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“Beautifully Awful”—A Feminist Ethnography of U.S. Women Veterans’ Experiences with Transition from Military Service

By

Kiersten H. Downs

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Anthropology
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:

August 25, 2017

Keywords: Feminist Ethnography, Gender, Militarism, United States, Women Veterans

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Dedication

To my parents, Cornelia and Christopher Downs who have supported me in every way possible throughout the pursuit of my education. Without them, there would not have been an extraordinary cycling trip that took me across our country, ultimately leading me to discover a topic that later became the focus of this dissertation. For my partner, Thomas Martineau, whose persistence and strength accompanies me up every mountain. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to all of the women veterans I met during my fieldwork and those who spent hours meticulously filling out a survey in striking detail and talking to me on the phone. You have opened your hearts to me and trusted me with your stories. In turn, this led to the opening of mine. Together we will continue to make a difference.

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Acknowledgement

Mentorship played a significant part in the path that I have traveled. I met Dr. Antoinette Jackson at a time when I was trying to figure out who I was after I left military service. Dr. Jackson provided me mentorship and the space to pursue a topic near to my life. Additionally, she introduced me to Dr. Davis and Dr. Craven, the feminist anthropologists whose work on feminist activist ethnography helped shape me into the scholar I am today. I am grateful to the members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Daniel Lende, Dr. Tara Deubel, Dr. Lynda Davis, and Dr. Lawrence Schonfeld. Their critical insight and guidance, along with their consistent encouragement guided me through the steps required for project completion. I am appreciative for the guidance and support of (Ret) Lt. General Marty Steele. Your empathy, compassion, and willingness to listen to people and their stories have helped to create positive change at the individual, community, and policy levels. I would like to thank Blake Barrett, MSPH for his expert knowledge and assistance with analyzing data from the PCL-C included in this study. Additionally, I would like to thank the VHA Office of Rural Health for their help with the GIS mapping of the online survey respondents. Lastly, I would like to thank my team at the Center of Innovation on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (CINDRR) with the Department of Veterans Affairs for their encouragement and support.

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Abstract

As issues of gender inequality in the military are addressed, women will continue to fill jobs traditionally occupied by men, and ultimately take on a greater percentage of leadership responsibility. For these reasons, women will remain the fastest growing population within our active duty forces. An increased need for research, advocacy, and resources for programs and services designed specifically for women veterans is necessary in order to prepare for an upsurge in the numbers of women who will be seeking services in the years to come. This research utilized a feminist ethnographic approach for data collection and analysis. Data was collected using mixed methods consisting of an online survey (n=915), telephone interviews with women veterans and community reintegration specialists (n=31), and participant observation at veteran focused events. This study provides an in depth understanding of US women veterans' experiences both in the military and after, emphasizing the different gendered experiences of participants. Among the many findings, I conclude that women veterans negotiated and performed gender in a way that worked for them within the professional militarized environments that they were a part of. However, upon leaving the military, many experience challenges associated with having to renegotiate gender, often times in civilian workplace settings where traditional aspects of masculinity and femininity are still upheld as societal norms. This research is meant to contribute to a growing body of literature on veteran transition and help fill the existing gap in anthropology of the military on the intersections of gender, gendered role-making, and military service. It will be of interest to lawmakers, policy experts, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and community stakeholders tasked with identifying the short-term and

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long-term challenges affecting women veterans as they enter civilian life after service, and how to appropriately tailor programs and services to meet the needs of the population.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I have a love-hate relationship with the US military. Coming from a veteran and an anthropologist this might seem odd. However, there is a disciplinary expectation for me to look critically at the institution. This study is about women veterans and their experiences with transition from military service. Each of the stories highlighted in this discussion represents a different aspect of what I consider a gendered experience. The stories are interconnected, wrought with confusion, contradictions, and challenges that stem from years of service in an institution where masculinity and a reliance on heteronormativity[1] are what bring order to its ranks. As noted by MacLeish (2015), the military institution fosters a sense of gender rigidity that can wreak havoc on the people living within it. This research furthers this assessment by analyzing the lasting impact the institutional culture may have on the service member's life after their enlistment has ended. This study examines gendered performances and the responses women have to conditions they face in the military and the implications of these responses as they transition from military service. Providing adequate programs and services to meet the needs of United States military veterans is of grave concern. Often overlooked is the growing population of women veterans.

I am still steeped in a military way of thinking and doing things that was developed through a process of enculturation after volunteering over eight years of my life to military

[1] Heteronormativity is the assumption that society should be structured around heterosexual relationships (Craven and Davis 2015, 18). Those who argue for heteronormative ideals, believe that people fall into the distinct categories of man and woman and that these categories come with natural roles in life. The term has roots in anthropologist Gayle Rubin's "sex/gender system" and Adrienne Rich's conceptualization of compulsory heterosexuality (1980).

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service. The rituals, the relationships, the tears I shed from frustration or homesickness, the inequities I observed and experienced are all a part of me. I have been deeply engrained with a military perspective and continue to view life through this lens. This dissertation places military culture, experiences of women who served in the military, and my own military experiences in critical relief and sits at the intersection of gendered role making, violence and militarization, and the process of transitioning to civilian life after service. Primary research questions explore how military culture is perceived by women veterans, what their understandings of femininity and masculinity are based on their own experiences and what transitional challenges they face after military service. The role of community stakeholders in facilitating community reintegration for women veterans is explored along with how military masculinity impacts women veterans' experiences as they transition out of service.

I am a feminist scholar and recognizing, admitting, and embracing the existence of personal bias is a necessary part of my research. According to Wylie, "doing (social) science as a feminist is a matter of insisting that we be accountable for the values and interests that shape not just our choice of research questions but also the whole range of decisions and conventions that constitute our research practice" (Wylie 2007:569). Feminist researchers have a mutual understanding that "the personal is political" and that our past experiences, values, and personal predispositions inform feminist research. Challenging dominant accounts and developing new questions for research that are attune to power dynamics that structure women's lives are at the forefront of feminist beliefs. Continually interrogating our positionality[2] and utilizing reflexivity[3]

[2] Positionality refers to how one is situated in relation to participants in their research. The feminist researcher interrogates their positionality by identifying who they are and what their relationship is to the project or the community they are working in (Craven and Davis 2015, 65).
[3] Reflexivity simply implies, looking back on one's actions throughout the research process (Craven and Davis 2015).

