map? Why did the GAO value data collection over people? The answer may be found in reviewing the purpose and audience of the report and in reconsidering the GAO's own mission statement. When the Armed Forces Committee requested this information from the GAO's NSIAD division, they asked NSIAD to investigate a matter with which they had little or no experience. Although NSIAD did its homework (they studied EEOC literature and social science research), these investigators must have still felt uncomfortable in this arena, judging from their findings. Though uncomfortable with sexual harassment, they did know their audiences, the Congress and the military, well. They knew that if they foregrounded the human

factor—the teenage boys and girls attending the academies and the sexual harassment they were experiencing—Congress would be forced to take more immediate action against the military. If they foregrounded the problems of data collection, however, Congress and the military could move more slowly yet still be perceived as acting.

Probably for this reason, the report's recommendations downplay the difficulty of rectifying hostile environment harassment and the problems of chain-of-command reporting. Foregrounding the data collection issue allowed NSIAD to map safe and acceptable recommendations that stayed within the narrow solution boundaries dictated by their audiences. Furthermore, NSIAD investigators learned from firsthand experience how unsystematic the academies' tracking records were, so they had solid grounds for making the recommendations they did. All of these considerations most probably influenced the choices the investigators made when writing the report and making their recommendations. The report/map they created took their readers into the academies, noted problems that needed solutions, and offered solutions that seemed, to the GAO writers, tenable even from the military perspective.

Deconstructing the GAO report thus reveals the perspective from which the writers created their report. The social and political landscape in which they worked (dominated by Congressional and military interests) shaped and bounded the tenable recommendations their report could offer. On the one hand, the report's recommendations needed to value and address the confirmed sexual harassment in the military academies; but on the other hand, these recommendations had to maintain the established chain-of-command tradition. To arrive at tenable recommendations, in light of these values, required the writers to exclude dangerous, conflicting ideas as much as possible, blurring differences between military and civilian remediation policies and offering action that would improve the situation without calling the military's policies into question. Their recommendations achieved this goal by calling for more evaluation and research of the harassment problems at the academies. Interestingly, the report, mapped in this manner, was still not acceptable to its Congressional and military audiences.

Detours

Following the publication of the report, GAO officials testified at a congressional hearing and addressed congressional and military concerns about their report's findings and recommendations. The hearing's outcome was a new congressional request that GAO evaluators re-open their investigation and, after further study, issue a second report on the incidence of sexual harassment in the academies. While this second study was conducted, several related actions followed: Congress required the DOD to establish a comprehensive sexual harassment definition and complaint resolution policy for all armed

forces divisions and to establish improved tracking procedures at the service academies. When viewed in retrospect, the actions, although improvements, can all be seen as detours that moved Congress away from definitive remedial action to protect the cadets and midshipmen who had been harassed at the military academies.

Detour 1: Postponement

Following the January 1994 release of the GAO report, the Senate Committee on Armed Services met with GAO officials to discuss the report's findings. As a result of one congressman's questioning of the report's methodology and strong criticism by academy officials who reacted against the report's findings, the GAO was ordered to re-evaluate its methodological procedures and re-assess the academies' climates, thus requiring the GAO to investigate and produce a second report and postponing recommendations for another year.

Detour 2: 1995 Appropriations Bill

Despite the postponement, the Senate included instructions in the 1995 appropriations bill that required the DOD to develop a compre-hensive sexual harassment complaint policy for processing complaints of sexual harassment and to issue policy implementation guidelines. The bill further stated that the Secretary of the DOD should insure that the policy was implemented no later than March 31, 1995, and it required the armed services to review their policies to establish an equivalency across the services and improve their incident tracking systems.

Detour 3: Report Update

In March 1995, the GAO published its second report: *DOD Service Academies: Update of Extent of Sexual Harassment.* This report confirmed the GAO's initial findings of sexual harassment and indi-cated that current academy efforts were not decreasing perceptions of sexual harassment. In fact, sexual harassment had actually increased at the Naval and Air Force Academies since the first survey.

Detour 4: Implementation of Improved Tracking Procedures

In response to the 1995 Defense Appropriation Bill requirements, the DOD directives, and the GAO report, the service academies did begin to improve their tracking procedures. Both the Naval Academy and the Air Force Academies implemented a mentoring program through which they track and resolve informal (typically hostile environment) complaints. According to Captain Glenn Gottschalk, the director of the Naval Academy's Office of Institutional Research, complaint reports can now follow several paths to resolution, and the navy has even implemented alternative methods for reporting which move outside the chain of command through the Character Develop-

ment Office. Midshipmen and cadets at both the Air Force and
Military Academies are surveyed annually about sexual harassment
issues, and all three academies continue to work to establish trend
data. In 1997, military officials reported that sexual harassment
training has now become so commonplace that it is considered unnec-
essary by some academy women and that many women have requested
less training and fewer surveys. Yet while these changes may have
improved the tracking of complaints and increased the number of
training hours, no information is publicly available that indicates
whether these actions have actually reduced the specific number of
incidents, either reported or unreported, in the academies. In fact,
DOD studies, published two years after the GAO's initial report,
verified that a hostile environment for women still existed in all
branches of the military ("Sexual Harassment Declining" 34).

