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# Sisters in Arms: A case study of the experiences of women warriors in the United States Military

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Sisters in Arms: Case Study of the Experiences  
of Women Warriors in the United States Military

by

Carmen T. Stein-McCormick

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Psychological and Social Foundations  
College of Education  
University of South Florida

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful family who has stood by my side day and night. To my soul mate and the love of my life, Tom McCormick—this dissertation is for you. I give you this dissertation and my unwavering love for your remarkable patience during the course of my studies, for the countless days and nights you stood by me, the many times you encouraged me to continue and not give up, but most of all for being the wonderful man, friend, husband, and father you are.

My daughter, Katherine, who came to class with me and helped me look for books in the library, type notes, and slept on the floor by my desk, who helped me enter numbers during my Statistics class and learned SAS in 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

To my daughter Camille who has always been there for me as a friend and daughter, who has made me very proud of her military career, who will finish my military mission, and has always been available to answer my military questions. Thank you for all the help you gave through my pilot study and this dissertation. This is for you, Major Camille LaDrew.

To my sister, Scarlett Parks, and nieces, Kendall and McKenzie—the sky is not the limit; there is no limit to what we can do. Follow your dreams and don't give up. For all my grandchildren: Alex, Cole, Vance, McCayla and Ashlynn. Follow your heart, stay true to your dreams, and keep your eyes on your path. Your future is yours to create.

To all my sisters in arms wherever you may be, stand strong and true to yourselves. To my nine warriors: Amijah, Alice, Carolyn, Cassandra, Jeanne, Jackie,

Janora, Krista and Wilma. Thank you for helping my dream come true. You are each an inspiration to me and to the sisterhood.

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It was only possible to complete this dissertation while maintain a private practice and consulting for the military because of the dedication and support of my office Manager Sue Griggs. Without her help in running the business and staying on top everything, this dissertation would not have been possible.

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### **Abstract**

Presently there are few studies that describe the current experiences of women warriors relative to issues such as sexual hostility, sexual harassment, and other uncommon experiences during their military careers. Very little is known about how being a woman in a male-dominated military may affect women warriors' choices between making the military a career or returning to civilian life. With better understanding of women warriors' military experiences, mental health professionals, educators, and other human services professionals may have a better understanding of the issues that may affect women in the military. To date there are limited studies that have examined the effects of military experiences on the psychological and emotional well-being of women warriors. Whether its effects are positive, negative, contextual, or permanent is not yet known. This study supports the earlier research regarding the needs and unknown needs of women programs and the training of counselors and helping professionals. With the United States Military being one of the largest special populations, and women warriors making up 15% of that population, it is imperative that appropriate training becomes available for counselors, educators, and other helping professionals.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Women have served in the United States military since the beginning of this nation, initially in support jobs that would allow men to fight. As early as the civil war there was the famed Clara Barton, a nurse to Dr. Mary Walker, who received a field commission in the Union Army and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor (Friedl, 1996). Additionally, it was estimated that there were hundreds of women fighting as soldiers during the American Revolution while assuming male identities (Solaro, 2006). During the Spanish American War over 1,500 women served as nurses overseas and later, in 1901, were recognized for their heroism, which gave impetus to creating the Army Nurse Corps (Goldstein, 2001).

Early on women continued to serve in the military even though they did not receive the same benefits as men. It was during World War I that women began to receive recognition as members of the military. For example the Navy recruited its first women in 1917. In fact, these recruiting efforts by the Navy resulted in approximately 12,000 women serving as yeomen. The Marines followed suit by recruiting 305 women (Goldstein, 2001).

In 1942, the Army created the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) to serve with the Army in support positions such as typists and nurses, but not in the Army as soldiers (Treadwell, 1954). The WAAC created a large problem for its women that volunteered to serve because the women did not have the same ranks as men. However,

in many instances WAACs held similar jobs as male soldiers, such as cooks and mechanics. For example, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the WAAC would be called a third auxiliary (Seidman, 1998). Additionally, the WAACs did not receive the same pay as men and were not entitled to full benefits such as medical, dental, and retirement. In 1943, the Army replaced the WAACs with the Women's Army Corps (WAC), making it an official component of the Army (Treadwell, 1954). Other military branches followed suit. Soon there was the Navy's Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES), the Coast Guard's Semper Paratus Always Ready (SPARs) and the Marines (who kept the name *Marines*) (Soderbergh, 1992). These female components of the military branches, WAACs, WAVES, WASPs, and SPARs, were designed primarily to free up men for combat while these women held more supportive jobs such as nurses, typists, laborers and other non-combatant roles. It was not until 1977 that groups of women, known as Women Air force Service Pilots (WASPs), were finally recognized for their efforts in ferrying warplanes from the factories to airfields within the U.S. during WWII (Soderbergh, 1992). The WASPs also worked as mechanics on the planes and were charged with the training of the male pilots. By the end of WW II over 350,000 women had served in the military, home and overseas (Soderbergh, 1992). It was not until March 10, 2010, more than 60 years later, that WASPs of World War II were honored with the Congressional Gold Medal. Fewer than 300 women were available to receive the honor and 38 were killed during non-combat military flight missions to free their male counterparts for combat (Air Force Magazine, 2010).

After WWII the services tried to retain women as part of the peacetime military. In 1947, the Army-Navy Nurse Act (Public Law 36-80C) made the WAVES and WAC

corps permanent. With the passage of the (Public Law 80-625) in 1948, women became part of the regular military (Solaro, 2006). However, this success did not come without restrictions. There was a 2% ceiling on the promotion of women. The highest rank a woman could attain was full Colonel in the Army, Air Force, and Marines, and the Navy's equivalent, Captain (Soderbergh, 1992). There were also restrictions on duty assignments as well as assignments dealing with aircrafts and sea vessels. Women were not allowed to serve in any aircraft or sea vessel that might engage in combat. However, there was no restriction on serving on a hospital ship regardless of the mission. The Army was the only service that decided to keep the WAC as a separate corps (Nathan, 2004).

At the beginning of the Korean War there were approximately 22,000 women in active duty. Again, the military sought to increase the number of women but fell short of their recruiting goals (Solaro, 2006). Due to the shortage of women recruits in 1951, Defense Secretary George Marshall created a committee of 50 prominent women to study better ways to recruit women into the armed forces (Solaro, 2006). The committee became known as the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service (DACOWITS). This effort was unsuccessful, and at the end of the Korean War, there were just under 49,000 women left in the armed forces (Solaro, 2006).

In 1965, during the Vietnam War, active duty women had dropped to 30,600 even though the military had continued its attempts to recruit women into the various services. It is estimated that 660-1,600 women served in Vietnam. The majority of these women were nurses including approximately 600 WACs, 36 Marines, nine Navy officers and 400-500 Air Force women (Veterans, 2007).

The 1970's brought new opportunities for women in the military. With the end of the draft, there were new career choices for women, which included the first woman pilot since the WASPs were commissioned in the Air Force. During this time, the Navy was also willing to allow women on non-combatant ships. In 1978, the Army disbanded the WAC and opened 14 new career fields for enlisted women and eight for officers. As a result of these changes, women could now attend the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and train with men (Veterans, 2007).

By the 1980's, women made up more than 8% of the combined military force. During this time women had graduated from service academies and entered active duty as officers. Along with the new military graduates over 170 women participated in the 1983 invasion of Granada (Goldstein, 2001). Once again, the debate over military women's issues such as pregnancy, parenthood, dual service couples, and particularly women in combat came to the forefront. By the 1990's nearly all restrictions against women in combat were lifted. According to Friedl (1996), numerous sources estimated the number of women serving in the Gulf War between 27,066 to over 49,000. Eleven Army women were killed and two taken prisoner of war during this time. As of 2007, there were more than 200,000 women in active duty comprising about 15% of the military in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other countries in conflict (Veterans, 2007). Even though, the percentage (15%) of women in the military continues to grow, they are still in the minority in a male-dominated military. Progressive changes for military women, such as eliminating the WAAC to form the WAC and then providing opportunities for women to enlist in regular Army, resulted in women's roles transitioning from auxiliary components to actual women warriors in the United States military.

The current literature uses the term *warrior* to describe military individuals that are original or natural fighters (Henriksen, 2007). *Warrior* will be used in this study to describe soldiers, both men and women, in all of the military branches. For the purpose of this study, all women who serve or have served in the United States military will be described as *women warriors* with their male counterparts as *warriors*.

Women are the fastest growing group of warriors in the United States military. Women serve in nearly every type of military unit, except in those directly involved in combat as decreed by the United States Congress. Women also share the tragedies of war. For example, in our most recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan over 100 women were killed, 600 were wounded, and three taken as prisoners of war. As of 2010, women have become an integral part of the all-volunteer force. The mission of the all-volunteer military is to meet the needs of the military regardless of gender.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although the number of women serving in the military has continued to increase, and the number of career opportunities has increased as well, there may be other factors such as sexual harassment and sexist hostility that prevent women warriors from achieving full equity because service members have plagued women in the military (Antecol & Cobb-Clark, 2006). Gelfand, Fitzgerald, and Drasgow (1995) (as cited in Mathews, 2009) identified three types of male to female sexual harassment: gender harassment, unwanted sexual coercion, and unwanted sexual attention. If these types of unsolicited behaviors are being experienced by women in the military, the outcome could create serious consequences for women warriors as well as the military.



Mathews and Ender (2009) examined the attitudes of West Point cadets Reserve Officer training (ROTC) and civilian students towards roles women may fill in the military. The study concluded that the West Point cadets showed the lowest acceptance of women's roles in the military. Unfortunately, similar attitudes could be held by military leaders with responsibility for review of complaints of sexist hostility towards women warriors. In other words, if the male leadership is accepting of sexist hostility early in their military careers, they may be part of the problem rather than the solution.

Presently there are few studies that describe the current experiences of women warriors relative to issues such as sexual hostility, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and other uncommon experiences during their military careers. Very little is known about how being a woman in a male-dominated military may affect women warriors' choices between making the military a career or returning to civilian life (Jeffrey, 2009). Thus, as the number of women warriors increase in the military, it is imperative that research is conducted to determine how their psychological and emotional well-being may be affected.

With better understanding of women warriors' military experiences, mental health professionals, educators, and other human services professionals may have a better understanding of the issues that affect women in the military. To date there are limited studies that have examined the effects of military experiences on the psychological and emotional well-being of women warriors. Whether its effects are positive, negative, contextual, or permanent is not yet known.

### **Significance of the Study**

American women are fighting, killing, and dying in combat at an unprecedented rate, and with the deployment of women into combat zones, the norms of military culture are undergoing radical change (Solaro, 2006). It is important for educators, counselors, and other human services professionals to hear the experiences of women warriors in the United States military in order to better understand their needs. Women warriors may

choose to make the military a career or return to civilian life. Regardless of their choice, they will experience emotional challenges to which they have become adapted as a means of competing and surviving in a male-dominated environment. Civilian counselors may not be academically prepared to recognize the needs of women warriors, and may improperly diagnose their presenting problems. Without proper diagnosis and understanding of their behaviors and concerns, women warriors in need of assistance may not get appropriate help.

An understanding of the experiences of women warriors who have served or serve alongside men will offer new insights on the possible impact of their experiences. Insight into the experiences of women warriors will give counselors and other professionals a better understanding of the adaptive behaviors of women who serve or have served in the military forces.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The experiences of women warriors have changed dramatically over the last 20 years. Women's roles in the military have gone from auxiliary support to an active role as a warrior. Because these roles have changed so dramatically, there is a need to know how their experiences affect their psychological and emotional well-being.

The purpose of this case study is to explore the experiences of women who serve or have served in the United States military from a Standpoint Feminist perspective (Harding, 2004). According to Harding (2004), dominant groups are not prepared to identify oppressive features of their own beliefs and practices; it is only the oppressed group that is in a position to describe the oppression. Standpoint, on the other hand, is

considered the “logic of inquiry,” and through research, it will allow researchers to maximize the empowerment of the oppressed groups, such as women warriors.

Standpoint Feminist theory has delineated numerous goals over the last thirty years from explaining the relationships between androcentric institutional power and sexism to the methodology of research that will promote empowerment for the oppressed group (Harding, 2004). The present study investigated the military experiences of women warriors through a standpoint lens. Their experiences were the central focus of the study and will provide a voice and an in-depth understanding of the uncommon experiences of women warriors. Participants will have an opportunity to share their experiences through semi-structured, open-ended interviews in order to have their military experiences understood.

### **Questions Guiding the Inquiry**

The following guiding questions were derived from a pilot study that was conducted with 44 women warriors via an online questionnaire to determine what their views are as women warriors and their perceived gender roles (Stein, 2009). As a result of the online pilot study the following guiding questions were derived to be used in this phenomenological study in order to allow the participants to share their experiences with gender in the military.

#### Demographic Questions

1. What branch of the service are you/were you in?
2. What year did you enter the service and how old were you?
3. What can you tell me about your family of origin?
4. What prompted you to join the service?

5. How long have you been/where in the service?
6. What is/was your highest rank?
7. What are/were your jobs in the service?

#### Military Experience

1. How successful do you feel you are/were in the service?
2. What prompted you to stay/leave the service?
3. How has your military experience shaped who you are as a person today?
4. How much do you believe you have in common with non-military women?

#### **Conceptual Assumptions**

There seems to be many different reasons why a woman would chose to join the military. One of them is that she may have come from a military family or grown up in a male-dominated environment (Jeffrey, 2009). Many of these women could feel at home in the military and may not perceive themselves out of place. Most often these women come out of the military academies or the ROTC, Officer Candidate School (OCS) Army, Officer Candidate School (OTS), or Air Force and often become part of the leadership, which may put them in a more protected status. Other reasons may be money to improve their social economic status, educational opportunities to go to college. Many women join out of as sense of patriotism and find military values to be in concert with their values and attitudes. Women who join based on these values and attitudes tend to have the attributes that lead to successful military careers.

There are several assumptions underlying the purpose of this study. First, many women warriors may leave the military for a number of reasons that include sexual

hostility and sexual harassment issues within the military culture. Second, women's opportunity for advancement may be inhibited by the military's failures to acknowledge a woman's role in a combat zone as well as sexist hostility. For example, when women are attached to a combat unit for specific missions, they do not get the same recognition as men (e.g. ribbons, combat patch, and, ultimately, promotions) because women are not supposed to be in combat according to the United States Congress. Third, some women adapt to military life and choose to make it a career with unknown social consequences after retirement. Fourth, some women remain in the military even when exposed to sexist hostility.

Another issue that affects women warriors is the attitudes of the male service members. Historically the military has been considered to be an elite, male-dominated institution, which has been passed down the male line. Therefore, it may be hard for some males to accept females into the military. Military academies such as West Point, Annapolis, and Air Force Academy base their membership on creating strong warriors out of the best and strongest students available, which are often considered male. It is acceptable in our society to indoctrinate young males to be warriors/combatants in the military. However, this has not been the case for women (T.F. McCormick, personal communication, December 28, 2009).

As our military has modernized, many of its service branches have loosened up their policies on the roles of women in the military. Even though the services have made attempts to train women equally, the issue of disparity may be in the utilization of women warriors as combatants or in the front line. This disparity in the utilization of well-trained women may add to a woman's dissatisfaction with making the military a career. On the

other hand if the woman warrior was trained in a gender-neutral career, she may not be exposed to the hostility or competition from males and may make the service a career. These experiences may be different depending on the branch of service, such as the Marine and Army where women may have more opportunities to work with men. The Navy and Air force still use women warriors in a more supportive role, with the exception of the Navy's new program of female submariners. This assumption recognized that Navy and Air force women, along with their male counterparts, have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan (better known as putting one's "boots in the sand") (C. LaDrew, personal communication, December 1, 2011).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework used in this study is based on the preceding conceptual assumptions. There seems to be numerous factors that may affect the success and retention of women warriors in the military as well as dissatisfaction (Appendix A). An interview by the Department of Defense in 1995 suggests that 70.9 percent of active duty women reported experiencing some type of sexually harassing behavior (Antecol & Cobb-Clark, 2006). Rosen and Martin (1997) suggested that sexual harassment has a definite link to reduction in unit cohesion as well as combat readiness. When highly trained women warriors leave the service prematurely it creates a void in the combat readiness as well as long lasting, unresolved psychological issues for the woman warrior. A job satisfaction study stated that understanding the effects of sexual harassment on job satisfaction is of interest because job satisfaction is a measure of overall well-being as well as an important predictor of individual behavior (Clark, 1996, 1997).

## Conceptual Framework

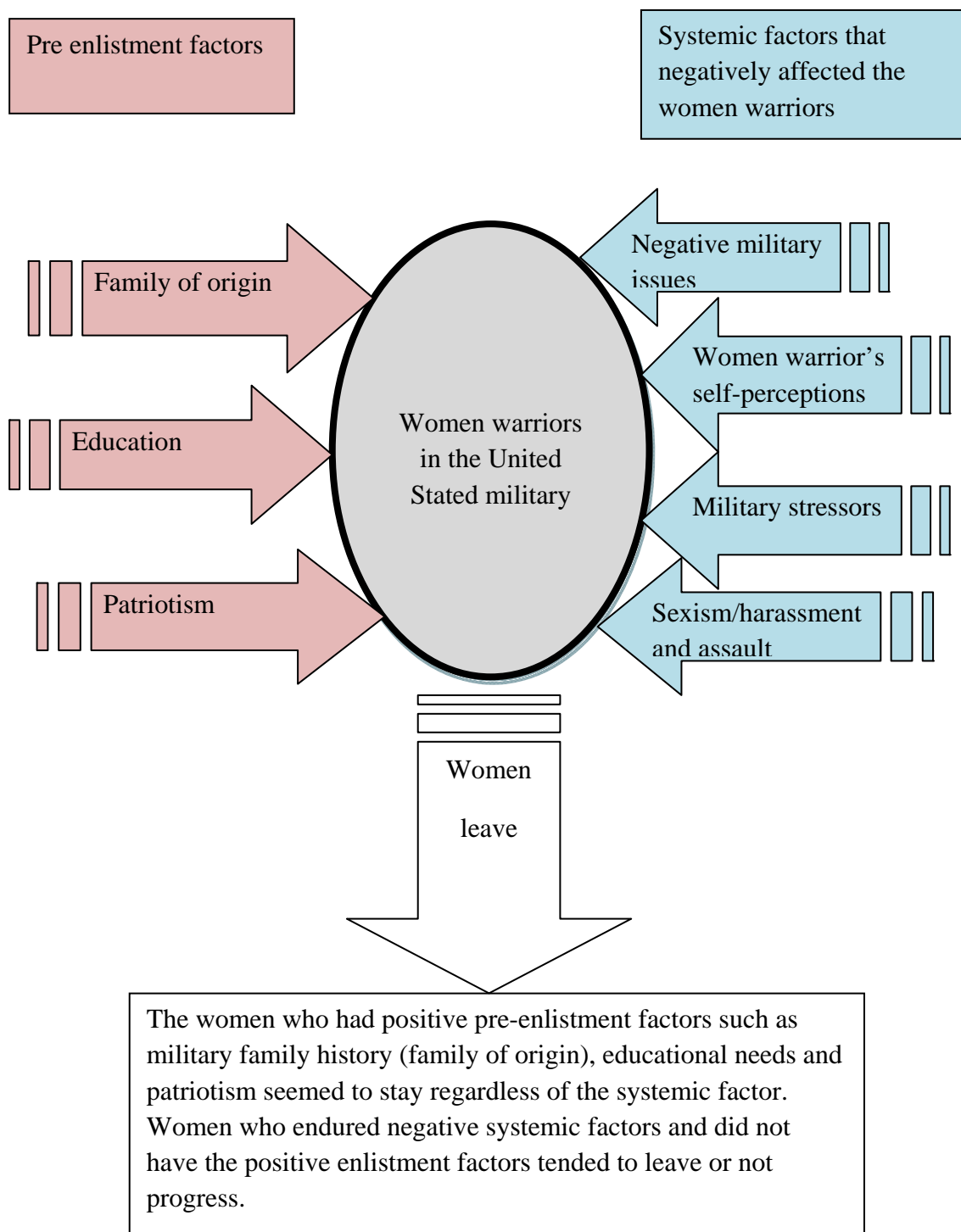


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## Definitions of Major Terms

The following list is comprised of definitions of key terms that will be used throughout this study.

Civil Air Patrol	The civilian auxiliary of the United States Air Force. While the CAP is sponsored by the Air Force, it is not an operating reserve component under the Air Force or the federal government.
Feminine	The description of a particular behavior, trait, interest, or attitude assigned to the female gender role in a particular culture or society.
Gender	Refers to the social categories of males and females plus a set of psychological features and role attributes assigned to them by a given culture or society.
Gender role flexibility	The adaptive behaviors and cognitions of women who must modify their stereotypical gender roles in order to succeed in an environment that does not accommodate stereotypical female gender roles, such as the military environment.
Gender-role stereotype	Socially-determined gender role norms or behaviors expected by a society.
Gender-role violation	Not following stereotypical gender-role norms as defined by a given society.
Masculine	Describes manliness or man-like characteristics that have been set forth by culture, often opposite of feminine.



ROTC	Reserve Officers Training Course usually found at colleges and universities predominantly in the United States.
Sea Cadets	Naval youth education program for Americans ages 11-17 years old.
Sexual hostility	Discrimination based on one's own sex.
Standpoint Theory	Standpoint theory believes that women's lives are socially constructed and can only be seen from the eyes of women or the oppressed.
Traumatic brain Injury	Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is caused by blunt force injury to the head and/or the concussive force of explosions, which severely shake or compress the brain within the skull.
Yeoman	US Navy clerk typist, male or female.

### **Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

The focus of this study was limited to women warriors who were willing to share their personal experiences through narrative interviews as described by Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000). Women warriors must be serving or have served in the United States military from 1979 to present and be between 18 and 55 years of age. Males were excluded from participating in this study. Women warriors were chosen for this study due to their increasing participation in the global war on terror, as well as the fact that there is a lack of literature on women warriors' lived military experiences.

With women making up only 15% of the military, they tend to fall into the classification of a minority group even though their service is voluntary. This study sets

out to understand the lived experiences of women warriors in a male-dominated military. As of this study there have been no scholarly studies describing the lived experiences of women warriors in the United States military.

### **Narrative Outline of the Dissertation**

The remainder of the dissertation will include a discussion of the limited literature on the experiences of women warriors, specifically as it pertains to women in nonconventional or stressful situations. I will also explain the methodology that I used to gather the data from women warriors who chose to participate and the rationale for the guiding questions, which were derived from a prior pilot study conducted by this researcher.

## Chapter 2

### Literature review

#### Introduction

The available literature on women warriors is limited to studies that look at issues such as Military Sexual Trauma (MST), Deployment Integration, Post Traumatic Disorders (PTSD), sexual harassment, and gender attitudes towards women. The available literature is mostly quantitative studies that do not allow for the understanding of the women's experiences and needs. Besides journal articles, there are numerous books dedicated to the stories of women warriors such as, *Love My Rifle More than You* (Williams & Staub 2006), *Band of Sisters* (Holmstedt 2007), *The Girls Come Marching Home: Stories of women warriors returning from the war in Iraq* (Holmstedt 2009), and *One Woman's Army* (Karpinski 2005). Furthermore, I reviewed a quantitative study that does not speak to the topic of women warriors directly; it looks at gender and stress. The study, *Gender and Stress: is gender role stress? A re-examination of the relationship between feminine gender role stress and eating disorders (Gender and Stress)* (Bekker, 2002), is a relevant scholarly work that offers new insight into the role of gender, stress, and well-being of women, as well as certain disorders. This literature review will discuss the available literature surrounding women warriors in combat situations.

#### Women in Combat

*Love My Rifle More than You* (Williams & Staub 2006) is the story of one sergeant's experience of being young and female in the United States Army. The book

describes Kayla Williams's personal experience in a combat zone somewhere in Iraq. Her book reflects her personal opinion of her military experience as well as military colloquialism, such as "Queen for a year," to describe women warriors in a combat zone. According to Ms. Williams, as a "woman at war, you are automatically a desirable commodity, and scarce one at that. We call it 'Queen for a Year.' Even the unattractive girls start to act stuck-up. There is also this 'deployment scale' for hotness" (2005, P. 19). Ms. Williams describes not only the military male perception but also the perception of the male Iraqis towards women warriors. Ms. Williams shares that "apparently Iraqis asked our guys if we were prostitutes employed by the U.S. military to service the troops in the same way the Russian army managed sex for its soldiers in Kosovo. I did not want anyone to think we were the U.S. equivalent" (2005, p. 21).

From a more humorous but very realistic approach, Ms. Williams has a short chapter on "How to Prepare for Deployment to Iraq." Some of her suggestions include:

- Every night until you deploy, sleep in your vehicle. Or sleep on a cot next to your vehicle. (p.64)
- Hire a garbage truck to run all day and night in your driveway for correct ambient noise. Keep a pit of manure burning for proper fragrance. (p. 64)
- Ask two hundred people you don't know, and don't necessarily like, to live with you for a month. Make sure there are at least five times as many more men than women. (p. 65)
- Once you are good and filthy, use baby wipes to clean yourself. Don't take a proper shower for two weeks. Pretend you don't know what you look or smell like. (p. 65)

- Travel in convoys with your neighbors. Drive very slowly, careful to avoid plastic or paper bags on the road (in case they are explosives). Carry your weapon with you at all times. Point it at anyone suspicious. Stop at every bridge and overpass and inspect them for bombs before driving over them. (p. 66)
- When your child asks for a ball to play with, have him find the precise one he wants on the Internet, type up a Form 9, attach a printout of the web page, put everything in an envelope, mail it to a third party for processing, and tell your child the ball will arrive in just a few weeks. (p. 67)
- Just when you think you're ready to resume a normal life, do everything on this list again in order to prepare yourself for the unexpected extension of your deployment. (p. 67)

For the most part, it appears that Ms. Williams is sharing her experiences in Iraq from an angry perspective and she appears to generalize sexual experiences across the military. Without taking away from her personal experiences and those that she may have observed during her Iraq deployment, Ms. William's book does not meet the criteria for a trustworthy study. The credibility of the book was not established as a scholarly work but rather a personal story with a narrow focus on her perspective. Transferability, dependability, and conformability of Ms. William's experiences are subjective and can only be validated by her.

*Band of Sisters* (Holmstedt, 2007) presents the stories of 12 women warriors from different military branches who served in Iraq. This book makes an effort to approach the stories from a multicultural perspective and highlights some of the first military opportunities for women warriors. Some of the uncommon stories are from the first

female U.S. pilot to be shot down and survive, the military's first black female pilot in combat, a 22 year old turret gunner defending convoys, two marine lance corporals in a firefight, and a nurse saving lives including her own. Marine Lance Corporals Carrie Blais and Priscilla Kispetik share a memory of a specific day, any day in a war zone:

Suddenly, a loud crash jolted them from their tranquil positions. A rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) had just smashed the window and wall where the male Marines were sleeping. They dropped to the floor. "You okay?" they yelled to each other. Before they could grab their flaks, Kevlars, and rifles, they heard the whistle of another incoming RPG and crash. (Holmstedt, 2007 p.1)

Gunnery Sergeant Yolanda Mayo and Captain Kelly Frushour, who became the first Public Affairs female team in combat, both women no taller than 5'7", survived multiple attacks. The two marines' job was to report on the war battles and deal with the stress of war because of their ability to find humor in most situations.

In this second book, *The Girls Come Marching Home* (2009), the author attempts to follow the process of re-integration back into a non-military society. The author states that "I had to finish what they started. In *Band of Sisters* you heard their voices from the battle field; now I want you to hear their voices when they came home" (Holmstedt, 2009 p. vii). The book outlines the desperation experienced by women warriors who try to pick up their lives where they left off. As the book states, "many of the women find that the civilian world no longer understands them and the military is not always able to give them the help they need" (Holmstedt, 2009). For the general population interested in a journalistic approach to understanding women in the military, *Band of Sisters* and *The Girls Come Marching Home* are good reading but not scholarly research. These stories

are limited in that they are through the eyes of the authors. The authors describe the women's experiences from a story-telling perspective and not from a phenomenological study perspective.

The final book, *One Woman's Army* (Karpinski, 2005), was written by General Karpinski as a way to share her story of the scandal of Abu Ghraib Iraq as well as the obstacles and limitations the Army put on her during her career. General Karpinski begins her book by stating:

What I resent is being scapegoated for the mess at Abu Ghraib. After more than 25 years as an officer in America's Military service, I am still the expendable women in this man's Army. . . . I wrote this book to dispute that claim. I kept the record of a difficult, sometimes humiliating, often exhilarating transition not just for me, but for all women who have stepped beyond the velvet bounds of the old Women's Army Corps and are determined to stand shoulder to shoulder with men in an Army that needs us all. It has been a long climb, and there are still a lot of men who do not acknowledge our passage, but let me help them out. Let me state the theme of my story very clearly: It's my Army, too." (Karpinski, 2005, pp. 24-25)

General Karpinski describes many of her challenges as a woman during her Army career. Beginning from her early days going through basic training at Fort McClellan, Alabama, where the sentiment towards women was either you were a lesbian or you must be sleeping with every man in sight. After many years, General Karpinski shares one of her interviews:

When I showed up for the interview, a retired lieutenant colonel was seating in the waiting room. He told me he was certain he would get the position, and I said, 'Well, it's good to have confidence going into an interview,' Then he looked at me and asked, 'Is there a secretarial position open? Is that why you are here?' 'No,' I said. 'I'm your competition.' When I got out of the Army, I should have realized how hard it would be to get the Army out of me. (Karpinski, 2005 p. 105)

This book clearly depicts the reality of women warriors in the Army. As a women warrior myself, I understand what General Karpinski is trying to share. She is fair in her story and assessment of the power division between men and women. She gives credit where credit is due and the rest, the reality of being a woman warrior, becomes very obvious in her powerfully honest story.

In this collective case study the women's experiences was captured verbatim without any interpretation from me. Their uncommon lived experiences were captured thorough the interview process of demographic and military experience questions. As part of the interview instrument, I was sensitive to statements or reactions to questions that lie outside the semi-structured interview questions. In this collective case study I offer civilian readers a more in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of women warriors as opposed to a journalistic approach as presented in earlier works.

### **Theoretical Framework**

**Standpoint epistemology.** Standpoint epistemology is based on the Marxian idea of a standpoint of the proletariat. Marx suggests that depending on the social status the person occupies, it give them a distinct perspective on social reality. These standpoints are not only different in their content, but also in reality. The inference is that the



perspective the working class has on society is less distorted than from other standpoints or perspectives under the capitalist system. This Marxian epistemology suggests that in order to accurately understand the needs of a phenomenon, one must be in a position to experience it and its effects, as well as to not have a vested interest or bias that may lead to a distorted understanding (Tanesini, 1999).

Hartsock's (1983) feminist standpoint is based on Marxian ideology that a person's everyday life will tell the understanding of the society developed by the person. Hartsock suggests that women's specificity is the basis for a distinctive perspective. For Hartsock, the feminist standpoint emerges from the "sexual division of labor," using the term "sexual" rather than "gendered" because of the role biology plays in human existence. This component is the human production of children, which distinguishes women's work from men's work. It is childbearing and childrearing that gives rise to distinct experiences that may be understood only by the participant.

**Gender role.** Socialization can also create serious outcomes for those individuals who chose to "violate" certain gender roles. O'Leary and Donohue (1978) find that violating a single role is not problematic compared to multiple violations. The male that has the ability to stay home to nurture his children, cook for them, and take care of all their daily needs is said to be a "perfect father" and the lucky woman must recognized how lucky she is. Conversely, the woman that joins the army, dresses in BDU's combat boots, and shoots an M4, is said to be too "manly," "tomboyish," or possibly a "lesbian." It is this unfair discrepancy of gender role violations to which standpoint objects, and it refutes the viewpoint that we must conform according to our gender.

Gender role violations become increasingly more unacceptable to the group that feels “violated,” and in many cases, those groups are males. Women in non-traditional roles are often criticized for violating gender roles. Yoder (1985) describes her experience as one of two civilian females at West Point. She describes the isolation she felt and how quickly her self-esteem went down. She was pigeonholed as either a “woman’s libber” or a wife figure who was expected to bring food. After she objected to sexist remarks, she was not considered a team player. Feminism looks at this dilemma as a quandary that puts well-qualified women in the position of accepting what they can get as well as tolerating sexist insults at the expense of their selves. A woman warrior’s option becomes either take it, and keep your mouth shut, or leave because she cannot take it. Women in leadership positions have often become the target of sexist remarks that question their leadership abilities (Yoder, 1985).

A meta-analysis showed that there were no differences between men and women when their overall leadership effectiveness was measured (Eagly, 1995). However, both sexes were more successful when the gender violations were minimized. Current gender studies are less concerned with establishing superiority between male and female. Presently, the consensus is that gender is socially created rather than biological. Children learn their gender roles very early on, and create internal guidelines for which behaviors are acceptable and which are not.

The study I reviewed, *Gender and Stress*, is an academically sound study that offers new insight into the role of gender stress and well-being of women, as well as certain disorders.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships between eating disorders, feminine gender role stress, and other types of stress. Furthermore, the use of depressogenic coping by the control non-clinical group and eating disorders experimental group was also examined. The hypothesis of the study is that women who suffer from eating disorders will experience stress more often and use depressogenic coping skills more frequently. Eating disorders is the independent variable. Feminine gender role stress, masculine gender role stress, perceived life stress, and coping styles are the dependent variables of the study.

The findings of the study show that women with eating disorders suffered from higher levels of three different types of stress: feminine gender role stress, recently experienced stress, and masculine gender role stress. Stress and eating disorders appeared to be associated. Women with eating disorders applied emotional coping more often than the control group of participants. Therefore, the authors conclude that stress is not the cause for the eating disorders; eating disorders is the result of the negative emotions that women have. Thus, the experimental group used emotion-focused coping more often.

The article is written in a clear and organized way. The issues of the study are discussed in a balanced way. It addresses the current practical concerns of women with eating disorders. The study clearly stated the rationale and hypothesis that women with eating disorders tend to cope with their stress in an emotional coping style. The study did not provide a literature review for all the types of stressors that may affect women with eating disorders. The authors mainly focused on the women's self-perception and self-esteem. The rationale for using the eating disorder inventory, gender role stress scale, the perceived stress scale, and coping inventory with stressful situations were discussed in

this study. Furthermore, the good validity and high Cronbach's alpha as a coefficient for the reliability is reported for each instrument (.86 - .96).

The statistical procedure was a t – test for two independent samples to investigate between group differences, the experimental and control groups with regard to different types of stress and coping styles. Feminine gender role stress was found to be statistically significant in both groups. Thus, multivariate analysis of covariance was used with recently experienced stress as a covariate. In addition, the authors used subsequent multivariate analysis of covariance with age and educational level as covariates. Finally, the authors calculated the association of different subscales.

The authors goal was to examine whether the presence of eating disorders is associated with stress, which leads to more frequent use of the depressogenic coping. The relationships were investigated with the use of MANCOVA, which is an appropriate method of inquiry. The experimental group was a sample of 36 Caucasian women from an ambulatory institute from the southern part of the Netherlands. The control group was composed of “normal” university female students. The difference in age and level of education between the two groups reported by the authors could create a bias in the study.

The finding of the study shows that women with eating disorders experienced statistically significant more stress than those without eating disorders: feminine gender stress (  $t = -2.19$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), masculine gender role stress (  $t = -3.50$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), recently experienced stress (  $t = -5.95$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and emotion focused coping (  $t = -4.57$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). However, the results of the MANCOVA showed that there was no difference between either group of women in the feminine gender roles and masculine gender roles. The authors note that one of the threats to internal validity of the study is that the samples

were of bulimics and non-clinical students. Furthermore, another possible threat to internal validity was selection and participation of the subjects as they were “requested” by the psychotherapist to participate. It is unknown the true motivation the participants might have had. An unbalanced sample size of white Dutch women was used, which threatens the external validity of the study since it may not be generalized across populations.

The authors admit that the conclusion of the study may be threatened by the limitations, and they encourage further research on temporal and causal relationships between stress and eating disorders. Overall, the study was productive, however, the study could have been more effective had the researchers controlled better for sample size and representation of the population.

Feminist standpoint recognizes the need for gender role flexibility in order to succeed in a dynamic and collaborative society. Extreme gender ideals of femininity or masculinity may affect the mental health and overall well-being of an individual (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987). This gender role conflict may ultimately create role stress when behaviors are not consistent with the roles learned in childhood. Individuals who do not resolve these conflicts may end up with problems of emotional well-being (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987).

Eisler and Skidmore (1987) devised a measure of masculine gender role stress (MGRS) in order to measure behaviors that violate male gender roles. They suggest that gender roles can manipulate certain functions as well as coping, creating gender differences when it comes to certain life stressors. The scales were to measure rigid or maladaptive gender roles in women’s coping skills, hoping to reduce susceptibility to

stressful situations. Gillespie and Eisler (1992) designed a study to investigate women's stress when faced with feminine gender role commitments. Women demonstrated more stress when their gender role was challenged, indicating that cognitive appraisal and coping can be influenced by gender role conflict.

According to Nolen-Hoeksema (1987) many women believe that the internalization of feminine gender roles can create serious interpersonal inadequacy as well as threaten their self-esteem when their gender roles are threatened. Nolen-Hoeksema noted that certain coping strategies such as passivity, self-deprecation, dependence, rumination, and emotionality might suggest possible depression in women. The researchers suggested that for future research women's responses should be measured across gender-specific and gender-neutral questions.

**Androgyny.** Bem (1981) refutes the concept that it was the "true female" or "true male" who typified true psychological health but rather individuals of either sex that are androgynous. Bem (1974) suggests that individuals who do not adhere to the internalization of sex roles are more adaptive, as well as psychologically healthier, because they do not have to adhere to rigid sex roles. These individuals are said to be androgynous as they have the flexibility to engage freely in male and female behaviors without constraints.

Overall research on the concept of androgyny has suggested that androgyny may need to be seen as ability to self-actualize and personal fulfillment rather than as stand-alone concept. Individuals who have the flexibility to become fully functioning will have greater opportunities to experience well-being and success in their lives. The term

*androgyny* was not fully accepted by researchers or clinicians as a measure of well-being independently of gender role constraints.

**Standpoint.** According to Harding (2004), dominant groups are not prepared to identify oppressive features of their own beliefs and practices. Standpoint, on the other hand, is considered the “logic of inquiry,” and through research, it will allow researchers to maximize the oppressed groups. Feminist standpoint has delineated numerous goals over the last 30 years from explaining the relationships between androcentric institutional power and sexism to the methodology of research that will promote empowerment for the oppressed group.

Bem (1981) postulates that people learn a “complex network of gender related concepts and symbols from their culture” (p. 23). Once a person acquires gender schema, i.e. that “lilacs” and “pink” are feminine and “trucks” and “brown” are masculine, they perceive their behaviors as well as others through this schema lens. According to this theory, a person that has strong gender schemas may judge a new acquaintance based on his or her schema. For instance, a female who has very strong feminine gender schema may judge a new acquaintance according to her own level of femininity. On the other hand, an academician may judge the same person according to the subject’s abilities and vocabulary. Gender stress has been linked by many researchers as a catalyst for stress as well as psychological issues. Bem (1981) argues that there are motivational consequences to gender categorization. According to Bem (1981), highly schematic men consider masculine behavior desirable and feminine behavior undesirable in themselves and other men. However, gender-aschematic people do not really care whether their behavior or other’s behavior is masculine or feminine. These groups of aschematic individuals would

be considered androgynous and may exhibit both feminine and masculine gender behaviors. Bem's androgynous theory is emphasized differently in the gender schema model. The strength of the individual's belief about gender schematic behavior versus gender aschematic behavior is of greater value, instead of feminine, masculine, or androgynous behavior.

**Gender stereotypes.** Gender stereotypes may have a direct effect on the difference in sex behaviors of individuals and specially women who do not subscribe to traditional roles such as the military. Steele (1997) suggests that stereotypes can have a devastating negative effect on women when stereotypes diminish their abilities, i.e., females not being good at math or mechanically inclined. These stereotypes can create anxiety and devalue a woman's self-worth and may suppress the performance of an individual who belongs to the group. Steele coined the term stereotype threat to describe this phenomenon. According to Steele (1997), stereotype threat occurs specifically among individuals who are capable of certain ability. However, if the ability is paired with differences in gender, the individual does not perform to his or her ability. This phenomenon has been noted when women were asked to take a math test that would measure their math ability according to gender. The stereotype of women not being good at math creates a negative stereotype that lurks in the minds of women while they take these tests.

**Negative stereotypes of women warriors.** Dunivin (1994) argues that the military often justifies excluding women from combat as a way to preserve combat effectiveness. Many proponents of keeping women from combat believe that effective unit cohesion can only happen in a gender-homogeneous combat unit. Dunivin argues



that it is this exclusionary model of *warrior* with male overtones of superiority, and so called normalcy that creates a form of female deficiency. A further example of the possible negativism of the exclusionary model is the statement by U.S. Department of Defense Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Edwin Dorn (1996), in which he explains to congress exclusion laws and policies restricting women from certain assignments:

The combat exclusion reflects and reinforces widespread attitudes about the place of women in the military...Put bluntly, women may not be regarded as “real” soldiers until they are able to do what “real” soldiers do, which is to kill and die in combat. (p.3)

The Atlanta Journal and Constitution (1993) published an editorial in which the writer stated that the problem of allowing women into combat is not in the inabilities of women, but rather in the mind of General Merrill McPeak, Air Force Chief of Staff. The editorial quotes McPeak stating before congress that “if given the option to choose between an inferior male pilot and a much better women pilot, he would choose the male. ... I know it does not make much sense, but that is how I feel.’ The issue for General McPeak is not about effectiveness but rather gender, as the existence of female pilots would offend his sense of proper gender roles” (Dunivin, 1994, p. 536).

A 1992 Roper poll of over 4,400 military members showed that three out of four military members agreed that combat assignments should go to the best-qualified person regardless of gender (Ward, 1993). In an article describing the Tailhook incident, the writer states that the military must adopt an identity that includes not only war-fighting, but also peacekeeping as well as disaster relief (Solaro, 2006). It is not until the climate of the military changes from a non-egalitarian, male-only vocation that equal opportunity will be available for all warriors. However, altering the military’s culture is very difficult.

It is almost impossible to change the fundamental nature of beliefs and attitudes of such institutions as the military that have been acculturated by generations of soldiers.

Studies by Hall and Ebbert (1993) and Francke (1997) find that stereotypic beliefs about women are in direct contrast to the successful performance of a soldier. Stereotypic beliefs of a successful soldier are those of males, with the stereotypic qualities of women being rejected. The discrepancy between the stereotypes of women and the required attributes for success in the military create negative evaluations of woman if they seem to lack masculine traits and possess feminine traits. These stereotypes are what often make women “unfit for military roles” (Eagly & Karau, 1995; Heilman, 1983).

The integration of women in the military is often seen by many as “token” behavior. According to Kanter (1977), token status creates a larger problem since tokens are constantly watched, and this creates heightened pressure to perform. Furthermore, tokens are kept away from male-type clubs and are not invited to bond with males, thus creating a larger gap in the appearance of gender-based differences. On the other hand, when tokens assume gender inappropriate roles in order to fit in, they appear to harvest hostile reactions (Yoder, 1991).

Many issues have been used to explain why women should not be totally integrated into the military. Issues of deployment and risk factors such as increased incidence of mental disorders are an area that has been studied. Results show that during an 18-month period, 1.3% of women in combat support occupations were hospitalized with a psychiatric disorder, compared to 2.2% of women who were not in combat occupations. According to Lindstrom et.al (2006), an explanation of this phenomenon of “protective effect” may be that women who choose to enter the combat support

occupations of the military are more physically and mentally fit than those who are not in a combat support area.

Another related study that underpins the concept of gender flexibility supports the knowing-how hypothesis. Bem (1974) proposes the construct of *androgyny*, which combines the most desirable characteristics of males (agentic) and females (communal). According to Bem, agentic characteristics include assertiveness and independence whereas communal characteristics include gentleness and nurturance. Bem and Lewis(1975) argue that androgynous individuals have the ability to be gender-flexible as well as adaptability to a series of different situations, allowing them to handle a broad spectrum of situations. The higher the gender-flexibility, the easier it is for androgynous individuals to move towards the desirable agentic characteristics or communal characteristics. Conversely, according to Bem and Lewis (1975), individuals with lower levels of gender-flexibility, masculine and feminine, will demonstrate more gender-appropriate characteristics regardless of the situation.

**Issues affecting women warriors.** A quantitative study I reviewed that looks at women warriors is *Gender and Stress* (Bekker, 2002). The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between eating disorders, feminine gender role stress, and other types of stress. Furthermore, the use of depressogenic coping by the control non-clinical group and eating disorders experimental group was also examined. The hypothesis of the study is that women who suffer from eating disorders will experience stress more often and use depressogenic coping skills more frequently. Eating disorders is the independent variable. Feminine gender role stress, masculine gender role stress, perceived life stress, and coping styles are the dependent variables of the study.

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The long term integration of women in the military continues to be a problem, not only due to the perceived differences between men and women, but the ongoing internal issues that many women warriors experience. These unsolicited and unacceptable experiences create an unprofessional, as well as unequal, environment for women warriors. Sims, Dragow and Fitzgerald (2005) conducted a study of 11,521 women spanning four years and concluded that experiences of harassment led to an increase in turnover. A similar study by Friedl (2005) funded by congress to study the biomedical issues of importance for military women found that when it came to sexual harassment and assault at three Army posts, 30% of women and 8% of men reported sexual assault. In a study going back as far as Vietnam, 79% of women reported sexual harassment and 54% reported unwanted sexual contact. Sexual harassment was mainly due to poor leadership, hostile work environment, and male soldiers' lack of acceptance of women as fellow soldiers.