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as a methodological tool are ways that feminist researchers address power and knowledge "as a self-critical action whereby the researcher finds that the world is mediated by the self—what can be known can only be known through oneself, ones lived experiences, and one's biography" (Hesse-Bibir and Piatellie 2007:496). Through this "self-critical action", reflexivity has assisted me with exploring the impact that my own positionality has on this chosen area of theoretical inquiry. The introduction I feel is an appropriate place to discuss not just my position but also my motivations for choosing to engage in research with a population that I am a part of.

I joined the US Air Force at 18 years of age, a month after graduating high school and just months prior to September 11, 2001. I served for over eight years. My service included loading bombs and troubleshooting the weapon systems in B-1 Lancer aircrafts while on active duty. Additionally, I carried out administrative tasks for a fighter jet squadron while in the Air National Guard. I was deployed three times overseas in support of Operation Iraqi freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Although I was often times left feeling like an outsider as one of the few women among a sea of men, I witnessed a level of human connection happen between those I served with that is very different to what I have observed in my post military life.

The process of "returning" home is often referred to as "reintegration" or "transitioning". According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, "reintegration" is the complex and individual process of "resuming age, gender, and culturally appropriate roles in the family, community and workplace" (VHA 2010). It is widely cited that some veterans have a difficult time with re-entry after service. Among post-9/11 veterans who served in combat, 76% say their military experience helped them get ahead, yet half (51%) say they had some difficulty readjusting to civilian life. Fully half (49%) say they have likely suffered from post-traumatic stress. And many question whether the government has done all it should to support them. Still, they express a

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deep sense of pride in their service and an increased appreciation for life (Pew Research 2011:49). In the same research study, veterans were asked about the particulars of negative experiences they have had since leaving the military. The study results indicate additional differences between combat and non-combat veterans. According to the Pew Research study, nearly six-in-ten post-9/11 combat veterans (57%) say that since being discharged from the military, they have experienced frequent incidents of irritability or outbursts of anger. By contrast, only 31% of noncombat veterans say the same. Nearly as many combat veterans (55%) say they have experienced strains in family relations. This compares with 38% of noncombat veterans. Nearly four-in-ten combat veterans (37%) say that they have gone through periods when they felt as if they didn't care about anything. Only 24% of noncombat veteran's report feeling this way since leaving the military (Pew Research 2011: 50-51). After leaving the military some people get caught between self and service, a state of liminality when the veteran is trying to figure out their post military identity and new mission.

Providing adequate programs and services to meet the needs of United States military veterans is of grave concern. Often overlooked is the growing population of women veterans. Women veterans appear to be lacking appropriate services related to health care, employment, finance, housing, social issues and counseling for sexual assault during military service. The programmatic deficiencies are due to a lack of focus on the differing needs of women in a primarily male environment as men make up roughly 90 percent of the military veteran population (U.S. DAV 2011). According to a recent report published by Disabled American Veterans (DAV) on women veterans, "women constitute approximately 20 percent of new recruits, 14.5 percent of the 1.4 million active duty component and 18 percent of the 850,000-reserve component. Almost 280,000 women have served Post 9/11 in Afghanistan and Iraq"

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(DAV 2014:1). The number of women veterans is expected to grow to roughly 11 percent of the veteran population by 2020 (DAV 2014).

In all branches of service, women continue to fulfill roles that used to be primarily assigned to men. As issues of gender inequality in the military are addressed, women will continue to fill jobs traditionally occupied by men, and ultimately take on a greater percentage of leadership responsibility. For these reasons, women will continue to be the fastest growing population within our active duty forces. An increased need for research, advocacy, and resources for programs and services designed specifically for women veterans is necessary in order to prepare for an upsurge in the numbers of women who will be seeking services in the years to come. This mixed methods study is intended to address the needs of the growing population of women veterans by providing an in depth understanding of women veterans and their re-entry experiences using a feminist ethnographic approach to research design and analysis. An emphasis on the different gendered experiences of women with regards to their re-entry experiences needs to be made a priority in order to develop programs and services that are best suited to assist the population.

Literature on military masculinity has primarily focused on the experiences of men. Yet since it infringes upon every aspect of a woman's military service and identity, exploring the influence of military masculinity on women during and after service is worthy of further exploration. Further study will help to explain related challenges to transition faced by women veterans and collect their personal narratives so that their experiences are better understood, acknowledged, and respected as a part of the historical record. When men transition out of military service, their hyper-masculine traits are widely accepted and glorified by American society. Women veterans who perform gender in a way that may be perceived as more masculine

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in comparison to societal norms of femininity are likely to be marginalized upon re-entry and may face greater re-entry challenges. These challenges will be discussed at length during analysis. Ironically, these masculine traits and behaviors were often times adopted during military service in an effort for one to be accepted and fit in as "one of the guys". The challenge with "identity" that may result when women leave the military has been under investigated.

This notion of thinking, feeling, and wanting to be "one of the guys" will be explored further in the context of women veterans and their experiences with military service and transition from military service. However, given this is the introduction, it is important to note that women in militarized settings do not just "become one of the guys". As noted by Mendez (2013), women in militarized organizations "go through a nuanced process in which their traditional gender identities are juxtaposed with the militaristic requirements of their particular organizations" (3). Women veteran's experiences, roles, and expectations are embedded in specific patriarchal and militaristic demands within the context of American culture and society. It is hypothesized that women service members perform gender in ways that satisfy or attempt to satisfy the requirements of the military indoctrination process, which is deeply rooted in the perpetuation of militarized masculinities and femininities. I postulate that some individuals may experience difficulties after leaving military service due to the process of having to re-negotiate their "femaleness" in ways that meet the cultural norms of their post military environments, which often uphold traditional gender norms as a standard of conduct. The much different than how they adapted their "femaleness" during military service. In other words, the masculine standards and expectations that women adapted to while they were in the military, typically are not the same standards and expectations that they will face upon transition from service.