     In spite of the second report's findings, the five years of GAO
investigative effort, and the continued lack of published trend data, no
further hearings have ever been held and no official Congressional
response followed the publication of the final report. In other words,
no direct Congressional action was ever taken to correct the acad-
emies' hostile environments nor to provide direct remedy to the
victims.

Destinations

     Clearly, the GAO report on sexual harassment in the military
academies is not a value-neutral, objective document; it embodies
both the values of its writers and of government and military power
structures. The writers' perceptions of their audiences' informational
needs and tenable solutions led them to investigative strategies and
conclusions that fit within these boundaries, and, given these bound-
aries, the report did result in social actions that influenced policy
decisions, specifically improving incident tracking and record keeping
at the academies. Although these changes hardly eradicated sexual
harassment in the military or in the service academies, officers at the
academies now believe that better tracking procedures have improved
the academies' hostile environments.

     What the GAO report writers also did, even with their
foregrounding of data collection and their recommendations for
improved tracking, was to validate the existence of the problem and to
force the DOD, at least, to take account of it. Considering the con-
straints placed on the GAO by its mission and the report's audiences,
it does not seem possible that the report could have done much more.
Even with its narrowed field for recommendations, it took two reports
(the initial one and the updated 1995 report) to convince its audience
that a problem existed. Nor does it seem fair to expect a single report's
recommendations to eradicate a problem as extensive and complex as
sexual harassment in the military because of all the values and power

relations embedded in behaviors of one person to another. Nevertheless, the damage that was done to the cadets and midshipmen who actually experienced sexual harassment before and during the GAO's five-year investigation should not have been ignored.

Mapping this Inquiry

This analysis of the GAO report configures one possible map of the report and its impact on public policy and American citizens' lives. Other stories could have been told; other maps, drawn. An alternative map, for example, could have focused positively on the changes in tracking at the service academies, the academies' reports of improved conditions, and the GAO report's instigation of these changes. Another might have told the story of the time and expense involved in GAO reporting; both were considerable. Yet as mapmaker/report writer, I chose to ignore or de-emphasize these accounts. I chose instead to focus on how and why this document emphasized statistics and information gathering rather than the young women and men who were being harassed at the military academies.

Why did I make this choice? I did so because I wanted to reconstruct a new map of the GAO's report, a map that visualized those who had previously been excluded. I made this choice because I was concerned about the nameless cadets and midshipmen translated into numbers in the original report, and I wanted to examine how and why this transformation occurred. I was concerned that the report's findings and recommendations gave little voice to these cadets and midshipmen, despite the investigation's five-year duration. And I was concerned that the report and its update took five years to convince Congress that sexual harassment even existed at the academies. Nor was I convinced by my conversations with academy officials who told me that conditions have so greatly changed in the academies that now women there ask for less sexual harassment training and fewer tracking procedures. I was even less convinced when I read about the other military sexual harassment scandals, most recently at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in 1996. My concerns and biases, therefore, form a context for my own report. My values shaped my perceptions of the interviews I conducted and the academic literature and government documents I read. My map of the GAO report, consequently, reflects my own values.

In this way, my values and sense of audience awareness have shaped this analysis and the rhetorical choices I have made within it, just as the GAO evaluators were influenced by theirs. As report writers, we all frame our documents within personal, institutional, and cultural contexts. We all face constraints that require us to make rhetorical choices as we decide which pieces of information to select or privilege over others. Recognizing these constraints and articulat-

ing them is an important first step in recognizing their social impact on human lives. Through this articulation, the individuals our reports impact, not just our audiences, become a part of the negotiation equation used to decide what to report or what not to report.

Implications

Technical communicators must be aware that each time we select or privilege information within our reports, we act with power. Such an awareness can help us to recognize that our reports, shaped by our choices, are never completely objective nor are they neutral. They are socially-constructed spaces in which conflicts are waged and choices are made. And because our choices can affect human lives, we should acknowledge our own decision-making processes and social contexts as we write. We should teach our students about the effects these influences have on rhetorical choices, discussing with them the ethical implications of these choices. In addition, we can introduce these students to postmodern mapping strategies. Knowing these strategies can assist future report writers to recognize and consider the stand-points of all stakeholders in public policy issues. Viewing policy questions from diverse standpoints, report writers may better be able to shape public policy debates by mapping into their documents the voices and views of all stakeholders. Their reports may thus become more responsive to and representative of individuals who are affected by policies but seldom empowered to speak. They may also promote actions which actually result in viable solutions for these individuals. Postmodern mapping strategies offer technical communicators who write reports a method of conscious reflection that can help us to make truly ethical decisions about our reports' maps—both their contents and recommendations. Through such conscious reflection, we can acknowledge the power we have in molding public policy and employ it more effectively to shape the decisions that affect others' lives.

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