A study by Antecol and Cobb-Clark (2006) examined the relationship between sexual harassment and turnover of women in the military. Over 70.9% of active duty women reported experiencing harassing behaviors during a 12 month span, which has been associated with job dissatisfaction and a reduction of well-being (Clark, 1996, 1997). An issue that seems to be of great interest to the Department of Defense is the attrition of women in the military. Caulfield (2005) looked at the premature attrition of women being 30% higher than that of men. However, this study, as well as a very large study sponsored by the United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (2009), looked at the women's interpersonal trauma prior to enlisting in the military, not what may have happened during their enlistment.

Women are suffering a range of brain injuries during their military service. When they return home to their communities, women veterans who may appear normal from the outside may be suffering in silence while attempting to return to their previous lives and functioning in their previous roles in the civilian community (Foster & Vince, 2009). This transition may be especially difficult for women caring for families, going to school, or returning to the workforce. Women may face the challenge of not having their service-related injuries recognized because Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is still not well understood.

In September 2008, the Veterans Administration (VA) acknowledged that even mild TBI sustained by service members is a serious problem likely to affect their ability to make a living. As a result, compensation for such injuries has increased. TBI results in a broad range of physical, cognitive, behavioral, and social challenges. According to the

National Institute of Health (2002), those who survive head injuries often suffer from a range of problems including:

- Hearing loss, vision, and speech problems
- Difficulty with memory, information processing, and attention/concentration
- Anger management issues
- High rates of depression, anxiety, and alcohol use

The presence of any of these conditions can impair health, work productivity, and family and social relationships. Co-occurring problems are substance abuse, homelessness, and suicide. Roughly only half of those who need treatment seek it, but only slightly more than half who receive treatment get even minimally adequate care (Tanielian, 2008). Based on a study of national VA data:

37 percent of the OIF/OEF veterans receiving VA health care from 2002 to 2008 received a mental health diagnosis, including PTSD (22 percent), and depression (17 percent). Active duty veterans younger than 25 years had higher rates of PTSD and alcohol and drug use compared with active duty veterans older than 40 years. In addition, women were at higher risk for depression than were men, but men had over twice the risk for drug use disorders. (Tanielian, 2009, p. 31)

According to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Women face a unique set of challenges associated with their military service. Female veterans are more likely than male veterans to have experienced serious psychological distress” (p. 32).

Serious psychological distress is an overall indicator of past-year mental health problems such as anxiety and/or mood disorders. In women who utilize the VA, higher rates of mental health conditions are present than in their male counterparts: 37 percent of women veterans have mental health diagnoses (Tanielian, 2009).

There are studies that describe certain issues of women warriors, such as:

- Journalistic books that explore the women warrior's perceptions of the military and readjustment into civilian life.
- Studies that review the data on gender flexibility and androgyny
- Issues of sexual harassment and sexual hostility
- Psychological distress such as TBIs, depression and substance abuse.

There are also policies of the United States Military and possible attrition factors, however, there is no academic literature as of this study that has captured the uncommon lived experiences of women warriors and their uncommon experiences in the military that may affect their decision to stay or leave the service.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Design and Methodology**

A collective case study design was chosen for this study as it allowed me to explore the individual experiences of women warriors as individual cases and across the cases. This collective case study allowed me to better understand the experiences of women warriors in the United States military and how those experiences affect their lives and choices to stay, leave, or reintegrate into civilian life. Using my own experiences as a woman warrior in the United States Army in the 1970's, I reached out to my sisters in arms and asked them to share their lived experiences.

The experiences of women warriors who have served or are serving in an all-volunteer force offer new insights on the possible impact of the military on women's lives. This insight into the experiences of women warriors will give counselors and other professionals a better understanding of the adaptive behaviors and psychological/emotional wellbeing of women who serve or have served in the military forces.

#### **Introduction**

For the purpose of this study, all women who serve or have served in the U.S. military will be considered warriors, as are their male counterparts. In this section, the logic, structure, and design of the proposed study will be presented, as well as any threats to the trustworthiness of the qualitative design. Also in this section is a description of the



participants, instrumentation, and procedures, , as well as a discussion of the techniques, instruments, and methodological assumptions regarding the sample.

### **Design of the Study**

This study uses themes as cues derived from a pilot study where 44 military women participated via an on-line survey that asked, “What have your experiences been in the military as a woman warrior?” Themes from my personal experiences as a woman warrior, as well as *woman warrior literature*, were used to create an on-line survey that was accessible to women warriors all over the world for my original pilot. This design lends itself to the exploration of a phenomenon when there are no measures or instruments available and when the variables are unknown (Green, 1989).

Maxwell (2005) agrees that reality cannot be captured in a qualitative inquiry. Validity then, “is a goal rather than a product: it is never something that can be proven or taken for granted (p. 105). Criteria for trustworthiness of this qualitative study follows the guideline provided by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Trustworthiness was obtained by following Lincoln and Guba’s procedure of credibility:

1. Prolonged engagement or insider knowledge of my military experience allowed the participants to feel at ease and allow me to measure the validity of the interview.
2. Triangulation was used to corroborate the information derived from the participants’ interviews with the themes of the past online -survey pilot study and my personal experiences in the military.

3. All interviews were member-checked by those members that were not deployed via e-mail. The transcriptions were sent to the participants for their approval of the transcribed information.
4. The participants have the option to add new information, clarify existing information, or remove information.
5. I maintained a reflexive journal for the entire study. I began by using it as a way to maintain ideas, thoughts, and literature references. The journal also served as a way to debrief myself as I interviewed the women warriors and listened to their experiences. I also detailed a chronological historical account of my experiences throughout this dissertation process.

### **Participants**

The participants were women warriors who wear or have worn the uniform of the United States military sometime from 1979 to the present as these dates allowed me to participate as an instrument. This “criterion” sampling strategy worked best for this type of case study because it assured that all the participants had military experience. I asked the women warriors to send out emails to their women warrior friends asking them if they would be interested in taking part in my study. The internet was utilized to access women warriors through Facebook. Facebook was used to communicate with women who were willing to take part in the study and were willing to be interviewed in person or by phone depending on their location (Appendix B).

Women who wear or have worn the uniform of the United States military and have served from 1979 – present, and who are between the ages of 18–55 qualified to be interviewed, either in person or by phone. The year *1979* was chosen because it was in

the 1970's that the all-volunteer military force began and it was the period in which I served (Appendix C). This range allowed me, as one of the instruments, to effectively participate. For these qualitative, in-depth interviews, I interviewed nine women warriors. The interviews were conducted either in person or by phone depending where the women warriors were stationed. I chose to interview the first nine women that were available for an interview, making sure each branch of the military was represented (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Guard, and Reserves. (Appendix D).

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3. I maintained a reflexive journal for the entire study. I began by using it as a way to maintain ideas, thoughts, and literature references. The journals also served as a way to debrief myself as I interviewed the women warriors and listened to their experiences. I also utilized it as a chronological, historical account of my experiences throughout this dissertation process.

**Instruments.** The two instruments I used in this study were my personal experience as a woman warrior in the United States military and a semi-structured interview. I offered my experiences in the military for the purpose of bracketing my

experiences, and perceived ideas of the phenomenon of being a woman warrior. This concept of bracketing, or *epoch*, is central to the preconceived ideas of the phenomenon and allows for the voices of the interviewees to be heard independently (Field & Morse, 1985). Bracketing my experiences did not allow my assumptions of my past experiences to shape the data of the interview, nor was my own understanding of the experiences imposed onto the interviewees (Crotty, 1996). The use of a reflexive journal allowed me to understand my own experiences rather than eliminating them for the sake of the data (Porter, 1993). As I began the process of gathering data I started a reflexive journal in which I wrote down the issues or concerns I encountered. This process enhanced my ability to bracket my experiences from those of the participants. Moreover, this bracketing of my experiences allowed me to understand the participants' experiences without imposing a *priory hypothesis* on the phenomenon. I interviewed some of the participants by phone and the others in-person.

The use of phenomenological interview techniques was used in this study.

Seidman (1998) proposed an in-depth, three step process for phenomenological inquiry:

1. I focused on the past experiences of the phenomenon (my experiences)  
(Seidman, 1998)
2. I focused on the lived experiences of current women warriors
3. Both experiences were joined to create the essential experience with the phenomenon.

Prior to interviewing, a full description of my lived experiences as a women warrior was documented, as a form of *bracketing* or *epoch*, in order to put aside my own preconceptions, as defined by Patton (1990).

The next step was the reduction of the phenomenon where I identified the essence of the phenomena as described by Patton (1990). The data was then clustered around themes that described the “textures of the experience” (Creswell, 1998, p. 150). Structural synthesis was the final stage where the description of the essence of phenomena and structure was culminated (Creswell, 1998). This form of phenomenological interview technique allowed me to focus explicitly on my own, personal lived experiences

**Interview.** The interview was semi-structured beginning with rapport-building statements (Creswell, 1998). Rapport building statements included:

1. My status as prior Army
2. My status as a disabled veteran
3. My status being married to a retired Navy officer
4. Having a daughter in the Texas Air Guard
5. My experiences as a WAC/Soldier

As a practicing psychotherapist, I used active listening and probing questions as needed in support of the guiding questions. The participants were nine women warriors who agreed to be interviewed by means of hearing of the study, participating in the pilot survey, or referral from another women warrior.

The protocol for the interview was comprised of the following guiding questions that were derived from the survey conducted as a pilot study. In this qualitative inquiry, there were several questions guiding the study:

1. How did their military experiences influence their decisions to stay or leave the military?

2. What were the positive aspects of being a woman warrior in the United States Military?
3. What were the negative aspects of being a woman warrior in the United States Military?
4. How did they decide to stay or leave the service?

The interview was broken down into demographic questions and military experience questions with appropriate prompts as necessary.

Demographic questions:

1. What branch of the service are/were you in?
2. What year did you enter the service and old how were you?
3. What can you tell me about your family of origin?
4. What prompted you to join the service?
5. How long have you been/were in the service?
6. What is/was your highest rank?
7. What are/were your jobs in the service?

Military experience questions:

1. How successful do you feel you are/were in the service?
2. What prompted you to stay/leave the service?
3. How has your military experience shaped who you are as a person today?
4. How much do you believe you have in common with non-military women?

All participants were asked: “What has been your experience as a woman warrior in the United States military?” These questions were the basis of the formal scrip that was asked of the nine women warriors who volunteered to be interviewed as part of this study.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Upon receiving the University of South Florida IRB approval, I interviewed nine women warriors face-to-face or by telephone, and in both scenarios the interviews were recorded with their permission. Some of the telephonic interviews were long distance, as far away as the United Kingdom and deployable countries. An advantage of telephone interviewing rather than face-to-face is that it afforded me the opportunity to reach women that were not accessible by other means or methods. Women who are locally accessible were interviewed face-to-face, affording a greater complexity by allowing for more in-depth questioning, observations, and reactions of the participant. According to Sudamn (1981), response differences between phone and face-to-face procedures are small and can be ignored for most research applications. Using the appropriate methods and experienced interviewers, initial cooperation was the same as on telephone and face-to-face interviews.

I asked women warriors to tell other women warriors about my study and invite participation, either in person or by phone. During my pilot study, 44 women warriors participated in an on-line survey that included questions derived from my own lived experiences. I created business cards that explained the nature of my study and I passed them out to prospective women warrior participants with the name of the link ([www.femalewarriors.us](http://www.femalewarriors.us)) where the women could take the online survey.

### **Research Design and Verification Procedure**

Researcher bias plays a very important part in phenomenological studies, especially if the researcher “shares the same experiences with the informants” (Creswell, 1998, p. 133). In order to acknowledge my specific biases are towards this study, I have

included my lived experiences as a woman warrior in order to *bracket* my lived experiences from the participants' lived experiences.

Verification of phenomenological studies begins with “establishing the truth,” which is the researcher’s perception of the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas suggests:

The researcher must first reflect on the meaning of the experience for oneself, and then one must turn outward to those being interviewed, and establish “intersubjective validity,” the testing out of this understanding with other persons through a back and forth social interaction. (p. 57)

Moustakas (1994) offers five questions that researchers should ask themselves:

1. Did the interviewer influence the contents of the subject’s description in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the subject’s actual experience?
2. Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation in the interview?
3. In the analysis of the transcription, were there conclusions other than those offered by the researcher that could have been derived? Has the researcher identified these alternatives?
4. Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account from the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?
5. Is the structural description situation specific, or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations? (p. 57)

### **About the Researcher**

As a doctoral student in Counselor Education at the University of South Florida and woman warrior, I chose to study the phenomenon of women warriors in the United



States Military. As a Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Family Mediator and Board Certified as a National Certified Counselor (NCC) and Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselor (CCMHC) with over 21 years of experience in the practice of psychotherapy, I have worked with many women warriors and their families. As I listen to their stories I cannot help but feel they do not fit the typical mold of women. I have often validated these observations and feelings by remembering my own lived experiences of being a woman warrior, first as part of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and then as a soldier in the United States Army.

My yearning to be part of the military began long before I enlisted in 1974 during the Vietnam War, and before it was acceptable for women to join the military. Looking back at my childhood in Santiago Chile, I have memories of always belonging to some type of organized government institution. My earliest memories were of living in the Dominican Republic Embassy in Lima, Peru, Santiago, Chile, and Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic with my grandfather, the Ambassador, and my grandmother. I also lived in the Dominican Consulate in Chile with my uncle while he was the consul general for the Dominican Republic. Besides experiencing the diplomatic corps, I also lived with my paternal grandmother, who had once been married to my grandfather, a Judge of the Supreme Court of Chile for many years.

The memories that were imprinted on my young mind were that of protocols and duty to country. My world as I knew it was turned upside down when my parents moved my sister, my brother, and me to New York City. My new world did not have protocols, maids, chauffeurs, private schools, and, most of all, they did not speak Spanish and I did

not speak English. This move was life-altering for a nine-year-old. It was very long before I began to adjust to the “American way,” but I picked up English rather quickly.

Looking back at my early elementary years, I can see that I seemed to be more motivated than the average 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grader. I chose to spend my summers in summer school in order to improve my English and become involved in many of the science programs NYC offered. I remember the summer I finished the 4<sup>th</sup> grade; I signed up for a science program that dealt with botany. To my surprise, I was the only student that showed up and the teacher and I spent the summer planting peanuts. Evidently, all this extra schooling that I subjected myself to with great pleasure paid off as I spent the rest of my school years in advanced placement classes. To my surprise, I really enjoyed going to school and learning, actually learning anything anyone was willing to teach me. This has become evident throughout my educational life.

My rebellion against the establishment began early in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade when I noticed that most of my friends were being placed in 8th grade accelerated science and social studies class. When I spoke with my guidance counselor, he told me that it would not be a good idea for me because English was my second language and I may have problems with the material. I pointed out to him that his rationale did not make sense since all my report card grades were outstanding, 96-100%, in spite of English not being my first language. So, off I went to accelerated classes. I excelled in high school and quickly became bored and un-inspired. Luckily, my high school had an arrangement with Queens College for a creation of a “mini school” composed of high-achieving students that were not being stimulated by the high school. By this time I was 16-years-old and had been encouraged by my mother and younger sister to meet the lifeguard of the pool in our

condominiums. As a way to get me out of the house, which was something that was of great concern to my parents, I decided to go meet the lifeguard. It turned out he had a younger brother who was also a lifeguard in one of the other pools. Against my better 16-year-old judgment I befriended these two brothers who were born in Siberia and had immigrated to the United States through Poland. After the first summer, all three of us became very good, platonic friends. We would often go skiing, camping, spelunking, fishing, and anything else that had to do with the outdoors. This was 1973-1974, and many of our friends had already been drafted and sent to Vietnam. Some returned, others did not. In an attempt to circumvent the draft, the three of us agreed we would all join the Army. This way Wally, who was the oldest (21 at that time), would not be drafted. During the draft years, it was said that if you got drafted you would go directly to Vietnam, but if you joined you may first go to a school of your choice first.

All three of us showed up to the recruiter's office in Queens, New York and told the recruiter we wanted to join under the "buddy system." We were quickly given the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) in a room that seemed to have a thousand people in it. It was at the local MEPPS station in Fort Hamilton, New York. As we waited for our test scores, our excitement grew and we began to meet many of the soldiers returning from Vietnam. One of my clearest memories was meeting a woman who was probably five years older than me (at the time I was 17). She showed up in a white fur jacket and boasted to an Army sergeant how great of a jacket it was. She spoke about how much she loved her job as a Military Police (MP) and that she was making \$500.00 per month with everything else paid for. Even though I was not over-impressed

by the fur coat or her salary, I began to realize that this woman was on her own and getting all the education and training she wanted.

As I reflect back on what seems to have been an impulsive reaction to join the Army, I recognize that it was probably a well-calculated move on my part. I had just turned 17 and my high school did not know what to do with me. I spent most of my time in the outdoors, which put me in great physical shape. Wally and I became a couple, but it did not destroy a beautiful friendship between the three of us. I was entering the 11<sup>th</sup> grade when Wally began going to Brooklyn College to study Psychology. I spent more time going to school with him, sitting in his classes and helping him with his homework, than going to my school. I remember being called in by the Dean of my school and being asked where I had been. So I told him I had been going to Brooklyn College with my boyfriend. I showed him some of the papers I had written and discussed my class participation though I was not officially enrolled. The class was so large that even when the professor would call on me, he did not know I didn't belong there. My Dean suggested I try to test out of the rest of high school because it was obvious I was not going to stick around. So I did. I was so excited when the letter arrived; I ran to show my mother and asked her if I could enroll in Brooklyn College. At that time, it was \$53.00 per semester and I could car pool with my boyfriend. My heart stopped when my mother told me that because she needed me to help baby-sit my newest sister, who was about six-years-old, I could not attend college. I tried to negotiate with her by telling her I could go to college part time, or at night, or Wally could also help babysit when I was in classes. However, the more logical I became, the more insistent she became. That was the clincher for me.

Within the week, November 4, 1974, I joined the Delayed Entry Program (DEP), where one joins before he or she is old enough. Wally and George joined with me because we had planned to join under the buddy system at the same time. By this time, our ASVAB scores were back; we had done extremely well, and we had the option to choose any job the Army had available. George, who was the most daring of us, decided he wanted to be an Airborne Ranger and was wishing he would be sent to Vietnam. Wally and I decided we wanted to be Soils Analysts, which is equivalent to a Soils Scientist in civilian life. This was right up my alley as my passion was Geology and anything that had to do with the outdoors.

No one in our families knew we had joined the DEP. On December 13, I turned 18, George was 19, and Wally 21. The morning of December 14, 1974 was a Saturday. The doorbell rang. I opened it, invited my ride to come and wait while I picked up my very small suitcase and said good-bye to my family. I thought they were going to drop dead. My parents were pale and in shock that I had the nerve to make my own decisions and join the Army. They did not speak to me for over a year.

From my house in Queens, New York, I was sent to Atlanta, Georgia to catch a connection to Birmingham, Alabama and then a bus that would take me to Fort McClellan, home of the Woman's Army Corps (WAC). By Sunday morning, I was part of a new society. There were 100 beds laid out side by side. Every two beds were separated by a metal dresser, with a wooden footlocker at the foot of a metal cot, the mattress was a typical four-inch-thick white sheets and a green, 100% wool OD blanket. Our beds were assigned alphabetically by last name. My name was *Aguero*, so I had the first bed in the dormitory and was made the example in front of everyone as I was

ordered to complete various commands in demonstration. I used up the first and only one hour of down time we had in basic training to walk around and meet some of the women. I was struck by our diversity; not only was there various skin colors among us but there was also a range in ages, educational backgrounds, and where we came from before enlisting. The women from California were wild, promiscuous, and were often either discussing smoking pot or smoking pot. There was a large group of women from Puerto Rico who could barely speak English, which left them confused much of the time. Some of them were not all there mentally. I remember there was one woman who had previously been in the service, had gotten out but could not make it in civilian life, and had re-enlisted.

Basic training was 12 weeks of hell; unnecessary hell. Our day began at 0400 hours in the dark skies of December in Fort McClellan, Alabama. We were tired, hungry, disoriented, and many were homesick. But I wasn't, even though I was one of the youngest. I missed Wally and George and we would often write letters to each other sharing our experiences in basic training. We spent the first few days of basic being immunized and measured for uniforms. I recall that the immunizations were administered in large groups resembling cattle calls. My barracks had about 100 women, and so did the other four companies. At any given time I could be standing in line with hundreds of women all with their shirt sleeves rolled up and some of them crying out of fear. Attrition was alive and well during these few weeks. Sometimes it was easy to predict which of the women would be sent back home or "retrained," usually for not passing the physical tests.

The medical prospect of being a recruit Enlisted 0, better known as *E-0*, was very scary, but what was coming next was even scarier. During the first week they kept us in a temporary company in order to process us with a very loving, maternal, easy-going Drill Sergeant. The second week we were assigned to our permanent company with a group of young, mean, female Drill Sergeants (cadre) who spent the day trying to make our lives hell. However, they seemed to mostly pick on the recruits that we had already identified as not making the cut. For the next few weeks we could not show fear, lack of motivation, or homesickness. If a woman showed any of these signs of weakness, the Drill Sergeants would peg her as a wounded animal and would harass her until she either straightened up or dropped out.

I still have vivid memories of marching everywhere we went and thinking to myself, "If I can hang in and graduate, I can do anything." Time seemed to pass very quickly in basic, mainly because the cadre always made sure we were busy doing something: peeling potatoes, cleaning, sweeping, marching, and studying – anything but lying down in our cots. This busy work was from 0400 to 1700, seven days a week. I remember the time that I was so exhausted that I began losing even more weight (I was 108 lbs. when I went into basic) and began sleepwalking. Then the Colonel in charge of our basic training battalion asked for volunteers to go sing in the church choir on Sundays. I was the first to volunteer even though I had no experience singing and especially no experience in a church choir, being Jewish. My last impulsive move was to run back home to New York and marry Wally. We figured that if we were married, they would not split us up. On December 24, 1974, we married.

On a very cold day in March of 1975, most of us who graduated marched in our class A uniforms with black high heels and heavy wool coats. This marked the beginning of even a more turbulent and chaotic military experience. Within two days, I was in Ft. Belvoir, Virginia waiting for my husband to arrive and my Soils Analyst class to begin. On the first day of class there were about 30 students, two of which were female (me and an American Indian). The first thing they did was give us a horrific math test. Then there were about 15 students left.

It was still rather cold in Virginia where we would spend hours digging holes, designing, and mixing cement and asphalt. By the time we finished class each day we were all exhausted. My husband and I were a little luckier because we were able to live outside the base since we were married. However, we still had to report by 0530 to the mess hall and 0600 to class, Monday through Friday. After graduation, the school offered my husband an opportunity to stay in Fort Belvoir and teach Soils Analysis. However, he refused because that would have broken the contract we had with the Army to keep us together.

Within a week's time, we arrived at Fort Riley, Kansas for the beginning of my real military experience. There were two engineer battalions that could use a Soils Analyst: the 34<sup>th</sup> Engineers (construction) and 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Engineers, to which I could not be assigned because I was female. So, I was assigned to the 34<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion where they were not sure what to do with me because I was a female and the first one they ever had. Within a month's time I was attached to the Corps of Engineers as Soils Analyst and New Construction Inspector for roads and bridges. This again did not go well, since I was again the first military female to work with the Corps that was mostly



civilian Engineers. By this time I was still only 20-years-old, well educated, and very willing to do my job but, again, the Engineers did not know what to do with me. I suggested they give me my assignments and let me work out of my soils lab by myself. My independent work went very well; I was promoted to E-3, and then quickly to E-4 (Specialist 4). My husband, who had been offered the teaching job, failed to advance in rank and job specialty. I then began to chase the elusive E-5 and in my case it would be a Specialist 5. However, my Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) required a minimum of 801 points to sit for the E-5 board. These points are made up of time and grade, time in service, commendations, education, and MOS tests. The military assigns these extremely high scores when they do not need to advance certain MOS because of demand. In the entire Army there were probably no more than 15 Soils Analysts.

As daunting as the MOS test appeared, I knew there was a chance the score may drop and the only person I would have to compete with would be my husband. I began to compile points, got letters of recommendation, and signed up for as many programmed Army courses as I could take. The day finally came; the score dropped from 801 to 501, and I was ready. The only thing I had not counted on was that the day I found out I could go before the Board I also found out I was pregnant. Therefore, off I went before the Board with my skirt zipper slightly open, hoping no one would question why I seemed to be holding my breath. After a very long inquisition, I emerged from the Board passing with flying colors. I was able to get my Specialist 5 in two and a half years. This was a great accomplishment.

As I neared the end of my three years of active duty I decided I should re-enlist rather than get out. I was home-bound for the last 30 days of my pregnancy because I was

underweight and my unit did not know what to do with a pregnant female. While I had decided to re-enlist, it was obvious to me that I should not stay with the Engineers; I felt they were not ready to utilize me to my full potential because they had so many issues with my being female.

I was able to secure an interview with Military Intelligence for a job as an Interrogator Prisoner of War (IPW). I had already taken the language test while I was accruing my points for my Spec-5. One of the major requirements was to be a linguist or learn a new language so I went in with Spanish as my rated language and Russian as my new language. I spent the next two years learning Russian and training American soldiers on escape and evasion techniques as well as compliance with the Geneva Convention as pertaining to Prisoners of War.

During these last two years, I had great opportunities for advancement such as going to West Point and training in Germany as part of the Return of Forces to Germany (REFORGER), which was an exercise designed to prove U.S. ability to move conventional military forces from the United States to Europe. However, I was disqualified from West Point because not only was I married but I also had a small child and REFORGER would take me away for a couple of months to the cold villages of Germany. As I decided to “man” the rear echelon, I recognized that as the only female Non-Commissioned Officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Military Intelligence Battalion left behind, I would have to pull Charge of Quarters (CQ) almost every other day. Not only was this an exhaustive duty but I had to do it with a loaded 45mm handgun. The gun was for my protection because there had been a rash of rapes in Fort Riley, Kansas during that time.

Even though I had great opportunities during my military career that were only limited by my marital circumstances, I also experienced daily sexual harassment, intimidation, and gender prejudice. On January 31, 1979, I left the Army against my better judgment, mainly because I was not getting any help from my husband with my daughter and had become a single parent. To this day I regret that decision to leave the Army.

### **Peer Debriefing**

To maintain clarity of the objective, which is to listen to the lived experiences of women warriors in depth, I had a peer debriefer, who has military experience and speaks the language of the military, help me debrief my prolonged interviews. The use of my peer debriefer helped relieve any stress or emotional reaction I may encountered due to listening to the lived uncommon experiences of the women warriors. The peer debriefer also ensured that some of the unique statements that were part of the women's uncommon experiences were not lost during the transcription.

### **External Auditing**

External auditing was conducted by a retired Navy officer who is very knowledgeable of the military culture as well as knowledge of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the auditor should review the product of the analysis for accuracy of themes and how the analysis was conducted as well as the results of the study. The external auditor also had the latitude to review the entire study and bring forth any concerns that he may have had about the design, collection, and analysis of the study that may jeopardize the quality of the study.

## Member Checking

After the interviews were transcribed, the participants were contacted by e-mail and asked to review the transcripts for accuracy. The participants had the opportunity to change, add, or delete any information on the transcript. The participants were asked to review the transcripts and return them via e-mail within seven days with any changes. Participants that did not respond within seven days with changes were assumed to have accepted the transcripts as written. Some of the participants were not accessible for member checking because they were deployed. The participants were reminded that the transcripts had a pseudo name and that their names will be kept anonymous from everyone except the searcher, peer debriefer, and doctoral dissertation committee.

The following is the email sent to each participant of the study asking her to review the attached transcript of our interview and to make any changes, additions, or deletions:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I would like to begin by thanking you for your participation in my study of Women Warriors in the United States Military. As I shared with you earlier, I am a woman warrior and recognize the dedication involved when one shares her personal lived experiences. I want to remind you that your information will have a pseudo name attached to it, and only the peer debriefer, the Ph.D. committee, and I will ever know your identify. Please review the attached transcript of our recorded interview and feel free to change, add, or delete any information on the transcript. If you make changes please return the changes within seven days. If I do not hear from you, I will assume you accepted the transcripts as written.

Again, thank you for sharing your most valuable lived experiences with me and allowing me to memorialize your experiences in my doctoral dissertation.

Sincerely,

### **Data Analysis**

For analyzing the data gathered in this study, I utilized the Stevick-Collazi-Keen method with modification as described by Creswell (1998). Legitimization of the data, such as verification, was attained by submitting the transcripts to a co-researcher, who also has military experience, in order to confirm the patterns that arose and possibly those that were not obvious to this researcher. The following steps were taken in order to analyze the data:

1. I began with a full description of my experiences with the phenomena, describing my experiences as a woman warrior.
2. As I interviewed women warriors, I listened for significant statements (horizontalization of the data) that demonstrate how they have experienced and/or are experiencing being a woman warrior. Each statement had equal worth, and was added to a list of non-repetitive statements for analysis. Themes were recognized for their frequency, saliency (affect) or uniqueness (non-modal). I also paid attention to uncommon statements (non-modal), which were sighs, reactions, and voice intonation.
3. As the researcher and instrument, I reflected on my own lived experiences and reflected on all the possible ways the participants may have experienced the phenomenon.

4. As the researcher and instrument, I reflected on my own lived experiences and reflected on all the possible ways the participants may have experienced the phenomenon.
5. I then constructed a meaning of the perceived lived experiences of the women warriors that offered their voices.
6. This process began with my own lived experiences and was then applied to each of the interviewed women warrior's experiences. The outcome was then a composite of all the perceived experiences.

The results of this study are revealed in chapter four with each participant's lived experiences reviewed individually, and my lived experiences bracketed. Chapter five reviews the methodology, findings, conclusions, and recommendation for future research.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

Chapter Three presented the methodological procedures followed during this collective case study. The study concluded with nine participants from the different branches of the military as well as one veteran. Each of the participants was interviewed using the same format and number of questions, which were introduced in Chapter Three. All interviews were in-depth and lasted from sixty to ninety minutes. The transcripts were analyzed in order to look for themes and nuances or non-modal statements from the participants. The data analysis was described in Chapter Three, along with a discussion of the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the data and research design. Chapter Four begins by presenting the results of each case study. These case studies are presented independently of each other and in the order they were recorded. Each participant's story is told using her own words. Demographic information was offered by the participant and is presented in the case narrative in order to view the participant's experience from the context of her background. Quotes from the participants are used to show an experience that identifies with each of the four military questions. Presenting the quotes in the first person allows the reader to be less distanced from the participant (Seidman, 1991).

### **Case Studies**

In this section, each participant's case study is presented in narrative form and with a pseudo name chosen by the participant. The cases begin with demographic information as

offered by the participant and are then followed by the four major military experiences questions:

1. How successful do you feel you are/were in the service?
2. What prompted you to stay/leave the service?
3. How has your military experience shaped who you are as a person today?
4. How much do you believe you have in common with non-military women?

At the end of the interview, I also asked all participants, “What advice do you have for young women wanting to join the service?” I asked this question to bring closure to the interview process and to thank the women warriors for sharing their very personal military experiences.

### **Amijah**

Amijah is a 36 year old Hispanic female who is presently in the Air Force. She has been in the service for ten years and is presently a Staff Sargent (E-5) working in a Force Specialty Code of Personalist. She grew up overseas with her father retiring from the Army and returning to Panama. She had never been to the United States until she joined the Air force. She is bilingual, speaking English and German but not Spanish, though both her parents are from Panama. Amijah’s father tried to discourage her from joining the Army. He suggested she join the Air Force so she could be treated equally and would have an opportunity to go to school. She was studying Nursing before joining the Air Force in Germany, but the school was not able to transfer her credits because of their lack of accreditation. She is presently finishing her Associate’s Degree and plans on starting her Bachelor’s degree.



For the past ten years, Amijah has been stationed in Arizona, Korea, Germany, and England. Arizona, her first base, was a culture shock because she had never been to that part of the world. Arizona was very rural, and “there was nothing out there.” Then there was Korea, which was very stressful because of the real war threat. And then Germany was “too big and the work was doubled.” During this ten-year period, Amijah was never deployed to a war zone.

Amijah was very stressed and pressured as she spoke about her degree of success in the Air Force during her service. She began by telling me that her Air Force Specialty Code has caused her anxiety because of the lack of computers and the excessive work. I redirected her to the original question, and she began by telling me that she has been trying to get promoted without success. She told me that this was her fourth time testing for her next rank (E-6), and she not had time to study because she was “moving or over-tasked.” In describing her frustration of not getting rank, she told me:

You know it’s an Air Force ambition. I’m still overworked at work, so I’m actually sort of frustrated with my progression. I think that the work I do and the quality of the work and the amount of work is already at the next level in my case that would be an E-6. In the civilian world when you do that, you get paid or get some type of recognition. I didn't get anything. And the common consensus is that, well, you know, if you're able to do it for six months then why get you another person to do the job if you're doing it? But I was doing my job and the job of two other people. And I found that to be very dissatisfying. So that's where my energy is going, and then when I come home, I'm too stressed; I'm too tired to study.

Amijah expressed quite a bit of disappointment during our interview at her lack of promotion opportunities, but she continued to participate in the interview, looking forward to the next question. As we continued, Amijah stated that she has stayed in the Air Force because she is not finished with her degree, and that was her goal. She also told me that she was not financially stable, and she liked living overseas. She is trying to get

herself back on track and put some money aside. Amijah told me about some friends who left the Air force, and they regretted it. She recounted:

One person, her and her husband both got out because they were being deployed simultaneously. He then tried to come back to the Air Force, but they came out with this law that if you get out, you can't come back in, even though you're Reserves, but that's not the same amount of pay (Indiscernible) in the Army. And that's when you really realize how easy the Air Force was because the Army deploys up to nine months at a time. And then she had the problem that she's alone -- with three kids as a civilian, and she had to find a job. And she ended up getting the civilian counterpart of what she was doing in the Air Force, but the difference was that if she would have stayed in the Air Force, she would have been getting her own retirement down the road. She had over ten years in, so now she's basically starting over in a civilian job every time he gets stationed somewhere else. So long-term didn't make any sense.

Amijah continued to share about another friend who was discharged and worked in a civilian job for one year. I asked her why her friend had been discharged, and she indicated:

Well, I wasn't there, so the official answer was for homosexual misconduct. But her story was that her husband was deployed. He was physically abusive. During his time away, she was trying to get a divorce. Very few people understood her perspective because he was a cop, and they sort to take care of each other, and it was a small base. So, you know --

He was deployed, and during that deployment she tried to reach out to different people, and somebody that listened to her was somebody who had separated from the military who was openly gay. . . . Based off of their statements, small base, she was then discharged. What I know is that she divorced him while he was deployed, and afterwards he tried to come after her because they were from the same town. He knew her family. She had nowhere to go, so she was safe with that person, and she ended up leaving the state after the divorce. She got her truck and from one day to the next she was gone. I actually didn't find her for six months.

Well, she actually has a very interesting story. She was physically assaulted during her first deployment, around September 11th, and I was there to witness that too. So, she had a tough time at it. But she was excellent at her job. She's one of those people who definitely would have done 20 years. Her challenge was then, okay, you leave the military. They can make situations bad. Everywhere you put that DD form 214 -- And then, you know, it says homosexual misconduct. So where do you go after that? And that was very hard for her. She has relocated to three different states. She is now in Texas and is now working

for a welfare agency that helps kids, and she's back on track. But that took her two years.

Amijah seemed very sad as she shared her friend's problems. During this part of the interview, I could actually see her concern for her friend in the way she spoke deliberately while looking directly at me as if she wanted me to really understand this story. I began suspecting that Amijah may have also had some negative experiences during these ten years. As a follow-up to Amijah's friend's problem with the Air Force, I asked her what kind of experiences she has had, being a woman, with the military.

Amijah quickly responded:

The problem with the military is like it's like a very elite club. Once you're a member, you're a member for 20 years, and with that comes a certain mentality in that, depending on your rank, you can pretty much get away with whatever you want. In a small base, people talk. So my first base, there were 5,000 people, and that sounds like a lot, but the majority of those people were TDY there because it was a training base.

They were pilots. So do you really think if, you know, somebody's been in the military for three minutes is going to have time to make friends with pilots who are only there for three minutes? It was very isolated, very limited amount of people who I could . . . talk to, period. Most of them, it was work related. So it's very common for people to get married within the military because they already have a limited amount of time, lots of stress. Very few people would know how to cope with that or know how to deal with that unless you're in the military.

To that phenomenon of being miserable and not wanting to be miserable alone, and then getting married in tech school, during basic, after basic, on the first base, divorce rate is very high. I think I was too smart for that. I said I joined the military to go to school, and let me just do that. So that protected me from a lot of, let's say, disappointment that I saw other people going through, but the loneliness remained. And what I did, I became very good at staying in touch with people that were close to me. And I think that's one of the things that I've maintained. That's what keeps me going.

So maybe I don't have friends where I work, but I have friends outside of that, and that's been something I've worked very hard to maintain. I took it from an even keel. I don't make my relationships dependent on whatever based on that or I probably would not have or would I not have very functional ones. The next problem we have is everybody outranks. What type of relationship do you have out of uniform? And I've witnessed people that have gotten in trouble for fraternization.

As I continued to listen to Amijah's story of her friends, I asked her again whether in the last ten years in the Air Force she had encountered any inappropriate behaviors towards her. She first told me, "no," probably because she's very guarded and not very trusting and also because her goal was to finish school, save money and work. However, she then told me:

I had a supervisor, who called me a piece of shit, and I went to military equal opportunity, and I wrote him up. The issue with that was because I did that, he immediately went to the Commander, and then he said they were investigating it, they simply moved me. That was the way to fix it. So, that was very eye-opening that someone can use abusive language, get away with it, and then the cover is, you know, "He's a guy. You know, that's how guys talk." And I said, "If he ever does that again, I'll go straight to the Base Installation Commanders." So, the way they handled it was get me out of the way.

I asked Amijah if she knew why he talked to her like that. Was it because she was female? She told me that he outranked her by one stripe, and he favored her co-worker, who could do no wrong. But when something was going wrong, he would come to her.

This was the longest part of the interview. Amijah did not need much prompting when she began sharing some of the stories of her friends who had negative experiences in the military. During the beginning of the interview, Amijah answered the questions in a matter-of-fact manner. However, when I asked her what prompted her to stay in the Air Force, she became upset and seemed hurt by what she perceived to be an injustice towards her and some of her women warrior friends. I was surprised when she first started sharing these experiences because when I first asked her about any negative issues during her years in the military, she denied having experienced any. I took this opportunity to follow her momentum by asking her how her military experiences had shaped her as the person she is today. Amijah quickly answered:

I think I'm less trusting of people because I've experienced over and over again that people to a certain degree, if they're your supervisor, they suck you dry. As a woman, I think we get put in the role of taking care of everything, clearing problems, negotiating on behalf of someone, and that ability gets abused. So one thing I like to do is set boundaries, and that is a means, people don't consider me, how do I say it? They say I'm professional, but they don't want to hang out with me. And that's fine. That's the price I'll pay because I got tired of being the one staying late, coming early, and then I don't get a thank you. So, professionally, I think I'm tougher than I was because I came in very idealistic and very eager to please. And that got beaten out of me –

Amijah continued to talk about how unfair the Air Force was when it came to treating everyone equally. She shared that sometimes if someone with higher rank had a child in the sports team you were coaching, you may get more attention. We continued to talk about some of her personal accomplishments, such as medals. She admitted to having nine or ten medals but she was not very proud of any of them. She felt that some of the medals were given automatically so anyone could get them. I was surprised that Amijah was willing to stay in the Air Force considering her perception of the Air Force's unfairness.

As we began to conclude the interview, I asked Amijah how much she believed she had in common with non-military women. At first Amijah wanted me to clarify if the question was asking about pay or work. I told her in everyday life. Amijah's first response was "stability and the opportunity to get an education without being in debt." She also felt that civilians had it easier because "they can work under their own terms." She felt that in the Air Force you have to work under certain standards, and it's "very stressful, like having to stay until the job gets done and you are on a 24 hour standby." She stated that she has become very tough and unsympathetic when civilians complain about their jobs. She did follow-up, saying that both civilians and military deal with the same things. Amijah added:

I think the difference with the military is you wear the uniform, and you either have people who believe in empowering you or people who abuse the fact that they have a uniform on, and you're there to serve your country. And in my experience we're usually getting abused.

To clarify I asked if she was talking about her job. She said she didn't feel recognized but even though she envied their freedom, she preferred her job stability. She went on to add that another difference between military and civilian women is the fitness that is expected in the Air Force. She added:

We now have to be like Marine warriors now. But -- Well, it's tough when you're held to the standard of a Marine. Marines get military physical training time every single day, and they do it as a group. So, when they're gone as a unit for two hours, they get two hours on-duty time to work out. We don't get any time to work out. I have to be at the job every single day from 8-5, but then they want me to have a Marine body. In order to have a Marine body, I have to find two hours out of my schedule to go to the gym, and it can't be during duty hours. It has to be outside of duty hours. So, I find that --

Amijah continued to share some of the other issues she's dealing with in the military. She added that besides the physical training there is also the matter of doing pushups, sit ups, running a mile and a half, and body measurements. But with all these necessary differences, Amijah still has a positive outlook toward being in the Air Force. As I concluded the interview I asked Amijah if there was anything else she would like to offer for the interview. Amijah immediately shared that her friend was sexually assaulted, and she had nowhere to go. She was in a deployed location. I asked her what happened and she offered:

She was deployed in Turkey with fellow soldiers. She gets assaulted by a fellow soldier, and they sided with him. She was emailing me every day. She had put in a package to testify, and they made it so difficult that she just wanted to go home. And I was one of the few people that she could share what had happened, and I was, you know, 100 million miles away in Arizona. And one thing I never forgot was when she came back, nobody addressed what had happened to her. She got two weeks off, and then she was expected to go back to work. The way of them

handling was, they were like, "Okay, we're going to move her to another location so that she can start over."

And I never got over that either because she's the perfect example of somebody who she came in at 18, so a lot younger than me. Was all about wearing red, white, and blue, as they say, and I think that's the wrong way to do somebody. I mean -- So I never got over that, and that's sort of like a sore point with me. I actually became a Sexual Abuse Representative Coordinator because of it.

As Amijah shared this story with me, I could see she was very visibly upset. She mentioned that she was sure that as I continued to interview other women warriors, I would continue to hear stories of sexual trauma towards women warriors even though this is considered a taboo. She finished the interview by telling me:

You never see what happens down the road. I don't know that joining a system means I'm actually going to change the system for the better. Sometimes I just feel like I'm one mouse in the wheel that is rolling and rolling and rolling, but that's something I wanted to share.

Amijah was my first interview. I had approached her about two weeks before the actual interview and had explained what my study was all about. I shared with her my military background and that I was interviewing women warriors for my Ph.D. dissertation. I explained that the interview would be anonymous, and she could choose a pseudo name. Unknown to me at the time, Amijah had asked her supervisor for permission to participate in the interview, even though it was not during working hours. She also shared with other working colleagues that she was going to be part of an interview of women warriors that was going to be used in a Ph.D. dissertation. I was impressed that Amijah thought it would be necessary to ask permission from her leadership to participate in an interview where she would be sharing her personal experiences while in the Air Force. This behavior showed me that she had been well indoctrinated in the military way of thinking that one does not do anything that may

compromise the security of the service members and country without checking with the chain of command. I was also impressed that she shared with other women warriors that she was going to be part of the study. She conveyed it in a way that seemed to make her feel special, as though she had been chosen to share her experiences and that someone valued her experiences. Amijah checked her calendar for a good day and time when she could participate. Once we agreed on the date and time, Amijah emailed me numerous times reminding me of our appointment. When something came up and we had to change the appointment date and time, Amijah took the lead and made sure that this time nothing would get in the way. Her dedication and perseverance were very impressive. She left me wondering what had really happened during her career that did not allow her to progress to her next rank. Not that I felt that she had done something she had not disclosed, but rather that the system may have dropped the ball by not mentoring Amijah properly.

During our interview of slightly over one hour, Amijah shared numerous experiences that showed me that she had kept her positive and negative experiences at a very conscious level. She quickly and easily recalled situations that impeded her promotions and created stress in her life. Amijah also showed a very soft and caring side when she shared with me what had happened to some of her women warrior friends. She had a way of projecting her pain for her friends. In a way, she needed me to understand. She would often stare at me and repeat some of the words or statements. I could see that these 11 years were sometimes really cloudy for her, and she could not make much sense of why things ended up this way. Many themes emerged from Amijah's interviews, which can be categorized in the following themes: family of origin, money,



sexism/harassment/sexual assault, education, stressors, self-improvement, women warriors, and military issues.

### **Cassandra**

Cassandra is a 37-year-old Caucasian Sailor in the Navy who joined in 2000 at the age of 22. She grew up on a little island 12 miles wide in the Chesapeake Bay called Smith Island. She was raised by her great aunt, her brothers, and by other family members. Cassandra tells me that her mother worked for Georgia Pacific and was absent frequently. However, her grandmother, who was helping to raise her and her brothers, was diagnosed with cancer. Cassandra's mother quit her job in Florida and moved to Maryland to help take care of her grandmother. Once her grandmother passed away, Cassandra's mother was "tired of not having a job and living off welfare." She returned to Florida, and Cassandra went to live with her great aunt:

I ended up growing up with my aunt. She was strict but I wouldn't be who I am today if it wasn't for my great-aunt. My youngest brother Chad ended up staying with another aunt and she was horrible to him. It was just because Mom's not able to get on her feet, that's basically why we all stayed where we were at in Maryland.

Cassandra seemed to have a sad family life, but she did not show her sadness. She actually stated at the beginning of the interview that "I had a fairly good childhood growing up there." I asked Cassandra what prompted her to join the Navy.