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Throughout this dissertation, I will highlight how women are militarized[4] through their participation in the US armed forces, and as stated by Cynthia Enloe (2000), "are militarized in different ways and to fulfill different militarizing functions" (295). This will be shown in an analysis of the experiences of women who served in enlisted and officer capacities, participated in different branches and eras of service, military career fields, who may or may not have been deployed, and are classified as combat and non-combat veterans. I focused on a method of inclusion versus exclusion in my recruitment methodology due to what I learned prior to the launch of recruitment for the study. Through participant observation at veteran focused events and casual conversation with women veterans who do not fall within the prescribed "post 9-11 era", I realized that there was an opportunity to include an intergenerational analysis among women veterans. Most research on US women veterans is clinical in nature and focuses on the newest generation of veterans, Post 9/11 veterans, but leaves out the experiences of so many others who served and have never had the opportunity to share their stories. The similarities across space and time among women who served in various capacities and timeframes will be highlighted, as well as the differences observed in their individualized experiences.

I argue in the context of the US military, that gender is militarized during service. The presence and militarization of women in any armed group disrupts traditional gender roles and redefines gender roles, but "not necessarily in a way that successfully overturns gendered hierarchies" (Mendez 2013: 3). By militarized gender, I mean that both masculinities and femininities are hyper-masculinized through a military indoctrination process (i.e. ROTC, basic training or boot camp, follow on trainings during service, etc.) meant to redefine behaviors and

[4] The word 'militarized' is used here to describe the way that military training changes the service member in ways that are conducive to military service. Cynthia Enloe (2000) and other scholars use the word "militarized masculinities" to describe the hyper masculine traits, attitudes and behaviors that are associated with military service and "soldiering".

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attitudes traditionally associated with "female" (Mendez 2013). In order to explore these complexities and not essentialize or reduce women's experiences in the armed services to simplified dichotomies, I build on of the anthropological work of Sherry Ortner (1996, 2006) and Màximo Bàdaro (2015) who show that female agency, or the capacity for an individual to act, cannot be understood without taking into account "the individual projects, desires, and experiences that women express and achieve through various power games in which they are involved" (Bàdero 2015, 89). It is these 'power games' that women are involved in that produces the subordination of women in a specific setting, yet enhance individual projects or produces a liberating effect when viewed in another sphere of influence or power such as the family or the community (Bàdero 2015, Ortner 2006). Little work has been done to show the continued impact of gendered performances shaped in militarized settings. I argue that a powerful female autonomy can result for women service members after they leave the military. This female autonomy is motivated by the various power games, which they were involved in during service, thus resulting in the redefining of femininity. This is an area that this research hopes to contribute to.

When analyzing transition and reintegration challenges through the lens of militarized gender, it may initially come across as a negative force in veteran's lives. During data collection, I wanted to better understand women veteran's own thoughts and feelings about military culture, how they define military masculinity, how they embodied it during their military service if at all and if they felt it contributed to transitional challenges. The data show the subjective experiences and military specific behaviors shared by participants. Often times, they comprehended these character traits and behaviors as personal character strengths, not flaws. Through the struggles of

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transition, for many of the participants, their personal agency is recognized and reaffirmed, thus resulting in a process of redefining femininity during their post military transition experiences.

Women service members face specific challenges during military service and after leaving military service while reintegrating into their civilian communities. Many of the short and long-term challenges women face during reintegration are gender specific, and they are at risk of domestic violence, reproductive health complications, and social stigma (Mendez 2012). Academic literature on war and conflict in anthropology has focused primarily on women who are civilians thus resulting in dominant representations of women in war primarily as victims. However, the majority of social processes associated with the effects of war, including sexual violence and other forms of gendered maltreatment during service, affect women both as civilians and as participants within the war making effort. Women service members are both victims and victimizers who embody a military masculinity in a similar manner as their male counterparts (Mendez 2012). The primary focus in the literature on war and conflict in terms of women (women as victims) ignores the experiences of women who are active participants in state run violence such as the activated U.S. military. The experiences and identity of women service members cannot be reduced to single instances of victimization and negative empowerment (Mendez 2012). The main characteristic of women's experiences and women veterans' identity as will be shown in the results of this study is ambiguity. The participants are victims and victimizers, and embody both traditionally masculine and feminine characteristics that often times stay with them long after their military service has been created. Some of these militarized characteristics are thought of as strengths in some settings, yet stigmatizing in other circumstances.

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This research is meant to contribute to a growing body of literature on veteran transition and help fill the existing gap in anthropology of the military on the intersections of gender, gendered role-making, and military service. It will be of interest to lawmakers, policy experts, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and community stakeholders tasked with identifying the short-term and long-term challenges affecting women veterans as they leave the military and enter civilian life after service, and how to appropriately tailor programs and services to meet the needs of the population. Research Questions include: 1) what are women veterans' perceptions of masculine and feminine gender roles within military culture? 2) How did women perform gender during military service? 3) What are women veteran's experiences with transition to civilian life after military service? 4) How does military culture influence transition after service for women veterans? 5) How do community reintegration specialists understand transition to civilian life and the challenges faced by women veterans? And 6) Do changed performances[5] of gender within military culture contribute to post-military challenges?

Organization of the Dissertation

Following this introduction, chapter two provides a review of literature situating this study within anthropology of the military. It will highlight the importance of feminist approaches and examine the cross-cultural presence of women in the military. Additionally, this chapter addresses the historical relationship between women and the US military and the Department of

[5] To "perform gender" is a phrase that has its roots in feminist theory. More specifically, this term draws from Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Butler understands sex and gender to be socially constructed acts. Butler holds that gender is really "performative" in that it is not "a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is…instituted…through stylized repetition of [habitual] acts" (Butler 1999, 179). For instance, through wearing certain gender-coded clothing, walking and sitting in certain gender-coded ways, stylizing one's hair in gender–coded manner and so on, people "perform" gender. Gender is not something one is, it is something one does: it is a sequence of acts, a doing rather than a being.

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Veterans Affairs taking into account the major transformations that have led to most recent events of the opening up of all combat positions. The theoretical framework is presented, drawing primarily from the works of Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity and Cynthia Enloe's (2001, 2004) theory of militarized masculinity. I explore the lasting impact that "militarized gender performance" as theorized by Mendez (2013) has on the transition experiences from the military for servicewomen. Lastly, I build on the work of Sherry Ortner (1996, 2000) who illustrates that female agency cannot be understood without taking into account the different 'power games' in which they are involved (Bàdero 2014: 89).

Chapter three outlines the quantitative and qualitative methodology employed in the study specifically in relation to feminist ethnographic work. The specific research questions are provided and I explain their operationalization for the data collection process. I discuss the mixed methods used for data collection including ethnographic interviews and an anonymous online survey questionnaire. This chapter also includes reflections on my positionality in the field as a member of the population that I am researching. I discuss my past experience in working with the population and issues of building rapport, and also highlight the challenges of accessing this particular population. Additionally, I describe the data analysis process and the ethical considerations that guided my research during the IRB approval, data collection, analysis, and writing stages.

Chapter four presents results of the quantitative data derived from the online survey. Descriptive statistics of the sample population are presented along with the results and analysis of the standardized measure called the Post Traumatic Stress Scale Civilian version (PCL-C). Descriptive statistics derived from the quantitative results are used to provide a description of the study population in order to supplement the qualitative data.

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Chapters five and six present the discussion and analysis of the qualitative findings for the study based on an account of US women veterans who were interviewed for this dissertation. These chapters incorporate a significant amount of testimony collected during my fieldwork with women veterans over the past year. The testimonies are complemented with insights and information from existing literature on the historical experiences of women veterans. I draw from the theoretical perspectives of militarized masculinity and militarized gender performativity to shape my analysis.

Chapter seven considers limitations to the current study, applied implications, and the role of anthropologists in providing best services for women veterans. Lastly, I provide concluding remarks from my own point of view as a woman veteran.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This ethnographic study on women veterans and their experiences with transition from service is situated within the sub discipline of Feminist Anthropology and will add to an existing body of literature on Anthropology of the Military. Holding a feminist perspective means examining the roles that marginalized people have in society. Feminist researchers explore the ways that inequalities are expressed in people's lives and the ways that people are stratified in society in terms of race, class, gender, ability or other categories of difference (Craven and Davis 2015). In the following paragraphs I provide an overview of feminist research and articulate what it means to do social science as a feminist and as a feminist anthropologist. The intent of this conversation is to illustrate how a feminist ethnographic approach to research design and analysis can contribute to military veteran centered research. Additionally, within this literature review, a background on anthropology of the military will be provided. Given the complexity of civil-military relations and veteran reintegration, a brief historical introduction will discuss major transformations in American militarism that have changed the face of civil-military relations over time. The result of these changes correlates with contemporary reintegration challenges such as an increasing divide of misunderstanding that is widely cited to exist between service members and civilians, thus making community reintegration more difficult for those exiting out of the military institution. I will briefly discuss veteran reintegration and potential reintegration challenges that are well documented in the literature and end with the theoretical framework that guides this study.

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Feminist Research

Since this research falls under feminist anthropological research and employs feminist ethnographic methods in its approach, a short discussion on the contributions of feminist research will help frame the dissertation. The path towards feminist scholarship is never clearly planned out. The label of feminist scholar is not just given because of one's choice of higher education coursework; it is embodied over time by means of a personal transformation encompassing the individual's personal experiences. To quote Ava-Gail Gardener (2006),

> To be a feminist, one has first to become one. For many feminists, this involves the experience of profound personal transformation, an experience that goes far beyond that sphere of human activity we regard ordinarily as 'political'. This transforming experience is complex and multi-faceted. In the course of undergoing this transformation…the feminist changes her behavior. These changes in behavior go hand in hand with changes in consciousness: to become a feminist is to develop radically altered consciousness of oneself, or others, and or 'social reality' (202).

In a recent article published in the Chronicle for Higher Education, feminism, according to Cobble, Gordon, and Henry (2014) "may be the social cause least understood by scholars". However, there is no denying that feminist scholarship "has been a major source of critique, theoretical intervention, and analytical insight for disciplinary and trans-disciplinary knowledge's" (Harrison 2013: ix). Articulating the important contributions of feminist scholarship to the discipline of anthropology and making a case as to why a feminist ethnographic approach is significant with regards to military veteran centered research, are major objectives for this project.

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What Does It Mean to Conduct Social Science Research as a Feminist?

Regardless of specialization, feminist inquiry requires a commitment to "interrogating accepted beliefs, challenging shared assumptions, and reframing research questions" (Hawkesworth 2007:47). Initially, feminists questioned how they could conduct better, more inclusive research in order to "counteract the sexist, androcentric erasure and bias in conventional research" (Wylie 2007:567). Throughout discussion in the 1980's and early 1990's, feminist scholars questioned the purpose of feminist research by debating the "feminist question in science" that was proposed by Sandra Harding in her 1986 book appropriately labeled, *The Science Question in Feminism*. In brief, Harding argued that up until this point in time, science served "primarily regressive social tendencies" by defining research problems and constructing knowledge by ways that were "not only sexist, but also racist, classist, and culturally coercive" (Harding 1986:9-10).