Well I always wanted to join the military. I wanted to go in the Army so I could be a crew chief. People always told me that if you went in the army you're going to be -- if there's a war then you are the first one to go. I decided that wasn't the way for me. My mom was working for a retired admiral. She moved from Naples to Virginia to take care of him. I was supposed to go in the Air Force and got scared and didn't go. My mom always said, "Go in the Air Force. Go in the Air Force. Go in the Air Force." I ended up not going because I got scared. I had never been that far away from home before. I moved down to Virginia Beach with my mom and helped her take care of the admirals. You hear them telling you all these stories and all the cool places that he had been.

I talked to a friend of mine that was in the Navy who was a seal. I asked him what the Navy was like and he said, "Well if you want to be on a ship and you're going to go on a -- seven and a half foot long and a few inches wide.... then you'll be fine. Don't sign anything until you talk to me first." I was like, "All right." Just to hear him talk about and when he was gone all the time it made me think, "Well shoot. Why not go?" So I ended up going to MEPPS on a Wednesday and leaving the following Monday.

Because Cassandra's decision to enlist in the Navy seemed quite spontaneous and performed on a whim, I was very curious to know how long she had remained in the navy. I asked Cassandra, "How long have you been in the Navy now?"

"I'll have eleven years in June," she responded. "I'm an E-5. Petty officer second class."

"Tell me a little bit about when you first went in," I probed. "What was your original job that you tested out to do and what were all the different jobs that you've done so far in the Navy?"

When I first came in I had the option to be either in intelligence specialist or in IT, which is what I'm in now. It was either an information systems technician or an operation specialist. I asked the guy who was at the training place. I think we were there in boot camp. He asked me what I wanted to do and I said, "Which one makes more money?" He goes, "The ITs." I was like, "Okay, then I'll be in IT." I've been in IT straight the whole time I've been in the Navy. You know how you have some people who come in undesignated, which means they don't have a rank or a job. They go to working with (Indiscernible) makes their work or some of them will even go down to the engineering department. I didn't have to do that.

"Tell me a little bit about what you do in the job," I continued. "I don't know what you actually do."

Well we do a lot of different things. We deal with the computer side of it. We've got the side that does the tech control, which [means] we maintain communications like voice circuits, satellite communications. We get messages. Say somebody was in your family and somebody had passed away; you would have the hospital send an American Red Cross message. We receive those and we also send out the messages as well.

I asked Cassandra concerning how successful she feels she has been in the eleven years that she has served in the Navy Reserves:

“Not very. Not at all.”

“Why is that?”

“I think that if I had a better mentor or better leadership in some commands that I was at I think I would have probably been an E-6 (Indiscernible) chief by now.”

“Had you done E-6, do you think you would’ve stayed in?”

Probably not. I enjoyed being on a ship but I didn’t like the in and out parts of it where you are home for a month and then out for three months or home for a week and then out for two to three weeks. You are constantly under way.

“How many ships have you been in?”

“Three. I was on the USS Comstock that was my first one. My second one was the Tarawa, which is now decommissioned, and then my third one was the Carl Vinson.

“Were any of those deployments out to any of the conflicts that we have had recently?”

Yes. Our ships mostly -- whenever we go underway we always go to the Gulf. Every ship that deploys, there may be a few that don’t, they will always end up in the Gulf to do their little rotation and then we get relieved. We rarely leave the Gulf unattended. My first ship when I was on the Comstock we were in Darwin, Australia when the plane flew into the Twin Towers. I was already on the ship but about midnight that night we did a recall of the ship. People were out in town in their hotels. They brought everybody back to the ship. The next morning about 9:30 or 10:00 we were gone. We were headed out to the Gulf. Our arc as they used to call it, I’m not sure what they call it now, it was an (Indiscernible) group. Ours was the first one on station after that happened.

“Tell me what it’s like being on a ship? Being a female woman warrior on a ship?”

It’s hard. You don’t get treated any different than the men do or at least I never did. You work hard. Some days you worked harder than others. I know in my last command I worked my tail off because when I got there I found out that I

didn't have a clearance. I had been in five and a half years and then I find out, "Hey, you can't work today. You have no clearance." They were like, "Hey, what do you want to do? Would you mind volunteering to strip and line the deck for a couple weeks?" "Sure!" It was just a couple weeks. Well a couple weeks turned into six months. It didn't bother me. I didn't mind doing it because at the end of the day whenever I was done I was the one out of the shop saying, "Hey man, those decks look really good." I thought, "Well they should. I did it." I never got treated any different than any man did. I have seen where some of the girls get treated differently but I never paid it no mind. I was raised to be worried about what you're doing and not worry about what everyone else is doing.

"Were there any conflicts between the men and the women or the women and the women?"

No. On all my ships the males and the females got along really good. On my first ship the radio shack was predominantly women. We had three guys at the most at one given point in time. The radio shack was full of women. It was harder working with the women than it was working with the men. You asked for training and they don't want to train you because they are busy shopping online or talking to their husbands on the phone. It's things like that. When I asked for training they would say, "We'll train you. We'll train you."

Two weeks went by and I never got any training so I called over to a different ship and asked them if I could take down the circuits and bring it back up because no one wants to train me. They were like, "Yeah, go ahead. We'll be here if you need us." I was like, "All right." When one of the girls wanted to use one of the circuits that I had taken down, they were livid. I don't know what you call it in the Army.

When it got to my chief, she was like, "Why would you do something like that?" When I told her that I had been asking for these guys to train me and they never did she flipped out. She was like, "That's not going to happen anymore. Seldom do you ever have anybody that is that persistent to get training who wants it and needs it." She said, "You've been getting denied for too long. She ended up cutting off everybody's internet at a different time and made them get up and train me. I told them, "Well if you want then don't worry about training me. I'll get somebody else who will train me."

I talked to the team, which are electronic technicians. They are the guys that if we break something they fix it. I would call them to come down and give me training. They were glad to do it because they know that if they teach me how to fix something, they don't have to worry about coming down to fix it themselves because they know I can fix it.

"How about issues of harassment or sexual harassment or anything like that? Do you see a lot of that on ships?"

I haven't seen any of it. No. I haven't seen any of it. I'm sure there are some. I know that at my last command there were a couple girls that were in the aviation ordinance and the guys didn't think that they could stand up to the test, I guess you could say. You know, with carrying all those weapons and things. Sometimes they would push the women aside and say, "No, we'll take it. We'll take it." The girls that I know that they would do this to would be like, "Hey, look. This is my job and I'm going to do it so step away. (Indiscernible) that I'm not as strong as you are. You might be stronger than me but it doesn't mean that I can't do it." I haven't really seen that much stuff like that.

"What prompted you to stay for the 11 years? Have you re-enlisted at least once or twice?"

Yeah. When I was pregnant with my last child, Daniel, I ended up re-enlisting. I was going to get \$32,000 almost \$33,000 to re-enlist. I had full intentions of making the Navy a career. I wanted to be a chief. I ended up re-enlisting for six years. I wanted to do my sea time first and then do my shore duty just in case if I decided to get out. I decided to go ahead and re-enlist for six years because I wanted the money and I knew I needed the money. After my last command I just said, "I can't do this anymore." That place put a sour taste in my mouth for a lot of things.

Her response sounded like there was more to the story, so I pressed her a little further and asked, "What happened in your last command?"

We were in the yards. I know that the yards are the hardest place to be at but I've seen a lot of good kids who worked really hard who had come in late a couple times and get written up and then get kicked out. In the first year and a half we were in the yards we had at least 200 and some odd people fail the urinalysis just because they wanted to get away from the command. These were the best and brightest sailors. If they had had better leadership or better mentors to help them learn that, "Hey, you see this is bad but you don't want to be like that. You take a different path and you follow a different set of leadership. You'll be okay." The ship was in Newport News. The (Indiscernible) were down in Norfolk. If they missed the bus that morning they had to wait for another hour or more, depending on traffic, in order to get to work. To me it was sad to see something like that happen because I know a lot of those kids that I saw and spoke to everyday who would come out and be dirty from head to toe. You know they were working. You see them working. Their leadership failed them.

"Is that typical of the Navy or was it just that one spot?"

I think it was just that command. I've seen where people have gotten kicked out before because they had done stupid things. The morale across the whole entire

ship was the most awful thing I have ever seen in my life. I have never seen anything like it. We would sit in our shop with nothing to do. We were three or four weeks ahead of schedule while the rest of them were way, way behind. The department had made the whole division stay until 1700. Our normal working hours were to 1500. He had extended us to 1700 and we had nothing to do. We couldn't go help them because we weren't allowed to but we had to stay just because those divisions had to stay. I understand the one team one fight. It wasn't our fault if their leadership didn't have their schedules planned out accordingly.

Our chief, he fought tooth and nail for us and was like, "Look, this is just going to last for a month. When we can have (Indiscernible) meet again, we're going to go over this again. I'm going to ask him, 'Why are we still here?' I'm going to try to get us out of it." That's the only chief that I've ever had that has stood there and fought with us. Our department liked him because he fought for us. When this chief came in I could not stand this man, but I respected him. If I were to stay in the Navy and I made chief, he's the kind of chief that I would want to be.

"What rank was your department head?"

"Oh God, I think he was a commander."

"When you get people like that, meaning bad leaders, is there any recourse? It sounds terrible what was happening with the sailors."

"Honestly I've not seen any one of them get in trouble."

"So people sometimes can get away with their leadership incompetence?"

"Yes. I think it was because maybe people were scared to take it up higher. I know that I was. I would've been."

"How about your chief? What was his suggestion?"

Well, I told Chief that I was going to get fat until (Indiscernible) and get kicked out. He told me that by the time I get fat and I'll get kicked out, I'll be off the boat. I said, "God Chief, why you got to make jokes?"

"But I'm sure you were just kidding. You don't want to get kicked out."

And yet I wanted to get fat so I could get kicked out. The higher-ranking people - it all seemed to get swept under the rug. It was more focused on the mission, the mission, the mission. It is understood but you can't expect everybody to really focus on getting the mission done when the morale was at its lowest. We had a

kid that committed suicide. It was, "I know you guys were friends with him, but you've got to get back to the mission. You need to put that behind you and focus on the mission." "Thanks. We just lost one of our fellow shipmates and you are going to sit here and tell us to get back to the mission?"

"What was the mission? I thought you said that you guys were already three weeks ahead of schedule?"

Exactly. Our whole entire command was focused on getting things done. A lot of the things that were getting done was getting done half-assed because the leadership wasn't there to make sure that things were getting done right. We would have to go over and do things again. This was not just in my department or division, but mainly around the ship. When one division or department is behind then the whole ship is behind.

"How do you think that your Navy experience has shaped you into the person you are today? Are you any different?"

Oh yeah. I'm a lot different. There were times where I wouldn't -- when I was in school somebody would pick on me and I wouldn't say anything, or my great aunt when she would get mad at me. If I just went (sigh) and rolled my eyes then I would get spanked. I would get in trouble. That's fine but I would never say anything. Even when I got out of school I would never say anything to defend myself. I would just cower down and let it go.

I think my experience in my last ship is what has strengthened me and caused me to be what I am today because I have no tact and I don't care who's around me. I just blurt things out. If I see something wrong, I'm going to say it and I don't care who's around. That's how I am. I shouldn't be that way and I know that but it's hard when you've seen so many things that have happened to your fellow shipmates like people getting kicked out or people working their ass off while you have other people who are sitting there not doing shit all day. You know what I mean? You just blurt it out.

"I've seen that myself. How about as a female? Do you feel more assertive? Do you feel more self-assured? With your self-concept do you feel stronger since you've been in the military?"

No, I don't. I don't know. Maybe it's a self-esteem issue that I have. I can't really go up and approach -- for example, I saw a girl walking down a road the other week and her hair was below her collar. I didn't say anything to her. I should've but I didn't because a lot of times with my hair it flies out all over the

place and I'm fine. My thing is I'm not going to go correct somebody about something when mine sometimes is just as bad as theirs. It's hypocritical.

"Were you higher ranked than she was?"

"Yes."

"In your mind, what do you think you should've said to her and how would you have said it?"

If I were to do it over again I would've stopped her and said -- and I wouldn't be the Navy talking, it would be my talking. I would've told her, "Look, your hair is below your collar. You're going to have to figure out a way of getting it up. Make sure it's not hanging down below your collar. You can have it down. Just make sure you curl it to where it doesn't fall past your collar."

When I first got over here I had forgotten my utility jacket. I had a friend of mine send it over to me but they ended up sending me the wrong coat. It was one of the foul leather jackets. It gets cold here. For some reason my first winter here was the absolute worst winter. It was the coldest weather I've ever had to go through and I'm walking around with this leather coat on. I went over to NYPD and I had a C-5 come up to me and he asked me where I got my coat. I was like, "That's none of your damn business. Why?" He was like, "No, for real. Where did you get it?" I said, "It's none of your business. Why are you asking? I paid for this coat." He said, "This chief over here wanted me to come over and tell you that you need to take it off because that's not authorized here." I turned around and looked and I see the chief staring at me and him talking. I said, "Do yourself a favor. You walk back over there and you tell that chief that if he's got anything to say to me about my coat then he needs to come do it himself instead of sending his little peons over here to tell me for him."

He got up and walked over there and told the chief. He just looked at me and it was like, "Oh my God. We're going to have problems with this one." Later on I saw the guy and I said, "Hey look. I'm not mad at you but it just really kills me that he's going to send you over here to tell me something when he could've done it himself. If he sees me he should've come to me, not you." He was like, "I totally agree but because we come in here and we make E-5 within two to three years of us being in the Navy, we have no ways of learning leadership skills so they do that for us I guess. I was like, "Next time you see him you tell him that he needs to come to me. I don't appreciate him sending people to me to tell me anything."

"So did you ever see that chief again?"

"Yes, I saw him again. He never talked to me. I wore it until I got my other one."



“How much do you believe that you have in common with non-military women, women who have never been in the service at all?”

I’ve got a lot in common with those people. I was older when I came in so I had life experiences before the military, but then again there is a big difference. We do have a lot in common, but yet we don’t. They get to see their family every night. They don’t have to spend much time away from them. They don’t have to worry about going to war.

“Do you have a group of non-military women friends that you hang around with?

Play games or play cards or go shopping? Do you do girl bonding with non-military women?”

There are one or two women that I do. We invite them over for dinner once in a while. We went to go see a Ramstein concert last year in London with a couple. Usually I’m home. I don’t go out much.

I felt kind of shy about this next question, not because it was a silly question, but because I was nervous that Cassandra’s initial assumption would be that it was frivolous:

So let me ask you this. This is a silly example that I put together. Let’s say that you were competing for a million dollars in something similar to Survivor, you know the show, and they were going to drop you some place in some weird, deserted island. They say to you, “Cassandra, you have a choice to pick five women who are going to be your teammates. Whoever survives this at the end of two weeks wins a million dollars.” What five women would you choose? Or what kind of women would you choose?

Her answer was telling, but not totally surprising:

I would pick women that would be survivors. I would pick ones that would get up and not hesitate to do whatever it is that they tell them to do if it was something gross. Over here I’ve watch and have a celebrity say, “Get me out of here,” when they make them eat bugs and they have stuff crawling on them. I would want women that would actually do something like that. I’m not going to do it but if they’re willing to do it -- if they are willing to eat a worm they can have at it. I would want somebody that wants that money just as bad as I do. I don’t know about eating the worms and stuff like that, but maybe if they had to trample through a swamp and sleep under a tree or had to hold it before they could go to the bathroom or if they had to go then they had to go behind a tree or whatever you had to do.

“Even with what you are describing with so many characteristics -- would you agree with more military women than civilian women?”

“Yes. I wouldn't want anybody out there that was like, ‘Oh, I've got my makeup.’ That's not right. ‘Hold on, let me put my lipstick on before I go pee behind a tree.’ I wouldn't want any girly girls.”

“So I'm sure you'd have to put some Army women and Marine women there too, right?”

“Yeah, definitely. They're tougher.”

“Tell me a little about how you feel about your sense of patriotism. Do you feel patriotic about being in the military? Do you have a sense of unity and protocol and all that?”

Yeah. Where I grew up at we are really patriotic. Every morning in school, even when they said that you're not supposed to, we would say the pledge of allegiance. We would pray in school. They probably still do it for all I know. I haven't been there in ages when school is going on. People who had flagpoles -- if some important person had passed away, we would put the flags at half-mast. We were raised patriotic. We would sing “My Country Tis of Thee” in school. When I hear people bad-mouthing my country I get really pissed off. When they bad-mouth Obama because they don't think he's doing what he's supposed to be doing I get really pissed off because he is my president. That's my country. I really get so angry when I hear people talk about him, especially over when they say, “Stupid Yanks.” It just causes my blood to boil. I get really aggravated with people when they talk crap about us.

“If a female would come to you and say, ‘Cassandra, I'm thinking of joining the Navy or going into the service. What can you offer me?’ What would you say to this young woman? What advice would you give her?”

I would ask her what she wanted to do “when she grows up” or exactly what it is that she is interested in. If she goes up to the recruiter they're like, “Well we only have engineering.” I would want to keep her from getting lied to. I would find out what she is interested in. I would let her know exactly what she could get into and what type of rating or job that she would more likely get into. I wouldn't

want to put somebody in my rank or job because it's hard for us to advance. I would like to see that person go in and pick something that she's going to enjoy, that she's going to advance into, and something that she would be able to use outside the navy.

I'd tell her all about ship life and I would tell her not to, if she was on a ship or was going to go to a ship, to not get pregnant until she's ready to get off that ship. I've seen so many girls who say, "I don't want to leave my husband. I don't want to leave my boyfriend," so they go get pregnant. That's 18 years or more of dealing with a child just because they didn't want to do a nine-month deployment. I would rather do the nine-month deployment than have to turn around and do the in and out part. That's harder I think. To me it's harder. Just do the nine-month deployment and get it over with. So if you don't want to go out to sea then you shouldn't join the Navy.

I would tell them that to be a good sailor you have to have a good mentor. You just don't learn things on your own. You can learn things by watching them in your own little experiences that you are getting but if you find somebody who is a really good mentor who is basically coaching you throughout your entire career -- these people have experiences that they have learned from and can share them with the junior troops. Having a mentor is so important. Having a good one is even more important because if you have a really crappy mentor or if you don't have one then you are going to be stuck like me. I've been in these for five to seven years.

When I was at my last (Indiscernible) I wanted to get out so bad that I didn't care if I made rank or not. I could care less. After I was done there and I came here, I felt like I died and went to heaven. Then I hear people complaining about how crappy this place is. I was like, "Have you ever been on a ship?" "No." "Oh my God. Go to the (Indiscernible). It is the most amazing ship you have ever seen." "Well I've heard some really bad things about that command." I said, "Don't listen to what people say. You make your own experiences. The Carl Vinson was the best ship I have ever been on." A month later the kid comes back to me and says, "Hey, I got awarded to the Carl Vinson." I was like, "Oh my God. He's going to kill me. He's going to hate me. Oh my God." That's a true story.

"So did you ever hear from the kid again?"

No, but I do know people who are on the boat that know him and they are like, "Oh my God. This guy hates it here." I'm like, "Well he'll always remember. I taught him a lesson to always remember never to complain about where you are because the next place you go to might not be so good as the last one you went to."

I had just been to the UK base she was talking about I couldn't believe they didn't like it.

What is it that people hate about the UK assignment? Isn't it a little paradise?

Tell me about it. I don't know. I'm still trying to figure that out. I think it's because most of the people who are here, most of the junior sailors, they've never

been on a ship before. This is their first term. They get out of their A school or their -- I don't know what they call it. The Army or all the other ones -- their first training. They get their orders and they go to here. They don't understand what it's like. I'm thinking, "My God. You had the opportunity to come here first." Some of them will never go to a ship because they are mostly intelligence specialists. A lot of these guys, depending on what they choose, they either go ground or imaging. They'll never go to a ship. Some of them will though.

"What do you have to do for E-6 in the Navy?"

"Well we have to take exams. A 200 question exam. Huh?"

"Have you taken the E-6 exam?"

Jesus. That I have. I think I've taken it -- I've lost count -- at least eight times. I'm coming up on my ninth time. I had a point in my life when I was at my last command where I didn't care so I failed it twice. I didn't intentionally fail it but I didn't study. I didn't read the questions good enough. I was like, "Yeah whatever," and I just circled it. Then your evals on top of it add points to it. All of your collateral duties that you've done adds into your evaluation. Whatever you get score-wise on that eval will be added in towards that exam. If you've got award points that'll go towards that exam as well.

"Do they feel that you had a piss-poor attitude or something? Is that why?"

"Well I worked hard and in my last command they saw that. They knew I worked hard. It's just that they had their favorites."

"But how long have you been in the UK?"

"Just over two years. I got here in October 2008."

"In this command that you're in, would you have had a chance to progress?"

Yeah, I'll tell you in my eval, it's came up a lot since I've been here. It has. I've learned a lot. Usually when people need something they know where to find me. I go in and train people; well, I used to. I don't do communication security anymore as much. I'm still there. I'd give people training on how to use the phones and to make sure that they don't move the cards that are inside the phones because they are 100% accountable.

If the card gets lost it's an incident. Usually people are like, "Hey, call that lady. Call her. She knows what to do." What kills me the most is we know that we only deal with ste which are secure telephones. To have me walk all the way over to a different building on the other side of the base to find out that the phone that they have is a normal landline phone -- people will tell me, "Well that

was the only way that we knew how to get you over here.” “Well, all you had to do was tell me what kind of phone you had and what was going on. I would’ve told me over the phone that you’ve got to call these other people down in the UK. I’m so mad. I went and picked up the phone. I said, “This is not a ste.” I went a grabbed the ste and said, “This is a ste. Obviously, Sir, you weren’t paying attention when I was giving you training, were you?” He was like, “Wow. You’re being a smart ass.” I was like, “I’m being serious. All you needed to do was tell me that it was a BT landline and I could’ve said, ‘Call these people. They’ll put in a ticket and then come and fix it.’ Problem solved.”

“Is there anything else off the top of your head that you would like other women or anybody else to know about your experiences or what it’s like to be a women warrior in the Navy?”

It is rewarding. It really is. If you sit back and look at all the bad times that you’ve had and you compare them with all the good times — and once again I’ll use my last command. The command was horrible but when we were able to pull in and work hard, we pulled into some amazing places. To think that how many people in my family have ever been in Portugal or Australia? Nobody in my family has been to Australia. Where else? Singapore, Guam, Greece, Dubai -- I mean Dubai was amazing.

“Make sure you make a list of all those places you’ve been so you don’t forget them.”

Yeah I will. What I would like to do is get a coat made with all the patches and stuff and locations where we went. It was great. On my first ship we had this thing called (Indiscernible). I don’t remember what it stands for now but it is basically a telephone line. It is satellite. It’s a normal phone and you call and it goes through these little circuits out to a satellite and down to whoever it is that you’re calling. You’d call and be talking at the same time and then you’d be like, “There’s a four second delay. I’ll speak. You wait and then you answer.” I’m calling family from Australia. They’re like, “Where are you at?” “Australia.” “No way! What part?” “Sydney.” “Really?”

When we were in Portugal I had duty and I was stuck on the ship for the day. I was like, “Shoot, I want to call my mom.” I called Mom and she loves Stargaze SG-1 and was like, “Guess what I’m watching?” I’m like, “What?” She’s like, “I’m watching Stargaze SG-1.” I was like, “Are you really?” She’s like, “Yeah.” I was like, “Well guess where I’m going tomorrow?” She was like, “Where are you going?” I said, “Well we’re in Portugal.” She was like, “Okay, cool. Where are you going tomorrow?” I said, “I’m going to Abydos.” She was like, “To Abydos?” Abydos was a planet that they had discovered and Daniel Jackson was

there and all this other kind of crap. It was the planet that all of them started. So when I told Mom I was going to Abydos she was like, “What? I want to go.” I was like, “Well Ma, this isn’t a planet. There is no stargaze or this Abydos. This is here in Portugal. It’s the capitol. She was like, “Oh my God. I wish I was there.” A couple years later my mom gets lung cancer and she dies. It’s good to sit back and reflect on all that. Out of all the crap that I’ve gone through to get where I’m at today and to be who I am today -- through all the crap from my childhood and all the crap gone through in the Navy, it’s turned out to be well worth it.

“That’s wonderful.”

“I wouldn’t change any of it.”

It’s wonderful to hear that because I know that you are disappointed and hurt that things didn’t turn out the way you wanted for chief and all that. You recognize all the wonderful things that you were able to learn and experience during your 11 years. You got to meet your fiancée also, right?

“That’s the best part.”

Cassandra was so animated during the interview. She had great stories about her experiences in the Navy. I found myself very intrigued at the way she expressed her experiences, her animation and blunt language. I was able to feel her disappointment with her Navy advancement, which made me feel sad at her predicament. I recognized that my sadness was because it was a little close to my own story. Many themes emerged from Cassandra’s interview, which may be organized into the following categories: mentoring, money, patriotism, leadership, stressors, self-improvement, motherhood, and military issues.

### **Janora**

Janora is a 31-year-old African American Air Force technical Sargent (E-6). She’s presently working as a personalist in England. She shared that she actually joined the military because she is an army brat; she has spent most of her life all over the world, but mostly in Georgia. She’s the oldest of four, and the only one of her parent’s children in

the military. She told me that she wanted to join the army like her father, but he wouldn't let her go into the army. He told her that the army's not for woman, so she joined the Air Force and off to college she went. Janora's first training was as security forces. She told me that she just wanted to prove to her family that she wasn't a dainty little girl anymore; she wanted to be tough. She has now been in the Air Force for 11 years. Starting as security forces and cross training, she is now into personnel.

From the very beginning, Janora was very excited to be interviewed, as well as being very friendly and pleasant. Before I began asking her the military questions, she offered to share her experiences during her last deployment to Iraq. She told me that even though she was a personalist, she ended up working with the security forces because of her background. When she arrived in Iraq she realized she would be working in the Base Defense Operation Center (BDOC), which was basically the nucleus of the base. She went on to describe the BDOC:

In BDOC, we had cameras where we could see inside the perimeter, outside the perimeter. A lot of times we would see kids with guns on the camera. I could just be in BDOC getting a cup of coffee or something, and you'd look up on the camera and you see these kids shooting at like our airman who was on the perimeter or you would see people trying to plant stuff, like stuff in bombs and carcasses. You know, as a personalist, I'm used to paperwork, so the war became very real to me then.

I asked her about the children and how old they were. I knew she had a 6-year-old son and it was very hard for her to be deployed; she was a single parent and her mother was watching her son. Janora's mood quickly changed when she started to tell me about the children and her time in Iraq. Janora became quiet and I could see the sadness as she described what she often saw outside the perimeter:

Little children. I would say maybe five or six. I remember making comments like, "Where is their mom?" or "Why don't they have school?" I have no idea, but

we also do know that kids used to bring weapons to the gate. They had a drop-off point where they would [go] if they found explosives. And once a week they would take the explosives out, and we would watch that on the camera. Take them out to this field and I believe they got money. Sometimes food. Whatever was their need at the time. And as a part of morale, myself, my commander, and my first sergeant and my chief, we used to go out there and check on the troop. Because, you know, they were first responders, front line. They were really on the front line.

Being at the gate, I could see what I would think in my mind was poverty. It was just trashy and just nasty, and the kids didn't have shoes on. It was just everything you see on TV, but it was real. Because the first thing I thought about was my kid.

Janora shared that this was not the first time she had been deployed, but her son was now old enough to understand that she was going to war. She would call him often and missed him so much. This became her own battle. The children's burden weighed heavily on her heart but there was nothing she could do for them. I asked her about other memories she had from her deployment that still linger in her mind. Janora shared the following:

I think that one of the biggest things was it was always cloudy, and when we were asked, "What is that?" [you] know, because it wasn't sand. It wasn't like a dust storm. It was just cloudy, and we were asked what is that. Well, that's from the burn pits. The burn pits? What are the burn pits? That's just where they burned everything. It wasn't a regulated burn. You could only burn certain things. They were trying to build up that base, so . . . the bulldozers would push dirt here and there. We would find bones, skeletons, you know, because that was one of Saddam's ranges.

They would find bones and skeletons, and as security forces, we went out there because we had to see if it was a crime scene. Was it American remains or [not], you know. So we would go out there, and they would just take it like it was trash and take it to the burn pit and burn it. So at all times, we had like this ash. If you stood outside long enough, you would be dusty from ash. And just knowing that it could have been bones. It could have been dogs. Just whatever. Just floating around. Yeah. I remember some people getting lung infections. If you didn't wear your proper equipment, a lot of people got sick. Well, a guy tried to commit suicide. He was a brand new Army troop. He had just got to the FOB. We called it the FOB. Forward Operating Base. Yeah. Just got to the FOB. He might have been there two or three weeks. Just the panic, and he shot himself in the head. He was there with the Army. Army was able to carry live rounds, so anywhere they went, they were ready. And he shot himself in the head, and as security forces, we always respond. When we go there, he was fighting off the medics. He was still alive, but he was fighting off the medics. And blood was



just pouring out of this guy's head. After he passed away, they secured the crime scene. You know, regular operating procedure. I walked away, got in the truck because I just didn't know how to [cope]. I felt so weird, you know, whereas these guys see this all the time. They know exactly what to do, but I couldn't help but go and sit and think about my family. And just being thankful that he didn't shoot somebody else.

It was. It was a very, I would say, real. It brought a lot of things to light, but it made me reevaluate my life at that moment. I mean everything in my life. I just can't imagine anything being that bad. And then I'm just thinking about all the other people he is hurting. Shame to your family.

I moved Janora from that memory as I saw her staring across the room and I did not want to have her re-live that specific experience. During this time the bell from the post went off but it sounded like an alarm. This alarm would go off daily around 4:00 PM. Today the alarm startled Janora. When she heard it she sat up and back on the couch and stared at me. When she gained her composure she explained to me that when the alarms would sound in Iraq it meant "incoming rounds." She quickly realized that that was one of her memories that still lingered around. After the alarm Janora continued reporting to me on specific details of her time in Iraq:

The smell. I mean it's not like a smell you've ever [encountered]. You know when somebody is burning leaves or trash. But when the bodies were being burned [it was different] They would have these mass killings. They don't have graves, so they would just --Iraqi bodies. Just burn them. They would stack them up like pieces of wood and --You could see it on the cameras. Yeah. But it was outside of our perimeter. I mean you would think they were having a party. They were just going around shooting guns in the air, and then you would have that smell just lingering over the base pretty much.

I asked Janora how she slept while dealing with this sort of stress and the sounds and possible dangers of incoming bombs:

Medicine. I found myself, I wouldn't say addicted, but I depended on Ambien and any other sleep med I could get my hands on. I had my family send me Advil PM, Tylenol PM because I just couldn't lay and rest.

I asked Janora if that was very typical of most of the people over there? Could they get Ambien or any of the sleeping pills? Were they prescribed? Janora told me:

You can ask for them, but at one time, the doc wouldn't give me a refill. And that's when my parents had to send me [some]. I was like, "Look. I can't sleep." And I would go days without sleeping, and then I just found myself not being able to function. "I haven't gotten any sleep. I can't think. I'm paranoid." And then maybe we got bombed that day, and the windows bust out of our --We got bombed at least two or three times a week. At one time, they were getting closer. That noise right there just took me back. That is the noise, the siren we would hear. Alarm red. That would be our alarm red. That's when they had an incoming or somebody already bombed the base. Yeah. So every Friday over here, that siren takes me back to where you had to get in full battle rattle. Helmet, vest, get indoors, get in the bunkers. I'm shaking now. Yeah. It takes you back there. And that's uncontrollable because I'm thinking I've been from over there almost a year now. It gives me chills. It just gave me chills. Wow. Yeah. A lot of times we had mortar attacks, and the closer it got to me leaving, I guess they got a new strategy where they would, like, bomb one place and then they would kind of, like, walk them in. Like if they knew that they hit base, then they would shoot again at the same, you know. And basically walk the bombs in the closer and closer they got. Yeah. We had mortars. We would have small weapons fire, if they were able to get close enough to the base. Our Army brethren, they were always going in and out. I can't think of what the trucks are called, but they would patrol the outside of the base. And Air Force Security Forces, we took care of the inside.

We had one security force female, she got shrapnel. She was injured very bad by shrapnel, and that contributed to us doing a recall a different way, or our accountability a different way. Because she was out there on the side of the road and nobody knew where she was. It just so happened some Army guys doing recon and they seen her. We did accountability on the phone. . . . If we called somebody in your building, we would ask you to go around and see who you could see. Because she was just out there. Nobody knew. I mean she had just got off a shift. We assumed she was either in the chow hall or [some place inside the compound, but] she was just in the street. We walked. I mean we walked everywhere we went on the base. It was a good maybe 500 yards from our building to where we live. So anywhere in between there. It could have happened when you were in the bathroom. We just kept our gear with us at all times. Everywhere you went, you had that raggedy gear. You know. But I wouldn't leave my gear anywhere. Even in the bathroom, as uncomfortable as it was. Even like we have bunk beds, so I would throw my gear on top, sleep on the bottom. Sleep fully clothed. There was no getting relaxed for six months, boots and all. I mean you would see some girls that I guess they got used to it. I'm like, "I can never get used to this."

During this part of the interview I could see that Janora was really shaken by her experiences. She spoke about the experiences like she was taking me to Iraq. I felt like she really wanted me to understand what she was sharing with me. I really felt like we had aligned. Janora sat back on the couch and, knowing that I was prior Army, began to tell me that in her base there were also Army women. I asked her if there was a difference between the Army women and the Air Force women. Janora quickly told me:

There is a lot of difference. You know, they kept us separated. They had the Army on one side, and they had the Air Force on the other. Air Force side was beautiful compared to the Army. The living conditions, you know, some of them had eight to nine people a room. We might have had four or three. There was just animosity just from that. They see that the Air Force is being treated better. When we got there, they brief us. "Hey, watch out for the Army." I was like, "The Army? That's supposed to be our brothers or our sisters." So they were like, "Watch out for the Army." When they tried to have little morale-boosting things, it was almost like we hated each other. Not on purpose, but --it was, I mean they were mothers just like us. They were --they were more relaxed, but you know, they were kind of more used to it. If you ever get used to it. They were a lot more calm about it. But these women had seen real stuff. They had been outside the wire. And just sitting at the bus stop some days you encounter some young women, and they'll talk about the night before when they had to throw a body . . . you know, get a body off their car or just things to me would be unheard of. But I had so much more respect for them because they're out there doing it. You would see them, and they would have lanyards with their kids' pictures. So they're mothers, too, and that's where our connection was. But even with all that, you still have the same crap the military offers. It's a man's military. They think they can say and do whatever they want to you. I mean they had a few sexual assaults on base. It didn't stop. On top of you being away from your kids and you're in a war zone, you have all this going on. You still have your leadership men, you know, being men.

While Janora was praising her Army sisters, the conversation quickly turned toward the subject of male leadership in the military. Janora's attitude changed immediately:

My commander told me I had a fat ass. He liked my ass. I would get compliments, you know, from guys, but some of them were over the top. And I felt like when they opened that door, I stood strong for myself. But yeah. On top of what you're already going through, you have these added stressors.

I followed her statement by asking her how she felt about her commander making sexual innuendos toward her. I also asked her what those statements tell her about herself and the way military men see her and the rest of the women warriors. Janora quickly responded:

I think they just see us as toys, like just to [play with], like they don't take us serious. . . . They treated us like we didn't have to go through the same thing they went through to get their stripes. . . . You know, we test. PT, everything. We still have to do all that.

I asked Janora if, from when she was deployed and listening to her other sisters, she believed that sexual harassment happened across the services, including in the Army:

I believe so. Yeah. But see, one thing about the Army, they were able to go in each other's room and interact with the guys. Not that that made it okay, but they had some kind of, I would say, release where the Air Force, we weren't allowed to go in each other's rooms. We weren't allowed to be caught with men one on one. You always had to have a battle buddy. It had to be the same sex.

I asked Janora if she thought that keeping you away from each other made it even worse?

She offered:

I think so. Because as human beings, we have sexual thoughts, sexual tendencies. You know. If two consenting adults, you know, I think, "Hey, let them play because that could be your last piece of tail." I don't know. I'm just thinking we're grown enough to carry guns and defend our country, but you don't trust us with each other.

As I listened to Janora's description of how the military would separate males from females, I wondered how they also separated the women. I asked Janora if she had any female relationships while deployed. Janora told me that:

We had a Bible study group, and so I would go there. We did have a female chaplain. And we used to have maybe two or three women. We had a base of 7,000..Seven thousand. But it used to be the same two or three women...I was the only Air Force. Everybody else was Army.

Janora told me that she was the only Air Force woman imbedded with the Army. I wandered if she had been treated differently by her Army sisters. Had they possibly been over-protective of her. She said, "They did. Because I'm Air Force. Yeah. They call us the Chair Force because I guess the Air Force, they don't see us as warriors like the Army. But yeah." Janora had been extremely friendly and cooperative during this part of the interview. She would often smile and laugh while she would describe her experiences. I took her upbeat mood to suggest she was doing well during the interview and was not feeling pressured or hesitant in answering my questions. As the interview continued, I expressed to Janora that I understood her position working with the Army women and after all, she had "boots on the ground." This is terminology that is often used in the military when a service member is deployed. I continued my interview by asking Janora how successful she feels she has been in the Air Force. Janora quickly sat up and answered:

I think I've done pretty well. I made E4 below the zone, which is like a quick promotion for Air Force. Ahead of my peers. I also made E5 at three years when usually it takes five to seven. Even now as an E6 is really early because usually that's 14, 15 years in.

You pass the test, and they score you among your peers. Your evaluation reports count. Your decorations, your awards, all that plays a part. ...Ribbons, I have 17...I have two commendations, and I have three achievements. My two commendations I got, one was from my past deployment, and then when I left my last base, I got another commendation.

I was very impressed by Janora's success and I know she perceived this by the way she would smile at me. She was a very impressive woman who recently had some relationship issues, but she did not let it get her down. I was mindful that she was dealing with personal issues but the interview seemed to have taken her mind off her problems. I

asked Janora, in light of all of her military successes, whether she felt successful as an individual woman:

Oh, yes. I have two degrees. Yeah. I have two degrees. I'm a single mother, but that's not stopping anything. My son is well educated. He's well mannered. I think I'm very knowledgeable about my job. And on top of those two, if those are not full-time jobs, I get out into the community. I volunteer. I help with school liaison. I try to just give myself. I'm working on my third degree. I want to prepare myself for when I do get out of the military. When I retire. Of course. Of course. I've been in too long not to retire.

Janora had an amazing work ethic and is a very caring mother. I had the opportunity to meet her son and watch them interact. Being a woman warrior and having a small child dependent is not easy, especially in Janora's case as a single parent. I understood some of Janora's position because I also had a small child while I was in the Army; without proper back up from family, it is impossible to be an effective service member or parent. I asked Janora what prompted her to stay in the service this long considering she had been sexually harassed and a single parent with numerous deployments.

I think because my goals are so much bigger than what the sexual harassment has to offer, and I just refuse to be broken in those aspects. And I have a son, you know, whereas I used to be kind of hot-headed and fly off the handle and didn't care about the consequences. I have somebody that depends on me, and so he is at the top of my list at all times. But defending my country, I know that if I don't do certain things right, I could possibly let somebody in that could cause real harm to all the people I love back home and people I know, even people I don't know.

“So you have a very strong sense of patriotism also.”

“I do. It doesn't always show, but I mean that's a part of me. Yeah. I've been treated bad. I mean, I've had some bad experiences, but I've also had those wonderful ones.”

Janora's story was very intriguing. I could sense she felt a great deal of accomplishment by the way she would describe her experiences as well some of her military

disappointments. I asked Janora how she believed that her military experiences have shaped her into the person she is today. Did she think that she would be the kind of woman she is today had she not been in the military?

Yes, I do because my family values shape me. I was “Janora” before I came into the military, and the military just gave me another standard to live by. It did. And it made me reevaluate myself, and it gave me new goals. Because out of high school, all you want to do is get out of high school, you know. But I never really wanted to go to college. That was kind of pushed on me, but it's allowed me to make my own decisions and the consequences for my decisions. I have to look at all that now. Like I said, I used to be a hot head. Like a fireball. Like cussing. You know, disrespect.

Never toward my family because my mom and dad didn't play that. But like when I first got into the military, you know that brand new A1C or airman, 21-years-old. I feel like you can't tell me nothing. I know the world. But, you know, I had some of those good NCOs that took me under their wing and said, “Hey, you're going down the wrong path.”

All my NCOs were females, and they saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. And so just to sit down and talk with me. “Hey, you know, I don't know who you're trying to be, but I don't believe that's you.” And just them believing in me, I would never want to let them down because they stuck their neck out for me.

I have had a couple. As a matter of fact, I call them my big brothers now. They just tell you what to look for. Like the path you're going down. . . . You know, from a male point of view, they're going to see you as being a slut. You don't want that. You want to give them these books. You want to get everything you can out of the military because they're going to get everything they can out of you. And just to see them excel. It was like you know this is a man's world, whatever, but what you need to do to excel is a, b, and c. So the guys, they were tougher than the women, but everybody was tough.

Towards the end of the interview I asked Janora how much she believed she had in common with nonmilitary women. This was an important question for Janora since, according to her story, she had turned into a different woman since joining the Air Force.

I think I still have a lot in common because their battles are just like ours except we defend the country. I have a couple of friends that are on the police academy, and we joke all the time. You defend the city. I defend a country. But their struggles are the same. They still have to deal with the sexual harassment. They still have to deal with not being treated equally because they're women. They're still mothers. . . . I see myself as a go-getter. I like to get things done. Just because when you're in the military you have no choice. You better get it done or

you're going to suffer the consequences, whereas in civilian world, if you don't show up to work then you just don't show up. But in the military, you don't show up and you could possibly go to jail. So I feel like military woman, or military in general, we're held to a higher standard. I'd definitely go military just because I kind of know what they're made of because I know what they had to, at least at the beginning stages, I know what they had to go through to get to where they are.

I asked Janora what advice she would give women who are thinking of going into the military, choosing a branch, or just enlisted in the military. If she had an opportunity to mentor them, what would she say to them? What advice would she give them?

When I was deployed, one of the ladies who worked in the BDOC with us because we had all branches in there. She was just so tough. And I admire her for being so tough, but I was thinking, "Are you a person?" because she was so much like a robot. Everything was serious all the time, and she never smiled. I'm thinking when she gets out, she's not going to have no friends.

This was a perfect Segway into the topic of women after they leave the service. I said:

And that's a good point. Of course we know that that's kind of Marine mentality. I mean if you're a Marine, you're a Marine. You're not male or female. You're a Marine. I'm glad you brought that up when you get out. What do you think eventually, in your experiences, what do you think happens when a military woman gets out of the military? How does that woman adapt?

I was uncertain how Janora might respond. This question forced her into looking at the issues of adaptation from a more general perspective:

I don't think she does. And I think that's how we come up with so many homeless because you're used to this structure and now you're just out. I don't think they do. Some of them don't. Some of them do very well. . . I guess if you've been in combat and you get out and you're used to combat --

I honestly think every civilian should do at least two years in the military. I think well roundedness and you at least get an understanding of what us 20-year vets, what we deal with. I think everyone should join the military. They should have a taste of it.

But I think they should see the structure. That way you can better understand like when you go off into the civilian world why that female is not [the same]. I wouldn't say messy or why she just holds herself to a certain standard.



As I concluded my interview with Janora I wondered what outrageous experiences she may have had in the military. Janora had a variety of experiences working with women and men of the different branches. I wondered if Janora's experiences were similar to those of the other women I had interviewed, particularly in the realm of sexual pressures from military men:

First sergeant, yes. He got promoted to senior master sergeant, which is an E8 in the Air Force. He drove from Wisconsin to South Carolina because he said he wanted to take me out to lunch or dinner because he just appreciated the job I did in Iraq.

So Wisconsin to South Carolina is pretty far. Well, he was there. We did go out to lunch or we went out to dinner. He kept trying to get me to drink. Drink, drink, drink. No. I had to work the next day. It was like a Wednesday night. And then when I took him back to his hotel, he was like, "Do you want to come up for some wine?" I was like, "No, Sir," because he's still my superior. "Well, you want to come up for something else?" I was like, "What else could there be, Sir? I could give you a back rub." So right there, not only did I feel sick to my stomach, but I totally lost all respect for him. Totally lost all respect for him.

I assured Janora that she was probably not the first female that he made those comments to. I asked her if there was anything else she wanted to share with the sisterhood.

Nothing I can think of right now. Usually I'm triggered by memories. Like when the siren went off. The smells. Yeah. I'm learning to deal with it. Being that it's uncontrollable, it puts you in a mind frame and I think about it all the time, but after time passes, it goes away. I'm being medicated for it just because when I got back it was so hard to get back. It was so hard for me to show emotion to my kid because I had been away from him for so long. I was so used to moving. . . . You know, you integrate back in. You have to talk to the psychiatrist. He was like, "That's normal, but if it becomes a problem to where it's affecting your everyday life . . ." to come back.

I enjoyed interviewing Janora because of her openness and friendliness. She had experienced much trauma growing up and in the military, but never gave up. Janora was one of those individuals that I believe will go far in life because of her dedication and tenacity. Throughout the interview it was obvious to me that Janora was very patriotic,

not only because of the present position in the Air Force, but because of growing up “military.” Janora also showed a very human side when she shared with me her memories of “down range.” She is still re-living many of her experiences, such as when reacted to the noon alarm during our interview. I was aware that Janora was in the middle of a very hard personal experience that was creating a great deal of anguish for her. However, she did not mention the problem during the interview. That was another of Janora’s strengths; she was able to stick to the task at hand as I interviewed her, but I could tell she was preoccupied about her personal life. Many themes emerged from Janora’s interview, which were put into the categories of: women warriors, mentoring, sexism/harassment/sexual assault, patriotism, stressors, war zone experiences, self-awareness, motherhood, and military issues.