Original questions articulated in Harding's book about the nature and direction of feminist research were reframed by Longino (1987) who urged, "we should ask not what it means to build or to do 'feminist science' but what is involved in 'doing science as a feminist'" (Wylie 2007:568). Wylie (2007) added that although we should be prepared to recognize what it means to 'do feminist research'; we have to respect that feminist "practice will be as diverse as what it means to be a feminist and as situationally specific as the fields in which feminists have undertaken to 'do science'" (568). According to Wylie, "doing (social) science as a feminist is a matter of insisting that we be accountable for the values and interests that shape not just our choice of research questions but also the whole range of decisions and conventions that constitute our research practice" (Wylie 2007:569). Feminist researchers have a mutual understanding that "the personal is political" and that our past experiences, values, and personal

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predispositions inform feminist research. Challenging dominant accounts and developing new questions for research that are attune to power dynamics that structure women's lives are at the forefront of Feminist beliefs.

Feminist critiques of objectivity suggest that what is regarded as objective or universal often "veils the privileges of patriarchal organizations and male speakers" (Hesse-Bibir and Piatelli 2007:426). When discussing feminist critiques of objectivity, Hesse-Bibir and Piatelli assert:

> A feminist epistemology questions the proposition that the social world is one fixed reality that is external to individual consciousness and suggests that it is socially constructed, consisting of multiple perspectives and realities. To propose that an objective reality exists is to deny that reality is humanly and socially constructed within a historical context. It also denies the importance of human subjectivity and consciousness as part of knowledge creation (Hesse-Bibir and Piatelli 2007:497).

In order to challenge notions of objectivity, universality, or neutrality, feminist researchers often combine different objective approaches with experiential approaches in order to get a more holistic picture of the lived experiences of research participants.

Questions regarding power and knowledge have been a matter of concern for social scientists for a long time. Feminist researchers believe that reflexivity as a methodological tool can be used to address power and knowledge "as a self-critical action whereby the researcher finds that the world is mediated by the self—what can be known can only be known through oneself, ones lived experiences, and one's biography" (Hesse-Bibir and Piatellie 2007:496). Through this "self-critical action", reflexivity can assist researchers by exploring the impact that

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their own positionality has on the chosen area of theoretical inquiry.

A reflexive methodology challenges the status quo of scientific inquiry where objectivity lays at the foundation of positivism. One of the biggest critiques of positivist methods is that a common result of this kind of scientific inquiry is found in unequal power relations between the researcher and the participants they study (Harding 1991, 1993; Harstock 1998; Reinharz 1992; Smith 1987). Sandra Harding (1986) alluded to "a stronger science" as one that includes an emphasis on reflexivity. Pierre Bourdieu even acknowledged that there are objects of knowledge to be understood by the sociologist, but the sociologist is also an active participant in the objects and fields of knowledge, which scholars have come to understand as the patterns of habitus (Hesse-Bibir and Piatelli 2007). Reflecting on the importance of Bourdieu's work to feminist notions of reflexivity, Hesse-Bibir and Piatelli (2007) state "if we accept with Bourdieu that the social world of interaction and meanings are directly linked to the cognitive knowing of this world, then through the symbolic world of language and representation the known world is dominated, subordinated, and controlled" (497). In order to be a critical theorist, the researcher, according to Bourdieu must examine "one's relation to the research object" (Hess-Bibir and Piatelli: 497).

Harding (1993) argues that the scientific model of objectivity needs to be replaced with "strong objectivity". This means that by not removing oneself from the research process, by acknowledging our situated location, and being reflexive about our own positionality, it is then that we will move to a "stronger science" (Hesse-Bibir 2007). The point that the researcher must be reflexive and examine themselves and their relation to their research, along all stages of the research process, has become a crucial part of what is considered to be "a feminist science".

Substantial consideration has been dedicated to the question of how feminist methods are

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distinct from other 'ways of knowing'. To sum up this section, the main difference between feminist methodologies and more positivist approaches to scientific inquiry is the acceptance by feminists that there will always be some kind of personal political element affecting the research process. Feminist researchers draw from the personal, lived experience of the research participants, which includes analysis of the personal, lived experience of the researcher. Additionally, Feminist researchers are highly critical of positivist notions of objectivity in truth seeking, and emphasize holistic approaches to scientific inquiry including collaboration across disciplinary boundaries. The reflexive feminist researcher acknowledges, "all knowledge is affected by the social conditions under which it is produced and that it is grounded in both the social location and the social biography of the observer and the observed" (Mann and Kelley 1997:392). A positivist critique of reflexivity questions the replicability of research findings given the notion in feminist research that the interaction between researcher and participant is critical to the method. However, the methods employed within ethnography (in this case, the online survey, participant observation, and ethnographic interviewing) can easily be employed with the same population at a later date to explore the validity of the findings, conduct a deeper analysis, and expand on the current study.

Disciplinary Contributions of Feminist Anthropology in Brief

Throughout the historical record women have suffered from universal generalizations when compared to their male counterparts. In anthropology, a murky androcentric past makes this reality well known among feminist anthropologists who have critically assessed the social structures and cultural ideologies that shape women's lives. Early feminist anthropologists made it their mission to make women visible in the ethnographic record and in their own worlds

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(Lewin 2006:1). The following section provides a brief historical overview of important contributions made by feminist anthropologists to the discipline.

Early feminist anthropologists had a desire to conduct research that would "do justice to women in various cultures, a group they saw as disenfranchised" (Lewin 2006:1). The prevailing perception among feminist anthropologists centered on the subordination and silence that affected women across cultures. In the introductory chapter to Lewin's (2006) edited volume, she highlights how the field has evolved from being an anthropology of women to an anthropology of gender, and finally, in its present form, primarily a feminist anthropology. Although feminist anthropology gained attention in the 1970's, there are women anthropologists dating back to the early nineteenth century whose work inspired a feminist turn in the discipline. Credit is owed to Elsie Clews Parsons who is an honored foremother of the field, along with many wives of anthropologists who took it upon themselves to learn about women in different cultures while their husbands were conducting studies primarily focused on men (Fernea 1965; Smith; 1954; Shostak 1981, 1989; Wolf 1968). Feminist thought and practice was drastically shaped within the context of the 1950's-1970's social movements where "struggles over gender's meanings, scope and stakes assumed a variety of forms across a continuum of politically charged settings" (Harrison 2013:x).