### **Wilma**

Wilma is a 36-year-old Marine. She is a Master Sergeant who enlisted at the age of 17. She grew up in a farming area in upstate New York near Fort Drum, a major Army post. Knowing college was not an option because of her parent’s economic state, she knew she would have to join the Army in order to get an education. When she went for her interview, the Army recruiter was not there, but a Marine Recruiter was available and she decided to join the Marines. Wilma is the only girl of five children and the only one in the service. She told me that her family is a “lot of petty criminals” and that her brothers escaped that life especially after her mother moved down to North Carolina where she was stationed. Wilma was so desperate to leave her home life that she would have joined the circus had it come to town. Joining the Marines was a way out of the situation she was in.

Wilma has been a Marine for the past 19 years and is presently an E-8, leaving her one more rank to achieve in order to reach the top (E-9). She tells me that her rank is a great accomplishment since there are only less than 10 Marines in her job and, as a whole, in the Marine Corps there are less than 10 percent female Marines total with maybe just a couple hundred who are E-8s. When she is ready to compete for her next rank, she will compete with all Marines regardless of gender.

Wilma's story is one of emotional and educational rags to riches. As she described her need to escape her poor farm life in New York in order to better herself, joining the Marines is probably one of the most intense escape routes, and perhaps the toughest military branches for women. She was lucky that, because of her poor scores, her recruiter placed her in an administrative job at first, which were due to her lack of educational preparation. She quickly was disillusioned by the office work and asked to be retrained. She was chosen to be a Marine Security Guard (MSG), whose responsibility it is to guard consulates and embassies throughout the world. Wilma shared that there is a very high attrition rate being an MSG, regardless of gender:

You don't get to sleep. You don't get to sleep and you still have to perform because they know you're going to have to stand eight hours of watch, and you possibly may have to do other things in the embassy. And it's very rigorous training. It was tough. It was tough. I made it through there. From there, I was assigned to Turkey. It was my first duty station there. I went from there to Spain, but in the meantime, I got to stand at the embassy in Algiers. I did get to stand at the embassy in Istanbul and Ottawa. So I did get to stand at a couple embassies. It was absolutely wonderful. So from there, Marine security guard, the tour for that is three years. You can't go past three years in that training. So when the three years ended, I went back to admin because I can't just say I'm a Marine security guard. So again, back to the place I hated, so I did a lateral move. And I laterally moved. I wanted to go be an interrogator. I thought that would be great, and then I wanted to go Counter intelligence. I couldn't do that either because it's all male-dominated in the Marines. Yes. And especially at that time. So I said, "Well, what else have you got for me?" And they said, "Well, you can be a squint. You can look at imagery all day or you can be an intelligence

specialist.” So I went for intelligence specialist. And that's the MOS that I've held since then. I went to training down in Virginia for that. I left from MSG battalion, which was going to keep me another three years doing admin work. So I ditched out of there. And from there, I went to Camp Lejeune. And this is when I was first introduced to Marine divisions. I went to second Marine division from there, and the job that I had there was more of a production analysis chief. And I was doing definitely a lot of intel work and a lot more leadership. Because, I mean, when we go out to the field or we'd go out on deployment, I mean, it was a whole different ball game than I was used to.

From there, I went to Third Marine Division, which was in Japan. From Japan, I went to mag 31, which is in Buford. I was the intel chief there. And from there, I came to my current duty station.

I was very impressed by Wilma's determination or rather her tenacious nature. She reminded me so much of how I spent my years in the Army. I congratulated Wilma for her determination and her ability to seek out what she wanted. I wanted to know if she had a mentor. Did somebody else watch out for her, or did she flush it out herself?:

Well, I definitely was seeking. I was a question-asker. If I saw something or I saw a poster or I heard something, I was like, “Well, what is that? How do you do that?” Yeah. “Who is allowed to do that?” You know. “How do I get into that?”

I reminded Wilma that during the interview she had told me that to get her job at the embassy she had to beg, beg, and beg. I asked her why that was and whether the begging was for every one or just women?

Women. . . . It's very, very male-dominated. Women, if they're in an embassy because we're so small. The det set, I went to the largest one, would have been Spain, and that had ten people. So ten people only, and I was the only female in both dets. Every det, actually. I was the only female there. So the propensity for the female to be messing up is a lot greater.

And not only that, but we had to sign a waiver about getting pregnant. If you got pregnant, you are booted off the program immediately. So it was a risk that the Marine Corps would have to take sending us out there.

Wilma showed much success during her 19 years in the Marine Corps. However, when I asked her how successful she thought she had been in the military her answer surprised me:

“Not very successful, I've got to say”.

But when I showed my surprise at her answer and asked her how she is measuring it for herself, like asking herself, “Look at all the things I have learned!” she responded differently:

That's a hard one. How do you measure your success? If I would have stayed where I was at, I definitely feel as though if I still was in upstate New York that I would not have been even close to the success that I have now. The stories that I can tell. I have friends that have stayed there. Now with the networking that you have with Facebook and whatnot. They'll just glaze over when I tell them some of the things that I've done. I actually ratchet it back and not tell them a lot of things and just listen to what they have to say, because I've just exceeded. And then of course I have a lot of fans, I guess, that would say “Wow! That's so great.” And they're just really in awe of all the things that I've been able to accomplish. So I would have to say it's very successful.

“Wilma, isn't it wonderful when you say that you had to ratchet back because you've exceeded not only your expectations but some people wouldn't just even get it.”

“Right. They'll glaze over, literally. You'll see their eyes just kind of glaze over. They have absolutely no idea what you're talking about. Yeah.”

At this point Wilma was feeling very successful in her Marine Corps career, and she believed she had really earned it. I continued the interview by asking Wilma what prompted her to stay in the Marine Corps for the last 19 years:

Yeah. Well, what's the commitment for staying? Well, of course 9-11 was a big reason to stay in. There's a stop loss for a certain amount of time, but that didn't affect me because I was working in intelligence. And I just knew that I wanted to keep going. So when it came to my ten year, decided to get in or stay out, it was kind of an easy answer at that point.

So that's one of the main reasons that prompted me to stay in the service. But it was a struggle. It is a struggle. It's very male-dominated. You do feel that there's a glass ceiling a lot of times. You do feel a lot of just typical harassment and just normal, everyday just, you know, I'm kind of tired. I'd like to see what it is like to be a civilian lady, especially after joining at 17. And being raised on a farm, you see ladies, and it would be nice to be a civilian sometimes.

I offered the fact that she was a civilian after hours or on the weekend:

“No. Once a Marine, 24-7, right? We say 24-7. And they do call you in the middle of the night and you have to put your hat back on. Yes.”

Wilma’s reaction in seeing such a difference between being a Marine and a civilian lady did not surprise me. I asked her if she thought she would ever be a civilian:

No. No. I'm trying. I mean I'm part of my church, and I teach a ladies class at my church. And I fake it, I think. I fake it very well. I fake it very well sometimes. But if a Marine was to walk in my ladies class in church in my dress and started talking about Fallujah and talking about some of the experience, I would quickly find myself right back where I was and just telling the stories. And the ladies would be aghast on what was being said in the room.

I was wondering what her other stories would be like. I guessed these would be the only one she could really tell.

“Yes. Yes. So I do feel as though it's going to take some time. My husband, I've seen him transition after a certain period of time, so I'm hopeful that it will wear off kind of like a –”

I shared with Wilma that I agreed with her that it is hard to adjust to civilian life if you go into the service at 17 and that I had heard similar concerns from other women. I shared that I had gone into the Army at 17 under the delayed entry program.

“That's what I did. I did the same thing.”

Because Wilma was so open with her experiences as a Marine in a male-dominated military, I asked her to share with me some of her deployment experiences. I asked, “So when you went back this last time in civilian clothes, did you have a weapon?”

“Let me put it that way. So it's like being your --I was armed. Yes. I was armed PX.”

“So you only did that one time in Iraq with the Lionesses. During that time with the Lionesses, how about the other women, the other Lionesses? Did you meet up with them? That's different from Army and Marines.”

“Just Marines. Infusion was just Marines.”

Because I know that there are some Army ones, too, somewhere. They are also part of the Lionesses. . . .So it's kind of ironic. So on one hand it could be very dangerous, but that was kind of a way to get out of the office.

Yes. A way to basically flex your military muscle a bit. Yeah. Because . . . as a woman, you're always trying to strive to be better than the men around you, right? So you're part of a wolf pack, but you're never really accepted as a wolf because you're the child wolf. Right? So you have to do just a little bit more than they do. So the guys that are sitting on their butts behind the computer are doing what I was doing, I found another way of getting outside the wire and basically having a little more bragging rights. That's the only way I can put it.

“Kind of the alpha wolf in a sense from that group. Because of that. I know. And that's courageous.”

Yeah. So again, just to exert your leadership and show that yes, maybe I can't run as fast as these dudes to the battle, but I will run toward the battle. I will not run away from the battle. So it's kind of just showing that you're a cut above your counterparts.

That's great. What a great experience. What a great experience. And doing that, did you ever run into something that was not a very great experience? Some things that, you know, still [think about]? Any memories of, . . . I mean the life outside the wire? --So you only did that one time in Iraq with the Lionesses. During that Lioness, how about the other women, the other lionesses? Did you meet up with them?

See, that's just it. Not so much, you know, because again, it was after my duty time. And sometimes I would have to break away just long enough to do some training and then go back to my work section. But there were three females in my entire area, and some of them couldn't get released to go do the Lioness. They had to stay there. So the women I didn't know then. So I would just be there long enough for training, and then I would go back to my office. So I didn't really get to know the females that were in the Lioness program at all. That's different from Army and Marines. Just Marines. Infusion was just Marines.

Because I know that there are some Army ones, too, somewhere. They are also part of the lioness. So it's kind of ironic. So on one hand it could be very dangerous, but that was kind of a way to get out of the office.

Wilma was sharing such great experiences that I did not want to break her momentum. I was impressed by her experiences but not surprised. Wilma seemed to exude her marine discipline. Often during the interview I had a feeling that I ought to stand up and salute. I asked Wilma about some of her not-so-great experiences while deployed down range and especially outside the wire:

When I was out there, a Major was killed. She actually died, not while we were out, but I heard about it coming back from chow. I was used to going out. So definitely the threat was there, and that's probably the worst experience I had while I was out there. Because again, there's not that many females as it was.

I was interested in Wilma's experiences with the mortar attacks. I asked her about whether there was a difference between being inside of the compound and hearing mortar attacks all the time and feeling like you have no place to go versus hearing them when you're outside the wire. "Does it seem like if you're outside the wire, maybe you can get away from it or drive away from it or run away from it?"

Well, no. Because then you have the threat of ambush at all times. So not so much. In the first time that we heard the alarms go off and then we had incoming, you do tend to feel a little bit of anxiety. And then you can kind of feel a stereo vibration in your chest when it hits, and they came in threes all the time.

"Why in threes?"

I don't know. I think it's as many as they could get off before they do the counter battery and I.D. their position and basically just bring down the rain on them. And so the first one, then you feel it and you kind of [panic]. But after that, we started laughing it off. But there were a few times where it was close enough where it kind of rang our bell a little bit, but then we still laughed it off and did our business anyway.

I've had it kind of rain down on my head a little bit, but it's just the dirt and whatnot. Never any kind of metal shrapnel or anything like that. So I've never been injured.

At this point I asked Wilma how she believed the military had molded her into the woman she is today:



I'm not very girly, that's for sure. I definitely lost that ability. Like I say, I can turn it on when I need to turn it on. Yeah. That's what it is. Learning it. Right. Learning it quickly. I'm definitely very aggressive when it comes to what I want and ways of getting it. I'll look into any avenue or venue. Let's see. I really didn't know how to do the temperature test if you only have one temperature.

I would maneuver until I was able to reach my objective. If that meant I would have to outmaneuver somebody else, as long as I wasn't squashing them. I just . . . never pictured myself standing on somebody's chest to appear taller, but to outmaneuver them to get what I wanted, I think I could do pretty quickly.

Military women and military people don't react to it because they understand it, but civilian people have a tendency to think, "Oh my gosh! What is she going to do?" I ask sometimes, "What do you think I'm going to do?" I mean, I'm just telling what I need and what I want from a very assertive point. It's been my experience that in a civilian world, people are not like that. They are not part of the leadership. They're just kind of part of the followers.

I work with a lot of civilians, too, but a lot of them are former military. . . . I'm getting close to retirement now. Before I would have not dealt with a lot of civilian females or just basically ignored what they had to say. Because being a female in the military, a lot of times the only ones we come in contact with is their wives, and they don't like us anyway because we have a rapport with their husbands that they just don't get.

Wilma was obviously feeling the difference between being a Marine and civilian. She had also experienced the perception of civilian woman towards Marine women and maybe women from all the branches. I felt that Wilma, on one hand, wanted to be a civilian woman but she realized that the military indoctrination had been very effective, especially because she had entered at such a young age and was molded the military way. I asked Wilma what she thought she had in common with civilian women, women who were not veterans:

Again, Facebook is probably one of my favorite examples of this. I have friends that I grew up with in high school and have known for [years]. Basically, I went to the same high school or my same grade school, so I've known these people for a long time, nonmilitary types, right? And I can draw some comparative contrasts with these ladies.

One of the things, as a parent, I see my parenting style is completely different than the civilian lady. I mean completely and totally different. I have two boys. Accountability, loyalty, integrity, those types of things. Their judgment, when they make bad judgments. Every moment being a teachable moment. Never let a moment go to waste. And just on them and not letting

something skew the values that I've learned in the military. It's one of the things that I've been able to pass onto them. Patriotism, education is important. Things like that. Just the things that I've seen in the military.

What it is to be a man amongst men? What does it take to become a leader when you want to be a leader? I think there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that a civilian lady has no idea how to make a man a leader. So I see my friends right now, a lot of them have children, men, and they are romper-rooming. They're wandering all over the place, and she has absolutely no idea how to teach that young boy how to be a leader. Whereas I know for a fact that if my husband was to step out of the picture, which he's not, that I would be able to come along side that.

So I haven't been really able to see, even in the civilian community I'm in now, a woman take a strong, strong leadership role that has been a straight civilian the whole time. The ability to make a strong decision and stick to it, and if it fails, to own up to it. Women will not do that. They will slide around like a hagiel (phonetic sp.). It's not my fault. I didn't do it. I didn't make the decision. You know? Whatever it takes. Whereas a lot of times a military person, especially a military woman, will stand up and say, "No." That was me. I made that call. It was a bad call.

When I first asked Wilma if she thought she had something in common with non-military women, her first statements were of general commonalities such as Facebook. As she continued to think about it, I could see in her facial expressions that she was actually searching in her mind for the answer. I sensed that Wilma wanted to be like civilian women, but she wasn't. She clarified her stand as a woman warrior:

I have no propensity to do anything illegal. Whereas friends of mine say if you can get around the system, do it. Whereas I just say there's absolutely no way. There's black. There's white. Gray is a cloud color. It is not something that I believe in. So I definitely see that as something that I just -- Actually, my husband is a lot more lax than I am when it comes to them. He has hearing damage, so they speak in low tones or if they can do things in low tones, they get away with it. And they've adapted to that. Whereas if mom's around, I can hear them very clearly, and so you can see them perk up when they see. You know, boys will always test the limits. And men test the limit. I don't have that experience, luckily I think. Yeah. I said a lot of what I don't have in common.

"Do you have anything in common?"

"I menstruate once a month."

Towards the end of all the interviews I asked all the woman warriors a question that would have them choosing a team in order to win a competition. I wanted to see if their choice was consistent with their statements about woman warriors. I proposed that they had an option to pick five women to be on their team. "Who are the five women you are going to pick?"

"Military women. Military women and maybe a CEO or a lawyer who is able to barter things and then rely on us as the other four."

"There you go. No doubt about that. You knew exactly."

Yes. Yes. Most definitely. Even though we do tend to turn on each other in an event of a survivor, just knowing the program and what it's about that there would be alliances made and we would turn on each other, but I can guarantee that we would probably lie against the men quickly.

Wilma had such great stories. She was very self-assured and proud of her accomplishments, as she should be. I could feel how proud she was not only of who she had become, but also of all the obstacles she had overcome. I asked Wilma, "If you could do things all over again in the military, knowing what you know now, of course, what would you do differently if anything? Especially as far as being a woman Marine in a totally male-dominated branch?"

Yeah. They always say the Marine Corps is definitely the wolf pack. It's a wolf pack mentality. So you're going to either blend in with the wolf pack or you're going to be outside of the pack. If you're outside of the pack when it comes to the United States Marine Corps, you are going to be not so much not given information but it won't bring you into the good part of the information, right? I'm trying to give an example of it.

If you're in a formation and a sergeant is giving you directions, that's not the end of the direction you're going to get. Your direction truly is going to come from the people who know what the sergeant really wants. So he has a decision to make. Either he's going to bring you into that group so you can succeed, or he's going to leave you outside of the group and you'll fail on your own. So I don't know if you call that sexist if he's going to ostracize you because you're the female. You really have to be [putting on a] show in the Marine Corp that you're

just as tough, just as willing, and just as capable to go ahead and execute a mission that's given to you. So you definitely have to go that route.

The type A males, they're aggressive. They're aggressive in all aspects, including being forward with what they want when it comes to sexual experience or what have you. I was quick to understand if you just tell them, "Hey, back off!" I don't know, without whining and complaining about it, that they would find another target.

So again, I hate to say target, but it is a targeting mentality. Because there's only a few females around. And if you're on deployment, there's even less females around. And they will continue to try to reengage your target. But if you're very upfront, then almost every single time the guy will be able to look for another target. If he tried it again, then of course you say, "I'm armed. You understand that, right? I have both the will and the capability to end your life. So if you really want to go there, I'll be crying, and I'll write a letter home to your mom."

Yeah. So again, they kind of teach that to us right from the get-go. And there's a few women who don't get it, but most women get it. Most women understand that if you want to be part of the team and you joined the boys' club, you had to be one of the boys.

I asked Wilma if she had a sense of brotherhood from the other Marines. Were there times when she feels really good that they were all in there, that she was part of the pack? That they were all brothers and sisters?

Yeah. You get that sense, but you always know you're a female. And I've seen it, now that I'm a senior, where a woman will get too relaxed in that, and quickly the men will remind her that she is a female. And they'll try to reengage the target. See what I'm saying? She became a soft target again. So as soon as she becomes a soft target, a lot of times the men will try to reengage her again.

"And now that you are in a leadership position, when you see those females, what do you do about that?"

The ones who become a soft target? I pull them aside quickly and then try to remind them. But a lot of times it happens so quickly. It's not like it happens over a period of time. It happens over a period of hours. So it's over a weekend and a bad decision she made that she got so close to the boys that she thought she could be one of the boys. So, unfortunately, I've seen that happen a few times.

"So if a young female was coming to you for advice and said, 'Wilma, I'm thinking of joining the Marines,' what advice would you give her?"

I'd tell her not to. No. I'd tell her not to. There's other services other than the Marine Corps that would cater to more of her being a female. The Marine Corps is really going to strip you from being a female altogether. So if she's ready and willing to be that kind of person, I would probably explain to her the type of job she could have. I'd explain to her that she'd be a very small percentage and almost always the only female Marine out there doing something and just be ready for it. The recruiter did not explain to me what the ratio was. I truly thought it was kind of like the Army.

“And what if you run into a female that you could see that she was really gung ho and she was capable in your eyes.”

But if she was going to come to me, I really want her to just know what she was coming against. Let me explain to you how it's going to end up working out. Nine chances out of ten because there's always a ten percent of everybody I say. So nine chances out of ten this is more than likely going to be your experience. A lot of times I'll point them towards the Air Force because I know they'll have a lot of educational background with the Air Force, and it won't be such a dramatic change in their lives to chance to become a civilian after their Air Force experience.

I have a hard time with the Navy because there's such a division between the Navy guys and the Navy gals. So I just hate to put them in that situation. I think it is almost worse than what we are. The second one I would have to say is the Army because the women in the Army seem to band together, a lot more cohesive, and they seem to take care of each other. They understand leadership and they understand small-unit leadership and they understand if I'm a senior female, I need to pull this female aside and not just watch her flounder around. I had to flounder so you have to flounder. So there's that sense of small-unit leadership in the Army.

What else? Is there anything else that you have [to say on that]? Let's say this young person said, well, you know, what do I do about the guys? Or they have a problem with being harassed or being raped. How do you deal with that? Yeah. I would tell her that it's pretty much the same as if you're in a civilian community. Given her place where she grew up. I mean, I grew up in a place where it's more country so there wasn't, but if she was a city girl, she would understand what I was talking about. I try to just explain to her about the soft target, hard target. What's the difference between the two.

Compromising yourself if you end up being in a relationship with somebody in your unit, how that quickly gets around, especially today in today's media world where the guys can take photos and they want to take photos of themselves. But they take photos of her, and then before you know it, it's all over the place. And how she'll be drug in front of the first sergeant with a naked photo. Whereas they never look into see who took the photo to get that guy in trouble, but she's hosed because she exposed herself on some type of film and it got around. So those types of things that you just wouldn't deal with so much in the

civilian world where she'd lose rank or maybe get booted out because of something like that.

With Wilma's vast experience with deployments and her many years in the Marines, we began to talk about women in combat. I asked her of her thoughts and experiences when it came to different jobs and opportunities for woman in the military. Would some of these jobs take the women into combat?

If she can do it, let her do it. Yes. Yes. I do worry about that female if she was to be in more a combat role because of the testosterone that you find when you're in the field. I don't know how to describe it, but if the men are together with each other for more than a couple of months, they break the tough barrier quickly. They're slapping each other on the back or what not, and then three to six months, we call it gay chicken, and they start playing gay chicken. Right. So they start hugging each other and what not. It's ridiculous. All the sudden the barriers start breaking down. And I'm really concerned with a female there. Even if she does make herself a very hard target, that she would be the target a lot of times and with a lot of different men. So they definitely have to put them out in a group, and they're doing that now, especially in the Marine Corp. The women there that are going out there on the patrols, there's a group of women. You talk about six, seven, eight, nine women. They're all together.

I think I look at it more as being ridiculous. . . . I hate to say it like that, but if you're in a playschool group and you see the kids bouncing off the walls, do you get excited and want to jump in the ball pit? I'm not the person that wants to jump in the ball pit. I love watching them do it. So to watch the men just act stupid and be aggressive, I mean you turn it on when you have to. If they're being too ridiculous, you have to ratchet them back if you are the leader in the group, but I don't find myself just pairing up to be a knucklehead like some.

Have you found yourself in a position that you had to get a surge of aggressiveness during your military career? I mean, anything comes to your mind where you had to really get [serious], you know, women also have testosterone . . . but you had to pull in all your testosterone . . . and can you share that? Anything that jumps out that you had to do?

A time that we had to turn it on. We do have react drills in the embassy where you'll have, like, an intruder, a possible intruder in the embassy. During those times, yeah, you have to rotate who is in the front, the front of the stack because the first guy gets usually shot in the running lights if there's a bad guy down the way. Right?

So that's probably the most I can think of other than my time in Iraq or Afghanistan where I was. . . . But then I was younger, too. Where I got super aggressive and just wanted to be in the front almost all the time, so I'd jump in the

stack. Right? And because we're rolling, we can't really correct somebody when you're in the middle of a drill. Like that young. I got counseled very hard on the way back. They were like, "What was wrong with you? What were you doing?" I was like, "I just wanted to kick the door and I want to be the guy." I wanted to be that guy.

"Is there anything else that you think would be beneficial for other women to know or read about from your experiences?"

"Yes. And your female wing man, she's drinking. She's just as bad as the guys because she can no longer be the sound guidance that you need by your side."

Interviewing Wilma was very exciting for me. She was my only Marine and I could feel her allegiance to the Corps. There were numerous times during the interview that I wanted to stand up and salute her. At one point I found myself thinking I should have joined the Marine Corps instead of the Army. I quickly reminded myself that when I enlisted, Army women and Marine women did not receive the same training, and I wanted a more hands-on training. I was very impressed but not surprised by how successful Wilma had become during her Marine career. It was obvious that Wilma lived by the same ethical and military rules whether she was at work or home. Many themes emerged from Wilma's interview, which were reduced to categories such as: mentoring, money, sexism/harassment/sexual assault, patriotism, education, leadership, male dominance, stressors, war zone experiences, self-awareness, self-improvement, women warriors, military relationships, military issues, and motherhood.

### **Krista**

Krista is a 29-year-old Caucasian female who is married without children. She joined the Army in September 2001 when she was 20-years-old after spending a couple of years working and living on her own and not having enough money to further her

education. Krista grew up in Nevada where her parents divorced when she was 4-years-old. Both parents re-married and had other children. When Krista was eight, her father died. She has two half-sisters and three half-brothers. She grew up in a low-income house; her mother had not graduated high school and she was the sole moneymaker because her step-father had been discharged from the Air Force for being Bi-polar.

Krista was an independent female from a young age mainly due to her living circumstances. She knew that she did not want to end up like her family and she needed to go to college in order to succeed:

The only reason I was Army was because I remembered the Army recruiter when I was in high school. I had lost my wallet one day, and the Army recruiter that was at my high school drove me to work. And, you know, of course, he gave me his card. I thought he was hitting on me. I really did. I didn't really know he was just [doing his job]; he had a quota to fill. He gave me his card, and I blew him off. And then, two years later, I just remembered him, and I was like, "I needed to get out of Reno." I really did.

And I went back. . . . I called the high school. I said, "Who was the Army recruiters that were there?" And they said his [name and] I remembered. He was Sergeant K, and K was short for "Kiowa" or something like that.

From the beginning of the interview, it was obvious that Krista was a very motivated and independent woman. She recognized that she would have to leave her home in order to make something out of herself. She had been working as a pharmacy technician but was barely making the bills.

So I thought, "Well, they have those in the Army. So, maybe I'll be able to get into [that]." I wasn't able to get into the Army with that, though, because I had a record. . . . Well, I was found "not guilty" in court, but . . . I was arrested for it; . . . my recruiter messed up. They had to do a felony waiver. So, anyways, I had . . . the job that I was certified for, I couldn't do in the military until I had a couple years experience. So, I thought I was going to go into that, but instead I just went in as a medic, [and] I loved it. It was the best thing that could have happened to me. I love medicine.



Krista told me she enlisted in the Army and was active for seven years and plans on reenlisting.

I did four. . . . My thing was I was going to get out and go to school. And I had a first sergeant that said to me, "You're not ready," and he was completely right. And he said, "Why don't you go to this unit. They're deploying. Go spend a year with them deployed." I had already been deployed twice and he said, "Go spend a year. All you're going to do is an extend, and you can just deploy, save that money, . . . then you'll be ready." And he was 100 percent right. And then I wound up reenlisting for three years. Well, I reenlisted for four years. . . . And it's funny because nobody liked him. Nobody liked him. Everybody thought he was the worst first sergeant in the world. And he said that to me, and he was right on the money. I was not ready to get out at that time. I was not. His . . . was the best advice that I could have gotten.

Krista said she spent 16 weeks in Advanced Individual Training (AIT) as a Medic. She was concerned because AIT had just been changed from 10 to 16 weeks and it was very grueling.

I was scared because I wasn't a runner, and I couldn't do push-ups. And then they said that I was going to Ft. Bragg, and all I could think of was every other female in that medic school was going to Korea. And I didn't want to go to Korea, and I was like, "All right, I'll go to Ft. Bragg." I was all nervous because everybody was going to AIT, and they're like, "Ft. Bragg, that's where they run every day -- and people get shot during PT (physical training)." And people, all these Security Forces guys, are coming home . . . Special Forces guys are coming home from deployments and shooting their wives because of the malaria pill, and I was like, "Oh my God. I'm going to Ft. Bragg. Oh my God. I'm going to Ft. Bragg."

Krista was very quick to tell me that "everything happens for a reason."

Best [thing] that could have ever happened to me. Well, I could always do push-ups. I still can't do pull-ups, though. . . . The reason that you're supposed to have the body strength to pull on risers. I could pull on risers just fine, but, yeah, . . . I can't anymore, but I could max them. Twenty-five. And I actually later on went to jump master's school. But I couldn't get enough jumps to get the Master Blaster rings or anything just because deployments. In the three years that I [was there], or in the six years that I was at Ft. Bragg, I was deployed a total of three of them all together.

I was amazed at Krista's experience; she had spent all of her seven years as a medic. To my reaction of disbelief, she continued:

Yeah. And when I [finished] my last job . . . I essentially . . . stayed in the same [position]. I had two units. I was in two units, both at Ft. Bragg in the 82nd, but they essentially had the same mission, both the units. And the last year that I was in the military, after I had gotten my E-6, I went, and I worked in the support operations office for my last deployment. So, for the last year I was in [the service], I was deployed to Iraq, and I actually had an office position, which is probably why I have sciatica. The claim is in with the VA for that one.

Krista's background was not surprising; I had heard similar stories from some of the other woman I interviewed. The difference was that Krista showed a lot of independence early on in her life and seemed to carry it into the Army. I asked Krista how successful she felt she was during her seven years in the Army:

I was very successful, and . . . I knew the Army was getting it out of me, so I was getting what I needed out of the Army, which is part of the reason, you know, I did reenlist. And when I reenlisted, I got a good bonus, and I also got school benefits. . . . But on top of that and in part because of all my deployments, I also progressed through the ranks very quickly, almost too quickly. I say *almost* too quickly, but it was probably too quickly. I probably didn't have the experience I needed to be an E-6 after four and a half years, but I liked being an E-6. So. The pay was great. I bought my own house. At 25 years old, I came home and for my third deployment I bought a house. I bought a Harley Davidson. I paid my truck off. I was independent. You know, I was single at that time. I'm married now, but I didn't get married until I got out of the military. And so, that was very successful to me. . . . I had always [taken] night classes. I even took college classes when I was deployed. So, at the age of 25, I was very pleased with myself. My mother didn't own her home until she was, you know, almost 40 years old. No, actually 42 [when] my mom bought her house.

So, you know, I'm 25, and my house is nicer than my mother's. Obviously, you know, I did something right, and I was going to school. And I did something right. And it was joining the military and I met great people.

I asked Krista why she left the Army considering she had been so successful. It has been my experience that many people who leave the service early leave because they cannot adapt, have family problems, or they believe that there are better opportunities in civilian life. However, Krista had her own reason, which did not fit any of the ones I had anticipated.

Well, . . . first and foremost, I was always going to get out because I wanted to finish school, and initially I wanted to go to pharmacy school. And I wasn't getting as far as I wanted to get in the military. I wanted to go to pharmacy school. I wanted to go to a pharmacy. I wanted to be a pharmacist, whether it was in the military or not. That's fine, but as it is, the Army does not have . . . you know, where they would send me to medical school. They don't have a pharmacy school. They don't send students to pharmacy school. They send them to PA school or medical school. Or they have green and gold programs, which is where they send you to get your four-year degree. Well, pharmacy school requires two years of school prior to the four years. So I wasn't going to be able to do that. I needed to get out.

Then the last two years before I was getting out, as soon as I came back from Afghanistan, I met who I am married to now, the love of my life. And he just happened to be an officer, and that's not allowed in the military. Because of fraternization. So, six weeks after we met, he deployed, and then I deployed. We just . . . we met. You know, we were just out on the town. I was out with my girlfriends. He was out with his guy friends, and we met. And it was love at first sight, and he deployed, and then I deployed. So, we were apart for two years. And then I came home, got out, and we were married four months later. And partially it's probably because I had just come back from Afghanistan. So, I had been gone, and he had been at Ft. Bragg before, and he had been there for a year, the whole time I was gone. [But] I had never known him before. But it turned out that we [had a number of mutual friends]. He didn't work that far from me, although he never worked in my unit. . . . And I wound up working with a lot of people he knew, . . . and one of his really good friends, like, almost his best friend right now, is somebody who, when I had first gone to Ft. Bragg, was my squad leader.

Yes. And my husband, says, you know, one day he looks at his phone, and he's like, "Hey, we're going to go have drinks with this guy. You probably know him. Sergeant so and so." And I was like . . . [laughter] "Wait a minute. They were just at the cook-off with our family. Great people. Great people." So, that was the number two reason why I got out when I did.

I understood how hard this must have been for Krista because the military does not allow marriages between enlisted service members and officers. There are cases where both service members are enlisted and one goes to Officer Candidate School. In these cases there was no fraternization to begin with, which is really the illegal [aspect].

Well, it's not allowed. He would have gotten in trouble. And some way . . . it's kind of like, well, if somebody doesn't like you then they can throw the book at you, and you're in trouble. If you have a chain of command [who] is like, "Well, you know, okay, whatever." And we just went out and got married one day -- It happens all the time, and then the chain of command says, "Well, here's a letter

for your local file," and then as soon as you PCS, there's nothing to it. They don't do anything. Yeah. Well, it just . . . depends. Like if they were both enlisted before. And then she went to OCS. . . . I mean, they're not going to kick somebody out if they [get married], even if me and him had just ran off and got married and then turned our paperwork in and said, "Hey, guess what? I'm married to an officer now." You know, if your chain of command doesn't like you, they could throw the book at you. And if they do like you then you're okay. "Is your Marine husband still in the service?"

He is. He's already at 20 years. So -- He's a lifer. Actually, he's going to get out, and then I'm going to go back in. And he's going to raise the kids, and I'm going to go to work. And I'm going to get 13 years for a retirement check. I'm looking for a direct commission as an officer into a laboratory officer position. . . . I just need the civilian education. . . and the civilian certifications.

I asked Krista what she was studying at USF, and whether it has anything to do with the degree she would need in order to become an officer?

I'm going to get a degree in chemistry, and then we're actually moving to Texas right after I get my degree in chemistry. So, when we go there, I'm going to look into a reserve unit and see if they'll do the direct commission with just my four-year degree. And if they will not then I'm going to do a medical technologist program, which is a year long, and, with that, I'll almost certainly get a direct commission just because . . . I mean, it's competitive, but just because I have a really good GPA, and I have seven years of experience with the military already. So, they're going to really think of me, and I'm a Veteran and everything else.

Krista had great experiences and had come such a long way from where she started. Even though she had temporarily left the Army, she was still in as a family member. She has a calculated plan to return to active duty as an officer and most of it with the help and understanding of her husband. I asked Krista if all of these Army experiences had created who she was today.

Oh, yes. I mean, . . . I've always been a strong, smart woman, but it's definitely made me proud. I'm very proud of what I've done, very proud of what I've done and what I've become in the military, not just giving me the opportunity but developing me into who I am today. I love the military. I am a salesman for the military. I really am. At the same time, I always tell people, "You know what? You've got to get out of it what it takes from you." A lot of people, it drains them or something, you know. I have a cousin that just . . . went in, and he went in for . . . his four years. He got in a little bit of trouble, got an Article 15, which is not that big of a deal in the big picture of it all. And he just . . . had a bad time, and he

got out, and he became an alcoholic for a while. And, you know, . . . you can sit there and blame that on the Army all you want, but the fact of the matter is you've got to get out of it what it gets from you. So, and that's what I did, and that's what I tell people all the time.

I shared with Krista that I have always felt the Army was wonderful for me, too. I believe it provided structured guidelines in which I could grow as an individual. And I look at people who cannot make it in the Army, and they really screw up. And I'm saying, "If you cannot make it in the military, you're going to have a hell of a hard time outside."

Krista strongly concurs:

Yeah. It's not different. . . . I'm trying to get my little brother. He's very, very smart. Because my family was so low income, we were trying to get him to go into [the] Air Force or the Army, the academies or something, West Point, because you don't have to pay [and] you're getting paid to go to college there, and then you're guaranteed a job afterwards. And he said to me [in] one of the emails, he's just like, "I just can't see myself as a soldier." And I wanted [to say], "Whoa. I was not a soldier before I joined. They turn you into a soldier, and it's not a brainwashing process. It's just . . . you're maturing and developing into who you are. You're learning about . . . not just leadership but followership and, you know, the ups and downs. And you learn tact, too, and how to talk to people, you know, in a certain way, at least you hope to."

And there's so many things, you know, that I learned so much later, but, you know, I still learned it. And I still would have used it later. You know, if I had continued to be in the military as an NCO, I still would have, you know, used it at some point. You learn so much. You really do. There's so many instances where you're like, "Well, that's not fair. Why does this officer get to do this?" And then, you know, and it's just like, "Ta-da." You know, the light bulb comes on, and you're like, "Okay." That's how real life is. You know? It's not always fair. If you want it then go and [get it].

If you want to live like that, go and do that. So, I'm telling my brother, "It's a guaranteed job. You can go to any four-year college and what? You're going to go and work at a computer lab somewhere and have a jerkwad as a boss that you have to kiss ass just to do, you know, get a day off or something like that?" He's 17. He just got accepted to the University of Miami. So, we're just waiting on scholarships. We're hoping for Vanderbilt, too. We're crossing our fingers. Neither of our parents [went] to college. Like I said earlier, my mother didn't graduate high school. So, it's just hard, and none of my other sisters . . . my younger sister, one of them was pregnant and married at 16, and the other one was . . . she dropped out of high school. She's got a daughter now, and she works hard. But, you know, they're not going to make much, . . . they're not going to go much further than where my mother went. And my older sister isn't; . . . she just

makes crazy decisions, but she's a good person. My little brother, he's smart. He's so smart, and he's got a determination to study at least, to get good grades. And he has taken classes that will get him toward school. So, he's doing all the volunteer work that people like to see.

It was obvious that Krista was very proud of her brother, but she also expressed how proud she was of her own accomplishments. She shared that no one in her family had succeeded as she had and now it was her turn to help out her little brother. Krista was taking a big chance by getting out of the Army to return as an officer. I asked Krista what she thought she had in common with other non-military women.

You know, I don't see any difference, and it's just because I don't really connect with women. I wouldn't connect with a military woman any better than I would connect with a nonmilitary woman. I'm happy and I'm social, but I'm not one of those connected people that makes lifelong friends. And that has nothing to do with the military, but I do know that there is a difference. I do know that what I've experienced is a lot different than what they've experienced. But then again, I had experienced a lot before I even joined the military.

So, it's not that I can be like, "Well, you know, I was in the military. I've done all this and that." And it's like, no, because civilians go through a lot of stuff, too. We've had five cops in the Tampa/St. Pete area that were killed in the last two months. So, and these . . . you know, they weren't women, but there are women out there that are police officers and firefighters and everything else, too. So, there are . . . you know, everybody . . . there are definitely a lot of courageous women out there. So, that's good.

This particular question that I asked the participants got a lot of resistance when they tried to answer it. It felt to me that my women warriors did not want to believe that they were any different than civilian women. However, when I prompted them with a different approach, they all seemed to let go of their resistance of being different. I asked Krista if she could choose five women to accompany her on a trek to North Georgia in the dark and through the swamps and all that. And at the end of this trip, she would win a million dollars. "Tell me about the five women you would choose?"

"I can't tell you that I would choose military women."

I was really surprised by her answer. I asked her what kind of women she would choose.

Women who could just suck it up and drive on. I don't want to hear complaining. I don't want to hear complaining, you know, not too much. You got to talk about something to pass the time when you're doing some crap like that, you really do, but it can't be like complaining, nagging, "I don't want to do this, ooh, something just crawled up my shorts." I don't know. That would be kind of funny, but the women . . . Survivor show. I don't know that I would ever do that anyways. That's crazy. I slept on the ground enough, but I can't say that the Army or a military woman [would be any better]. I don't know. They might be able to suck it and up drive on.

I've had soldiers that were pretty . . . and that's the great thing about being in the 82nd, is the women all had to be airborne -- at one time. I don't think it's like that anymore because of the operation tempo for deployments. They've had to fill the slot, but at one point, y'all had to be airborne. Everybody had to be airborne. Everybody went to the airborne school, which is grueling. It was three weeks long versus 16 weeks of AIT and nine weeks of basic training, and it was worse in airborne school in the three weeks than all the basic and AIT put together, physically and mentally. It was grueling. . . . I would definitely pick those five women out of most of the women I had deployed with or was stationed with out at Ft. Bragg.

I realized that she had changed her mind, but I wanted to be sure so I asked her, "You'd pull them out of the airborne school?"

I would. I would definitely pull them, especially from my units. All the women that I was [with], especially ones that I grew up in the ranks with, and a couple of the soldiers that I had were pretty tough. They were survivors.

I was very intrigued by Krista's story and I was curious to her experiences down range. I asked Krista about some of her memories that stood out for her and specially some that most women had not experienced.

We came a long way from my first deployment . . . where we had some plywood up and some tires and a bucket to go to the bathroom. That was in Iraq, my deployment. That was in Iraq, yeah. I was in Iraq in February. . . . Well, I wasn't; . . . I was in Iraq in March of 2003. I was in Kuwait in February of 2003.

But [we had] a bucket inside of some tires and some plywood stood up around you, and I was never on the burning duty, but, you know, that's what people did. And now, they have these massive trailers with showers, and, I mean, I didn't take a shower for almost two weeks once, my first deployments. Two weeks, baby wipes and that's it. On a mission, convoying, sleeping on the ground, on a cot, on the trucks. It was men and women. Yeah. It was men and women.

It was a majority of men because at the time in the 82nd, there weren't a lot of women. Even in a medical unit, which is what I was in, where a majority . . . of medics are women. There weren't a lot because you had to be airborne qualified to go through. The last year that I was in the military, they lifted that just because of the deployments, and one of the units that I was in went from having, you know, four or five women out of 80 people in the company to half or more than half women. So. . . the environment definitely changed when that happened, big-time changed.

That unit that I was with, I left that unit to go work in the support operations office in a staff position where I was sitting behind a desk, and I was kind of like a higher headquarters to that company. And all we heard was just, "This girl is sleeping with that girl . . . guy," this and that, and, oh my goodness, it was unbelievable. And it was my last.

I wondered why there was so much sex going on. Was there extreme stress going on? I asked Krista if this was an active area. "Were there a lot of mortar attacks or was it actual fire?"

My last deployment . . . wasn't as active as some of the other places. But there were a couple of good hits, unfortunately, which, with mortars isn't very common just because . . . there's no aiming involved. And a lot of, you know, a lot of the times, they would go, and they wouldn't make it, you know, inside of the wire. And even if you make it inside the wire, there's not usually a lot going on . . . but there were a couple of unfortunate hits at that unit, the last one that I was at. And I was in Afghanistan, which was the time before that, my third deployment. We got mortared all the time, all the time. A couple of times a week, probably. You get your gear on, and you get into a bunker. When we were in Afghanistan, you got your gear on, and you got into a bunker. And, I mean, it's completely different. The measures you take on one camp is going to be the measures you take on another camp because one will have bunkers that are fortified with sandbags, and then the other one has these big, huge, what we call, T-walls, and they're 30 foot high, if not more. I think 30 feet high . . . , yeah. And it's just concrete, and they just stack them up. And that's your wall, and you can just go into your trailer where you're sleeping, and hopefully you're good.

So, my trip to Afghanistan, I was a female medic. So they would send me off with some infantry units. We would get [to go] because they needed female medics. We had missions where we were searching [for] women or providing medical care to women. And so I was in a brigade support battalion. We supported the infantry units. So, I went out on a mission, and I was gone for two or three months with this unit. My first convoy with this unit and we're going from Ghazni to Bagram. We're going from Ghazni to Bagram, and it's like . . . it seemed like it took six hours, but it was probably two or three. And we're coming back, and I have to pee. So I'm like, "Okay. Well, I'm going to go find a berm to go behind. It's not a big deal because I don't know these guys. And Ghazni is up



in the mountains, and it was snowing. It was in the winter. So, snow was all over the ground. I'm like, "Okay, I'm going to go over here." I see a berm, and it was 100 meters out, maybe. And I walk over there, and I had seen some of the shepherds out in the fields walking around, but they were way farther in the distance. And I was just like, "Okay, it's good. The ground is covered in snow. So, I walk out to the berm, and I drop my pants. And I'm about to go pee, and I hear this yelling. And I turn around and the whole convoy, they're all waving their arms, "Red rocks! Red rocks!" Red rocks are painted to show a minefield. A place where there's mines that have not been exploded. I was just like, "Aww." So, I just button up my pants. I did not pee. I walked back in my footprints in the snow all the way back to the convoy, and then I . . . did it right behind the thing. But I was so embarrassed. We got back to the camp, and I hadn't been there for a couple of days when I went out on this mission. And nobody really [knew me] only a couple of people knew me. And already by, like, 4:00 or 5:00 the next morning [when] I was at the gym . . . the unit's commander and everything were laughing at me. And when . . . I wound up leaving, somebody bought me a sign that said "mines" on it. Another guy brought me a rock that was painted red. And I was just like, "Oh my gosh." I never lived that one down.

I asked Krista what she thought were some of the most common issues with women when she was deployed. Were the women different from each other?

There is a [variety]; every type of women that you would see on the civilian side, you see in the military. There's just a wide variety. Even . . . I was a princess. I mean, I would pick up . . . a chest, and I would sling it in the back of the truck, and I would work just as hard as every other guy. But at the end of the day, if I broke a nail, I was like, "Damn."

So, you still have . . . you know, you still have the women that try and get over. They want everybody to do everything for them, and then you have the strong women, the women that . . . I mean, this scares me about going in the military. The women that are out there that, you know, deploy away from their children. I mean, you got to . . . I mean, you really have to give it to them. I mean, they're [serving] and these aren't short deployments. They're not gone for six months. The Marines only deploy for six to eight months or something like that. Air Force even less.

The Army, you're gone -- My husband was deployed for 15 months. There are National Guard units, which I'm a little, you know . . . it's a very . . . with me, it's kind of like, "Well, they're the National [Guard and] in the military, too. I don't care if you're National Guard. You're in the military. Go do your part." But they really get worked over, and especially for a while there. So, getting off of the subject. They deploy for so long away from their children. And there are families that they're both dual military. So, the children have to end up with a family member.

My boss (and this is what I'm looking to do) had children, and her husband was also in the military. They were both deployed. Their children were five and

six. She was a lieutenant colonel. Awesome woman, military oriented. She was, you know, “go, go, go,” “Do this.” Very smart. And I look at her, and I’m like, “How do you, you know, be away from [your family]?” And she had a nanny, and the children were also with their [grand]parents. And I was just like, “Ah,” but then I realize she’s going to retire in a few years. And somebody said, “You really want to be with them when they’re teenagers because they’ll get over it when they’re four, five, or six years old. When they’re teenagers, you can’t fix it all.”