Anthropology of women was established through foundational texts like Peggy Golde's (1970) edited volume called *Women in the Field*. This series included works from well-known authors like Margaret Meade, Cora DuBois, and Rena Lederman, who questioned how being a woman might affect the experience of anthropologists conducting research in different settings and historically different times (Lewin 2006). As the field exploded in the 1970's, women anthropologists were motivated to make corrective marks in the discipline and "sought to

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recuperate women as distinct cultural actors" (Lewin 2006:9). In the effort to make women's voices heard, Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (1974) published *Women, Culture, and Society* which sought to investigate whether women were "universally the second-sex" (Lewin 2006:10).

In this volume, Michelle Rosaldo (1974) used anthropological methods as a basis for political strategies by connecting improvements in women's status to their ability to "transcend domestic limits" (Lewin 2006:10). Work by powerful women anthropologists like Nancy Chodorow and Sherry Ortner similarly framed women's status as "universally devalued" (Lewin 2006:10). It is important to note that the authors produced an image of women in the text "not that of a helpless victim", but as acting agents in their social and cultural worlds. The agency that the authors gave to women in the cross-cultural accounts made this collection distinct from how women were written into the previous anthropological record by male scholars. However, all authors seemed to agree, "the forces arrayed to challenge her were deeply entrenched and seemingly unmovable" (Lewin 2006:11), meaning that it was going to take an intense dedication by women to set the record straight. Motivated by the feminist movement, women anthropologists were inspired to continue to produce work for women written by women.

Rayna Reiter (1974) published a foundational edited volume called *Toward an Anthropology of Women.* Reiter questioned and brought to the forefront the existing male bias in anthropology and asked for explanations about women's inequality. In addition to shining a light on ethnographic works that focused on the cultural and social contributions of women, the volume cautioned against what she called "the double male bias". The "double male bias" emanates from the researchers own culture, "which conditions our ability to understand what we see in our research and that which leads us to accede to male dominance in the cultures we

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study" (Lewin 2006:11). There were three common themes that were emphasized in Reiter's volume and Rosaldo and Lamphere's book. The first theme is the variability within women's situations across cultures, the second theme is a focus on women's agency, and the third is an emphasis on the role that power has in the making of culture. The overall purpose of the large corpus of writings published during the first decade of the anthropology of women was that they sought to situate women in the ethnographic record and argued that women's voices would offer different perspectives on the inner workings of culture (Lewin 2006:11).

By the 1980's and 1990's, the anthropology of women had morphed into the anthropology of gender. The shift began when women anthropologists realized that it was time to move beyond universalizing the experience of women, which resulted in an awareness of the complexity of factors that determine how women live. Intersectional analyses began to consider not only gender, (or sex), but other features of identity and status such as class and race. Women of color and women of minority groups came together to organize in ways that strived to have more of a visible influence in political and social causes. According to Lewin, some of these pressures reflected concerns that the goals of early feminists were too closely tied to "bourgeois social desires" and could not be applied universally (Lewin 2006:19). The field continued to evolve as various methods were used to link gender, privilege, and disempowerment to issues of inequality.

The idea that feminist anthropology had to be strictly scholarship about women written by women started to fade in the late 1980's and early 1990's as gender as a cultural construct came into the conversation. Anthropologists of gender "broadened their concerns from women's experiences per se to the ways in which gender and other analytical categories meet and complicate one another under varying material and cultural conditions" (Lewin 2006:19). At the

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same time that scholars began rethinking sex and gender, feminist anthropologists and others across disciplines became increasingly aware that "knowledge had to be considered situational and grounded in the particular dynamics of the research situation" (Lewin 2006:20). This turning point in anthropology is described as the postmodernist turn.

The postmodern turn in anthropology is symbolic of the disciplinary struggle where scholars attempted to collectively deal with a very internal fragmented history. To fight against further disintegration and seeing a need for collaboration, a well-known feminist anthropologist, Frances Mascia-Lees (1989) critically assessed the influence of post-modernism within anthropology. She argued for an increased focus on feminist ethnography in an attempt to enlighten scholars of the already existing field, which she felt was adequately addressing the concerns coming from post-modernists. Postmodern calls for a "genuinely new ethnography", according to Mascia-Lees, seemed inconsequential considering that an effective model addressing similar concerns already existed (speaking towards a feminist ethnographic approach). When differentiating between feminist theory and post-modernism, Mascia-Lees states, "feminist theory is an intellectual system that knows its politics, a politics directed toward securing recognition that the feminine is as crucial an element of the human as the masculine, and thus a politics skeptical and critical of traditional "universal truths' concerning human behavior" (Mascia-Lees 1989:8). Anthropologists subscribing to a postmodern prescription for their work sought to explore the idea that culture is "composed of seriously contested codes of meaning, that language and politics are inseparable, and that constructing 'the other' entails relations of domination" (Mascia-Lees 1989:11). It appeared that post-modern anthropologists were attempting to replicate what feminist scholars had been discussing for more than forty years. It is at this point of contention, otherwise known as the post-modern turn in anthropology,

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where anthropology of gender evolved into a body of work called *feminist anthropology.*

One of the most important contributions to feminist anthropology has been a large body of scholarship devoted to exploring questions of social justice and the impact of economic and political processes on the welfare of society. First wave feminism is connected to the abolitionist and temperance movements in that many of those involved were working towards the abolitions of slavery. It is largely credited for supporting the Women's Liberation movement and women's suffrage[6] (Craven and Davis 2015). The second wave feminism spanned from the 1960's to the 1990's in the United States and is recognized for the resurgence in feminist organizing efforts during the Civil Rights, lesbian and gay, and anti-war movements (Craven and Davis 2015). Third wave feminism is largely credited for moving the focus of feminist anthropology from cultural universals to a form of cultural critique. Aggarwal (2000), discussing the contributions of contemporary feminist critique to the field, underscores how feminist anthropologists are equipped with pedagogical skills that they can transfer to community based programs thus "reducing the dissonance that fieldwork produces between what we know from the field and what we do at home" (25). Drawing from Elizabeth Enslin (1994) and her involvement in the literacy project in western Chitwan, and Deborah Gordon's (1995) feminist activist experience in El Barrio in East Harlem, Aggarwal draws attention to how feminist activist methods help build "feminist understandings of identity and meaning, and methods of interactive learning and reflexive studies" that have been "employed to promote a critical over functional literacy so that the women could ward off damaging stereotypes about themselves, take advantage of social

[6] Although the "waves" metaphor is commonly referenced in order to better understand the development of the feminist movements over the years, it is problematic in that globally, there has been an uneven realization of women's suffrage. According to Craven and Davis (2015) access to the political arena around the world has been uneven in that women in the U.S. won the right to vote in 1920, yet were voting in New Zealand since 1893 and Australia since 1894. In other countries, women were not able to vote until much later.

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services, and improve their employment prospects" (25). These examples demonstrate the power behind feminist activist efforts to confront real world problems by methods of collaborative engagement.

I want to conclude this section with a brief discussion on politically engaged action that describes the current state of feminist social inquiry. The strength in feminist ethnography, according to Craven and Davis (2013) is that it "privileges particularity and the importance of individual experience, situated within uneven systems of power" (6). Combined with activist scholarship as "a model of active engagement between the academy and movements for social justice" the researcher is allowed to "experience the struggles, joys, and defeats" alongside the communities with which they work (Craven and Davis 2013:8). Recently, there has been a surge of anthropological collections that are calling for more public, engaged, and activist centered work within the discipline of anthropology (Sanford and Angel-Ajani 2006; Holland, Nonini, Lutz et a. 2007; Hale 2008; Craven and Davis 2013). Yet Craven and Davis's collection is one of the few that calls for a feminist activist ethnographic approach. Many themes within feminist ethnography and activist ethnography overlap and appear to be mutually exclusive.

My purpose for wanting to commit to a feminist framework has been influenced by the work of Shannon Speed (2006) whose research within a community in Chiapas, Mexico led to a rich gendered analysis. Although my intent is not to study the effects of military mobilization on an indigenous population, as was the purpose of Speed's work, I see value in drawing from Speed's feminist activist approach while studying veteran reintegration. Developing questions in a way that will reveal gendered differences in reintegration practices will lead towards a better understanding of women veterans' collective practices post military service, an area lacking in attention within anthropological research. At the end of Speed's article, she defines what she

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feels is the basis for feminist activist engagement. According to Speed, "As I understand it, it means combining critical analysis with engaged research to produce knowledge that is empowering to women and that contributes to the struggle for gender justice" (Speed 2006:186). Cheney et al. (2014) show that the Veterans Health Care system, similar to the military, "is a gendered organization where women veterans' experiences are shaped by gender inequalities and structures of power" (149). Further research on veteran reintegration practices is imperative to make sure that the experiences of women veterans are documented and heard in order to shape policies and programs to meet the needs of this population.

Where are the Women? Feminist Ethnography and Veteran Centered Research

Christa Craven and Dana-Ain Davis (2013) define feminist ethnography as, "a project committed to documenting the lived experience as it is impacted by gender, race, class, sexuality, and other aspects of participants lives" (6). Feminist ethnography is well suited to explore urgent questions concerning widening disparities of wealth, life expectancy, health, and other aspects of human well-being, which, according to Faye Harrison (2013), "are differently embodied and experienced along interlocking dimensions of gender, race, class, sexuality, and generation" (x). As this dissertation will show, feminist ethnography is a multi-methods approach to social inquiry that may use both qualitative and quantitative methods, depending on the purpose of the research and questions being asked.

In light of current scandals and allegations regarding quality and access to healthcare, along with high rates of veteran and military suicide, increasing rates of mental health disorders and diagnoses, issues with substance abuse, military sexual trauma, PTSD, among other reintegration and transition complications, it appears that veteran centered research is well suited for a feminist activist ethnographic approach. As noted by Craven and Davis, conversations

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about how to make anthropology "relevant and useful in the world" has led to calls for a more "public" (Borofsky 2011), "engaged" (Sanford and Angel-Ajani 2006), and "activist" anthropology (Hale 2008). One way to help to accomplish these goals is through a feminist activist ethnography that will engage in North American research, "that is socially and politically relevant to those being studied" (Craven and Davis 2013:2).

From Industrial Warfare to the Draft: How Changes in American Militarism Affect Civil-Military Relations and Result in the Recruitment of Women into the US Military

Civil-military relations comprise an existing area of scholarly research that focuses on the relationship between the military and the state, societal structures, and institutions (Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2006). Because the military functions as a subsystem of society, it is important to stress its distinctive characteristics from civilian culture. This distinctiveness is found "in the tasks, functions, and responsibilities assigned to the military" (Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2006). In the 21st century, interest in civil-military relations in Eastern and Western countries has been a focus for scholars in the social sciences studying militarism and contemporary war theory.

The United States has a long history of militarization. Militarization is defined as "the contradictory and tense social process in which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence" (Geyer 1989:79). The process of militarization "involves an intensification of the labor and resources allocated to military purposes, including the shaping of other institutions in synchrony with military goals" (Lutz 2000:723). Simultaneously important to this idea is shifting the public discourse, societal values, and public perceptions that ultimately "legitimate the use of force, the organization of longstanding armies and their leaders, and the higher taxes of tribute used to pay for them" (Lutz 2002:723). Public discourse about militarism and war is in constant

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flux over time and public perceptions of war have changed as a country's "mode of warfare" has changed. The American public has generally supported our nation's service members. However, there have been times when the negative public perception of American engagement overseas has complicated soldiers' transitions to civilian life when returning from war. This is especially evident for returning soldiers who served in Vietnam.