As we began to conclude the interview, I asked Krista what advice she would give a young woman who was thinking of joining the military.

“Think about yourself. Don’t run off and get married in the first couple of years in the military. Think about yourself for the first few years. Don’t worry about, you know, finding somebody,” because so many women do that. They go in, and they’re like, “Oh, I met somebody in AIT, and we got married.” Wait. Do what you got to do for you, and then live your life. Have your family. But, just get out of the Army what it’s getting out of you. It’s taking your time. So, take advantage of what they can get. The medical field, I would definitely go into the medical field because it’s awesome. I can’t imagine. My roommate . . . my last roommate in the military when I was deployed, she was a truck driver. I’m like, “How do you do that?”

I mean, I drove trucks as a medic. I mean, I drove LTV . . . I can’t tell you what they stand for anymore, but they’re big trucks. They’re big trucks. They’re not like that . . . you know, so I drove big trucks. But somebody whose job it is to be a truck driver, I’m like, “Ugh, couldn’t do that.” Maybe . . . I just . . . I like the medical part.

I wondered what Krista’s answer would be to acting helpless or pulling the “girl’s card” as I had seen in my past experiences.

It can get you a lot. It can get you a lot. I had a really good friend, and she just did not belong in the Army. There were two of them, two lieutenants, both females, and both of them are like the smiley, giggly, you know, personable, they’re going to get what they want. And this one is . . . she knows how to keep it in check so that, you know, she keeps herself out of trouble. And this other one doesn’t.

So, she’s like all happy and making friends with . . . you know, she’s a lieutenant making friends with lieutenant colonels all over the place and pulling her little [girl card] and it’s not that she purposely was pulling her girl card, but she was definitely not somebody who needed to be in the military. And she is not in the military anymore. She was a great person, but she did not need to be in the military.

Well, here’s the thing. They are some limits that women have, and there are some limits that some men have. And . . . it’s funny. I’m in college and [in]

my English Composition II class, we had to write about an issue, and I wrote about women in the military. And with my personal experience, I know men who have passed off their aid bag because it was too much for them to carry on a mission, when I had females that would never do that. So it's just . . . it's a matter of, you know, playing a weak card. You know, it's not, "I'm a female." It's weak. "I'm weak." That's what it is. But we had [some play the] weak card. It's a weak card. I had a squad leader who once told me, "You're either a soldier that gets up and slings chests," which is, you know, real loading stuff, you know, "or you're a soldier who needs to be told to do it." And so, from the get-go, I was like, "You know what? I'm never going to be the person that, you know, has to be told." If I know things . . . need to get done, I'm just going to get up and start doing it. But you have a lot of women in general that are going to be like, "You know. It's heavy." So, it's automatically going to go . . . and I get that in my college. I was . . . in an undergraduate research laboratory. We were standing it up. So, we were getting all these boxes of new equipment in, and I had just had surgery. And it was . . . a couple of months earlier, but I was still healing, and I couldn't lift anything heavy. But it didn't look like I had surgery, but I just . . . I couldn't lift anything. And I was talking to . . . my professor, and I told him that I had had surgery and that I couldn't lift anything heavy. And I felt bad because everybody else is carrying everything in there, and I'm sitting here saying this. And he looked at me like, "Oh, okay." You know, like, "Oh, the girl can't lift anything." And I was just like, "Oh, you don't even know." I felt bad, but . . . yeah, so everywhere you go, get the girl card.

Krista was a delight to interview. She was decisive and very in-tuned with the military way of life. She was very amusing as she shared some of her experiences in the Army even though some of them were very scary. I was also extremely impressed by the change she is taking in leaving the Army in order to come back as an officer. The military is very unforgiving and can change rules as needed, which may create a problem for Krista's return. Krista is a great example of a tenacious woman who went in at a young age and was able to turn her life around and become personally and militarily successful by staying on track and seeking out what was available to her. Many themes emerged from Krista's interview, which were reduced to categories such as: family, mentoring, money, leadership, education, patriotism, stressors, war zone experience, self-awareness,

self-improvement, women warriors, military relationships, military issues, and motherhood.

### **Alice**

Alice is a 31-year-old Caucasian Major who is presently in the U.S Military Reserves. She went into the active army in 2001 at the age of 21. She served four and a half years, and has been in the reserves for the last four years. She is third generation army. Her grandfather graduated from West Point in 1932, and retired after 30 years as a full Colonel. Her father graduated from West Point in 1957, and retired after 32 years as a full Colonel. Alice's mother was a teacher for The Department of Defense and even though her mother was not in the military she worked alongside her husband. Alice is the first female in her family to serve in the military service, and she plans to make it a career until she makes Colonel or Brigadier General. Alice stated what prompted her to join the service:

Pretty much my father's influence [prompted me]. I think because that was his known path of career, he was most familiar with that, so that's what he encouraged the most. So I did ROTC in college and actually ended up really liking it, so I continued on with it and then stayed on until now.

For the last 10 year, Alice has been in the active army and presently in the reserves. She has had numerous jobs during these years:

I was a platoon chemical leader, a platoon leader. Then I was a brigade chemical officer, so I worked with the S-3. Staff. Yeah. And logistics. And then I switched over to military intelligence and became an executive officer for an ACE company, which basically they are the skiff for the brigade where all the intelligence happens.

So executive officer for a company, Size Element, and then after that, I was a liaison officer serving with an international unit in Iraq. And then I went back to working for S-3 to help basically with redeployment of the battalion. And then after that when I got home, I got out of the active-duty Army and worked with the civil affairs unit. I was their S-2, which is their intelligence office, helping keep track of clearances and things like that. And then I went back on

active duty as a reservist. . . . At the National Ground Intelligence Center, there is an office that works to track IEDs in Iraq, so I worked with them.

I asked Alice for clarification concerning how the tracking of the IEDs:

Improvise Explosive Devices, yeah. And then after that, I moved to England and became an analyst. . . . Well, it was under European command but the Africa section for the European command before it became Africa Commands. And while I was an analyst, I also became a branch chief because they didn't have enough officers, so they needed people in charge. So I helped with that. And then once they were able to fill all the billets, I went back to being an analyst.

During this interview I asked Alice which of her many jobs was the most satisfying or which would she either do a again or not do again:

Definitely platoon leader because I like the camaraderie in leading a large group, which, funny enough, they were either my age or older because I was just fresh out of college. That was probably the best job I had. And then I guess a brigade chemical officer is about the worst job you can have. It's just extremely boring, and nobody likes going in and out of gas chambers. So you have a job that people don't really care for either. It's kind of like being a dentist I guess.

I mean, our group, we were one platoon out of six, and ours was the best one. Everybody got along really well. The girls were treated kind of like the sisters of the group, so the boys took really good care of them. They were very protective of the girls, which was nice because the other platoons . . . I don't know. Somehow they ended up with the problem children, and people always ended up fighting. Everybody wanted to be in our group. I don't know. I wasn't able to hand-pick people, but somehow I ended up with the best group of people. And there was a rotation because we were there for a year, and people were constantly rotating in and out. And everybody just got along really well. In fact, a bunch of us still keep in touch.

I reminded Alice that she had mentioned to me that she had gone to jump school and I asked her to speak more to that experience.

Yeah. That was fun. I had to beg to go to it because the Army is really funny about [it]. . . . For some reason, you have to play . . . what am I thinking? Not devil's advocate but you have to kind of play [the game]. If you want to go somewhere, they won't send you, but if you pretend you don't want to go somewhere, then they will send you. So I had to basically make [believe that] nobody wants to go to airborne school. That was the funniest thing about it, and I had to beg to go. But once I was there, yeah, it was really good.

I always keep in extremely good shape, so physically, it wasn't challenging at all to me. I guess what was more significant was back when I was in college and I

had to go to a leadership course out in Fort Louis that all the ROTC officers have to go to or cadets have to go to. I worked out to the extremes, and when I got there, it was really rewarding because all the guys wanted me on their team because they knew [what] I could do. . . . I mean we had to succeed. It wasn't like, "Get the cute girl on the team." They had to succeed in specific obstacles, and they knew that I could do pull-ups and I could hold my own. So that, within itself, was really rewarding because I could see the hard work that I had done pay off.

And then by the time I got to airborne school, it really wasn't [too challenging] I work out all the time and I was pretty disciplined. . . . Airborne school is very individual-based. It's not team-oriented, so it's really up to yourself if you could pass or not. And there were a couple of runs, and you have to do pull-ups and things like that. But it wasn't anything that really fazed me, but it was a lot of fun. I mean it was exciting.

I think growing up before going to airborne school, you look around and not that many women have airborne wings. I also wanted to go to Air Assault School, but my commander in Korea was a downright jerk. . . . I don't know. He just chose to not care for me too much. I don't know. That was the only time I think I've ever, ever in my career run into any kind of form of sexism, but he was just a complete jerk to me. So when I wanted to go to air assault school, he wouldn't let me. So I ended up giving the slots to my soldiers, which ended up being rewarding. That was good, but it's still really irritating. . . . probably because he didn't go himself. I mean there was no legitimate reason, absolutely none. The guy was horrible, absolutely horrible. A horrible commander but Korea has a lot of horrible commanders, so I'm very glad I left there. But airborne school, the girls there hold their weight. They did the pull-ups just like I did. I don't remember any failing out for any reason. There was definitely a very small percentage. But there really isn't a need for women to go anyway because women aren't supposed to be going to combat, and the whole point of airborne is to jump into combat. So it's kind of funny that we're allowed to go.

Alice was very open and direct. She had made blueberry muffins and offered me some along with some hot tea. We were both very relaxed and in-tune with each other as Alice shared her military experience with me. We had originally set the interview for an earlier date but Alice had been called away to a conference. However, when she returned, she quickly contacted me and we began the interview. The first of the questions was "How successful do you believe you are in the service?"

Really well. I think the reserves, in the reserves, even as active reserves, you are treated more as an adult. So I think you're able to be more successful in the reserves. You're also able to pick and choose which jobs you want to do, whereas

the active-duty world . . . I don't know. From my perspective, this is just my experience. Not everyone would agree with me, but you're almost confined to a post. I mean you get to a certain post and you kind of just want to stay there. So you have to be really forward-leaning and proactive about finding jobs at different posts and moving around.

Keeping in mind that Alice had originally enlisted in the Active Army, I was curious why she had only stayed for four and a half years. She was presently in the Army Reserves and working as a civilian Analyst:

I absolutely hated it. My experience in Korea was horrible. It was absolutely horrible. And then I went to Bragg, and I loved Bragg. But I had pretty much already made up my mind after coming back from Iraq, which I had a good tour, that I wanted to try something different. But I will always stay in the reserves because I still love the Army. And then come to find out, I love the reserves. I absolutely love them. So even when I go on to get married and if I choose to leave my job, I will still stay in the Reserves.

I asked Alice about her experiences in Iraq. I asked her whether she had experienced any fighting or seen anyone get hurt, and whether she witnessed “scary” events.

No. Actually, I didn't. I did a couple of convoys. I flew a lot back and forth to Baghdad on C-130s, but I also flew in helicopters in the Bozer (phonetic sp.) area, which is in the south. And I flew helicopters in Baghdad as well. Scary? No. I don't know. I guess I didn't have the right head on. Because there was one flight where I had to get from the embassy back to [the airfield]. . . . And the embassy was really nice. But I had to get from the embassy back to the airfield, and they said “Well, we don't have any direct flights. You're going to have to fly basically for the next two to three hours around Baghdad and you'll eventually get there.” And I didn't think anything of it. I was like “Oh, I'm going to go home. I'm going to get in my own bed. Yes. Yes. And then afterwards, I was like “oh.” Because you're just a flying target for a while.

Yeah. The pilots were great. I mean they go high, high, high up in the air and then come back down. But it was beautiful. I got to see almost all of Baghdad. The moon was a full moon that night. I remember it clearly. It was just beautiful. After I landed, I kind of thought what the hell did I just do? . . . And it was really funny, too, because I got into the helicopter [with] the pilot, everything was going. You know, the operations have to continue on. So there's no stopping and chatting, so I couldn't hear anything. But he looked back and I looked up, and it was one of the warrant officers I had worked with in Korea who I hadn't seen in like three to four years. And it was just that split second we were like “Yeah.”

Yeah. He was one of the funny ones. He was a great guy. And he left Korea to go to pilot school. So yeah. That was funny. But yeah, it was good. I really enjoyed my tour in Iraq. I would go back to Iraq any day of the year. I would not go back to Korea. I would choose Iraq every time.

I was in Bagdad for the last three to four months. I'm trying to think. I got there as an executive officer, so I had to help deploy the unit. So once all that was situated and all the people were in their tents and stuff, then they realized they had individual augmentees. They had to assign different people to different posts, and this one was down with the intelligence unit office. So they sent me because they knew I lived overseas and understood the concept of interacting with foreigners. And so yeah, they picked me, and it was good. It was one of the best evaluations I have ever gotten. So it was good.

I was very excited by Alice's experience in Iraq and Korea. She had been very open and somewhat excited to tell me her experiences, whether good or bad. Alice had almost answered my next question but I wanted to hear her rationale for staying in the Army reserves, especially after having such a negative experience in Korea. "Why did you stay even after your bad experience in Korea?"

I don't know. The best sense I can describe is it's in my blood. I'm third-generation. It's very familiar to me. I know anywhere I go . . . I mean it's very American in the same sense. Like if you run into somebody in the military or even American across seas, you're instantly know everything about the person and very familiar to you. For instance, I went to this conference just recently in D.C., and of course once everyone starts being friends, during the breaks and stuff you start talking about, oh, what service were you in.

Well, two of the guys were in the Army, previously in the Army, and I had to drive from D.C. two and a half hours to another location, which they happened to be driving. There was a horrible snow storm, and they were like, "We'll take you. We'll take you." And I said, "Oh, that's so nice." And after being very stubborn, I'm like, "But I have to stop by this saddlery shop because I want to get my horse some things." And they just kind of looked at me. I was like, "I don't want to hold you up. I know you have to get home."

So I'm standing in line at this place because I happened to mention the town, and somebody taps me on the back. And I turn around and it was them. My heart had stopped because literally by the time I made it to the saddler shop, I just wanted to get out of the car for a second because there was so much snow. And I rented the cheapest car thinking there's not going to be any snow. And I was swerving all over the place.

And here, these people I don't even know, were like "No, we wanted to make sure you get home safe." And they're both married. They're both older guys. Just really, you know, it was like the Army camaraderie.



So we basically drove back to Charlottesville in a convoy. Like I was in the middle and one was in the front and one was in the back, and it was perfect because I didn't have to think about anything. I knew I would get home safely. It's just that kind of warmth. And I'm naturally kind of bossy, so I like being a leader. And I enjoy the leadership of it. I enjoy helping people out. I enjoy helping out the enlisted. I enjoy helping out people who don't have my rank who are being stepped on by other leaders who don't know what they're doing. I enjoy helping those people out. I enjoy making progress and seeing what I can do with a group of people.

Alice showed such dedication to the Army and to her leadership style. I wondered if she had observed this dedication and leadership in other women warriors. I asked whether she had observed other women warriors being treated unfairly:

I'm a very strong personality, so I naturally go to people who . . . I think I naturally attract and are naturally attracted to not strong personalities. Weak ones, especially in a military role, don't . . . I don't know. If somebody was being taken advantage of, then I offer my sympathy and my advice. If I can, I'll even step into the situation and try to take care of them. But if they're bringing it on themselves, then I really don't want anything to do with them because reputation is so much in the military, unfortunately, that I've learned my lesson as a young second lieutenant not to associate myself with people like that.

So yeah. I mean, I work out as hard as I possibly can because I enjoy it, but that puts me in a different category. I'm not elevated in rank, so that puts me in a different category. So I don't know. I haven't really . . . I think the only time I've seen women treated . . . I can't even say that. In Korea, the younger enlisted were not taken advantage of, I guess in a sense, by more senior NCOs, not even the soldiers really. But again, that was not in my platoon. My platoon was like completely taken care of.

And I'd step in if I saw something that was out of whack and make sure that one of the other NCOs would take care of the matter, and they always would. So it wasn't anything dangerous or uncalled for.

I asked Alice if she thought that some of the junior officers or younger Non-commissioned officers would get taken advantage of because of their position. Is there a rank difference or a difference between the services?

Well, officers are expected to hold their own. Yeah. So I'm trying to think. All the enlisted girls . . . I guess maybe I've just been really fortunate. All the female soldiers I encounter enlisted are strong personalities. I mean, you tend to get that in the Army, you really do. I can't even --I mean this is my first joint assignment, and I really feel like . . . And this is just my perception. I feel like maybe enlisted

girls walk around with their soldiers hunched. They look very insecure and not . . . Yeah. There's definitely a difference among the branches. The Marine Corp girls are fantastic. They walk around with a lot of confidence, for the most part, the few I've interacted with. They're more like the Army girls. Air Force girls tend to be a little bit cocky, I think. . . .

But all the Air Force girls I've run into are very good girls, outgoing, confident. I think the Navy girls are probably the ones that I would say . . . The officers are definitely confident. It's the enlisted that seem to be the most insecure. But yeah. There's definitely a difference among them. Honestly, I'd have to seriously think because I don't remember any female that I've met that is in the Army, officer or enlisted, that hasn't been able to hold their own. There was even this cute, little, tiny E5 in my platoon you thought would be as shy as . . . She's very shy, but she got up there. Like she impressed the heck out of the boys. Like she got up there and did everything they physically could do. She could run faster than them. And if you just met her, it would be really easy to just think "Oh, yeah, whatever," but when it came down to hard work, she knew she could do everything, if not more, than the boys could.

I shared with Alice that I had similar experiences with Army women. I had interviewed an Army Captain for my Pilot study while she was in Iraq. She had shared some stories of how she was leading some of the convoys in Iraq and some of the things she saw. Her stories were eye-openers but she told them matter-of-factly, even with negative emotions:

Yeah. Army girls are really unique. I'm really glad I chose Army. If I had to pick weak women, I don't know. There was this one lieutenant I worked with at Bragg who was incredibly insecure, not very well-kept in terms of hygiene, but she still somehow . . . And I didn't witness this myself, but I know other people did. She still turned out to be a strong leader in her own way. She found her way and was able to be effective even though like from a personal point of view, I don't know. I didn't think she was that well-kept. She was definitely a very sweet, sweet girl, but yeah, I don't know. I can't say I've met any weak women in the Army. I'd have to think about it.

Alice was on a roll, telling her story as well as the stories of some of her warrior friends.

She was so easy to speak with. She was animated but direct and friendly. I asked Alice how the military shaped the person she is today:

Well, it definitely has probably enhanced everything that was already there because I am my father's daughter. I think my aunt can attest to the fact that I've always been very outspoken and had a somewhat in-charge attitude. And I know definitely at home everyone is like . . . Not often. I mean fortunately it's not that

often at all. He has made one or two comments of “Okay. Let's take off your officer's hat. You're not in the office right now.” But I do have the take-charge attitude with pretty much everything, and that's why I need to learn how to relax at home. But no. I think it's done great things for me. It's made me into the person I am today, so I can't complain at all.

I asked Alice if she would encourage her daughter to join the service as did her father and grandfather for her.

Well, yeah. If they went to school in America, I would highly encourage ROTC. Not like my father did [when] one semester I decided not to do it and he drove two and a half hours that night to take me out to dinner to talk me back into it. I wouldn't do that, but especially ROTC in college, it lays the roots for some strong leadership. And if they liked it and enjoyed it, then I would encourage them to go on with it. Definitely encourage the Reserves at the very least, but I wouldn't push it. I certainly wouldn't dismiss it just because I have a daughter, and I certainly wouldn't push it if it was a son. But I would highly encourage it because I think serving your country is extremely important. Giving back to the people around you. I think that's extremely important for your country and then also as building values and morals in your own personal life.

Alice was very forthcoming about what she would like for her daughter, if she had one someday. I had a wonderful interview with Alice and I noted that much of it was due to the connection we had established. I asked Alice what she thought she had in common with non-military women:

That's the thing. I was one of those kids in high school who as the field hockey player and from the nice neighborhood, but I still had [and] I wanted very much to have friends from every genre. I mean the nerdy kid. I mean I was friends with everyone. I just like that. I like the ability to interact with everyone and not keep to one particular setting. I'm sorry. Ask me again. So I choose to . . . Like for instance, when I went to officer basic school, I made sure that I became friends with the wives of the guys that I went to class with. I wanted to interact with women not necessarily in the military. And I choose to have friends . . . I have a group now of friends that are in the military and aren't in the military or had military experience. I don't need to stay confined to that specific area. And they all turn out to be strong women anyway. I mean, my riding instructor, who I think is a great person, she's a very strong woman and has never had any military experience at all. Another one of my friends is in the FBI, and she hasn't ever been in the military. So yeah. That's just part of my work life.

I reminded Alice that her FBI woman friend is somebody who works in a high agency with men. And I would think that her riding instructor is somebody who is a strong person, too. I asked her, “What if she was putting together a trip and she could invite four or five of her girlfriends, and they were going someplace like to the Amazon or to the desert, someplace they weren't sure how they were going to get there or get out. Who would you consider putting into a group for this challenging trip?”

Oh, yeah. If it was something challenging like that, then yeah. I know a couple of my girlfriends in the Army that would very much be . . . One, they would love it because it was an adventure. And two, I know they would be perfectly capable of coming out of the situation. But I would never exclude. Because all of my civilian friends are very strong, strong-minded women. So I think I could probably choose any one of them to be honest.

I told Alice that she seems to be surrounded by strong women regardless of whether they're in the military or in the FBI, CIA, DIA, NSA, or any of the A's.

I think my friends who aren't in the military could function very well in the military. They just weren't given the opportunity that I was. So, I mean, I get a sense of very much respect from them, which is always encouraging. Because I have a friend who used to walk Benning a lot. My dog. Sorry. And she's got a very strong personality. And I've got friends at home who have nothing to do in the military. My neighbor, who is fantastic, very strong personality.

I asked Alice what recommendations she had for any woman who wants to come into the military or maybe even especially the Army. What advice would she give them? What to do, what not to do, and how to succeed in the military as a woman.

First of all, make sure it's something you really want to do. Lesson from my experiences. And how to succeed. I think a lot of strength comes from doing something that you want to do. I would never, one, play the fact that you're a female. Don't ever act like the cripple, and don't ever use being a female as a means of getting something or getting things a certain way. As an excuse. Absolutely not. That's just embarrassing. Try not to cry because that's embarrassing, too. I've never cried. I'm not saying that from experience, but when girls do, it's pretty embarrassing.

I asked Alice if she had ever cried in front of other military people?

“Yeah. I mean, I guess don't show your weakness.”

“Men cry and show their weaknesses sometimes.”

Yeah. You wouldn't see that so much in the military. It's not bad to [cry]. I'm not saying it's bad to at all, but I guess just don't play [it] up. Be your own self. I've never been conscious of the fact that I'm a female, ever. I've never let that hold me back.

All women who I've seen take on that concept have succeeded greatly, even the ones who aren't necessarily the best runners in the world. Just try your best is really what . . . As long as people see you trying, you're going to succeed. If you're not trying and you're complaining or whatever, then don't.

The other thing that might be slightly controversial is I'm not a big fan of going into spaces where I don't . . . I think women do have limits. Not all of them. Some might actually be able to do these things, but for me personally, I have no desire to be in the infantry. That's not a place that I want to be. I think that men do it perfectly well. But I know there are some women out there who probably could do it. But I guess knowing your place as well. Knowing what you're good at.

Like for instance, I like military intelligence because I enjoy international relations. I enjoy writing. I enjoy researching, reading constantly, and learning. So know yourself as well so you know which area to go in because there's so much to choose from in the Army. I mean there's . . . so many options really.

And another thing. I would highly encourage doing military-specific Army, especially after college because it lays a foundation for so many things in the future. Understanding leadership, understanding people and dynamics. You're not going to get as much people experience in other services as you are in the Army. Just being a platoon leader, had I gotten out after that, that was just an amazing experience within itself. Or even just going enlisted. Teamwork, it teaches you teamwork. It teaches you all kinds of things. It's such a beneficial environment.

I asked Alice about women warriors who don't succeed. What has been her experience?

Well, I mean they probably chose something that maybe they shouldn't be doing or they lost their confidence somewhere along their way. I had horrible leadership in Korea. One advice I'd give, which is hard to do, pick your boss because after my first year, I said, “You know what, that's it. I know this sounds absurd, but I am going to pick my bosses from here on out.” And I did, and I've had a fabulous time from then on. I've had excellent mentors because Army isn't like it used to be.

Every officer was assigned a mentor, and it was the senior officer's duty to find somebody to mentor. That has expired, gone away. I don't know why. I think it was definitely a voluntary thing, so it was never any regulation. But that's gone away, so it's up to you now to be a proactive one. And I think I'm from a

very proactive generation, to be honest. I think most people, especially women I know in the military, have sought out somebody to be their mentor, and that makes a huge difference.

I mean, it was really frustrating in Korea. That was my first assignment, being in charge of a group of people who are my age or older and then [having] a platoon sergeant who was this crusty old dude who hated Korea [and] didn't probably care much for women. He was just really difficult to work with, and I had to figure out ways . . . And I enjoyed the challenge, although it was frustrating, of having to get him to do . . . And at the same time grow up because I was still a kid and try and figure out, okay. Not only is this Korea, but this is a job that I have to do.

So, I mean, it was an eye-opening experience. And then to have people around you that hated being there, were difficult to work with, I mean it was just really demoralizing. The only thing that I enjoyed about that place was the people who worked for me. And I don't even like to say that. I think we worked as a team.

But yeah. If you can be weary of who you work for. And if you end up working for somebody who is not very pleasant . . . Finally, I got it by the end of the year. I realized. I went on an exercise, and a different battalion requested our platoon. And that lieutenant colonel was the most loved lieutenant colonel on the entire pen flat. He was just this wholesome, very down-to-earth, awesome leader, very comfortable in his own shoes, and he gave me an award because he had really appreciated what we had done for him.

It took an entire year to be appreciated. And so I actually went to his office before I left Korean and just said, "I really appreciate everything you've done. It's meant the world to me." Our company had a horrible reputation. I explained my background and my situation, and I thought it was appropriate to voice to him what he is doing is excellent because I don't think a lot of people get positive feedback when they're doing positive things. So I assume he was touched.

But at that point, I would have done anything to be in his battalion, but I had just finished. So I was able to give him that feedback, which was good. So if you end up working for somebody that's horrible, then try your best to seek out somebody who is [a better mentor] because in the Army, you can't really pick who you work for, but you there's plenty of leaders around. You can probably pick somebody out.

I told Alice that the good ones can be found, and you can see that there's light at the end of the tunnel and that not everybody is a bad leader. Alice was a very exciting woman to interview. She is a natural leader and seemed to be in great shape. I was very impressed by her Air Borne training and some of the stories she shared. Being the first military female in the family, Alice has to uphold the family legacy but it's obvious she will have

no problems doing it. Of all her experiences, it was a shame she had such a terrible experience in Korea with the leadership. Alice is an excellent example of my conceptual assumption of a woman who grew up in a military family and worked to leave the active Army because of poor leadership. It was her love for the military and patriotism that brought her back to serving in the Army reserves. Many themes emerged from Alice's interview, which were reduced to categories such as: mentoring, sexism/harassment/sexual assault, patriotism, education, stressors, leadership, self-awareness, war zone experience, self-improvement, women warriors, military relationships, and military issues.

### **Carolyn**

Carolyn is a 40 year old Colonel (O-6) in the Texas Guard. She joined the Guard at 17 because she had always known she would be in the military one way or the other. Her father was an Air Force enlisted career man and her two oldest brothers also joined the military: one went to the Marine Corps and the other to the Army Guard. Both brothers put in their time and left the service. Carolyn wanted to go to college and the Air Guard afforded her the time to obtain her degree; she was considered a traditionalist, drilling one weekend per month:

*Traditional* meaning part-time, you know, at the time, especially the one weekend a month, two weeks of training through the year. I joined. I was enlisted, went to basic training and tech school and then was traditional after that. And went to college. When I enlisted, I enlisted under some tuition assistant programs and the G.I. Bill, so I had some financial help with college.

But while I was in college, college was my full-time job. I had a part-time job on the side, too, in the Guard, which was fairly decent income . . . or part-time income for a young person. And then I actually spent a lot of my summers, college summers, traveling with the Guard, you know, working, kind of earning some money for the rest of the year, if you will, on training. So [I] traveled a lot in my younger years, all over the world. It was a lot of fun.

During this time Carolyn was also working in her civilian career:

Well, I started out. I was, of course, a college student. Then when I graduated from college I was a social worker. I worked in the Department of Human Services, Child Protective Services. Worked in state jobs as basically the welfare department, if you will, the common vernacular but working with folks who were receiving public assistance. And then I went to grad school, and I was going to grad school and working full time and still part time in the Guard and enlisted. And while I was in grad school, I actually got an opportunity to get commissioned.

And so that's when I went and got commissioned and left the enlisted force. Got a commission while I was on active duty for a while and training for a commission. Then came back to a traditional status again, militarily. But still doing the same type of work I had done enlisted in the military, but now I was commissioned. So actually in the same career field. A little difference because you're officer versus enlisted but same type of career field, but still very different from what I did in the civilian world. So it's kind of refreshing in that sense that they were . . . You know, sometimes you may be an accountant in the military and an accountant in the civilian world, but I was totally different.

As I listened to Carolyn's experiences I was very impressed by her determinism for her future. She had a plan to become educated and knew that she would have to find a way to do it herself. I asked Carolyn if her father was surprised that she joined the Guard:

No. My folks, it was kind of interesting. My older brother and I had decided somewhere along the way that we were going to go to college. We were first-generation college, so my parents didn't have that experience and didn't really know how to guide us probably, to be honest with you. But at the same time, [they] knew that we didn't have the money to pay for college and kind of fell in that middle income bracket where you couldn't really qualify for financial aid but you didn't make enough money to go to college. So we knew that we would have to do something. So that's one of the reasons I joined the Guard.

Now, in actuality, . . . because I was only 17, my parents had to sign for me, and my mother was very, very resistant. She was resistant because I remember her telling me . . . (and this was 1983) she was concerned because she didn't think that females in the military had a very good reputation or got a very good rap, and she was concerned about that. And did I know what I was doing and blah, blah, blah.

My dad wasn't as concerned, even though he was in the military. I think he was just kind of . . . I wouldn't say he was proud, but he wasn't opposed to it. I think, like anybody, he had a little bit of concern. So I finally convinced them to sign for me. My mom was the hardest one. And that allowed me to go ahead and enlist. Because, like I said, being 17 you have to have your parents sign for you. But I don't think either of them thought that I would still be here today. They



knew I was going to get some tuition assistance and maybe do my time and then move on, and in all honesty, that's kind of what I thought, too.

I wondered what Carolyn's parent were feeling about her many years of service.

Oh, love it. Love it. I mean obviously I've made a career of it. You know, about two and a half years ago, I came onboard full time, 100 percent full time, but I had been traditional for 25 years. That meant I had a civilian career and civilian world and then the Guard was on top of that. And I was traditional most of the time. I mean I did deploy during Desert Storm, and I did deploy for hurricane relief. I have not yet deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom, mainly because of my position. It sounds weird, but as you kind of go up the ladder, you are less needed in the field.

But I was kind of maintaining two different things. So as I progressed in my civilian career, my progression in the military grew somewhat congruent even though totally separate paths. But very proud. I mean my parents have been there for every promotion and all those kinds of things. So they are good people.

Overall it was obvious that Carolyn had made a conscious decision to join the military.

However, I was curious if it was just to get an education. I asked her what prompted her to join the service besides educational benefits.

Yeah. I think patriotism was probably the first, to be honest with you. Because I didn't even know there was such things as tuition benefits and G.I. Bills until I started looking. I just knew I wanted to be associated with the military. And I told you earlier, my parents weren't real school and what that meant, because if I could go back and do it again, I probably would have looked at one of the service academies. Because my whole point was I wanted to go to college, and I just didn't know enough about it. Even though I was in a high school where there were a lot of military kids and actually have had some of my peers, male peers primarily, that got accepted into various academies, I just didn't know what to do or how to go about it back then.

And I mean I certainly had the grades in high school. I probably had the credentials to do it if I had known how to go about doing it, and I just didn't.

With 28 years in the Air Guard, Carolyn, who holds the rank of Colonel or O-6, shared with me that in the enlisted ranks the equivalent would be Chief Master Sergeant E-9 and it is very hard to make the rank because of the limited positions that are available for that specific rank:

So it's kind of like the joke is the E9, which is the chief master sergeant in the Air Force, is basically equivalent to the O6, which is a colonel, which is what I am. So it's probably off a little bit, but I think there's less than one percent of Air Force folks are chiefs. That's the highest enlisted rank. And less than .8 percent of Air Force officers ever become O6. So it's about the same percentage wise.

“Is there a difference within the genders?”

I would say, percentage wise, probably, but only because . . . this is probably my perception, but I think it's a reality, too. Many, many females get out of the service before they ever have the opportunity to obtain those ranks, and I think it's just like in corporate America. Females may start off, but a lot of times, once they begin having families, then they may choose to no longer be in the service.

And I think the military is maybe in some ways more (Indiscernible) because you always have the possibility of being deployed or the possibility of having to leave your family. That's a lot of social pressure on women. So when I look around in my wing, for example, there just aren't that many women that are in the positions that will be the next O6's.

I mean you have less females in the military than you do males anyway, but it's just kind of an interesting phenomenon. And you see that because you look and you say, “Okay. Well, there's a female captain who is sharp as all get out, and she's got a bright future. And hopefully she can manage to stay in and manage the family and the deployments and everything in order to achieve those ranks.”

I have to be honest with you. I think the fact that I am single and the fact that I don't have children has made it easier for me because I haven't had to make those sacrifices. And I also think it's stereotypically easier for males, because a lot of times the men have the wives at home that can take care of the children and the family while they are deployed. I mean that is stereotypical, but it is a reality as well.

And there are some females that have the husbands that can do the same, and you see a lot of females in the military that are also married to military members who are male, and at some point in those careers, in order for them to stay together, it's almost like one has to give it up. And it usually would be the female. So I don't know if I have statistics that show the differences. I mean, I think you could find the statistics. I mean it's pretty obvious.

I asked Carolyn, with all her years of experience, whether she had done many different jobs in the Guard. I also asked her, in all the years as enlisted and as an officer, what have been some of her jobs that she has done for the Guard? “I'm sure you've done many different jobs. What have been some of the more exciting ones, or least exciting?”

Well, the most exciting [was] when I was enlisted, I was in the aerial port. The aerial port, it's a unit that basically . . . My wing flies cargo aircraft and ticket or

C-130's. So you have to have folks that load the airplanes up and unload them. That doesn't sound real exciting, but it actually kind of is. You know, you don't just put stuff on a pallet and load it onto the back of an airplane. There's a little bit of science that goes with that, too. But still, it was fun. And when you look at cargo aircraft that transports goods all over, not only in the United States but all over the world, especially in terms of the war going on, then you see that it can be pretty exciting.

I told you earlier when I was enlisted in college, I spent the summers kind of traveling. Well, that's what I'd do. I'd go on orders. I spent time in Spain at a Spanish Base, and I worked as an aerial port. So that was all kind of exciting. My first ten years as an enlisted person, I was in Germany and England and Spain and Korea and Hawaii and Alaska. I mean, just all over the world. I was in Germany three times. And so it was a lot of travel. It was a lot of fun. When I got commissioned and I was in the same career field as an officer. So as an officer, you tend to be obviously more leadership- and management-directed but also bigger picture. So I wasn't just an aerial porter. I was the commander of an aerial port flight, which again, you do the same career field, but if you imagine the enlisted core being sort of the workforce and the officer core being the management force. So the focus changed. And then as I progressed up, I stayed within that, and this kind of expanded as you moved up in rank. You just kind of expand over what you do. Like right now, I'm a group commander, so in my group is the old logistics running a squatter (Indiscernible) your daughters in and that. That's supply and vehicle management and vehicle maintenance and transportation management and air trans. It's a big conglomerate squadron, fuels. That's one squadron. I also received a cop squadron with security forces, which those are all cops. And the civil engineer squadron, which is all of our facility managers and plumbers and electricians and builders and contractors and the force support, which is your personalist, your services folks. The communications flight, which is all of your base com infrastructure. So I don't work in those career fields, obviously, because I'm at the management level, but I oversee and provide leadership to all of those different flights and squadrons. So the mission's fort group is basically everything in the wing other than operations, which is flying the aircraft, maintenance, which is maintaining the aircraft, and the medical group. Everything else that goes into running an installation falls pretty much under the missions support group. So it's a big, big, exciting place to be. I've learned a whole lot. Because you think like cops. What do cops do? They go to the airplanes and they let you on the base. Well, obviously there's a lot more to that. Until you're kind of in it, you don't really see it. So it's kind of fun. I've had a great time.

With all these great opportunities and experiences, I wandered what else Carolyn could have done. I asked her if she felt she missed out on some other experiences:

Oh, yeah. When I was young and enlisted, this is in the '80's, mind you, the first thing I wanted to do was . . . well, two things: one is instead of unloading the

back of the airplane, I wanted to fly the airplane. Well, C-130s at the time were considered combat aircraft, and women could not fly. They couldn't. They could not fly 130s. So that was out.

So the next thing was I wanted to go to what they call rigor school, and that's where you could pack parachutes. Because when you put things out the back of a cargo aircraft, when you drop them out, obviously there's huge parachutes attached to them so they could land. Well, packing those chutes is called rigor, and that was in Army School. And guess what? Females weren't allowed to do that.

And even at one point in the late '80's, I was again a member of the aerial port squadron, mobile aerial port squadron. They came real close to denying women . . . to be in mobile aerial port squads anymore because, again, they were considered combat-related. Again, this is mid to late '80's, so remember the timeframe.

So a lot of the things that I thought would be cool to do, I was actually not allowed to do because I was female. And then by the time you were like in the late '80's, early '90's when they started allowing females to fly the C-130s, I basically was on a different career path, was old. There is an age limit to be able to go to flight school, 26, and I was older than that. So the opportunity was no longer there.

So those are the things that were associated with the unit that I was in and the aircraft that I was in that I thought would have been neat. And probably I think I would have been successful at it, but I just don't know because I didn't get the opportunity.

The opportunity was not because you couldn't do it or wouldn't do it. It was because the military at that point was still not opening the doors to women for those career fields.

And that was unusual because in the Air Force, the Air Force when you think about as a service, there aren't that many combat-related jobs, not like the Marine Corp and the Army where there's very specific infantry. It's definitely combat.

But even now, I mean when you start looking at Desert Storm, which was in 1991, I mean you had female pilots that were flying aircraft into the combat zone that . . . because they weren't on the ground, ground pounding, . . . weren't necessarily considered combat, but it was. And even now, you've probably read where the military is starting to open up some of these traditionally combat-related jobs to females.

The reality is for the last 15 years they've been doing it anyway. What you haven't seen are females with a rifle in the trenches, on the front lines, and in infantry. And that is kind of what most people stereotypically think of as combat-related jobs, but there's really a lot more than that. In the Air Force, again, you're not pounding on the ground. You're in the air flying, but in some cases, it can be just as dangerous and more so.

“Just to kind of follow up on that, I believe that within the Guard or Reserves there is a component called the JET, the Joint Expeditionary Tasking. So some of the Guard people could be sent with the Army and Marines and other people downrange, right?”

And they are all the time. In fact, right now I've got two folks deployed, two officers. They're both attached to Army units. One is in Iraq, and one is in Afghanistan providing their expertise to the Army unit. So one is kind of on the front lines and one behind the lines. But my officer, who is a cop [and] went to Iraq, that is a position that is not open to females because it was considered combat boots on the ground, even though he may not be holding a rifle, shooting. In fact, for the most part, there's not a lot of that that goes on anyway. Most of our wartime things now are more behind the lines and from a distance. You do have some face-to-face, hand-to-hand combat, obviously, but it's not like World War II. It's not like the old war movies. But still, because it's considered a combat unit, [it] was not open to the females. Females were not open to that billet.

So there's still some limitations, and they primarily are associated with the Army or the Marine Corps. The Air Force, there are a few. Like for example, when we have a special operations and weather flight in my wing, and they're weather folks, meteorologist, if you will. But they are special operations, meaning they have to be combat-ready and jump out of an airplane, ride into the fields. They provide weather information for all the flyers. Well, that is a male-only field. It's in the Air Force, which is special operations, and females are not allowed at this point in that career field. So those barriers do still exist in some cases.

But I would think . . . And please correct me if I'm wrong. I would think that then the Guard needs to be always trained very, very well and trained ready to work with any of the other branches. Because if you're going to be sent to work with the Army or the Marines or anybody else, you have to pull your weight. Would you agree?

Oh, yes. Definitely. And I think you see that all the time. I mean the military is a lot more joint than it used to be. Not just Guard to the active forces but in reality. I mean even 27 years ago when I joined, Air Force folks went to Air Force schools and got Air Force training and did Air Force stuff, and it was odd to see another service member on an Air Force installation.

Well, in this day and age, I mean some of the trans has been combined. So if you're an aerial porter, you go to the same school as your Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. As far as the technical training, then you're going to go back to your installations and maybe learn some service-related stuff. But it is joint in a lot of ways.

Like here in this wing, we are in the Texas Guard, but we are on a joint reserve base that is hosted by the active-duty Navy but has every branch of service on this installation. In some cases, we are separate. But in some cases, we are joint. And so that jointness (phonetic sp.) is there. It's taken a long time to get there, and I think it's not because people don't want to be joint. I think it has to do with money and budget, honestly, and the fact that services do compete for money and that sort of stuff.

But yes. You have to be ready to basically serve with anybody. Even in my position. If I were sent over to Afghanistan right now, it's more likely than not that I would oversee folks who are of multiple components of the military, not just the Air Force.

Did you ever find yourself saying to yourself in these deployments, "Oh, I can do that," or "I can help you with that," and then you seem to have been limited because of the things you could and couldn't do because of your gender? Sort of yes and no. And the reason I say that is because I think early on I think it was just kind of a . . . It wasn't a (Indiscernible) that you're denied or the guys you work with don't think you can do it. I think as a young female, especially in a primarily male-dominated [career], not only career as in the military but in my career field. I mean I was in a squadron of 100 people. There were four or five females at any given time.

I think as a young female, you really had to make sure you did your job. In other words, I went out of my way to make sure I could do my job, pull my weight, and I wasn't viewed as a female. It sounds really kind of weird, but I wanted to be seen as a coworker, as an airman first and then, "Oh, yeah. She happens to be a girl."

And I think most females in the military who are successful have managed to do that and do it very well. There are still some females, just like in the real world, who use their gender to move forward in other ways. In other words, I'll give you an example.

We used to travel. I proved myself on the job pretty easily. I could pull my weight, do the job, just like any of my male counterparts. So I was accepted and trusted and all that sort of stuff. And we would travel. We would go all over the world. I learned early on that, and not as a show of independence necessarily, but I wanted to make sure that when I traveled that I could carry everything that I took with me. In other words, if I packed a suitcase, it was one that I could manage, I could carry, I could transport from the bus to the plane. Whatever. Because I didn't want it to be perceived that somebody had to help me, and it would have primarily been a male.

And especially that . . . And that's kind of chivalrous, and as a female, you might appreciate the gesture. But as an equal, you want to make sure . . . you don't want to look around and necessarily see other guys helping other guys bringing their luggage along. And I think that's just a silly example.

So if somebody offered and they wanted to, you would accept it, but for the most part, everybody would look around and you're hauling your own weight just like everybody else is. When you go off to deploy, you pack what you can.

You make sure you hold it. You don't expect somebody else to carry your duffle bag. You know what I'm saying?

“That's an excellent example,” I said to Carolyn. I could tell she had felt shy about her example and perhaps didn't realize its profoundness. I continued to show empathy by saying:

I work mostly with the Army, and this last assignment just came from Molesworth in England with the intelligence base. And I've done the same thing. Being prior Army, I said to myself, “Well, I'm going to have to go into England to this intelligence base and be embedded with the military (and that's a joint base also) and somebody is going to find out that I'm prior service.” And I think you'll agree that once you are prior service, you are always prior service. You always consider yourself military. And what I did is I cut my hair very short because I didn't want to have to say to people, “Oh, I need to blow dry my hair. I'm running a little bit late,” or “I have to straighten my hair,” or whatever. And I also did the same thing. I packed what I could carry. I got myself in shape so if I had to I could run PT with the troops. . . . If I'm going to embed myself, I have to be almost just like them. And I didn't want to stick out, being the old civilian, prior-service, Army woman.

Right. And to me, that's not necessarily a gender thing. We're females, so obviously, it is a gender thing. But in reality, it's just a fit-in thing. All the guys do the same thing. The guys want to make sure that they're fit and they look like the other guys, and that's kind of [the way] military works. You're the same.

“That's why everybody wears a uniform,” I concurred.

Everybody gets their hair cut and everybody does the same thing. And so you figure out how to stand out in other ways, but as a military member, you do look the same. Obviously, as females, you don't look like the males. But there is that certain kind of understanding that we're all equal. We're all here. We all pull the same weight. We all meet the same standard. We all have the same credentials. And so whether you're male or female, everybody tries to meet that and fit in, like you said. So I think just being a female is just that one extra step that it's obvious that you're a female, but at the same time and you want to maintain your gender identity. Just because you're in the military doesn't mean you can't be a girl. Doesn't mean you can't be a woman. But there's a time and place for that.

I once had a male peer tell me, . . . (he was kind of joking) “It's not really fair because . . . we work together every day and you're in uniform and everybody looks the same. But if we go out socially in the evening, like to a retirement party,” he says, “the guys still all look the same. They're dressed differently but they all still look the same. But the ladies look different.” And he said that just to say that it's nice to be able to see ladies that can still [feel] comfortable in their gender outside of work and sort of let your hair down, wear your earrings, do

whatever. But his point was you do look very different. He's seen his male counterparts after hours, and they look exactly the same. They just have different clothes on. But you see the females, and they have different clothes on. But you're still a female. You're still a girl, and that's okay.

On the job, you're not a boy or a girl. You are a military member, and to me, that's kind of what you have to do to be successful. And you don't rely on any gender stereotypes or any . . . and I come back to that carry your own bag example. I remember when I was probably in my mid 20's, and we had a young female that had come to the unit. And she was in a traditionally female role. She was an administrative clerk, so she wasn't an aerial port person. She did a different job kind of in the orderly room.

But she was very [insecure]. When we were deployed, she would take more suitcases than anybody, and she would not be able to manage it. And she always had to ask for help. And most of the time because she was cute and she was young and she was pretty, most of the guys were stumbling over themselves to help, if you will.

And I remember telling her one day, I said, "You know, Lori, you really need to figure out how you can do this on your own because you don't want to have to rely on other people to get you where you need to be." But she never really did get that because I think that she was used to having folks help her, and she didn't see any issue or any problem with that at all.

In reality, you could look around and go, "Yeah, well, she's got all these people helping her and here I am dragging all my stuff. Who is the smarter one?" But at the same time, I know for a fact that she was seen as very dainty, always needed help. She didn't help herself, in other words, by doing that because I think that [leads] to different kinds of perceptions. [Maybe] she wasn't where she needed to be. She definitely wasn't pulling her own weight. She always needed help. And that was just a persona that I never wanted to show. And so if I needed help, I would ask for it, obviously, but I didn't want to have to be sort of that stereotypical, needs-help-because-she's-a-girl kind of thing or expects help because she's a girl kind of thing.

"How would that have been different had that person been a male? How would the males have tolerated another male who always needed help?"

They wouldn't have. I mean plain and simple. They wouldn't have. She was seen with disdain. I mean, honestly. Like in my case, I was a little older at the time. I was in my mid 20's, so I pulled her aside and talked to her. But it was even frustrating for me because she really didn't get it. She was young and she was attractive, and she was very much used to the male attention and very much used to having people help her.

And I remember talking to some of the males, you know. Because they do it but then later they would kind of bitch behind the scene. "Well, why do you do it?" You know. "Well, can't have her stand there and not be able to pull her own



suitcase or pull her own weight.” And it's like, “Well, she'll eventually learn. As long as she's got somebody to do it for her, then she won't.”

I think in a lot of ways, some of the men who did step up to help probably felt almost chivalrous. It was expected. They were raised that way, to help whoever. You know, old ladies, young women, whoever. So on one hand, it was kind of in their minds somewhat respectful, but on the other hand it was definitely an ideal where if you're one of the team and you can't pull your weight, that's a problem.

I understood what Carolyn was telling me. “I know what you mean. A woman warrior who makes herself a burden will not be part of the team anymore, which causes her to become a liability rather than an asset.”

Right. You're no longer an asset to the team. You're a burden because you need extra help. You need extra, you know. But again, something as simple as managing your own luggage when you travel. Consequently, she did her time in the service and got out and moved on.

Carolyn had great insight into her career and those of other women warriors. She also had a very systematic approach to career survival in the military as well as a very defined leadership style. I moved on to some of the military questions at this point knowing that she might have answered some of them already; I wanted to be clear. “How successful do you feel you have been in the Guard? And do you feel you could have done better?”

Well, I mean I think just looking at my current position, I mean I've been very successful, more successful than I ever intended to be or ever thought I would be, I guess. I won't say intended to be. But certainly when you consider I joined because I was patriotic and wanted something to do with the military and also to go to college. I mean I really did kind of expect to get in and sort of do my time and move on. And in fact, early on, I almost got out because I had gotten engaged to be married and was relocating to where my new husband was going to be. And so I was going to get out and probably was not going to . . . I was probably done, you know? Start a new life, get married, have children, whatever. Military was just a piece of that.

That did not work out as far as the marriage, the engagement, and so I ended up staying in. And from that point forward, at that point, I probably knew I was going to stay in long enough to retire. And once you hit that 20-year mark, even part time in the Guard is kind of a sense of relief because then you know “Hey, at any point I can really walk away and be okay.

But I've been very blessed with opportunities. A lot of times, like any career progression, it's where you are and what you're ready for. And like any career, there's boxes you have to check. There are things you have to do. There's education, and there's professional development that you have to do to make sure that you are ready when those opportunities come up. And I've always been able to do that. I've always managed that. And so when opportunities have come up, I've been ready and have been competitive for them. That doesn't mean I've always gotten them. I mean it took me almost five years to get a commission, to get accepted to get a commission. And that kind of put me behind schedule because I thought as soon as I finished college and got the degree I would be able to get a commission within a year or two, and it took me five years.

I wondered why so long? I asked Carolyn what happened.

Just the opportunity. What do you apply for? What are you looking for? I even looked at the active-duty side of the house at certain points. I really wanted to do it in the Guard. I really wanted to stay part time, but I really wanted a commission. So that's kind of why I also looked at the active duty. But in the Guard, you apply for commissions based on slots that are available.

So if there's nothing available, you can't get in. Whereas in the active duty in the Air Force, you put your big hat in the pool, you go to officer training school, and then you go wherever they send you. So there's still a number of slots available, if you will, but there's much more, many, many more of them. But I really wanted to stay in the Guard. And so just waiting for the right opportunity, honestly.

And it was about five years between when I first started looking and when I actually got accepted for the commission. So that kind of put me a little behind schedule in my own mind as far as my being behind schedule. I thought I would be commissioned earlier than what I was. But that didn't necessarily stop me. And so if I were to retire tomorrow, I would be happy, and I would consider myself to have a very long, productive career and a lot of opportunities. But I also am looking up because I see more potential in the future. I really do. And not just in different jobs maybe when I'm kind of finished with this, but even the potential for another promotion maybe.

Carolyn was always one step ahead of my questions. I told her that was going to be my next question: "Where do you see yourself in the future in relation to the military?"

Well, again, I think a lot of it is looking at opportunities. I think a lot of it is what's available. You know, you kind of look at the military, and it's kind of come full circle. Because just like I told you. Earlier in my career, I was not able to do some things because I was female. When you look now, being female may actually be an advantage for me when competing for different promotions, not just the female. Don't misunderstand me. It's not a club or it's not a "We need a female" [mentality that I rely on for promotion]; it's being female, but it's being

female and having all the credentials that I have. If I didn't have the credentials I had, it wouldn't matter what my gender was. But I think the military has come full circle, and I've seen that there are big advantages to having just females, but a diverse workforce just like corporate America has realized if you have the right person with the right credentials, then that's the person that might be promoted. I'm not suggesting that I might get an opportunity only because I'm female. Please don't misunderstand me in that.

“No. No. I understand. Believe me. I know that there is a lot of things that have to happen before [one] can get promoted.”

Yes. That's the kind of almost, maybe an added benefit whereas 25 years ago it would have meant [I was not qualified]. And so it's just kind of interesting how that works. And so the number of females in the military that have a star, a general officer, are very, very few but less than . . . I think it's [eight percent] that are O-6 and far less than that who are officers.

In the Air Force, that's for a lot of different reasons. But mainly because of the Air Force culture, you normally become a general officer through [first becoming] an air crew member [or] a pilot or a navigator because that's just the way it works in the Air Force. Kind of like in the Army. You go through and become a battalion commander and a division commander, and in most cases, you then become general officers. A lot of those career fields are only open to the males in the Army because they're combat-related, so you have less females who have the opportunity. In the Air Force, you don't have as many female crew members. We're getting there, but you don't. There's less opportunity; however, in the Guard, remember I told you that our state leadership, our tag was an Army officer but we also have assistant adjutant generals. . . . There's one on the Army side, and there's one on the Air side. That is an opportunity for a non-flyer in the Air Force, and in this case the Air Guards, to become a general officer. And so it's possible. It's feasible. I can see it in the [near future]. Now it's just a matter of timing. If the right position is open at the right time and I'm the right person for the job or not.

It sounds silly, but really when you get [to] this level, just like in corporate America, a lot of this is based on opportunity. Is that opportunity there.? A lot of good people never get to do what they need to do because the opportunity just didn't present itself. And that's okay. And like I said, if I were to retire tomorrow, I would be perfectly happy. But if there's an opportunity and it's within my grasp, I'm going to strive for it.

If I don't get it, I'm not going to be disappointed. Well, I'll be disappointed, but I'm not going to be crushed. Because like I said, I think I've succeeded in a lot of ways. But it's too good of an opportunity to pass up if I was in the right place at the right time. You know what I'm saying? I couldn't turn it down.

Carolyn had an unbelievable amount of information and knowledge. She seemed to always be one step ahead of my questions as if she knew what I was going to ask her next. This interview went by so quickly, even though it was the longest of the interviews. Carolyn was clear and eloquent about the information I was asking her. During the interview I found myself trying to stay one step ahead of her answers in order to catch areas that I had not asked about. However, as I followed up on every experience she shared, I realized this could have become a case study by itself. Due to the amount of information I had already gathered from Carolyn, I had to modify the next question. I asked Carolyn what have been the two or three top things that have prompted her to stay in the Guard:

I love the military, so I think the patriotic side of it is definitely there. I love the military service. I like the premise behind what the military does. We're professional war fighters. People forget that we are in the business of war, which is not what we want to talk about and it's not sexy, but it's a very necessary thing to do. And there's all parts of that. In the Air Force, we tend to support the war fighter.

Whatever your politics are, I think the profession of arms is an honorable profession, and I enjoy being a part of that. And I enjoy the camaraderie and the brotherhood that goes along with being a military member. Like you said earlier, once you're in the military, you're always a military member, always associated. That probably is really the number one thing, honestly.

The next thing is the different opportunities that have allowed me to grow professionally and personally. In the military, which also does translate to your civilian world (and I was traditional in the military and worked full time on the civilian side), what I learned and what I got from the military benefitted my professional life on the civilian side as well. I think I was a better counselor. I was a better professor when I was at the college. I was better at what I did because of what I learned and what opportunities were presented to me in the military. So it's kind of rounded me out, if you will.

So those are probably the two main things. And then the third thing, maybe, [mostly] because of my personality style, I like to strive and I like the credentialing. I kind of achieved professionally on the civilian side what I needed to education-wise, career-wise, and I wanted the same thing on the military side. So that upward mobility and the opportunity. I mean the opportunity to be an O-6 female in the Air Force is an incredible opportunity.

It's an accomplishment for anybody. But I like being successful in that way. I like that I've worked hard and been able to get to where I'm at. I like that hopefully I'm providing a role model for others, not just females but other people in the military. And so that rounding out of my professional credentials, I think, was important to me as well. So those kinds of three things are probably what prompted me to stay in. Like I said, I could retire tomorrow if I wanted to and be perfectly happy, but I don't want to yet. I'm not done.

I asked Carolyn how the military has shaped who she is today as a person and as a woman. Did she think it has shaped her differently? Would she be who she is today had she not gone into the military?

I don't know. Probably not. I mean first of all, the different types of people you meet in the military and the different opportunities and people that you're exposed to in the military. There's nothing like it in the civilian world. There's just nothing like it. There's camaraderie in the civilian world. You know, when I worked at the college and I was a professor, you had that group of people that are important and who you associate with. There are similar things, but when you sit there and you think about all the people and all the associates and the friends that I've met in the military over 28 years and how those people have impacted my life, some in more ways than others. I mean, I can't even imagine not having those folks as part of my life, as part of my career.

So just the exposure to the different people. Also, I think the military way of life is a much more . . . disciplined way of life. It is. It's disciplined. Not that other ways aren't necessarily, but it's very structured and it's very disciplined and it invites an opportunity to grow. And yet there is very definite rules and traditions and morays that everybody follows. Even though it's political, in a lot of ways, it's kind of easy to navigate and understand. And I compare it to [how] I worked for 12 years on the civilian side in a community college. Politics in a community college are [complicated]; I never did figure them out. Kind of small town. I mean every other direction has their ways that you've got to get through it. But the military is very structured and very disciplined, I guess, and that has made me more structured and more disciplined than I probably would have been otherwise.

Just the whole idea that when you go to work, you go to work. The fact that you've got to be at role call at 6:00 a.m. because that's what you've got to do. Or the fact that you've got to put in an 18-hour day because that's what you've got to do. Or the fact that you're deploying because that's what you need to do. You know, a lot of that . . . Obviously, you're in the military voluntarily, so it's a choice. But it comes with the job. It comes with the territory. So I think you become a little more accepting maybe of some hardships and discipline that don't exist in the civilian life. So I think you become more appreciative. I know I have. It sounds really silly, but you appreciate the fact that you have a nice home. And if you travel, you get to stay in a nice hotel room and those kinds of things. You

appreciate your professional associations. So yeah. I don't think I would be the same person I [am] without the military. I just don't. I probably would be . . . honestly, I'd probably be lazy and fat and eating Cheetos all day. The military, I stay in physical shape, honestly, because I must. And some people do it because it's just part of their nature and they love it, but I, [for example, am] not necessarily physically, athletically inclined. I mean I'm active, but my family is not particularly athletically inclined, either.

So I can imagine if I didn't have the structure in the military that says, "Hey, Carolyn, you've got to get out there and stay in shape so you can pass your fit test and so you can drag somebody across the desert if you need to." And so just being cognizant of that and aware of that and the fact that at 45 years old I still get out in the morning and run a couple miles every day or whatever I can. And the same thing with [staying in shape] physically, the mental and the spiritual as well. It's part of being a well-rounded person so that you know . . . like you said earlier. The military is not necessarily an easy job, and some of the decisions you have to make are not easy. You have to be of sound mind and body to be able to do that and to have folks trust that you can do that. There's not any other profession in the world where you have that level of responsibility. And not just in leadership positions like I'm in but even in the midlevel ranks. So at the end of the day, you can take off your uniform, or the end of the tour or whatever, but just because you take your uniform off, it doesn't mean that you lost the values that the military has given you.

Right. They are lifelong. And you know they're never going to go away. I mean they're just not. I don't care if you're in the military for your four year stint or if you're in it for 20 or if you're in it for 40. There's a certain [steadiness] You can look at the military men and see, especially successful military members, and see very specific characteristics that you know that they learned in the military. Not that you couldn't have learned it somewhere else, but it's certainly ingrained in the military culture.

I wondered if Carolyn had ever found herself looking at a civilian and saying "Oh, that person must be prior service."

Oh, yeah. You can almost recognize it. Not always, but part of that is because I grew up in the military. So I'm around the military all the time. And another part of it is just because sometimes you can tell by the way a person talks or some of the language they use. And it's not necessarily military jargon that's really obvious but just in the way they do things, I guess. And it's just kind of a unique brotherhood or sisterhood we kind of recognize [in] a fellow military person.

Having felt this same sort of secret recognition toward unidentified military members, I said:

And I think that over the years we recognize now that the military is a culture in itself. And my husband, who is retired Navy, he always says that once you've been in the military, you're part of the greatest club there is. "The country club," he calls it because if you ever need any help or a helping hand, it doesn't matter what branch you were in, but the military people will help military people out, without any questions.

Without question. Without question. I've heard this said before, and to me, it's actually very true. You know a military member, and say you were stationed together ten years ago, wherever, and you both went your separate ways and then ten years later you were stationed together again. It's almost like you could pick up where you left off. You know what I'm saying? A lot of people will keep in touch all the time and they'll write letters or they'll phone call or whatever over the years, but some don't. But when you get back together, you just have that immediate initial bond, and you can literally pick up where you left off. You don't have to [get reacquainted] It's like a friendship that never ends, and it doesn't necessarily have to be nurtured like some friendships, like some professional relationships where . . . I'm on active duty now and away from the college world, but when I go back to the college world, I'm going to have to reestablish a lot of that stuff because a lot of those people will move on and they'll be in totally different areas or colleges or geographical [locations], you know? [In the civilian world, we may] lose contact with those people. But in the military, you always know where to find people. And when you do reunite, whether it's in three months or three years or ten years, you pick right back up where you left off. And it's just an interesting phenomenon. I've never seen that anywhere else. I saw that when we threw a surprise birthday party for my dad, his 70th birthday party. We had a bunch of folks there from all over his life, and a couple of folks that were there were folks that he was in the military with. He's been retired from the military for 30 years. And in some cases, he hadn't really seen them. He'd done the Christmas card exchange and that kind of stuff over the years but hadn't had an opportunity to see them. And they came into town to visit, and they had the best time. And they just caught up real quick on their lives, and it was almost amazing to see.

And anybody who is in the military, I think, can experience that, where you may not have seen or talked to somebody, but once you run into them again, boom, there you go. You've got that bond and you just continue on. And so I think that's kind of cool.

Yes. I agree. I think it's not just a friendship or relationship; it's almost like a family. Within even biological families, you may not talk to cousins or aunts and uncles for a long time, but when you see them again, you pick up because you're part of that system.

"Exactly, you have that common bond."

"Exactly, I've had similar experiences. I've been out of the military for a long time, too, but I've been reintroduced to working with the military all over again.

And then, of course, being married to a retired Navy officer and my daughter being in the Guard. So I was put back into the military, but even so, my old, old acquaintances, once in a while, three, four, five, ten, 15 years they call me and we pick up where we left off.

“It's phenomenal isn't it?”

I asked Carolyn, how much she believes she has in common with nonmilitary women. I mean totally civilian, civilian women who know nothing about the military:

I don't know. That may be kind of hard for me to answer because I think the fact that I'm single and I don't have children makes me not have a lot of common bonds with a lot of females across the board. I mean, there are a lot of females that don't marry and have children, obviously, but the majorities do. And so I don't have that link to females to start with, which is kind of an interesting thing because though I can't relate, obviously, with being a mother because I'm not a mother, but I can relate on similar types of issues. But I'm not a mother, so I don't do a lot of the . . . traditional things that most females do. So that in itself is kind of an interesting thing. And then you throw the military into it. If a female has never been into the military, or anybody has never been in the military, I think they have a hard time understanding what it's all about. Especially when I first joined in, I know a lot of my female counterparts, they just didn't really get it. Even though some of my best female friends at the time were daughters of military members. I mean, . . . I lived on an Air Force base when I was growing up. I went to a school that was probably 50 percent military kids, and so there were a lot of my female friends who were military brats as well. But they never had any intention of joining the military.

Again, this is in the early '80's, so it wasn't as acceptable maybe for females or wasn't common for females to join. So I think that some of the things that females tend to associate and bond with I just don't have in place, regardless of the military. But as far as professional credentials . . . You know, my very best friend in the world is a colleague of mine from college days when I worked at the college. She worked there, and we went to grad school together. We worked on our PhD together. So as you can imagine a lot of bonding there. We are probably separate in where we came from, how we live our lives, what we do. Our only association and the reason we met was because of working together at the college, but we have bonded beyond just about anything.

She doesn't understand the military in the sense that she's never been in the military. She's never come from a military family. None of her parents were in the military. She just wasn't associated with the military at all. So she doesn't really understand it, but she is somewhat fascinated by it. What she does recognize is as a professional, my desire to grow professionally and achieve



certain things. You know. She can understand that because she is that way on her civilian side, obviously. And I think it's a point where you have goals and you achieve those. You can understand that with counterparts doing the same thing. In one way, she and I are very good friends and we don't have the military in common because, again, she's never been affiliated or associated with it, and it is very much a part of my life. But she has become familiar with it and she has come to know it through me as my friend. And so it's kind of an interesting thing. And so I think you can become friends and bond because of the military and in spite of the military.

I took this opportunity to clarify Carolyn's answer about how much she had in common with non-military women. I felt that she was minimizing her military strengths as well as those of some of the women warriors she had worked with in the past. I asked Carolyn, "If you had an opportunity to go on Survivor, and they said to you, 'Carolyn, this is a big competition and the winner is going to get this humongous whatever.' Okay? 'And you get a choice of picking five females to be on your team.' Would you pick five females that had military background or five females who knew nothing about the military? I'm coming from the point of view that it has been my experience that most military females are very capable. They probably wouldn't bitch, moan, and groan that it was raining outside. If they had to run a couple of miles in the mud, they'd do it because there was a mission. They are mission-oriented. They are there to do whatever needs to be done. So from that point of view, I mean, what do you think? I laugh at that only because for many, many years, we would go camping. And my husband, who put in 32 years in the Navy, every time we would go camping, he would say, 'Okay, Carmen, pitch the tent and here's a compass. How do we get out of here?' He would depend on me. I always laughed. I said, you see, this is what you get for spending time in the Navy in clean cots and clean sheets while I was sleeping on the ground pitching tents and running through the swamps of Alabama. So I recognize it, and he recognizes that our training has been

different, but we use it. We use it appropriately. And my daughter, who is in the Guard, is also very excited about these extra abilities. I think extra trainings or extra opportunities that we've been given the opportunity to learn to go above and beyond and to just be able to have an opportunity to be somewhat equal to the males or just the military overall.

Exactly. And the idea that you have to pull your own weight, regardless of what that is, whether you've got to know how to turn the wrench on an engine to fix it [or] to know what to take with you when you deploy and how to behave.

I mean, I can remember when we got pulled to go down to support Hurricane Katrina when all that disaster happened. And we went down there, and there was a group of about 45 of us. There was only a couple of females in the group just because. And the first couple of nights we stayed out under an F16 cover on an old tarmac on the ramp of the New Orleans Navy Bell Chase Airport because there wasn't any place else to go. We brought our own cots. We brought our own stuff. There was noise and there were airplanes everywhere and it was hot and it was just disgusting, as you can imagine. Everybody was miserable, but we were there to do a job.

That first night we were trying to bed down. And keep in mind, we were out in the open under these aprons but out in the open, cot after cot after cot. Everybody is just mixed in. And I'm looking around trying to figure out where am I going to change my clothes. Just maybe not so much a gender concern as a modesty concern on my case. But in reality, you're just a bunch of females or a bunch of males, you don't think anything necessarily of just changing clothes real quick and moving on.

But if you're in a mix-gender situation, it does kind of . . . you're like, "Huh? What do I do?" And there wasn't any place to go, you know, as far as close by. So I just devised my way of doing it. You know. It was really kind of simple. I won't go into details what I did, but it was a way to protect my modesty, not to embarrass anybody else, and just move on.

And it was kind of interesting that I kind of went through that. And I'm glad my male counterparts just weren't all that concerned. Males maybe aren't as modest in some cases as females, but I also tried to respect their privacy as well. It was just kind of an interesting phenomena. Those kinds of things you kind of have to deal with when you're in a mixed-gender situation. In the military when you're deployed somewhere, in corporate America you probably are never going to find yourself in a situation where you have a male peer that you have to worry about how you're going to change your clothes

So I asked Carolyn, with all the years of experience and everything you've done and as well as you've done rank-wise and education-wise (and all those things are just massive [accomplishments]), what suggestions or what advice would she give to young women

who want to join the service? If they came to her and said, "Carolyn, can you give me some advice here?" For women who are either joining or for those who are already in the service, how can women succeed?

Well, I think it's like anything else in the world; you need to understand what you're getting into. That's true of anything. If you're going to go off to college somewhere, you're going to need to understand what that means. Where is the college? What do they do? [Same] if you're going to join a corporation. So that's not unlike anything else you would do. I would say that there are some unique things in the military that you have to be very aware of and concerned with, not just as a female but as any military member. And so do your homework. Do your research. And in the case of the military, there could be a branch of service that's more conducive to what you want to do than another for whatever reason, and that's okay.

But also understand that the military is a little different than anything else, and there are rules and there are standards. . . You may not have to like them, but you have to agree with them. I mean you may think that you want to wear your hair long and you're upset you can't do it in the military. Well, that's just the way it is. That's the rule. Guys have to cut their hair. There's a physical fitness standard that you must maintain in the military. That's just the way it is. That's not negotiable. It's not something you can join and later go, "Ooops, I don't want to do this." That's unique to the military. There are some civilian professions that require that as well, but for the most part, that is the condition of [military] employment, if you will. So those kinds of things you just have to be aware of and you have to know it and you have to work towards it. It's like any other job that you can progress [in] based on how hard you work and the credentials that you get. You continue your professional education. You continue your personal growth and development. And you check all the boxes you need to check with any job, but you kind of learn the career path. And you talk to the people in the service, whether they are officers or enlisted, and you seek mentors that will guide you. I think, in the military more than anything, if you've got a good mentor who can guide you and help you along the way as far as guidance, you've got it made.

Those who join the military [and] think they can do it on their own, some of them can, but for the most part, if you look at any successful military member, they can go back to different points in their career and tell you exactly who had an impact and why. Whether it was a peer, a subordinate, a superior. Whether it was in the service or [not]. . . I could go back over my 28-year career and name the most important people who had an impact on my career and why. And it's because they cared, because I sought help, because I was looking for guidance. They knew that I was looking to do my best and to move up and to make an impact. And they were there willing to help. It's not necessarily unique to the military.

I think you can find that in corporate America as well, but I think it's more obvious in the military, in my opinion, just based on what I've seen in the military

and what I've seen in the civilian world. And people will do that. They want to help. You have good, strong senior officers and [those] who want to make a difference, who want to take a young person and help them get where they need to be a provide them with opportunities. And all the opportunities, they may not be able to take advantage of them, but in my mind, never stop learning. Never stop growing. Never stop seeking opportunities. You can get into a job and get comfortable and stay there for 20 years and retire. That is possible in the military these days. But if you want to progress and grow, there are so many opportunities to take advantage of, so learn what those are and find someone who can help you through that. And it doesn't have to be just one person. I can be multiple people. I think the military is a good, strong career for women. I think it's female-friendly in a lot of ways, some branches more so than others, some careers in the military more so than others. But I think, whereas 28 years ago when my mom hesitated to sign because she didn't know that that was the right place for a female to be, I don't think that's the case anymore. I think females can progress as well [as], if not better than, their male counterparts with the same credentials and the same education. Being equal. I don't think you progress because you're a female, or you don't progress because you're a female. . . . Gender doesn't have to make a difference.

I shared with Carolyn that I knew that you just have to be prepared and have the same qualities, background, and education.

“Skills. Yes. Like anybody else.”

With all the years of experience and such great leadership skills I wondered what Carolyn would say to young women who might say to her, “Well, I'm concerned about going into the military even though I know it's a good career. How about with issues of harassment, sexual harassment or some of the things that have been in the news recently where women get [victimized]. I know there are avenues where these things can be reported and so on.” What is your stand on that?

Well, I think the whole idea of harassment, I think that has the potential to exist anywhere in any organization, in and outside the military. I think it's, you know. I don't know that harassment is so culturally-based anymore, like maybe we used to think it would be. It's more individually-based. I think there are certain people who will overstep the line at any given time if they're not in check. And I do think it's an organization's responsibility, and the leaders' and the managers' of the organizations. It's their responsibility to keep stuff like that in check.

It's more challenging in some cases than others, and I know that as a female, I would probably say in general if you are in a male-dominated career field, which the military is, you're going to encounter some males who are not going to look at you as an equal and that may try to take advantage of the fact that you're a female, either through joking, harassment, intimidation, or just plain ignorance. They think it's funny, and so they think everybody does. And it's not necessarily just harassment against females. It could be harassing other people, too. But I think that as [every] individual, but especially females, [should] be aware that it could happen. Be prepared to deal with it directly as much as possible if it does. In other words, if somebody comes up to you and says, "Hey, Sweetie. Blah, blah, blah," then I think you have to be able to say, "I don't want to be called sweetie." And that's a very assertive stance to take, and I understand that not everybody is comfortable with that. But I think you can nip things in the bud pretty quick. And then if it continues beyond that and it's beyond what you think you can handle or what you should have to handle as an individual, that's when you seek the help of a peer or a superior. But I think a lot of stuff can be nipped in the bud, if the right opportunity is there.

And again, I understand that not everybody is comfortable with that. Not everybody is in a situation where they feel comfortable with that. In some cases, there is true harassment that exists that needs to be dealt with on a managing or leadership level or, in some cases, even a legal level. I mean that's true of any organization. I think that if you do your job and you earn the respect of all of your peers, be it male or female, that you're going to be okay. And you will encounter different people throughout your career that, because of who they are, will do different things, and you just have to deal with them as an individual. And I know in my case, when I was younger, even though I quickly became, quote-unquote, one of the boys, because I was able to do my job and pull my weight, there was no question that I was still a female. And even though it wasn't done in the workplace, when you think about things like, and this sounds silly, but locker room talk. You know it goes on. Honestly, as females, sometimes we'll get together and talk about the boys. So it's how you choose to deal with it.

It's one thing for the boys to be talking in the locker room. It's another thing for somebody to come out and say something to you directly, obviously. And so I think it's just being aware and being cognizant and being as assertive as you can in dealing with it and nipping things in the bud but also understanding that there are avenues that you can take if you do feel threatened or intimidated. Overall, honestly, it's not normally a huge, huge problem, even though you hear about stuff in the news. It can be, but I don't think as a female in the military that you should expect that to happen. In fact, I would think that your attitude would be that you would expect it not to happen, and it is an anomaly if it does. Does that make sense?

I was definitely tracking and agreed, "Oh, yes."

I mean you don't go someplace thinking I'm a female so I'm going to get harassed. You really have to have more of the attitude that I'm a member of this

organization. I'm a team member, and I'm going to be treated as such. And then if something goes awry, then you deal with it as it happens. And a lot of times the females that come to me now, they're really more . . . how do I put it? They're not coming to me necessarily because they necessarily feel harassed or intimidated. They come to me for advice on how to handle very particular situations: "We were out after work one day. A bunch of us got behind the building drinking beer, and so and so said this to me. What could I have done? Do you have any advice on how I could have handled that differently?" That's normally what I get. And the kind of advice on how to respond or react. Especially in the Guard, I think that because we are a family, because the military in a lot of cases and the Guard in particular, because a lot of us work together for a long, long, long, long time, you really do become like family. And because you're like family, sometimes you get teased like a sibling would tease another sibling. You know. You're not siblings, so sometimes it can go beyond that, obviously.

But I think a lot of times people will say and do things and they don't necessarily mean to be offensive or intimidating or harassing. And maybe that's just me choosing to look at it that way. But I think by me looking at it that way I can deal with it more effectively. In other words, I don't automatically go "Oh, well, you're being [mean], . . . you're intimidating me." That's what I choose to think. "Well, you know what? You probably really didn't understand how that impacted me or how offensive what you said what or she said. So you deal with it, and you just tell that person.

Everybody has a line. Everybody has a line. It's just where that line is that we don't know. And so I may be able to joke with you about some very colorful kinds of things because your line is in a different place than maybe another person that I joke with. I may not be able to tell the same exact story or joke to person A as I can to person B. And it's my job to understand that and to realize that. And if I cross that line, then I would hope that the person whose line I crossed would say, "Hey, you went a little too far." And then it's my responsibility never to do that again.

To think that no one would ever cross the line is unrealistic. Because again, as individuals, we don't know where people's lines are. So I take it to be a personal responsibility of mine to make sure that people know where my line is. And I try to teach that and mention that to others, too. And yeah, I know that may sound kind of Pollyanna-ish and maybe naïve, but it's been very effective for me. I've not found myself in any compromising situations in my career. I do not allow myself to get into any compromising positions in my career. And that's a line that is never crossed with me, and it's pretty clear. I can joke with the best of them. I can pull a prank like anybody, but I have a very definite line that I'm not going to cross when it comes to compromising my integrity or my career or my judgment or my morality or my ethics.

And I don't have to tell most people that. Most people sense that, if that makes sense. But that's years and years of building and building camaraderie and friendships and having that kind of level of respect that I'm seen more as a professional and as a team member and the gender comes later.

Carolyn's interview was the longest. She was always one step ahead of my questions and followed my interview questions very closely. Possibly because she is also a counselor and she had a sense where I was going with the questions. Because of Carolyn's high rank and advanced educational level, I immersed myself more into the interview question that I might have in some of the other interviews. It was obvious that Carolyn was very educated, well trained and an effective leader. It was a challenge to keep up with Carolyn's tempo. For those reasons I chose to insert many more of my actual responses to Carolyn's statements, as well as to share my military experience. Many themes emerged from Carolyn's interview, which was reduced to categories such as: family of origin, mentoring, sexism/harassment/sexual assault, patriotism, stressors, education, war zone experience, women warriors, self-improvement, motherhood, and military issues.

### **Jeanne**

Jeanne is a 43-year-old Air National Guard member. She grew up in Oklahoma and joined at the age of 17. She told me that one day she had seen a commercial in her high school about the military. Her mother had never talked about college or any other type of education so she was impressed when the commercial spoke about education and traveling. This would be her opportunity to get an education and travel, plus her favorite color was blue, which was the color of the Air Force. She spoke to a recruiter and he offered to send her to Turkey but that was too far for her because she considered herself a "mama's girl." The recruiter then suggested she consider the Air National Guard. The following week she joined the Air National Guard:

I was a Mom's girl. I had never been away from my mom. It was most of my life, up until I was 11-years-old, it was just me and my mom and my sister. So my mom was a single parent, and then she married my stepdad. And then he was

. . . you know, he was fine. We didn't have the greatest childhood. Our childhood kind of sucked really, but you can't do anything about that. You just try and do better. So, we never talked about college or a way to pay for college or anything else, and that was just kind of probably more or less a way to better myself.

Jeanne is presently a senior Master Sergeant (E-8) with 32 years in the Air National Guard. She is slated to retire in 2012 and possibly under a medical retirement because she has bad knees. She does not believe she will promote to E-9 before her retirement, mainly because the slots are not available. I asked Jeanne what she planned to do when she retired:

I would like to do one of two things: I would either like to start my own catering business, or I would like to go to work for another government agency before I actually retire from the military, while I'm still active duty . . . and then gain that much time civil service. That would be my goal. Maybe go to work for FAA, is what I'm hoping.

Because she spent 32 years in the Air National Guard, I was wondering how many different jobs Jeanne had worked and how the jobs may have affected her promotion opportunities and deployment status:

My very first job was actually MICAP, which was ordering parts. As most people know, right now, it's current duties would fall under our customer service reps that we have, but it was a matter of tracking and ordering . . . expediting parts for the airplanes and such. I've done MICAP, I've done a little bit of equipment, I was a trainer, which is known as the logistics specialist now, for 11 years. I worked in contracting for five years. I'm currently the material management superintendent, and I've been doing that almost three years. I've been doing that since January of 2008. So just three years, this month. You know what? Believe it or not, I probably like the bench stock job the best. That was one of the very first things that I did. When I came to the Texas National Guard, I worked as a bin stockperson. Basically a male job. It was a warehouse job. So, most of the time it was males in the supply fields. I did that when I first started full time and right after the MICAP. That was where they had you when you first went into supply. They put you in an area, and then you just kind of did rotation and did, you know, rotational training to each area while you were getting trained as an ASFC. So they had me in bench stock, and I did bench stock for about, oh, I guess, three or four years, and then we moved. I got married, and then we moved to Greenville, South Carolina. So I gave up that job and became a stay-at-home



mom for a little bit, and then when when we moved to Texas, that was the job that they had opened again. So, it was a one-person position, and so I did that again, and that was back in '88 or '89. So that was a long time ago. At times, there were issues because there would be males that still had the . . . what do you call it? Male chauvinistic attitude that women were, you know, to be seen and not heard, and women should be barefoot and pregnant. You know, that they didn't really have a place in the military. So they were kind of really still old fashioned and [believed] women should not be in the military, and women didn't deserve equal pay and all that kind of thing.

I asked her how she knew that's how they felt. Did they verbalize this mentality? Did they ever say anything to her?

Yes, ma'am. There were times that people would verbalize and say, "You know, you really shouldn't . . . you know, this is a man's world." And most of it . . . I got that from the maintenance folks. I did not get that from the supply folks, but I did get it from the maintenance folks, and the maintenance were my biggest customer that I would give the parts to. And the gentlemen that would do that, they were the older guys that had been there for quite some time, which now is me. [They had] been there for a while now, and they were getting close to retirement, and they were old and crotchety, and they just, you know, they just really were old fashioned, and they were military. Yes they were. They were technicians. They were civil service, and they were senior master sergeants and chiefs. And some master sergeants, you know, most of them were, you know, seniors and chiefs, and that was the mentality, and for the most part, people thought that that was okay. You know, and I [would] respond back and say, "You know, you're entitled to your opinion, and I just want you to know that I'm here on my own accord. No one's given me anything. I've had to work for it. And I'm here to do my job, and this is what I get paid to do."

It usually took, for the most part, once I stood up to them for myself, usually we were pretty good. After that I usually didn't have any problems with them, but it was . . . I think it was a matter of just being because you're a woman and a female and in the military, you were kind of weak. And so that they would, I think, sometimes kind of see if you would react in a different manner or how you would even react to something that they would say. I think they were just trying to see what buttons they could push, if they could upset me or if they could offend me, you know, or if I was going to cower down and not say anything. But I'm not that way. I'm a very verbal person, and as you , I'll stand up for something that I believe in. Like especially defend myself. And I didn't feel that I needed to defend myself, but, you know, I still did.

I asked Jeanne if the Guard had given her ample opportunities for education during these past 32 years. Had she gone to specialty? What kind of education had the Guard given

her? This was important for me to know since education was one of the major reasons Jeanne had joined the Air National Guard:

I've gone through the three levels of flight school, which was at Lowery Air Force Base at the time, and it [was] actually the Material Management position. I went to that school. I had gone to contracting school. I [The] most school I've gone through was in the contracting area, when I worked for contracting for almost five years. I went two to three level contracting school. I went to the CON 234, which is the contingency contracting school that teaches you how to deal with things . . . you know, contracts overseas and the way other individuals deal with females being in the military. I had gone through the ethics class. I had gone through some of the GSA classes through the government, which they paid for. I've gone through all the basic contracting schools, such as the base contracting automated system, which they had at that time was called the B-CAT system. I was actually operator for that. I was the POC for that . . . And then you had the operator and then you had the administrator and then you just had just what they called a 3B2, which was just another level of contracting.

I feel that the Guard itself has allowed me wonderful opportunities to get education, to meet people, to benchmark. The only thing I do feel was that the Guard was also being totally upper management, you know, has held me back from things because of my gender or my age. I just feel that.

I wandered what Jeanne felt she had missed out on? I asked her, "What would you love to have done, but you felt that somebody held you back from?"

Well something as simple as deploying. Ever since 9-11, I have asked to deploy every single time, and I have never been allowed to deploy. When I would ask, I felt that those people that had families, you know, they were gone usually during the holidays, I wanted to [relieve them because], you know, my children were grown, so allow me the opportunity to go and let someone stay home and spend that time with their family. I was never allowed that opportunity. I was always told, "No, you shouldn't go. No, you need to stay here," but yet other people could, you know . . . other women got to go. If someone was just, because I was, a one-person shop, and if I left they didn't have anyone that they had trained to back up and do the job in my absence. But that was not my [fault] I didn't feel that that was something that I should be punished for. You know, you knew that we should always have a back-up for everything, you know. You have a traditional. Why not get that traditional trained . . . and allow me the opportunity to do that. But we didn't do that. For the most part, there was really never anybody in my shop. It was just me. So, therefore, I was always limited to have . . . you know, to get to . . . I would occasionally get to go to classes.

We would have a conference, a training conference, like every two or three years, but because of funding we might not even have it that often. That would be a training where we would all get together and talk about all the changes

that were taking place in the training career field, in the supply [shop], or just upcoming changes taking place with either the training programs or training in general. Who's going to be your new career field manager? Who's not? Who's going to step up? You know, just or who's changing on the boards because they would have, you know, a networking group.

I wondered if not being deployed with all the years in the Guard had hurt promotion opportunities. I felt very bad for Jeanne, she was the first military person I had ever encountered that had not been allowed to deploy.

I do because I feel that . . . well, I do to a degree because I feel that I should have been given the same opportunity as anybody else. I feel that sometimes because I'm a woman, I was singled out. You know, when those were able to go, like, there was a young lady that went. She was prior Army, she went. She didn't know anything, but they allowed her to go. Now, I don't know if it was because, you know, she was young, she didn't have any responsibilities, or what, and there was other people that went. She didn't deploy by herself, of course. And for them most part we usually don't when you're deploying. You know, it's usually as a group or as a whole, more than one. So you're never the only one person to have to go. But I just didn't feel that I was ever really supported by upper management, and upper management would usually either be my first line supervisor or my commander, my immediate commanders.

I could tell that Jeanne was very proud of her accomplishments in the Guard. But I could sense her disappointment when it came to her ability to deploy. This was a theme she often brought up during our conversation. In her 32 years she had never deployed, not even to CONUS (Continental United States), which seems very strange. I asked Jeanne how successful she felt she was in the Air National Guard:

I feel I've been very successful. I feel that, you know, I was given opportunities to get the education, you know, to learn different things, to learn about the AFSE. At one point, though, I kind of feel that when I did the training job, I felt, that I was stuck in there for 11 years. I tried . . . to be honest with you, I applied for . . . before I got the position that I have right now, I applied for 15 different positions. In 11 years, I applied for that before I ever got this one. So I was in training for 11 years. So I was kind of stuck. There was no room for being promoted because there just wasn't any room to grow, and the only way you could get promoted was to be able, you know, to apply for other jobs as they became available, and then I would do that. But yet, nine times out of ten, I can tell you, out of the 14 or 15

jobs I applied for, there was only two, maybe three, females that were hired. Everybody else was all males, and they were all younger.

“But it seems to me, and please correct me if I'm wrong because my knowledge of the Guard is somewhat limited, as I have worked with the Guard and been around the Guard, there seems to be a lot of people who have been there for a long time, so . . . male and female. So, I don't know. Is it more . . . is it unusual then to find a very young person because the Guard kind of stays around for a long time?”

Although my question was a bit hesitant, only because I knew this could be a highly sensitive topic for Jeanne, she was extremely gracious and patient in her response:

The Guard usually [hires] young, and then they stay for quite some time. However, there are positions where people go on. They choose to either find another job full-time, go to work with another agency, or they retire, you know, or they just get out medically. So there are opportunities for other positions within there.

Like I said, there was many other opportunities before the position that I applied . . . I applied for this exact same position that I am now in before, and I was never selected. It was given to a man. In fact, I think I'm the first person, the first woman, that's been in this position, which then other people . . . but I think I'm the very first one in this particular position.

Recognizing that there is a side of Jeanne that feels disillusioned over not having the opportunity to deploy in the last 32 years, I asked her what prompted her to stay in the Air National Guard:

Honestly, most of the time, it was because I was a single mom, and it paid the bills, and it provided, you know, a means of support for my two sons and [me]. It wasn't intentional. When I joined the Guard in 1978, I didn't ever honestly anticipate it being a career. It just happened that one day, here you are, and the next thing you know, you know, here it is, 32 years later, and you're looking at, wow, where did the time go in one hand, and the other time you're thinking, "You know, there's a lot of stuff that you've dealt with over the course of 32 years." You know.

I think about the experiences. I think about the outcome. I try and think before I react, and I actually have learned to pick my battles wisely. Okay? Pick and choose on what you feel is important, you know, in what you're going to win and what you're not going to win. But I think it's also . . . one of the first things too is to find out where upper management is and if they have your back, if they support you or not. I think that's been the biggest problem is I have not had a lot of support from upper management. I feel right now I probably have the best support I've ever had in my 22 years with the Texas National Guard, and that's the

best. Crazy, I know. It's been management and for the most part, believe it or not, most of it's all been men.

I wanted to clarify if she meant *men*. I asked Jeanne if it made a difference if

management was male or female:

I think it does. I think to a degree men don't really . . . you know, management being males, sometimes they have a hard time coping with females. They don't know how to deal with them. I think they think we may be a little bit emotional, sensitive, moody, . . . and at the same time, you know, they don't always respect women like they should, I don't believe. You know, I don't think that they have the same respect for me and my rank as they do if it's a male. You know, what I'm saying? I feel like that they don't treat me the same as they do a guy of my rank. I do see a difference there sometimes.

I could feel Jeanne's disappointment about of the way she had been treated over the last 32 years. Even though she's had numerous accomplishments, she still feels that she has missed out on some military opportunities. I wanted to shift Jeanne from a focus on her disappointments to discussing the positive aspects of her decision to join the Air National Guard 32 years ago. I asked Jeanne how her military experience shaped her into the person she is today, especially since she joined at 17 years of age. "If you had it to do over again, would you choose a different career path rather than the military path?"

I don't think I would, no. I've often thought about that. I think because of going into the Guard and being in the military, it's made me a better person. It's made me a stronger person. It's made me more independent, and I probably appreciate that more than anything. It offered me education, and I wish I would have gone to school, you know, years ago, but I didn't. Now, I'm 50 years old, and I'm going to school, working on my bachelor's. You know, that's kind of like what the hay? [It] was my life and the way things happen, and the opportunity just didn't arise, and then my children were gone. You know, they're grown and raised. I can do that now for me, and it was . . . first it was because I was always told, "You didn't get this job because you didn't have the education level." I'm like, "Really?" And then I would start looking around, and I'm like, "Gee, let's see, I just completed my associates in 2009, but, you know what, this person that you hired, this person . . . doesn't even have an associates." They barely have their [high school diploma]. So how does that fit, you know?

Jeanne seemed to have followed her plan for education and was realistic about her opportunities. She also shared how she was doing it “for herself.” I was pleasantly surprised that she was in tune with her needs after all the years of her feeling like a second rate person in the Guard. Jeanne showed me a very strong sense of resiliency, which is probably why she has stayed all these years in the Guard. I asked Jeanne how much she thought she had in common with other non-military women:

I probably have at least 50 percent common interest things with them, not being military, because I factor in being a mother, being a female, you know, being married. So I mean, I have other things to consider besides the military. For the most part, I mean, it's a career, you know, and the women I know, all the women . . . most of the women I know, they have a career too. Theirs was just not military. We just can't talk, you know . . . for the most part, we can talk about everything because I've not deployed, and that's one of the things that I find that I really miss because there's times when other military members talk about their deploying, including my husband. He's deployed multiple times, but I can't share that with him because I've never gone there with him. You know, so I kind of feel like that's . . . left out, you know. That's something I missed out. I didn't have that opportunity to learn to see what it would be like to go someplace else, even if it might have been not a very pleasant place, to have the opportunity to be around different cultures and environments. You know, I would have liked to have been able to say at least once I did that. I feel that I've served my country, but I don't feel that I've probably served it as well as my husband has, even though I've been in longer, you know, and he's air crew. So, he's able to, you know, go places and do more things.

Jeanne had so many stories and experiences to share. I asked her,

Looking back at 32 years, it sounds like you've had some really great experiences. What would you say, you know, not to lose out on the wonderful experiences you have had, but what would you say are some of the areas that you have endured? What are some of the not-so-good memories that you've had about, you know, the Guard or just being around the military? Have there been any negative things that have happened to you?

Probably some of the negative things would be being a single mom and with the war efforts and everything, being in a mobility position work center, where you have to be away from your children a lot. We have to get up and go out . . . you know, I was once called a ramp tramp at one time. I worked out on the ramp, and I was getting the people and the personnel ready to take the airplanes when they deployed.

So I'm out there at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, until the very last plane leaves. So I missed time with my children a lot, and we did a lot of exercises, and we've done a lot of practices, . . . and then when the real war took off, you know, . . . I had to be away from my kids. So that's probably my biggest negative was having not to be there sometimes for my children like I would have liked to.

How about any personal boundary issues? Have you ever had any problems with, you know, some of the males or even some of the females or whoever? Has anybody ever overstepped their bounds with you or, you know?

Actually, they have when I was . . . let's see, how old was I? Nineteen or twenty years old, I had first joined the Oklahoma Air National Guard, and I had a commander there, and he became very demanding and very controlling. And . . . when I joined the Air National Guard, I was one of ten . . . women that was the Oklahoma Air National Guard, and I had a commander that tried to fondle and to (Indiscernible), okay. And so, if I was working, then he would do . . . you know, he would find a reason to stay late, you know. And then he would come and say, "Hey, Jeanne, I need you to do this." And like, "Umm, no." So, I found myself . . . I eventually just quit going. He would tell me who I could and could not have lunch with. He would tell me he would like a date. It was just really bizarre. He was a lieutenant colonel.

So he was full time there. So, what I did is I pretty much . . . I just quit going to drill. I didn't . . . you know, I didn't know how to cope with it. I'm what, 19- or 20-years-old? I'm an airman, and I didn't know anything about EEO. I didn't know that it was okay to say (Indiscernible). I just didn't say anything. I just quit going. And the next thing I know I'm being brought up on charges for pretty much desertion. I had been there four years, so I was given a letter, a certified letter that I am to report to this board in my blues.

So I go there and here's these board of officers. They were captains and majors, and they pretty much just wanted to know why I hadn't been coming. And so at first I was hesitant in saying anything because I'm, like . . . I didn't know anything that much. You know, you didn't hear anything about sexual harassment or EEO or anything.

So I didn't know what I should and should not say, and I didn't know if someone was on my side or not on my side. You know, there again, I just didn't [know] anything. I just quit going because I got scared.

I wish I could remember her name, but I don't; but I had this captain, and she was very, very gracious, I guess you could put it, and she was very comforting. And she just said, "So, please tell me why you haven't been here." And I hesitated, and I said, "Well, ma'am, I haven't been here because," and I started giving her all these reasons. And I would say, "You know what? I just kind of got mixed up with the wrong people, and I started partying, and I shouldn't have." And she just kind of looked at me and she goes, "You know,

that could probably really be true because you're at that age, but I don't really believe that that's the truth." And I said, "Okay," I said, "the thing is, I feel that I'm being harassed by an individual, and I don't know what to do, and I don't know who to go to, so I just quit going." And so, she said, "Okay." So she took down the gentleman's name, asked what his name was. And she says, "Well, we'll get back with you."

Well it turns out that after researching, which I did not know, it was actually . . . this individual had three sexual harassment charges already against him. But no one bothered to say anything, and so I did not know. So, I'm like, "Okay, you're going to kick me out." Okay, this is my military career. You know, I'm 19- or 20-years-old, you're going to kick me out because I don't know what I'm supposed to do? So, the lady pretty much . . . she said, "I'll tell you what. We can't . . . we're not going to kick you out. We're going to let you stay in, and we will let you make up your drills. It'll be no pay, of course, because now it's out of the quarter, but we will let you make it up for points." So, I literally went for a solid month, and my mother went with me because I was scared to death that this gentleman . . . until they decided what they were going to do with him. So my mother went with me for . . . every day for a month so I could make up my whole year in drills.

And she'll still tell me today, "Remember, when I went to work with you?" And I'm like, "Yes, Mom, I remember that." And it turned out the gentleman actually . . . he was given the opportunity to just resign, you know, his commission, and he had enough time as a technician that I thought, you know, that's not really a very good thing that a young person has [to] deal with. "Had you told your mother at all about what was happening?"

I didn't tell my mother until after the fact because I didn't know how to cope with it. I mean, I just literally kind of started withdrawing. I didn't go to drill. I just didn't do anything, you know. My mom would just say something, and I would make up tales. You know, "Mom, I don't have drill," or, "We're not going to go. Oh, I already did that." You know? I made up things just because I was afraid, and then when I finally told her then, you know, she said, "You know, I don't know what I could have done except to just be there to support you." So, and that's what she did. She went with me, and she sat with me and went to work with me and made me feel secure.

"Do you think it could have been any different had you had a female mentor at that time?"

I think possibly, but I think, you know, there again it was with . . . it was still new with women being in the military, and the men that were there, they were old fashioned, not really thinking about women. And I think that they thought the women were just, you know, someone to look at, someone pretty to look at and didn't have much brains and that they could just do whatever. And I just . . . you know, like I said I didn't say or do anything because I was afraid to because I didn't know what to do. And I didn't really want to get out of the Guard, but I



didn't want to go to the Guard, either. You know? And I asked . . . I did the . . . you know, I asked what right did this individual have, and they said, "Well, he doesn't have that right," but that was, you know, after the fact.

I was very blessed. Like I said, they didn't promote me. They didn't . . . you know, the only thing, they let me make it up, and they were very good about that. And then the gentleman got out.

“How did that influence the rest of your Guard years after that? Did you keep that in the back of your mind?”

Yes, that's always been in the back of my mind. Men always thinking that, you know . . . sexual harassment in general. I mean, I don't single out the fact that sexual harassment is just a man approaching a woman. It can be the same thing with a woman approaching a man. I'm not blind to that, but I think that most of the time that you hear from the sexual assaults or, you know . . . any EEO complaints and things like that, it seems to be male on female.

“Have you . . . do you have any female warrior friends of yours who have gone through something similar or, you know, shared some information about being harassed or hurt or anything in any way?”

I do. I do. There's been a couple of women; I don't keep in contact with them anymore. But a lot of them didn't stay in. You know, a lot of them got out, and it was usually . . . I found the harassment was not from someone from their own age; it was from someone older that had been in the military for quite some time. But they knew right from wrong. They knew what you should do, and it was just mainly the young ladies were pretty much anywhere from either an airman up to a staff sergeant. You know, they were still pretty young within the service, so they didn't know . . . they knew that it wasn't right, but they didn't know what their rights were, and they didn't know who to go to.

What could the military do different? How can the military educate young women coming in, then? I mean, what would be your suggestion?

Right now they have like . . . they're very strong on doing sexual assault and response training. Okay, so we have safer training. We do EEO training. We are trying to be their (Indiscernible) diversity training. You know, making people aware of what you say, what you do. You have the fact that now you can . . . they've stopped people trying to be saying things that are inappropriate by coming up with third party complaints. If I'm saying something to you and someone else hears it and they find it offensive, guess what? Now they can do a complaint. It doesn't have to be me or you directly, even though we weren't talking to them.

They have that opportunity. So I think they try . . . awareness has been a big factor. It's made people in general more aware of sensitivity and what's wrong, what's wrong, and that, you know, victims are victims.

With all the experience that you have, you know, for so many years, 32 years, what . . . if a young female is going to come to you and say, 'You know, Jeanne, give me some advice. What do you think I should do? How can I succeed in the Guard or in any of the military branch?' What would you suggest to that young female? What would be your recommendations?

I would probably say be true to yourself. Always be the person that you want to be, the person that you can be proud of, and to watch your back. You know, make sure that you take care of yourself because, long story short, nobody is going to take care of you but you. And in the military, they claim to be family, but, yet, you know, you're the one that has to be [making] sure you're doing all your skill levels, you're going to your courses, you're getting your schooling, you're continuing your education, you're doing your PME, you know, getting your qualifications done, you know, you're taking your (Indiscernible) ancillary training. You, yourself, are the overall responsibility for that. You have someone to help you to remind you, but the bottom line is if something goes wrong and you don't make it, you can't blame anybody but you. You're your own person keeping you from being promoted. If you did everything you're supposed to do and if you're treated fairly, you should be able to succeed.

"Have you had the opportunity in the last so many years to give some advice to young women? Have you observed some younger women being harassed or taken advantage of, and have you stepped in or said something?"

I have not. I have not found . . . been around . . . I have the opportunity right now. I have a young lady that I supervisor. She is a young airman, and she is very strong willed, very strong . . . she's doing her education, too. She is actually going to school to be a counselor, so I'm very proud of her in that. But I taught her. You know, I've taught everybody in my flight. If there's something that you find that's inappropriate from anybody, no matter rank, race, age, you just need to let me know, even if it's me. I'm very conscience about making sure . . . I mean, I'm a touchy-feely person. I like to hug. You know, but I know my boundaries, and it's like, "You know, every now and then someone will say, "Jeanne, I think you need a hug today," but they actually will ask if it's okay. And I'll do the same, you know. I don't take anything for granted there.

There have been times when I felt that someone, you know . . . you can go walk down the hall and someone will make an accusation about how do you say this? Your boobs. You know? My eyes up here. I'm down . . . I mean, you need to look at my eyes, not look at other body parts. So, I mean, I'll call them out on it. You know? I'll remind them that people need to be treated with respect no matter what rank they are, and that is where the older ones . . . and we need to be the mentors. We need to be mentoring the younger generation because they're going to be the next generation. They're going to replace us.

And I don't want them to have to go through the things that I went through. I wish I would have had a mentor. That is probably one of the biggest things I never had in the military. I've never had someone to take me under their wing and say, "Hey, Jeanne, this is what you need to do. Here's what you need to do in order to succeed (Indiscernible)." It's always been . . . I've had to learn by my own mistakes, my own struggles, and it's a dog-eat-dog [world].

"In [summary], is there anything else that has come to your mind? Anything else that you would say that you wish hadn't happened or you wish it could have been different? Anything else that we haven't touched upon?"

No, I don't think. For the most part, no, we covered everything. I mean, you know, I do wish I'd been given more opportunities. It didn't happen; however, you know, I can thank myself because I got where I am today because of me. Actually, that's not . . . up to this point, probably up until probably about three years ago I got to where I was on my own, and it was because of part of the current management that I have right now that actually allowed me the opportunity to not only be promoted but to find another job and to learn other responsibilities, and I'm very grateful to management for that. So I'm thankful that I was allowed that opportunity because if I hadn't have been, I wouldn't be where I am today, and I'm very blessed for that.

Again, that was the one . . . looking and seeing and didn't know me from Adam, but that's okay; this is the person that I feel is the best person for that job, and I know that the individual who selected me, or the couple of individuals that selected me, they were questioned, "Do you really want to put that person in there? Do you really, because you know how she is? She's very vocal." But at the same time, you know, you're always told that something better is going to come along or everything happens for a reason. And I do believe everything happens for a reason, you know, and it's kind of ironic that where I started in supply is where I'm going to end in supply. You know, I started in a warehouse. Guess what? Now, I'm getting into a warehouse.

So, you know, I've come full circle in my career, and I'm grateful for that, and I . . . you know, I've learned a lot, and I have a lot of wonderful friends throughout the world because of it. But I do wish that we would have more programs in place for women, for awareness for sexual assault. I do wish more women would come forth. You know, I actually have asked a couple of women,

you know, have you ever been assaulted. And they said no, but they felt that they were probably close in a situation. I tried to make sure that, you know, the young ladies . . . hey, if you're going to party with a bunch of guys, please make sure you don't overindulge. Please make sure that you're aware of your surroundings. You know, I don't want something to happen to you. You know, make sure that you can trust where you are and who you're with.

And with my other girlfriend, who, after we get done I'll give you her name, the one that I told you was in the Navy, she's had other dealings except her dealings have been with the fact that she's been prejudiced not only because she's a woman but probably because of her race as well. And she's had several dealings, and she's retired Navy Reserve. So, I will give you her information. And she sent me an email and said, "Okay, give it to her," her contact information.

I wonder, you know, if people . . . if we had a (Indiscernible) females to mentor us, if the military had been a little more open minded, would we be more aware today. Probably not. I think we would have probably possibly been even further would have advanced. We wouldn't have been so restricted. You know, it's like they say. It used to be fun. It's not fun anymore. Well, why isn't it fun? It's not fun because people make it not fun because the bad things that we've done, the bad choices that we made or the bad things that we've said or for the circumstances, you know, of bad situations. We as people have done it. You know, it's not the military. It just turns out that we're in the military and that's our career, and it's very easy to blame the military for that. We all have to accept self-responsibility for certain things, and certain people just don't. You know, I wish they would. I wish that those that are in higher ranking would say, "Hey, you know, you know better than that. I was wrong. I was out of line."

Well, Jeanne, I really want to thank you very, very much. I know that your experiences will be invaluable to my research. So, thank you.

It was a pleasure. Thank you and I'm glad I can be part of your dissertation and your research, and I hope I helped you, and I hope your paper helps other women, and I hope other women can come forth and tell you their stories.

Many themes emerged from Jeanne's interview, which were put into the categories such as: family of origin, mentoring, sexism/harassment/sexual assault, stressors, male dominance, leadership, patriotism, self-awareness, women warriors, motherhood, and military issues.

**Jackie**

Jackie is 46-years-old and has been in the Navy Reserves for the last 13 years. She joined at the age of 33. Jackie's father was in the British Royal Navy and her mother is half Mexican and German. She has one brother, and lived most of her life in Mexico even though she was born in California. In 1988, her family moved to Florida. Jackie is married to a prior service Marine. The following interview reads differently than the other eight because Jackie's style was of few words. She was very good at answering questions, but would not elaborate. This was her style of communication, not that she was withholding information.

“Tell me a little bit about what prompted you to join the Navy Reserves?”

“Well, I was always curious about the military life, and it was just natural for me.”

“Did you have a friend that was in it, or you just passed by a recruiting station one day?”

“Well, I used to drive by the Reserve Center. And then I always thought about it, and then that's it. You know, one day I decided to go in and inquire, and I went through the recruiting stage.”

“So . . . and this, of course, was before 9/11.”

“Yeah, in '97.”

“And so, right now you're in the Reserves, and what is your rank in the Reserves?”

“I'm an E-5.”

“So let me see if I get this right. You're a petty officer, second class?”

“Uh-huh” (affirmative).

“All right! I've been practicing my Navy ranks. Okay.”

“Yeah, they've changed a little bit now between branches, I guess.”

Oh, absolutely. They're totally different. When I was in the Army, I was a SPEC 5, which [rank does] not exist anymore. I was a specialist, but I was still an E-5. And I can't even think about what they call them in the Air Force. I mean, you're right. Every branch calls them something different.

I continued by asking Jackie to tell me a little bit about going to basic training and her original training or jobs that she did when she first went in.

Well, basic training was a little . . . well actually a couple of years after I joined, believe or not. I just went two weeks. I was in New Orleans, and basically we learned about, you know, firefighting.

“So your basic training was only . . .”

“Damage control.”

“Two weeks' worth?”

“Yes.”

“So, I'm not sure you realize that's very different from the active duty people, right?”

“Yeah, I think they changed that now. I think you have to go through a whole eight weeks.”

“Did you feel that there was some other things you should have been learning or did you miss out on some things, looking back?”

No, not really. You know, I think that, you know, starting a little later, I think, it gives you an advantage because, you know, you're not a little, young kid. You know, you're not an 18-year-old fresh out of high school.

“You showing up with dedication for what you really want to do there. You know, and it's not like, you know, you have to be told what to do when you're 30-something rather than . . . you know what I mean?”

“Right. You're just better at taking orders when you're a little bit older. Yeah, and also, I don't know, it's just different. Your perspective is different.”

“Were you there with younger women? I mean, could you see a difference in your perspective because you were more mature?”

“Yeah. You know, definitely, you know, you come to think, you know, well, if I was 18, it would be different. You know what I mean?”

“Okay. So when you first signed up for the reserves, what was supposed to be your MOS or your job?”

“Storekeeper, basically.”

“Back on the ships?”

Yeah. Basically, just, you know, order in . . . a storekeeper is basically what, you know, who orders, who does the acquisition, the distributing, the -- supply. I like it. I actually . . . I really enjoy it because it has to do with everything. You know, supply goes, you know, to all the areas of the military.

“Right. Well, supply is very important, especially in time of war. You can't fight a war without the right equipment, right?”

I then asked her whether she had ever been deployed:

“No, I actually haven't been deployed.”

“Okay. Have you ever been on a ship?”

“Yeah, but not in . . . not on the way. I worked on a ship while it was in the harbor.”

“Docked?”

“Yeah. Kind of funny, but ”

“And then you did your storekeeper job there?”

“Yeah, actually we help with arranging the warehouses and all that.”

“Okay. What have you . . . you know what stands out for you? I mean, what seems to be . . . would there be the most exciting or memorable thing that you've done in some of these drill weekends?”

Well, drill weekends are not that memorable really. It's when you go and you're on your two weeks, you know, when you've traveled, that's when it gets exciting.”

“Where have you traveled on your two weeks’?”

“Okay, St. Louis, Pearl Harbor, London -- Greece, Italy, Bahrain --”

Have you ever run into any issues with, you know . . . I mean, I know that years ago there was a little, you know, I don't know, bad blood or whatever, if you were reservist or active duty. Has that changed over the years?

“No, I think it's getting a little better.”

“It is getting better?”

“Yeah, because, you know, they're kind of realizing that, you know, reservists are really helping them.”

“Right. Have you ever had a chance to be an individual augmentee? Have you been asked to go work with other branches and ”

“No, not with other branches.”

“Because many of the bases now, they're combined. So, even Pearl Harbor is combined with the Air Force base over there now.”

“With Hickam? I was there in, believe it or not, September 10 of 2001. The day before 9/11 ”

“Oh, right. So you were in Hawaii --”

“. . . and then I was in . . .”



“And then I was there also in 2004.”

“So your unit likes to go to Hawaii?”

“Yeah. This was a previous unit, you know. Right now, my unit used to go to London, and now they closed the base in London, and now we're going to Bahrain and Italy, you know, different places.”

How is Bahrain? Is there a culture difference, especially for women?”

“Very much so.”

Yeah, and in what way? I mean, you being an American woman, I mean, you show up over there, especially a military American woman, what are some of the issues you've encountered or your other friends have encountered?”

Well, you just try to be respectful, you know, of the culture because, you know, you're in their country, and you wouldn't want to be walking around in shorts or, you know, a little, tiny t-shirt, showing your shoulders or, you know, that's not acceptable to them. So you have to be respectful of them.

So, when you go to town, you have to follow their rules? I mean, is there a protocol that you're given, when you're stationed in Bahrain?

“Yeah, basically, you know, and it's . . . you know, and it also . . . it all comes down to common sense.”

“So out of all those missions outside of the continental United States, which one was the most exciting for you? Which one did you find to be exciting or interesting or challenging?”

“Well, you know, I don't know. It's been all really . . . I cannot tell you one specific one.”

“Have you been to any that have been uncomfortable for you? I mean, you know, have you been in a situation where you had to live in a tent or a container or with minimal . . .”

“No, honestly, I've been, you know, lucky enough that it's all been comfortable

for me.”

“Okay. Good. So, let's talk a little bit about your military experience now. How successful do you feel you have been in the reserves for the last 13 years? Do you feel that you've, you know . . . you're successful at what you've been doing?”

“Yes and no, because I wish I had more opportunities to advance.”

“Tell me a little bit about the Navy. How do you advance? I mean, what would you have done differently or what could you have done differently? I don't . . . explain that to me.”

“Well, we advance through exams, advancement exams, and we get, you know, regular evals, you know evaluations. So, whenever we have, you know, an exam and then you're rated amongst the same. . .”

“Same people at the same time. . .”

“. . . people, you know, and that's when you, you know, they rank you and you advance or not.”

“Were you supposed to have advanced? I mean, I'm sensing that you didn't advance at one time, or do you feel that you should have been a first class?”

“Well, you know, it's not that. It's just, I guess, it would be nice to have more opportunities to advance.”

“More opportunities, okay. Would you have . . . would it make a difference if you had a different job?”

“Yes.”

“Do some jobs have better advancement opportunities? Is there . . . at any time did you ask to do a different job, or you wanted to be in a different job? Is that something you can do?”

“Yes, you can cross-rate.”

“Have you thought about doing that?”

Yeah, but, you know, I'm happy right now with what I'm doing. You know, and as a reservist, you know, I kind of realize, you know, it really doesn't matter so much, how much I'm making. You know what I mean? I'm going to stay until I retire. I hope, you know, hopefully.

“I guess at that point it would make a difference, right, because if you can retire with the highest rank . . .”

“Yeah, of course. And I wish, you know, I could be as an officer. You know, they should have taken me as an officer, but I guess the recruiter didn't, you know?”

“Is that something you can still do? Can you apply to OCS?”

“I would think . . . I have applied, and I have a better chance once I'm done with my doctorate. We'll see what happens when that . . .”

“So, even though you haven't advanced as much or as fast as you wished, what has prompted you to stay?”

“Well, the benefits, the traveling. You know, I love traveling. It really is. You know, I can't complain about the places I've been, you know. No complaints on that whatsoever.”

“What are the benefits in the reserves?”

Well, you know, right now I'm not looking . . . I mean, of course you get access to military bases, you get access to Tricare and all that. You know, but what I'm thinking is a little more like after I've retired, you know, and I'm still going to be able to get, you know, the benefits, Tricare for life, you know, I get a pension, you get, you know, what they call I guess a thrift. It's like a 401(k) type of thing.

“Thrift plan or . . .?”

“You know, because I'm thinking, I'm not going to get, you know, social security when I'm ready to retire. So -- at least I'll have something, you know, for me.”

“That's good. And then you have your civilian job. So, you will have maybe two retirements.”

“Hopefully, yeah.”

“So it sounds like you really made the reserve job really kind of pay off for you. I mean, you seem to be really happy with it.”

“I am.”

“Now, what does your husband think? Is he in any kind of military at all?”

“He was a Marine. He used to be in the Marines. I don’t think he’s too happy about me being in the Navy.”

“Did he retire from the Marines?”

“No, no. He just did one tour. You know, he went to Japan, and, you know, did his part and that’s it. You know?”

“How do you think that your military experience so far has shaped you, who you are today, as a person today?”

“Well, it has given me a different perspective on authority.”

“What do you mean?”

Well, some . . . you know, you kind of like get to respect others that are above you whether you like them or not. It doesn’t, you know, make any difference. You know, just because of their position, you have to respect their decisions and also respect that sometimes it is possible that they are right. They have all . . . you know, they’re looking at a bigger picture. That’s what I understood a little bit in the military, is that the high ranking, you look at a bigger picture. You know, you’re responsible for more.

“So they may be looking at something you’re not aware of. I mean, they have the rest of the pieces to the puzzle.”

Exactly, you know, and you’re only thinking of, you know, E-5, E-4, or whatever. About what your immediate job is or whatever you have to do right there. Exactly. They have to think of -- Globally. You know, a little bigger picture.

“Yes. So, let’s see. How about, do you think that being in the Navy Reserves has shaped you in any way as a female, as a woman?”

I don’t know. It just gives you a little more confidence, I guess.

“Are there things that you do now that you probably would have never done? Do you ever say to yourself, ‘Wow, I don't think, you know, I would have ever done that’ . . . you know, experienced that with . . .?”

“Yeah, you know, I mean things like, you know, damage control on a ship, firefighting, and gun shooting, you know, all those things you couldn't do any other way.

“You would not be able to experience that in the civilian life?”

“Right.”

“And you said that you feel that it's made you a little more, what, emotionally stronger, it's given you more confidence? That's the word you used, more confidence?”

“Self-confidence.”

Self-confidence. So when you go away for your two weeks and you come back to your civilian job, what do the rest of the civilian people say when they see you come back from, you know, your reserves?

Do they kind of look up to you? Do they ask questions?

“Not really. I find it the other way. I think that they don't appreciate it. They think you're going on vacation.”

“Well do you ever clarify that for them? Do you share with them and say,

"Listen, you know, I had to stay up and pull whatever guard and . . . "

“Yeah, but they . . . you know, they still hear of the places I've been, and . . .”

“They think you went to the beach?”

You know, yeah, “You were in Hawaii. Oh!” You know, “You were in London. Oh!” Oh yeah. You know what I mean? Whether you were working or not, but all they see is that they have to do your work, and they don't see that you were still working, you know?

“Do you think it would be any different . . . if you were working with a male reservist, do you think that they would think that he was also just going to the beach?”

You know, I don't know. I've never thought about that. Maybe it would be a little different. You know, maybe, because the stereotype, they would say, "Oh yeah, a man. They put them to work." They don't think that they put women to work, although I've been, you know, on forklifts. I've been, you know . . . when I go to firefighting school, it's hard. I mean that wears you out.

"The firefighting school is in case there's a fire on the ship, right? What you have to do and all that? Okay. Of course, with the Navy, you would be trained just like a man."

Because you're not going to call 911 from a ship. You know, you have to be able to . . . you know, that's where the self-confidence goes a little bit, you know, because you kind of think, you know, like last time I was stuck on 75 here, you know, and there was a fire. And it just came to my mind, there was a, you know, a car on fire, and I said, "You know, I could really jump in and help the firefighters with this" because I know, you know, how they position themselves with the hose, who gets the nozzle, who gets the second place, who gets the third. You know what I mean? It's all kind of done the same way."

"That's great training, and do you think you would have known that had you not been in the Navy Reserves?"

"No, I wouldn't."

"Yeah. So it's really added to your repertoire of academics."

"If you want to call it academics, you know."

"Well, it's all learning."

"Yeah. You know, I think it just helps you in life, you know, in general."

"Has anybody at your civilian job ever asked you, 'Hey, you know, Jackie, what do you do over there? I mean, what do you . . . ' You know, are they curious?"

"Yeah, Yeah, they have. Some of them do. Some of them don't. You know, I don't know. I guess it all depends if they're, you know . . . I guess they probably . . . it's hard to change their mind once they have them . . . once they have a . . ."

"Preconceived notion. Yeah."

". . . notion, yeah."

“That's a shame.”

“It is. I think it is because it's a little lack of respect, I think.”

“Do you find that those type of preconceived notions when you deploy out or when you go out for those two weeks that you are with other military women? How do you see them compared to the civilian women?”

Well, you know, I respect them, you know, because I know what they've been through. I know it's . . . you know and when you work with, for example, active duty women in there, you realize it's not an easy life. You know, they have to be moving around, they have to, you know . . . it's hard to get a . . . you know, because normally you would think, okay, you buy everything for your house -- you establish that. Those are people that can't do that. I mean, because you can't move all your rugs and furniture and car and everything -- you know, every other three years, you know or whatever.

“So it's almost like you become a gypsy?”

“Yeah, in a way, you know, and then what does that do for your relationships?”

“You know on a personal basis too? It's like, you know, I've met women that just got married, and their husband is on a ship, and they just got married, not even a month ago.”

And then how about the tour, dual military, where they're both military, and they're on two different ships or -- Yeah, I've seen those cases. It's like they just got married? And oh, yeah, but my husband had to go to Japan.

“Or if they have children, and they get deployed, somebody else has to take care of the children. You know. Yeah, I've seen all those cases, and that's where you get a little respectful.”

“So do you feel that if you are with other military women, do you feel that you seem to respect each other better because you seem to have a better understanding of each other, what you're going through?”

I don't know. I guess it's implicit. You just, kind of like, it's a given between us. So there's like a . . . I don't know, like a special understanding or club between military people? They get each other. They know what's going on. Okay. So, on that, how much do you think you have in common with non-military women? I guess the question would be when you come back from those two weeks, sometimes do you find yourself that you come back, you know, feeling good and all pumped up? And does it take you a few days to kind of look around and, you know, feel like, coming back to civilian life?

“Not too much, but, yeah, a little bit. You know.”

“When you are on your two weeks, what do you call them, deployments, or two weeks out or underway or whatever?”

“Active training.”

Active training. If you needed to reach out and ask for help from another military woman, do you see a difference there asking that than when you work with civilian women? Do you see, is there a difference? Are military women more on top of things? You need to just ask them once, they know when it will be done, compared to maybe civilian women? Do you see that?

“Yeah, I think we are more apt to helping each other, now that I think about it. I haven't thought about that, but, yeah.”

“Do you find . . . have you ever run into any issues where some of the civilian women here have talked to you differently or treated you differently because you're in the Navy?”

“Yeah, some of them, you know . . . you get some experiences where if you're in uniform, you know, this lady out of the blue, she asked me if she can hug me. You know? ‘Can I give you a hug?’”

“Because she was thankful that you were in the military?”

“Yeah, you know?”

“That's nice.”

“That type thing.”



“Have you ever had anybody say something nasty or derogatory or . . .?”

“No, not so far, thank God, but I know it happens, you know?”

“Has it . . . I mean, have you ever seen that happen to someone else, another woman, or have you heard from other women, where they've been given a hard time or something?”

No, but for example when I've done funerals, you know, you hold the flag, you give it to their next of kin. I've heard, you know, that some places, there's people there posted in protest, which I think is a lack of respect totally because, you know, whether you like it or not, you know, they're there expressing their opinion because of us.

“Right.”

“You know? If it wasn't for us, they might not even be able to express their opinions.”

“So the military is giving them the ability to have freedom of speech?”

“Exactly. And they don't appreciate that. You know, they don't see it that way.”

“You know what I mean?”

“Do you consider yourself patriotic then? Do you feel very patriotic?”

“Yeah, I think so.”

Good. So, what suggestions or what would you have to offer to women who say, “Oh, I think I'd like to go into the Reserves or the Guard or the active” . . . whatever, the military? You know, if they came to you and said, “I'm thinking of doing this. Will you give me some advice?” What advice would you give women who want to go in, regardless of their age?

Well, you know, to make sure that their family affairs are in order. That they're not going to have trouble with their husband or with the kids. You know, like, you know, I've heard of some women, you know, they have a little baby and then they get deployed. You know, when the baby is six-months old, you can be deployed. You might not like that. You know, honestly, that would be difficult.

“My daughter was deployed with her twins when they were about seven or eight months old.”

“You know, that might be hard.”

“It was very hard, yes.”

“You know, so that's one thing that I consider.”

“Would you . . . if you had to do this again, would you go into the Navy or would you go into another branch?”

“Probably the Air Force.”

“The Air Force? Why Air Force?”

“I think they have a better . . . better facilities, better . . . you know. But that's another story. You know?”

“So, if a young woman or a woman wanted to join the military, itself, what other advice would you give her? What would you have done differently?”

Well, I would tell them to try to join, you know, the Air Force if possible or, you know, make sure that they get a good unit, that they look into where they deploy, where they're going to be. I think those are important issues.

How about . . . are there any issues . . . have you ever . . . have you run into issues or you know other women who have run into issues with any kind of harassment or, you know, sexism, or unfairness?

Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, when I was over in . . . I guess it was in Souda Bay, you know, they took one girl's . . . you know, that was with us, took her up into an alley and gave her a kiss. You know, this guy, just out of the blue.

“Another military person?”

“No, no, no.”

“It was a civilian?”

It was a local. You know, he was trying to do something to her. You know what I mean? Thank God, they were . . . you know, they were looking for her, and they found her. But this guy was kind of, you know, harassing her, and –

“How about harassment from our own military people? Have you . . . are there . . . I mean . . .”

I haven't found that myself. I know it happens. You know, it could happen, but myself, I haven't experienced it. I cannot tell ”

“In working with other storekeepers, let's say males, do you feel pretty confident that you're both kind of equal? Do they treat you equal? You're all storekeepers regardless of whether you're male or female?”

“No. It's like a given that they would let the man do the job first, and they leave the women a little in the back burner.”

“What do you mean, ‘Do the job first?’ They would get the better opportunities or . . .?”

You know, let's say it's a man and a woman, you know, same rank, same everything, same knowledge, but if they're going to ask somebody to do -- Something. You know, let's say for example, drive this forklift and put these material. Guess who they ask? You know, it's a given. They ask the man [first] instead of the women first.

“And that could ultimately affect your evaluation and your rank promotions too, right, if they have more opportunities to do things?”

“Yeah. I think it could. You know, I didn't think about in that way. Because they have more exposure and more ratings and people are saying more, ‘He's done this, this, and that’.”

“So that could also affect promotions.”

“Yeah. I think, you know, there's still a little clique between men and women, you know, not so much, you know, but still. You know, I don't take it too seriously.”

So is that something you would offer, you know to another woman going in as a suggestion, you know, "Keep your eye on that," and I don't know. Have you ever said something to them? [Like], "Listen, I want to do that job myself"?

“No, I haven't. You know, I'm just happy to do what they tell me to do, what they ask me to do.”

“Exactly.”

“And that's it, you know.”

“You're a good sailor. You take orders very well.”

“Well, you know, I mean, it's why fight? You know what I mean? It's . . . life is too short, I think, you know.”

“Is there anything else that you can think of, any other suggestions that you would offer, anything that comes to your mind?”

“To a female, specific to a female?”

“Yes, specific to a female.”

Just also to, you know, to make sure that her . . . I guess, you know, reputation as a woman and all that, you know, that she doesn't damage her reputation by going out too much with males and, you know, going around because it is that for a female when you get a -- bad reputation.

“Is it bad for males to go out with a lot of women?”

“I don't think so. You know, that's -- Double standard, you know. The man is a macho ”

“And the woman would be . . . yeah, a little bit loose.”

“-- as opposed to where the women would be thought of, you know.”

“That's a shame.”

Jackie was one of the last women warriors that I interviewed. She was very friendly and willing to be interviewed. I was touched that she was willing to come two hours early on the way to work to meet with me. I sensed that Jackie really liked being in the Navy Reserves even though she may not have had all the job opportunities that she would like to have had. Even when I asked her about changing jobs or her lack of progression she seemed to be complaisant or maybe just buying her time before retirement. Because Jackie had never been deployed to a war zone or been on the way on a ship, her experiences may have been somewhat limited. Nevertheless, Jackie had wonderful experiences throughout the world working as a Navy Reservist, which gives understanding to her love for the Navy. Many themes emerged from Jackie's interviews, which were reduced into the categories of: family of origin, mentoring, money, sexism/harassment/sexual assault, stressors, self-awareness, women warriors, and military issues.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Summary and Conclusions**

Chapter Four presented the in- depth interviews of nine women warriors. The nine women were all warriors who participated in an in-depth interview of their experiences in the United States Military. The interview data was reduced and interpreted in order to make it more understandable. The women had their own emerging themes, which were then looked at across each of the nine women's experiences. These themes were recognized for their frequency, saliency (affect), or uniqueness (non-modal). I also paid special attention to uncommon statements (non-modal), which may be sighs, reactions, or voice intonation. The major themes were then reduced down to categories such as: mentoring, money, sexism/harassment/sexual assault, stressors, male dominance, leadership, education, patriotism, war zone experiences, self-awareness, self-improvement, women warriors, military relationships, motherhood, and military issues. This method of case analysis and across cases analysis was used in this collective case study.

This chapter presents conclusions derived from the findings as well as implications for future training of counselors and other helping professionals when working with women warriors. The conceptual assumptions as well as the conceptual frame work for this study will be reviewed and discussed as the findings are supported. Suggestions will be presented as to how this study may be used in training future

counselors as well as helping professionals. Finally, limitations identified in this study will be discussed along with the suggestions for future research.

### **Summary**

Previous chapters in this study created the structure and protocols to be followed for this study. The goal of the study was to identify major themes that may become factors that affect the success and retention of women warriors as well as dissatisfaction in the military. The in-depth interviews provided rich data for analysis. This summary of the previous chapters will paraphrase the key elements and findings of this study and will help to set the stage for a comprehensive interpretation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although the number of women serving in the military has continued to increase, and the number of career opportunities has increased as well, there may be other factors, such as sexual harassment and sexist hostility, which prevent women warriors from achieving full equity as service members. Gelfand, Fitzgerald and Drasgow (1995) (as cited in Mathews, 2009) identified three types of male to female sexual harassment: gender harassment, unwanted sexual coercion, and unwanted sexual attention. All three of these unsolicited behaviors may result in serious consequences for women warriors as well as the military.

Mathews and Ender (2009) examined the attitudes of West Point cadets Reserve Officer training (ROTC) and civilian students towards roles women may fill in the military. The study concluded that the West Point cadets showed the lowest acceptance of women's roles in the military. It is important to infer from this research that West Point cadets may ultimately be the leadership that will review complaints of sexist hostility

towards women warriors. For example if the male leadership is indoctrinated early on in sexist hostility, they may be part of the problem rather than the solution.

Presently there are few studies that describe the current experiences of women warriors relative to issues such as sexual hostility, sexual harassment and other uncommon experiences during their military careers. Very little is known about how being a woman in a male dominated military may affect women warriors' choices between making the military a career or return to civilian life (Jeffrey, 2009). This is imperative that this study is conducted as the number of women warriors increase in the military and how their psychological and emotional well-being may be affected.

With better understanding of women warriors military experiences, mental health professionals, educators, and other human services professionals may have a better understanding of the issues that may affect women in the military. To date there are limited studies that have examined the effects of military experiences on the psychological and emotional well-being of women warriors. Whether its effects are positive, negative, contextual, or permanent is not yet known.

### **Methodology**

A collective case study design was chosen for this study as it will allow me to explore the individual experiences of women warriors as individual cases and across the cases. This collective case study allowed me to understand the experiences of women warriors in the United States Military and how those experiences affect their lives and choices to stay, leave, or reintegrate into civilian life. Using my own experiences as a woman warrior in the United States Army in the 1970's, I was able to reach out to my sisters in arms and ask them to share their lived experiences.



The experiences of women warriors who have served or are serving in an all-volunteer force, offered new insights on the possible impact of the military on women's lives. This insight into the experiences of women warriors will give counselors and other professionals a better understanding of the adaptive behaviors and psychological and emotional wellbeing of women who serve or have served in the military forces.

Nine women warriors participated in this study. They were all interviewed for a minimum of one and one half hours either by phone or in person. All the interviews were recorded with their permission and a pseudo name was chosen by the women warriors in order to keep their anonymity. The participants represented the active duty Army or Reserves, Air Force, Navy Reserves, Marine, Air Guard and veterans. The transcripts were reviewed numerous times in order to identify individual themes. These themes were recognized for their frequency, saliency, or uniqueness. I also paid special attention to indications of affect such as sighs, reactions, or voice intonation. The major themes were then reduced down to categories such as: mentoring, money, sexism/harassment/sexual assault, stressors, male dominance, leadership, education, patriotism, war zone experiences, self-awareness, self-improvement, women warriors, military relationships, motherhood, and negative military experiences.

### **Findings**

The purpose of this case study was to explore the experiences of women warriors who serve or have served in the United States Military. The major themes were grouped into categories which are presented in order of most frequent concerns. The largest category was Negative Military Issues for all the women warriors. In order of the frequency of concerns Table 2 describes the context of each participant's statement. The

second major concern was Issues Affecting Women Warriors. Table 3 describes the context of each participant's statement. The third major concern was Stressors, Table 4 describes the context of each participant's statement. The fourth major concern was Sexism/Harassment/Sexual assault, Table 5 describes the context of each participant's statement. The remaining categories will be described in Table 6. Table 7 demonstrated the difference in the response of four women warriors when asked what they had in common with non-military women.

Table 1

*Demographics of Women Warriors*

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Rank	Branch	Position	Status
Alice	31	Caucasian	Major	Army reserves	Intelligence analyst	Single no children
Amijah	36	Hispanic	Staff Sergeant	Air Force	Personalist	Single no children
Carolyn	40	Caucasian	Colonel	Texas Guard	Commander	Single no children
Cassandra	37	Caucasian	Second Class Petty Officer	Navy	Communications	Single two children
Jackie	46	Caucasian	Second Class Petty Officer	Navy Reserves	Store keeper	Married
Janora	31	African American	Technical sergeant	Air Force	Personnel	Married One child
Jeanne	43	Caucasian	Senior master Sergeant	Texas Guard	Flight Chief	Married Two adult children
Krista	29	Caucasian	xxxx	Army veteran	xxxxxx	Married
Wilma	36	Caucasian	Master sergeant	Marine	Intelligence	Married three children

Table 2

*Negative Military Issues Experiences*


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Participant	Statement from Transcript
Amijah	“I don't know that joining a system means I'm actually going to change the system for the better. Sometimes I just feel like I'm one mouse in the wheel that is rolling and rolling and rolling, but that's something I wanted to share.” P. 42, l. 24
Cassandra	“And yet I wanted to get fat so I could get kicked out. The higher ranking people -- it all seemed to get swept under the rug. It was more focused on the mission, the mission, the mission. It is understood but you can't expect everybody to really focus on getting the mission done when the morale was at its lowest.” P.18, l.1
Janora	“There was just animosity just from that. They see that the Air Force is being treated better. When we got there, they brief us. Hey, watch out for the Army. I was like the Army? That's supposed to be our brothers or our sisters. So they were like watch out for the Army. When they tried to have little morale-boosting things, it was almost like we hated each other.” P.18,l.4
Wilma	“It is a struggle. It's very male-dominated. You do feel that there's a glass ceiling a lot of times. You do feel a lot of just typical harassment and just normal, everyday just, you know, I'm kind of tired.” P. 14, l.24
Krista	“A bucket inside of some tires and some plywood stood up around you, and I was never on the burning duty, but, you know, that's what people did. And now, they have these massive trailers with showers, and, I mean, I didn't take a shower for almost two weeks once, my first deployments. Two weeks, baby wipes and that's it. On a mission, convoying, sleeping on the ground, on a cot, on the trucks.” P.36, l.15
Alice	“I got back to the company, and then I think the company commander was like, oh, what's this about you going out with your platoon sergeant? And I was absolutely livid. I was young at that point, so I didn't realize I can be like you know what, screw you. Reputation is not all that matters. Or perception, excuse me, is not all that matters. If anybody had bothered to come up to us or even looked closer, they would have seen I had notebooks all over the table.” P. 35, l.22
Carolyn	“But that's years and years of building and building camaraderie and friendships and having that kind of level of respect that I'm seen more as a professional and as a team member and the gender comes later.” P. 64, l.4
Jeanne	“I feel that . . . well, I do to a degree because I feel that I should have been given the same opportunity as anybody else. I feel that sometimes because I'm a woman, I was singled out.” P. 15, l.12
Jackie	“You know, like, you know, I've heard of some women, you know, they have a little baby and then they get deployed.” P. 28, l. 18

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Table 3

*Women Warriors Self-Perceptions*


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Participants	Statement from Transcript
Amijah	“So, professionally, I think I'm tougher than I was because I came in very idealistic and very eager to please. And that got beaten out of me.” P. 25, l.8
Cassandra	“You know with carrying all those weapons and things. Sometimes they would push the women aside and say, “No, we'll take it. We'll take it.” The girls that I know that they would do this to would be like, “Hey, look. This is my job and I'm going to do it so step away. (Indiscernible) that I'm not as strong as you are. You might be stronger than me but it doesn't mean that I can't do it.” P. 14, l. 8
Janora	“But these women had seen real stuff. They had been outside the wire. And just sitting at the bus stop some days you encounter some young women, and they'll talk about the night before when they had to throw a body . . . You know, get a body off their car or just things to me would be unheard of.” P.18, l.24
Wilma	“As a woman, you're always trying to strive to be better than the men around you, right. So you're part of a wolf pack, but you're never really accepted as a wolf because you're the child wolf.” p. 24, l.6
Krista	“I've had soldiers that were pretty . . . and that's the great thing about being in the 82nd, is the women all had to be airborne.” P. 34, l. 11
Alice	“But there really isn't a need for women to go anyway because women aren't supposed to be going to combat, and the whole point of airborne is to jump into combat. So it's kind of funny that we're aloud to.” P. 10, l. 7
Carolyn	“The opportunity was not because you couldn't do it or wouldn't do it. It was because the military at that point was still not opening the doors to women for those career fields.” P. 22, l. 4
Jeanne	“There was . . . at times, there was issues because there would be males that still had the . . . what do you call it? Male chauvinistic attitude that women were, you know, to be seen and not heard, and women should be barefoot and pregnant. You know, that they didn't really have a place in the military. So they were kind of really still old fashioned and believe in the military . . . women should not be in the military, and women didn't deserve equal pay and all that kind of thing.” P. 10, l. 4
Jackie	“It's like a given that they would let the man do the job first, and they leave the women a little in the back burner.” p. 31, l4

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Table 4

*Negative Military Stressors*


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Participants	Statement from Transcript
Amijah	“To that phenomenon of being miserable and not wanting to be miserable alone, and then getting married in tech school, during basic, after basic, on the first base, divorce rate is very high.” P. 18, l. 15
Cassandra	“The morale across the whole entire ship was the most awful thing I have ever seen in my life. I have never seen anything like it. We would sit in our shop with nothing to do. We were three or four weeks ahead of schedule while the rest of them were way, way behind.” P. 16, l.9
Janora	No entry
Wilma	“In the first time that we heard the alarms go off and then we had incoming, you do tend to feel a little bit of anxiety. And then you can kind of feel a stereo vibration in your chest when it hits, and they came in threes all the time.” P. 25, l.19
Krista	“They were both deployed. Their children were five and six. She was a lieutenant colonel. Awesome woman, military oriented. She was, you know, go, go, go. Do this, very smart. And I look at her, and I'm like, "How do you, you know, be away from . . . " And she had a nanny, and the children were also with their parents.” P. 60, l. 17
Alice	“You're going to have to fly basically for the next two to three hours around Baghdad and you'll eventually get there. And I didn't think anything of it. I was like oh, I'm going to go home. I'm going to get in my own bed. Yes. Yes. And then afterwards, I was like oh. Because you're just a flying target for a while.” P. 14, l. 5
Carolyn	“So I think the females . . . I think as a young female, you really had to make sure you did your job. In other words, I went out of my way to make sure I could do my job, pull my weight, and I wasn't viewed as a female.” P. 27, l.5
Jeanne	“Honestly, most of the time, it was because I was a single mom, and it paid the bills, and it provided, you know, a means of support for my two sons and I. It wasn't intentional. When I joined the Guard in 1978, I didn't ever honestly anticipate it being a career.” P. 19, l.4
Jackie	“I've done funerals, you know, you hold the flag, you give it to their next of kin. I've heard, you know, that some places, there's people there posted in protest, which I think is a lack of respect totally because, you know, whether you like it or not, you know, they're there expressing their opinion because of us.” P. 27, l. 12

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Table 5

*Sexism/Harassment/Sexual Assault*


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Participant	Statement from Transcript
Amijah	“So, that was very eye-opening that someone can use abusive language, get away with it, and then the cover is, you know, “He’s a guy. You know, that’s how guys talk.” And I said, “If he ever does that again, I’ll go straight to the Base Installation Commanders.” So, the way they handled it was get me out of the way.” P. 22, l.23
Cassandra	No entry
Janora	“My commander told me I had a fat ass. He liked my ass. I would” p.19, l.23 “I think because my goals are so much bigger than what the sexual harassment has to offer, and I just refuse to be broken in those aspects.” P. 27, l. 14
Wilma	“So again, I hate to say target, but it is a targeting mentality. Because there’s only a few females around. And if you’re on deployment, there’s even less females around. And they will continue to try to reengage your target. But if you’re very upfront, then almost every single time the guy will be able to look for another target. If he tried it again, then of course you say I’m armed. You understand that, right? I have both the will and the capability to end your life. So if you really want to go there, I’ll be crying, and I’ll write a letter home to your mom.” p. 36, l.20
Krista	No entry
Alice	“I don’t know. That was the only time I think I’ve ever, ever in my career run into any kind of form of sexism, but he was just a complete jerk to me. So when I wanted to go to air assault school, he wouldn’t let me. So I ended up giving the slots to my soldiers, which ended up being rewarding. That was good, but it’s still really irritating.” P.9., l. 17
Carolyn	“Well, I think the whole idea of harassment, I think that has the potential to exist anywhere in any organization, in and outside the military. I think it’s, you know. I don’t know that harassment is so culturally-based anymore, like maybe we used to think it would be. It’s more individually-based. I think there are certain people who will overstep the line at any given time if they’re not in check. And I do think it’s an organization’s responsibility and the leaders and the managers of the organizations.” P.58, l. 23
Jeanne	“I had a commander that tried to fondle and to . . . okay. And so, if I was working, then he would do . . . you know, he would find a reason to stay late, you know. And then he would come and say, “Hey, Jeanne, I need you to do this.” And like, “Umm, no.” So, I found myself . . . I eventually just quit going. He would tell me who I could and could not have lunch with. He would tell me he would like a date. It was just really bizarre.” P. 31, l. 1
Jackie	“I haven’t found that myself. I know it happens. You know, it could happen, but myself, I haven’t experienced it. I cannot tell.” P. 30, l. 18

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Table 6

*Categories*

Categories	Amijah	Cassandra	Janora	Wilma	Krista	Alice	Carolyn	Jeanne	Jackie
<b>Negative Military Issues</b> Behaviors, policies or experiences that impact negatively on the women (89)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Women warriors self-perceptions</b> Personal perceptions of themselves as women (72)	X	-----	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Stressors</b> Issues and behaviors that negatively affected the women (47)	X	X	-----	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Sexism/harassment sexual assault</b> Behaviors experienced while in the military (34)	X	-----	X	X	-----	X	X	X	X
<b>Self-Awareness</b> Introspective understanding of their needs (39)	-----	-----	X	X	X	-----	-----	X	-----
<b>Motherhood</b> Being a parent or seeing other women being mothers (16)	-----	X	X	-----	X	-----	X	X	-----
<b>Mentor</b> Someone to show the way and to help them navigate the system (16)	-----	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Family of origin</b> Grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters (16)	X	-----	-----	-----	X	-----	X	X	X
<b>War zone experiences</b> Experiences while deployed to a hostile country (15)	-----	-----	X	X	X	X	X	-----	X
<b>Male dominance</b> Behaviors or comments that are sexist (14)	-----	-----	X	X	-----	-----	-----	X	-----
<b>Self-Improvement</b> Working on what they need and desire (12)	X	X	-----	-----	X	X	X	X	-----
<b>Leadership</b> Military chain of command (11)	-----	X	X	X	X	X	-----	X	-----
<b>Education</b> Furthering and affording higher education (10)	X	-----	-----	X	X	X	X	X	-----
<b>Money</b> Money in order to live a better life (8)	X	X	-----	X	X	-----	-----	-----	X
<b>Patriotism</b> Sense of pride in their country (6)	-----	X	X	X	-----	X	X	X	-----
<b>Military Relationships</b> Working relationships with other military members (6)	-----	-----	-----	X	X	-----	X	X	-----

The preceding table depicts the categories that the participants described as issues in their interviews. All participants were cooperative and very open to the interviews. The interviews began with open-ended questions inquiring about their family of origin, which may have impacted their decision to join the military. Amijah, Krista, Carolyn, Jeanne and Jackie came from military families:

Well, my dad was in the Army, and because of that, I was -- Because of that, I grew up overseas. So, I have never actually been to the United States. I was an Army brat that had basically followed him from base to base. (Janora)

I was raised by my great-aunt. My brothers and I were all raised by different people. I had a fairly good childhood growing up there. (Cassandra)

I'm actually an Army brat, so I've been pretty much all over the world. After my father, who was in the Army, but he wouldn't let me go in the Army. (Janora)

Well, I was close to an Army base when I was growing up, and I was always thinking about joining the military service because we're a substance farm and we never really had a lot of money. (Wilma)

But I grew up in a family with five kids, youngest being my little brother, I was lucky though. And then, 20 years old, I realized I was doing what my mom did, supporting some guy not working while I'm working two jobs. Bad relationship. I just turned around and said the Army is going to get me what I want. ( Krista)

I'm third-generation Army. My grandfather graduated from West Point in I believe 1932 and remained in the Army for over 30 years, retiring as a full guard, and he served in World War II. And I think his last tour was at Fort Eustis. He was the commander at Fort Eustis. And then my father graduated from West Point in '57, and he retired after 32 years as a full-bird colonel in the Army. (Alice)

My father was in the Air Force, and my parents met when he was very, very young in the Air Force. Married. I have two older brothers. We're all actually almost exactly one year apart. We're in August of consecutive years. And because we were a military family, we were all born in different places. (Carolyn)

Honestly, I saw a commercial one day at Aim High about the military. My mom never talked about college or anything, and it talked about education and traveling, and it was going to be an opportunity to get to do that. And my favorite color was blue, so it seemed like the thing to do. (Jeanne)

Well, my dad was in his own country's military. He was in the British Army. (Jackie)

The most common reason for joining the military, as reported by the women warrior's, was either coming from a military family or escaping a poor social/economic life. All the



women interviewed also stated that joining the military would give them an opportunity for education, civilian or military. Along with education the theme of money came up numerous times but it was attached to joining the military to make money and get an education and then retire. Only one of the participants is looking to leave the service within this year and the Veteran participant is returning to the Army as an officer in order to retire.

The category of mentoring comprised many individual themes that seemed to be attached to personal development or navigating the system as a woman warrior. All but one of the participants shared their views on mentoring:

I think that if I had a better mentor or better leadership in some commands that I was at I think I would have probably been an E-6 (Indiscernible) chief by now. (Cassandra)

They understand leadership and they understand small-unit leadership and they understand if I'm a senior female, I need to pull this female aside and not just watch her flounder around. I had to flounder so you have to flounder. So there's that sense of small-unit leadership in the Army. (Wilma)

I would tell them to set goals for themselves. Definitely set goals for themselves. To exhaust all possibilities. Don't just take no for an answer. There's a way to ask questions and do things, but just don't take no for an answer. Do your research. (Janora)

And it's funny because nobody liked him. Nobody liked him. Everybody thought he was the worst first sergeant in the world. And he said that to me, and he was right on the money. I was not ready to get out at that time. I was not. His . . . that was the best advice that I could have gotten. (Krista)

And I did, and I've had a fabulous time from then on. I've had excellent mentors because Army isn't like it used to be. Every officer was assigned a mentor, and it was the senior officer's duty to find somebody to mentor. That has expired, gone away. I don't know why. I think it was definitely a voluntary thing, so it was never any regulation. But that's gone away, so it's up to you now to be a proactive one. And I think I'm from a very proactive generation to be honest. I think most people, especially women I know in the military have sought out somebody to be their mentor, and that makes a huge difference. (Alice)

And you talk to the people in the service, whether they are officers or enlisted, and you seek mentors that will guide you. I think in the military more than anything if you've got a good mentor who can guide you and help you along the way as far as guidance, you've got it made. (Carolyn)

And I don't want them to have to go through the things that I went through. I wish I would have had a mentor. That is probably one of the biggest things I never had in the military. I've never had someone to take me under their wing and say, "Hey, Jeanne, this is what you need to do. (Jeanne)

I think we are more apt to helping each other, now that I think about it. I haven't thought about that, but, yeah. (Jackie)

The theme of mentoring was mentioned numerous times throughout the interviews. The participants equated mentoring with career progression as well as self-improvement.

There were also comments such as the importance of mentoring as well as giving back.

One participant used mentoring as way to train future airmen.

The next category that was mentioned by most of the women was patriotism. This theme was usually linked to explaining why they joined the service or why they are still in. One woman left the Army because of poor leadership, but joined the Army Reserves because she loved the Army and felt she was very patriotic:

Where I grew up at we are really patriotic. Every morning in school, even when they said that you're not supposed to, we would say the pledge of allegiance. We were raised patriotic. We would sing "My Country Tis of Thee" in school. When I hear people bad mouthing my country I get really pissed off. When they bad mouth Obama because they don't think he's doing what he's supposed to be doing I get really pissed off because he is my president. That's my country. I really get so angry when I hear people talk about him especially over when they say, "Stupid Yanks." It just causes my blood to boil. I get really aggravated with people when they talk crap about us. (Cassandra)

I have two boys. Accountability, loyalty, integrity, those types of things. Their judgment, when they make bad judgments. Every moment being a teachable moment. Never let a moment go to waste. And just on them and not letting something skew the values that I've learned in the military. It's one of the things that I've been able to pass onto them. Patriotism, education is important. Things like that. Just the things that I've seen in the military. (Wilma)

The best sense I can describe is it's in my blood. I'm third-generation. It's very familiar to me. I know anywhere I go . . . I mean it's very American in the same sense. (Alice)

I love the military, so I think the patriotic side of it is definitely there. I love the military service. I like the premise behind what the military does. We're professional war fighters. People forget that we are in the business of war, which is not what we want to talk about and it's not sexy, but it's a very necessary thing to do. And there are all parts of that. In the Air Force, we tend to support the war fighter. (Carolyn)

I feel that I've served my country (Jeanne)

The next category that stood out was that of male dominated military and leadership which was mainly male leaders. None of the participants described negative experiences with a female leader. There were numerous comments on themes dealing with “boys club” and old military mentality”:

It's very, very male dominated. Women, if they're in an embassy because we're so small. The debt set, I went to the largest one would have been Spain, and that had ten people. (Wilma)

I'm not blind to that, but I think that most of the time that you hear from the sexual assaults or, you know . . . any EEO complaints and things like that, it seems to be male on female. (Jeanne)

Most women understand that if you want to be part of the team and you joined the boys' club, you had to be one of the boys. (Wilma)

These were the best and brightest sailors. If they had had better leadership or better mentors to help them learn that, “Hey, you see this is bad but you don't want to be like that. You take a different path and you follow a different set of leadership. You'll be okay. (Cassandra)

On top of you being away from your kids and you're in a war zone, you have all this going on. You still have your leadership men, you know, being men. (Janora)

It's been my experience that in a civilian world, people are not like that. They are not part of the leadership. They're just kind of part of the followers. (Wilma) You're maturing and developing into who you are. You're learning about . . . I mean, just . . . not just leadership but followership and, you know, the ups and

downs. And you learn how to . . . you learn tact too and how to talk to people, you know, in a certain way, at least you hope to. (Krista)

And I enjoy the leadership of it. I enjoy helping people out. That was the whole play. Originally, before VMI had to allow women in, they invited the women from Mary Baldwin. They initiated a leadership program that was . . . It's the only all-women cadet corps in the nation. (Alice)

The women who responded with themes of a male dominated military and leadership issues were all well-grounded in their ranks and positions. They spoke about “unequal treatment” and “lack of respect” for all the military regardless of gender and rank.

The next category that emerged was that of motherhood. Not all the women were mothers nonetheless they spoke from the heart about other military mothers having to leave their children behind as well as some of the mothers of a war torn country:

Then you have the strong women, the women that . . . I mean this scares me about going in the military. The women that are out there that, you know, deploy away from their children. I mean you got to . . . I mean, you really have to give it to them. I mean, they're . . . and these aren't short deployments. They're not gone for six months. The Marines only deploy for six to eight months or something like that. Air Force even less. (Krista)

Probably some of the negative things would be being a single mom and with the war efforts and everything, being in a mobility position work center, where you have to be away from your children a lot. So I'm out there at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, until the very last plane leaves. So I missed time with my children a lot, and we did a lot of exercises, and we've done a lot of practices, and we . . . and then when the real war took off, you know, we did . . . I had to be away from my kids. So that's probably my biggest negative was having not to be there sometimes for my children like I would have liked to. (Jeanne)

I have no idea, but we also do know that kids used to bring weapons to the gate. Being at the gate, I could see what I would think in my mind was poverty. It was just trashy and just nasty, and the kids didn't have shoes on. It was just everything you see on TV, but it was real. So the kids weigh very heavy on my heart, but there was nothing I could do. (Janora)

And there would be kids running around and whatnot. And then women were always giving us the exact same question, and I'm sure you've heard this a million times. What are you doing here? Why are you here? And why aren't you home

with your family? Don't you have a family? Why are you here? And then they'd always say, "We're just waiting for you to leave so we can go ahead and get this fight over with." (Wilma)

I think the fact that I am single and the fact that I don't have children has made it easier for me because I haven't had to make those sacrifices. And I also think it's stereotypically easier for males, because a lot of times the men have the wives at home that can take care of the children and the family while they are deployed. I mean that is stereotypical, but it is a reality as well. (Carolyn)

The overall category of children, mothers, children, and single mothers emerged on its own. The women were trying to share some of their own frustration with either being a military mother or feeling helpless when a mother from a war zone would ask for help to save their children. Krista sums up her experience in a war zone having to turn away a mother with a child in her arms:

And we had . . . so, the children, that was my . . . that was the hardest part. Only just the one time where this kid came in, and he was probably two or three or something like, and he was just burned all over him. And we couldn't . . . I couldn't do anything. I had to turn him away. I had to say, "Sorry. We can't." You know.

There was a . . . a bomb had gone off in the town near where we were camped or near where our compound was, and it was . . . there was crazy wounded. And that's when I had to make . . . I had to be the one making the decision just because the doctors were busy doing other things.

And while we were seeing everybody that was coming in, I had to make the . . . I actually . . . that was the first time I had to, you know, look at someone and say, "We're not going to be able to do anything for him." And, you know, and all of his friends are sitting there holding him, like --

You know what can you do? You know, you have to make that decision. You have to say that, "We're going to . . . you know, he doesn't . . . he's . . . he doesn't have a good chance, so we're going to have to turn and help this person who does have a chance." And that was pretty difficult. (Krista)

The last of the categories was self-awareness and war zone experiences. Not all the women I interviewed had experience being deployed. The themes that emerged when we began to talk about their experiences in a war zone were very interesting in that the themes revolved around self-awareness, strong women, high moral standards, being

tenacious, strong boundary and knowing your strengths and limitations. These categories seemed to be the “requirements” for surviving the war zone. The lived experiences are as followed:

Whatever your politics are, I think the profession of arms is an honorable profession, and I enjoy being a part of that. And I enjoy the camaraderie and the brotherhood that goes along with being a military member. Like you said earlier, once you're in the military, you're always a military member, always a (Indiscernible), always associated. That probably is really the number one thing, honestly. (Carolyn)

The smell. I mean it's not like a smell you've ever . . . You know when somebody is burning leaves or trash. But when the bodies were being burned . . . Because, you know, they would have these mass killings. They don't have graves, so they would just --Iraqi bodies. Just burn them. They would stack them up like pieces of wood and --You could see it on the cameras. Yeah. But it was outside of our perimeter. I mean you would think they were having a party. They were just going around shooting guns in the air, and then you would have that smell just lingering over the base pretty much. Usually I'm triggered by memories. Like when the siren went off. The smells. I'm learning to deal with it. Being that it's uncontrollable, it puts you in a mind frame and I think about it all the time, but after time passes, it goes away. I'm being medicated for it just because when I got back it was so hard to get back. It was so hard for me to show emotion to my kid because I had been away from him for so long. I was so used to moving. (Janora)

Because then you have the threat of ambush at all times. So not so much. In the first time that we heard the alarms go off and then we had incoming, you do tend to feel a little bit of anxiety. And then you can kind of feel a stereo vibration in your chest when it hits, and they came in threes all the time. I don't know. I think it's as many as they could get off before they do the counter battery and I.D. their position and basically just bring down the rain on them. And so the first one, then you feel it and you kind of . . . But after that, we started laughing it off. But there were a few times where it was close enough where it kind of rung our bell a little bit, but then we still laughed it off and did our business anyway. Well, I've had it kind of rain down on my head a little bit, but it's just the dirt and whatnot. Never any kind of metal sharp or anything like that. So I've never been injured. (Wilma)

I was like oh, I'm going to go home. I'm going to get in my own bed. Yes. Yes. And then afterwards, I was like oh. Because you're just a flying target for a while. The pilots were great. I mean they go high, high, high up in the air and then come back down. But it was beautiful. I got to see almost all of Baghdad. The moon was a full moon that night. I remember it clearly. It was just beautiful. After I landed, I kind of thought what the hell did I just do, but during . . . (Alice)

And then it was the next week, which there was an Iraqi Army camp right outside of ours, and we do a lot of . . . we train them a lot. I trained a lot of their medics. So, we go outside of our camp, and we go into their camp, but it's not . . . I mean, it's right there. It's not far at all. And it's . . . technically, we're still inside our outer . . . we're still inside the outer perimeter. And three people are driving in a truck along this road, going to the front, and direct hit. Moving target. Moving target with a mortar, which is -- And a week before, they hit a trailer where nobody was in. So, it's just like, you know, you have no idea. You have no idea. And that's just . . . yeah. Well, that right there, I mean, it made a lot of us think really . . . I mean, is it luck, or is just their day? It was their time because not a week before, you know, they hit somebody's sleeping quarters at a time when people would be in there. (Krista)

The experiences shared by the women were shocking and scarring to the average person. However, to these women warriors, they were everyday experiences. The women learned very quickly that that this was going to be reality for them until they returned home. Their military training would keep them alive as well as keeping them focused on the mission at hand. Many of the women spoke about themes that fell into the self-awareness category, which seemed to augment to the war zone experiences. Themes such as emotional protection, taking responsibilities, higher standards, being tough, being tenacious and doing your best were some of the themes that emerged from the interviews. These themes were also found in the category of women warriors and military issues.

### **Interview Observations**

All the interviews were amiable, honest and moving whether in person or by phone. The women warriors that agreed to be interviewed were very willing to share their lived experiences in the United States Military. All the interviews followed the proposed list of questions except with the last question, "How much do you believe you have in common with non-military women?" While I was interviewing some of the women, I felt that they were minimizing their experiences, not on purpose but rather they had adapted

to their military role as a woman warrior. I decided to ask the following question in order to elicit insight to who they are and who they have become:

“If you had the opportunity to be in a survival show for a prize of a million dollars, and you could pick any five women to be on your team who would you choose?”

All the women began their answers by minimizing the differences between women warriors and civilian women. However, when I prompted them or they thought about the question, their answers quickly changed to the difference between civilian women and women warriors. This last minute question proved to be extremely beneficial in that it allowed the women warriors to recognize who they are, who they have become and a sense unity between their sisters in arms. The following are the statements from the individual women.



Table 7

*Answers to Survivor Questions*

Participant	How much do you have in common with non-military women?	Given the opportunity what five women would you choose?
Krista	<p>You know, I don't see any difference, and it's just because I don't really connect with a . . . I wouldn't connect with a military woman any better than I would connect with a nonmilitary woman. I'm not . . . I'm happy, and I'm social, but I'm not one of those connected people that makes lifelong friends. And that has . . . that has nothing to do with the military, but I do know that there is a difference. I do know that what I've experienced is a lot different than what they've experienced. But then again, I had experienced a lot before I even joined the military.</p> <p>So, it's not that I can be like, "Well, you know, I was in the military. I've done all this and that." And it's like, no, because they've . . . civilians go through a lot of stuff to. We've had five cops in the Tampa/St. Pete area that were killed in the last two months.</p>	<p>I can't tell you that I would choose military women. Women who could just suck it up and drive on. I don't want to hear complaining. Oooh, it's wet. It's raining. Is that a snake?</p> <p>I don't want to hear complaining, you know, not too much. You got to talk about something to pass the time when you're doing some crap like that, you really do, but it can't be like complaining, nagging, I don't want to do this, ooh, something just crawled up my short. . . and that's the great thing about being in the 82nd, is the women all had to be airborne -- At one time. I don't think it's like that anymore because of the operation tempo for deployments. They've been having to fill the slot, but at one point, y'all had to be airborne. Everybody had to be airborne. Everybody went to the airborne school, which is grueling. It was three weeks long versus 16 weeks of AIT and 9 weeks of basic training, and it was worse in airborne school in the three weeks than all the basic and AIT put together, physically and mentally. It was grueling. But . . . so, those . . . I would definitely pick those five women out of most of the women I had deployed with or was stationed with out at Ft. Bragg.</p> <p>I would definitely pull them, especially from my units. All the women that I was . . . especially ones that I grew up in the ranks with, and a couple of the soldiers that I had were pretty tough.</p>
Alice	<p>So I choose to . . . Like for instance, when I went to officer basic school, I made sure that I became friends with the wives of the guys that I went to class with. I wanted to interact with women not necessarily in the military. And I choose to have friends . . . I have a group</p>	<p>Oh, yeah. If it was something challenging like that, then yeah. I know a couple of my girlfriends in the army that would very much be . . . One, they would love it because it was an adventure, and two, I know they would be perfectly capable of coming</p>

now of friends that are in the military and aren't in the military or had military experience. I don't need to stay confined to that specific area. And they all turn out to be strong women anyway. I mean my riding instructor, who I think is a great person, she's a very strong woman and has never had any military experience at all. Another one of my friends is in the FBI, and she hasn't ever been in the military. So yeah. That's just part of my work life.

Cassandra I've got a lot in common with those people. I was older when I came in so I had life experiences before the military but then again there is a big difference. We do have a lot in common but yet we don't. They get to see their family every night. They don't have to spend much time away from them. They don't have to worry about going to war.

out of the situation. But I would never exclude. Because all of my civilian friends are very strong, strong-minded women. So I think I could probably choose any one of them to be honest. Someone who couldn't stick up for herself or would just lend herself to . . . Somebody who is I guess easy with men or just not very confident. That would be a complete turnoff to me, and I wouldn't want anything to do with it. But I would have sympathy for them.

I would pick women that would be survivors. I would pick ones that would get up and not hesitate to do whatever it is that they tell them to do if it was something gross. Over here I've watch and have a celebrity say, "Get me out of here," when they make them eat bugs and they have stuff crawling on them. I would want women that would actually do something like that. I'm not going to do it but if they're willing to do it -- if they are willing to eat a worm they can have at it. I would want somebody that wants that money just as bad as I do.

I wouldn't want anybody out there that was like, "Oh, I've got my makeup." That's not right. "Hold on, let me put my lipstick on before I go pee behind a tree."

I wouldn't want any girly girls.

MS. STEIN: So I'm sure you'd have to put some Army women and Marine women there too, right?

Yeah, definitely. They're tougher.

Carolyn I don't know. That may be kind of hard for me to answer because I think the fact that I'm single and I don't have children makes me not have a lot of common bonds with a lot of females across the board. I mean there are a lot of females that don't marry and have children, obviously, but the majorities do. And so I don't have that link to females to start with, which is kind of an interesting thing

I think the basic answer to that question would be yes. I would probably tend to choose females who have been in the military, especially if I know them because I know . . . Where my second closest female friend, if you will, not to order them, but another one. She actually is in the military, and I've known her in the military and I've deployed with her. And so we have

because though I can't relate, obviously, with being a mother because I'm not a mother, but I can relate on similar types of issues.

But I'm not a mother, so I don't do a lot of the . . . I haven't done some of the traditional things that most females do. So that in itself is kind of an interesting thing. And then you throw the military into it. If a female has never been into the military or anybody has never been in the military, I think they have a hard time understanding what it's all about.

that bond, and I would trust her with my life, obviously. But I also am fully aware and capable of what she has done and what she can do because of the military.

But I think yes because I think I know that a respectable military woman has a lot of capabilities. And I know that more likely than not in this career field in the military, they have probably had to go above and beyond to prove themselves of their capabilities because it's a tough profession. Because it's a male-dominated profession. Still, because you don't want to be stereotyped into a . . . I hate to say helpless female but in some cases I think that's kind of how I always viewed it anyway. You want to be above that. And you consider yourself to be equal and you expect yourself to be equal with your peer counterparts, whether they are male or female. And so, yeah. I could see where I would go. And if I had two strangers to choose from and all I had was their credentials on paper and they were exactly the same except one had been in the military and one hadn't, I would probably go with the person who had been in the military. So I think the answer is probably yes. That military service, in my mind, puts most people, male or female, kind of one middle notch above anybody else. That sounds really biased doesn't it, but it is.

Janora I think I still have a lot in common because their battles are just like ours except we defend the country. I have a couple of friends that are on the police academy, and we joke all the time. You defend the city. I defend a country. But their struggles are the same. They still have to deal with the sexual harassment. They still have to deal with not being treated equally because they're women. They're still mothers. I think I have . . . You know.

I'd definitely go military just because I kind of know what they're made of because I know what they had to, at least at the beginning stages, I know what they had to go through to get to where they are.

The responses from Alice, Cassandra, Carolyn and Janora were completely different when I asked the second question. I noticed that they became excited while answering the second question. After I reviewed the transcripts I could see in the words they chose how proud they felt towards their sisters in arms.

Interviewing the nine women warriors was a pleasure and a great opportunity to get to know some of my sisters in arms. I was pleasantly surprised by the ease of the interviews. Most of the women warriors were very open, friendly and very willing to share their experiences. None of the interviews were terminated by the women, I had to terminate them in order to keep them to a manageable size. I believe that some of the interviews could have gone on for a couple of hours had I not terminated them.

### **Unexpected Outcomes**

When I originally embarked in the recruiting of women warriors for this study, I was concerned that I would only get junior military women. To my surprise all the women that responded and agreed to be interviewed were of high rank either in the enlisted ranks or officer ranks. This was a very pleasant surprise, but moreover it posed the question why would these high ranking women be willing to share their experiences? Usually higher ranking individuals are very guarded with their information. I thank my sisters in arms for their confidence and trust in my study.

Another issue that emerged that surprised me was of the minimization of skills, ability and emotional strength that these women elicited. They all talked about being tenacious, emotionally strong and staying on the original mission of a career and education. It was very hard for them to compare themselves to civilian women. They went out of their way to fit in with civilian women. But in the end as Wilma stated she

has to “fake it.” On one hand they know they are now different after years of military indoctrination, but at the same time they want to fit in the civilian world.

What surprised me was Jeanne’s determination to retire from the Air Guard after numerous years of sexual harassment and sexist remarks. Not to mention the fact that it got in the way of her promotion to E-9. Jeanne showed unremarkable tolerance for the system and has been able to keep focused on her primary objective which was an education and retirement. Jeanne’s experiences support Yoder’s (1985) research that women in leadership positions have often been criticized by sexist remarks which question their leadership styles. Jean described this problem in her interview.

Krista was another woman warrior who made a dangerous choice of leaving the Army to return to school, get a commission and return to active duty as an officer. Even though I understand her motivation and her plan, it is always dangerous to second guess the military. What can be done today may not be the policy tomorrow. If this became the case Krista may not be offered the opportunity to return to active duty and with her intense love for the Army I believe this would be devastating for her. Krista’s surprising move seems to support Bem and Lewis’s (1975) research supporting the thought that androgynous individuals are very gender flexible and are able to adapt to different situations. Krista demonstrates her flexibility by leaving the Army, continue her studies and return as an officer.

Most surprising to me was Jackie, who is in the Navy Reserves. She seemed very satisfied with her job and rank. Even though she had hoped to advance in rank and had not done so, she did not express her dissatisfaction like some of the other women did or

the way I would have. Jackie seemed to be very complacent in her military life and civilian life. She is a hard worker and dedicated to travelling a long distance to her job.

I was not surprised by Alice, she exuded a sense of pride and patriotism, strength and leadership. I understood this better when she share her families background of West Point with me. With such a strong military background I was surprised at some of the stressful times she endured in Korea with her leadership. But true to form she stuck in there and reevaluated her military career, and love for her country and decided to join the Army Reserves. Alice's experiences and ultimate dissatisfaction with the Army, supports Canfield's (2005) research, which demonstrated that premature attrition of women was 30% higher than men and in Alice's case it was due to poor leadership.

### **Expected Outcomes**

I was not surprised with Cassandra's interview because I had already spoken to her about my study. During that time she had shared some very angry memories about her Navy career. She could not wait to get out, and in the process she had used some profanity to express her dissatisfaction with the Navy. When I finally did get a chance to interview her, she did not add the profanity to her dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, she was still ready to get out.

I was not surprised by Alice, she exuded a sense of pride and patriotism, strength and leadership. I understood this better when she share her families background of West Point with me. With such a strong military background I was surprised at some of the stressful times she endured in Korea with her leadership. But true to form she stuck in there and reevaluated her military career, and love for her country and decided to join the Army Reserves.

Amijah was a product of the military having been born in Germany and her father stationed overseas all her life. She shared some unfavorable experiences but seemed to see them as a natural consequence of being in the military. Amijah dealt with her dissatisfaction by choosing to be around more positive people and “through” herself into her job. She is a hard worker with high ethics and sometimes to a fault because she expects that from everyone in her department. This behavior is expected from warriors that come from career military families. She joined the Air Force and now must the best of it.

Carolyn was not surprising. She is a very high ranking woman, well-educated with a Ph.D. and with natural leadership abilities. She seems to have “broken” the code to a successful military career, and has dedicated herself to mentoring young airmen. Coming into the military at the age of 17 may have helped Carolyn choose her career path as well as well as creating an environment where she has excelled.

Janora was in the middle of a painful relationship issue. I had known that she was sad and had been crying at work. Once we started the interview and she began to share some of her experiences her entire affect changed. She became focused on her stories and her sadness seemed to go away. The only time she reacted was when the noon alarm went off and she said it reminded her of “the incoming” alarms down range. However, even that reaction was just a matter of fact. At the end up the interview she hugged me and thanked me for interviewing her and making her feel better. This type of “mission oriented” behavior was not surprising to me. I have seen this behavior in the past from other women warriors as well as myself.

The women who described their experiences down range or in a war zone, all seemed to describe what they saw and experienced without much affect, rather more like story telling. I was surprised by their ability to just report their experiences since I was scared by some of their experiences down range or in any other dangerous zone. In some instances some of the women laughed as they told stories of almost dying, but I saw that as their own defense mechanism.

In summary, I was not surprised that that most of the women minimized their experiences and capabilities as women warriors. I also found it interesting that the women that had husbands or significant others, did not speak about them except when I asked if they were married they answered with “yes” or “no.” Those that were married never spoke about their husbands and what they did, or about being a dual military family. They also did not speak about their children beyond just telling me they had some. The lack of discussion about their family members may be due to again the focused being on the goal or “mission” of the interview about their experiences. There is a military saying that “if they wanted you to have a family, they would have issued you one.” In the military the mission comes first and often the family second. Overall, these interviews were longer than I had expected, but well worth it.

### **Implications for Civilian Society**

This study would be an excellent introduction for counselors and helping professional that are working and will work with service member, family members and veterans. We see in the results of this study that these women warriors have become defined by their profession. However, they have not lost or given up their gender identity. Women who are strong and tenacious such as the women in this study, can often be miss



understood as aloof, disconnected, aggressive and pushy. However, this study shows the strength, tenaciousness, assertiveness, leadership and focus of true warriors. These women are warriors on all fronts, at home and at war.

### **Implications for Military**

An implication for the military is would be to further research ways to reduce woman warrior's attrition and improve their military satisfaction. The military needs to look at the special needs of women warriors compared to males such as motherhood and marriage. Where males are also fathers and husbands, their primary jobs is the military. This creates a conflict in women warriors if they are a dual military family or just a very dedicated warrior.

Further military studies should focus on understanding the experiences of women warriors as they climb the ranks. Better studies on the effects of dual military warriors on their children especially during deployment. Ongoing mentorship programs would be an asset to the emotional and military development of woman warriors especially those that join at an early age. Mentoring would bring together women warriors and give them a sense of universality and sisterhood.

Furthermore, the military needs to have trained counselors who understand the specific needs of women warriors and their families. In a comparison of my results to my conceptual framework, the military needs to embark on research that identifies the major reasons for attrition of women warriors and possible programs to reduce such attrition.

### **Limitations**

This study was conducted to understand the uncommon experiences of women warriors in the United States Military. As a qualitative study, the results are not intended

to be generalized to all women warriors regardless of country of origin. This study interviewed nine women warriors from the United States military. They women were from the Active Army and Reserves, Active Navy and Reserves, Air Guard, Air Force and Marine Corp. Their ranks and pay grades were from Sergeant (E-5) to Master Sergeant and Senior Master Sergeant (Air Force) (E-8), Major (O-4) and colonel (O-6).

First, the nine women represented the Non Commissioned Officers and higher ranking officers. All the women had been in the service for a minimum of 11 years, none were in their first few years of the military. Having a sample of all grades and time in service would increase the chance of transferability.

Second, the women were interviewed either in person or by phone. The phone interviews were not as effective since I could not see their faces or pick up on their non-verbal reactions. Another issue was that many of the interviews were from overseas and the time difference made it very difficult. In future studies it would be more beneficial to interview the women in person in order to observe non-verbal communication.

Third, the lack of triangulation of data was not possible due to not having available the women's military records, corroboration from other women without creating a confidentiality issue. Opportunity for persistence observation and prolonged engagement was not available due to time limitations, geographic limitations and the design of the study. Fourth, some of the categories I uncovered, such as military stressors, military relationships, money, education, negative military issues, and others, represent systemic issues and could affect either gender.

This study supports the earlier studies regarding the needs and unknown needs of women warriors and veterans. This study supports the need for research of women

warriors as well as special support programs and training of counselors and helping professionals. With the United States Military being one of the largest special populations, and women warriors making up 15% of that population, it is imperative that appropriate training becomes available for counselors, educators and other helping professionals.

### **Conclusions**

This study interviewed nine women warriors from the United States military. Only one of the nine women decided to leave the service because of negative military issues. The rest of the women that were interviewed have stayed in the service even though they have also experienced different form of negative military issues. From the women's account of their experiences, they all experience some military stressors but internalized them and processed them differently. All the women showed adaptability and tenacity which may be the reason for their success in the military.

As revealed in my conceptual framework, the women who came went into the service with a military family background, educational needs and reasons of patriotism seemed to adapt better. The women warriors who came from a military family background seemed to be the most adaptive, resilient and tenacious. Most likely, the military family members are advising and supportive of the women's career choices.

The woman warrior that is leaving the Navy is very frustrated and has been frustrated during her entire career. Because she did not have support early on she was not able to adapt to negative military stressors. At the conclusion of the interview this woman warrior made it clear that she wished things could have been different for her in the Navy. All the women warriors that were interview showed a strong sense of patriotism

and love for the military. Even though some of them did not have a negative free experience in the military, they were willing to adapt and make the best of their career.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

It is recommended that future research consider interviewing in the field environment. This would mean that the study would have to extend to overseas and possibly in military installations. I further suggest that all interviews be conducted in person and not limit the length of the interview. Further, the researchers should try to get a more dispersed sample of ranks as well as veterans from each conflict.

Interviews in the field environment would give the researcher a better understanding of the daily experiences of the women warriors. Researchers may pick up on issues that are affecting women warriors that may not have been obvious to the women. Having the researcher take part in their daily lives may improve understanding and the opportunity for triangulation. Interviewing in person rather than by phone, would give the researcher a greater opportunity to hear and observe verbal and non-verbal language. In my study, the women I interviewed face to face showed a large amount of non-verbal communication. Ideally, the interviews would be prolonged engagement past one and one half hour in order to hear other experiences that may arise from the ongoing interview process.

Future research needs to consider studying women warriors across the wars in order to document experiences and issues that may affect women warriors regardless of their era of participation. A diverse sample of women warriors beginning from recruits out of basic training to “lifers,” would give a more diverse sample of experiences, and their needs.

Another area for future search would include as study of woman warriors success after leaving the military. The military is a great training and educational system that often does not allow for transferability of military specialties to the civilian world. Military occupations such as Tank Driver, Ammunition Specialist, Interrogator and other specialties that are often specifically critical to the military may not be very useful in civilian life. Besides the occupational training, women warriors would be leaving with a new sense of gender flexibility that is often not understood by many civilians as well as academia. This new gender flexibility was obviously necessary because adaptive behaviors may create criticism from civilians for violating gender roles (Yoder, 1985). Lastly, a longitudinal study of women warriors' negative military stressor may serve very helpful in order to create appropriate support programs for women warriors and help decrease attrition due to military stressors.

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## Appendices

**Appendix A: Recruiting Letter for Study****Attention****Women Warriors**

**I am conducting a research study and I need you!!  
I am looking for women warriors from all branches of the U.S. military  
between the ages of 18 and 55.**

**To be interviewed about their experiences while serving  
in the United States Military.**

**If you are not a woman warrior, but know someone  
who is, please pass this along.**

**All information will be kept confidential.**

**Benefits of participation include furthering the understanding of the  
experiences of women warriors in the United States Military.**

**Note: This research is being conducted through The University of  
South Florida and has been approved through the Institutional review  
Board (IRB) #00002236.**

**Contact**

**Carmen T. Stein**

**Researcher**

**csteinmc@mail.usf.edu**

**[carmenlmhc@aol.com](mailto:carmenlmhc@aol.com)**

**Appendix B: Selection Criteria for Study**

1. The participant must be a woman warrior serving or having served in the U.S. Military from 1979 – present.
2. The participant must be willing to discuss her experiences as a woman warrior with the researcher while her experiences are being recorded and later transcribed.
3. Women warriors must be between the ages of 18 and 55 years of age.
3. The participant must be willing to be contacted at a later date for member checks.

### **Appendix C: Letter to Participants**

Dear participant,

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of woman warriors who are serving or have served in the United States military. In exploring these experiences, this researcher hopes to contribute to the existing literature by providing implications for a better understanding of the experiences and needs of women warriors.

Please note that all participants have the right to decline participation in this study at any point during the investigation. There are no known risks or benefits to participants who choose to take part in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study please contact Carmen T. Stein at (813) 545-2320 or carmenlmhc@aol.com. Your participation in this research is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Carmen T. Stein-McCormick



## **Appendix D: Informed Consent to Participate in Research**

### Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

IRB Study # 00002236

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

There are no anticipated risks, inconveniences or discomfort in this study.

Please tell the study staff if you are taking part in another research study.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called:

**Sisters in Arms: Case Study of the Experiences of Women Warriors in the United States Military**

The person who is in charge of this research study is Carmen T. Stein-McCormick. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Herbert Exum, Ph.D.

The research will be conducted by phone or in person as mutually agreed by the participant and investigator.

#### Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to: The purpose of this case study is to explore the experiences of women warriors who serve or have served in the United States Military from a Standpoint Feminist perspective (Harding, 2004). I will investigate the military experiences that the women have uncounted or encounter some of which may lead to premature departure from the military or equity/success. This study is being conducted by Carmen T. Stein-McCormick for partial fulfillment for a Ph.D.

#### Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to: Review the consent form and sign it or give me verbal consent to be audio recorded during the interview. You will then be interviewed by using 12 questions, 7 demographic and 5 about your military experiences. This interview can be by phone or in person depending on your location and availability. The interview will take from 45-60 minutes on a one time basis and will be audio recorded. I will have the interview transcribed and your name will be kept confidential by giving you a pseudo name of your choice or one chosen for you. Once the recording is transcribed, the digital recording will be erased immediately. Once the interview has been transcribed, I will email you the transcription for your approval. You will have 7 days to return it to me with changes or accept it as is.

#### Total Number of Participants

About 6-24 individuals will take part in this study at USF

#### Alternatives

You do not have to participate in this research study.

#### Benefits

The potential benefits of participating in this research study include:

You will add to the better understanding of the experiences of Woman Warriors in the United States Military.

#### Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

#### Compensation

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

#### Cost

There is no anticipated cost to you for participating in this study.

#### Privacy and Confidentiality

We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, and all other research staff.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.
- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research. This includes the Florida Department of Health, and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP).
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and its related staff, who have oversight responsibilities for this study, staff in the USF Office of Research and Innovation, USF Division of Research Integrity and Compliance, and other USF offices who oversee this research.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

#### Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

#### New information about the study

During the course of this study, we may find more information that could be important to you. This includes information that, once learned, might cause you to change your mind about being in the study. We will notify you as soon as possible if such information becomes available.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638

### Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study  
Subject verbally consented to the study:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Person Providing Consent Information

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, she understands:

- What the study is about;
- What procedures/interventions/investigational drugs or devices will be used;
- What the potential benefits might be; and
- What the known risks might be.

I can confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in the appropriate language.

Additionally, this subject reads well enough to understand this document or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her. This subject does not have a medical/psychological problem that would compromise comprehension and therefore makes it hard to understand what is being explained and can, therefore, give legally effective informed consent. This subject is not under any type of anesthesia or analgesic that may cloud their judgment or make it hard to understand what is being explained and, therefore, can be considered competent to give informed consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent / Research Authorization

### **Appendix E: Auditor Background Information**

I have been a Licensed Mental Counselor for the Past 18 years. (Florida License MH-0003156). I am a retired Naval Officer with 32 years of active Naval service. I am currently in Private Practice and have been for 15 years. I am a Military and Family Life Consultant, I travel and counsel military and their families at home and abroad. I am an adjunct Professor with the College of Education at the University of South Florida. I am a Certified Family Mediator through the Florida Supreme Court. I also serve as a Court Appointed Parenting Coordinator.

My knowledge of the Military is extensive as my knowledge of counseling military members and their families. I have no personal interest in the outcome of this research study.

This is my first experience as an auditor for a dissertation.

Sincerely,

Thomas F. McCormick, LMHC, NCC.

## Appendix F: Letter of Attestation

May 20, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

My instruction was to assume the responsibility of auditor for the dissertation of Carmen Stein-McCormick, doctoral candidate with the Department of Psychological Foundations, College of Education at the University of South Florida. My role as auditor was to ensure dependability, confirmability and credibility of the findings in this doctoral dissertation. Mrs. Stein-McCormick's study focused on the experiences of Women Warriors in the United States Military.

My role and responsibilities as auditor of this dissertation were: 1) To review and verify the data gathered from the research participants and 2) to attest to having done so.

The steps I followed in the process were as follows:

- Familiarized myself with the responsibilities of an auditor by meeting with Mrs. Stein-McCormick to discuss her expectations.
- Read the interviews of the 9 research participants
- Ensured confirmability by, examining analytical techniques utilized by the researcher and assessing for researcher bias.
- Ensured credibility by providing peer debriefing to the researcher

I was able to find and confirm as dependable the research findings of Mrs. Stein-McCormick.

Sincerely,

Thomas F. McCormick, LMHC, NCC

### **About the Author**

After completion of her military service, Carmen Stein-McCormick completed a Bachelor's degree in psychology at the University of Tampa. She then enrolled in the Master's program in Counselor Education at the University of South Florida, graduating with an M.A. in Counselor Education. After graduation she completed an internship at the Tampa Vet Center where she worked as a Readjustment Counselor with Vietnam veterans. Two years later, Carmen Stein-McCormick became licensed as a Mental Health Counselor in Florida, as well as certified as a Certified Counselor Mental health Counselor (CCMHC), and National Certified Counselor (NCC) through the national Board of Certified Counselors NBCC.

She has spent the last 20 years working in her private practice, The Stein Wellness Center, Inc. as a psychotherapist, and consultant. During these years she developed a preparatory course to help individuals who wanted to be licensed as Mental Health Counselors and taught the course nationally as well as overseas. Ms. Stein-McCormick continues to work in her private practice specializing in counseling the military service members, and their families. She is also a consultant with the Department of Defense where she travels to different military installations within the United States and overseas.

Ms. Stein-McCormick's daughter is a Major in the Texas Air Guard, and her husband is a retired naval officer. She hopes to continue working with military service

members and their families as well as developing programs to help improve the understanding of the needs of the military service members.