An afternoon spent at a local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is likely to result in conversation with a Vietnam veteran who is still struggling with his wartime and reintegration experiences. Reintegration and the challenges associated with it have been made a priority of the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and the civilian veteran service world. Much of this attention is in large part due to the hardship faced by Vietnam veterans during their transition from military service to their civilian's lives.

The United States has been involved in countless military engagements since WWII. The major wars cited by historians over the past seven or so decades are World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, the War in Afghanistan, and the War in Iraq. Two transformations, the change from industrialized warfare post WWII and the end of conscription (the military draft) has extensively shaped civil-military relations. These examples will highlight major turning points in American military history, which contributed to the alienation of service members from the larger civilian society, in turn complicating veteran reintegration for post 9/11 service members.

A period of exponential growth of the United States armed forces occurred during the period of industrialized capitalism, which started in the 19th century and includes both of the WWI and WWII eras (Lutz 2002). Apart from "large standing armies", mass industrial warfare focused on manufacturing labor where workers were required to produce masses of goods to

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support the war effort such as guns, tanks, ships, and airplanes (Lutz 2002). Even more important than the "efficacy of a mode of warfare" has been the social life the mode has produced within it (Lutz 2002). The most blatant difference between industrialized warfare and the modes of warfare that followed can be seen in the technology used and the vast differences in numbers of those tasked to serve during WWII as opposed the wars fought in Vietnam, Korea, and the Gulf War era.

During WWII, large numbers of men were needed in order to fulfill the need of air, sea, and ground combat operations in Germany[7], Japan[8], Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania[10]. Per Code of Federal Regulations, 3.2d, WWII veterans are classified as individuals who have dates of active military service between December 7, 1941 through December 31, 1946. The WWII veteran population includes people who were volunteers and people who were drafted to support the war effort. In 1939, 334,473 people were enlisted in the American Army. By 1945, that number had risen exponentially to 12,209,238. Of that number, roughly thirty-nine percent (6,332,000) of service men and women were volunteers and sixty-one percent were draftees. Out of 1000 soldiers approximately nine would be killed in action and eighteen out of one thousand received non-fatal combat wounds. There were 671,278 casualties throughout WWII (National WWII Museum 2014).

Aerial bombing campaigns were used by the Allied powers, and British bombing of German cities resulted in uncharted numbers of deaths and widespread destruction of European

[7] War with Germany started December 11, 1941 and was terminated October 19, 1951, by a Joint Resolution of Congress. No peace treaty with Germany was ever signed (Torreon 2012).
[8] War with Japan was declared through Joint Resolution of Congress, December 8, 1941. An unconditional surrender document was signed on the deck of the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945. Multilateral Treaty of Peace signed with Japan in San Fran Cisco September 8, 1951 (Torreon 2012).
[10] Joint Resolution of Congress declared war with Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania on June 5, 1942 and cessation of hostilities was declared on December 31, 1946 with a Treaty of Peace signed in Paris on February 10, 1947(Torreon 2012).

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cities and towns. In order to force the Japanese government to surrender, the U.S. used the atomic bomb to target Japanese civilian populations. Yet still, the WWII overseas campaign was highly supported by the American public (Shaw 2005). The western public expansion of the U.S. military in WWII remains unmatched by any other military across the globe resulting in 672 strategically placed military installations or forward operating bases in countries all across the world.

Social and political incentives became more necessary as war was officially declared against six separate countries during WWII. Public sentiment to help soldiers fighting in the war return to civilian life was high during this period in time. Lutz (2002) argues that governments were compelled to extend things like civil rights and social benefits (i.e. the Montgomery G.I. Bill that allowed thousands of men who served in the military to go to college) in order to gain the loyalty and labor of larger segments of the population conscripted to serve in the military (Lutz 2002; Skocpol 1993; Tilly 1985). In 1944, Congress responded by establishing the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, known as the "GI Bill of Rights" which was signed into law by President Roosevelt on June 22, 1944. There were three major provisions within the bill: an education package; a federally guaranteed home, farm and business loan with no down payment; and unemployment compensation (Department of Veterans Affairs). According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, the GI Bill transformed the economy and society of the United States by contributing more than any other program in history to the welfare of veterans and their family members (Department of Veterans Affairs).

WWII veterans were highly regarded as America's best generation. The horrors of war and the after effects of "shell shock" are always present for many WWII veterans, and many struggled to cope with symptoms of posttraumatic stress articulated by Turnbull as "increased

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hyper vigilance, uncontrollable outbursts of anger, inability to concentrate, recurrent visions or dreams about events experienced, sporadic sleeping patterns, and disabilities in acculturating with other members of society" (Lende and Collura 2012:132). Yet, what makes WWII veterans overall reintegration experience different than subsequent wars is the notion that they fought in a war where the American public generally supported U.S. engagement overseas. Via public perception, the war was not fought in vain. The war that unraveled in Vietnam took on a different public persona than that of WWII. Its veterans not only found themselves drafted for a highly contested war, but they became political objects caught in the middle of a challenging period for civil-military relations.

After the era of industrialized warfare ended, the set of functions that national forces were responsible for was enlarged. Military forces are now responsible for operations outside of traditional war such as international peacekeeping operations (Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2006). With this expansion, came new territory within civil-military relations: an emphasis on "the problem of interaction of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) and international agencies, the local civilian population, the media and the military contingents involved in peace operations and conflict resolution" (Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2006:135). The relationship between the media and the military is an important dimension of civil-military relations in the sense that the media forms the social image of the military and shapes public opinion about the operations the armed military participates in (Rukavishnikov and Pugh 2006). The media played an extensive role in how the public viewed the Vietnam War and this perception aggravated reintegration for Vietnam War veterans.

Unlike WWII where a much larger number of the population shared the brunt of military service, the burden of war was unevenly distributed to a small segment of the population due to

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the full implementation of the military draft. Tom Holm, Vietnam veteran and military historian, conducted ethnographic research (1996) revealing clear generational differences between veterans of pre-Vietnam wars and those who served in Vietnam (Holm 1996). There has always been a wide interest in studying Vietnam veterans because "they have experienced all aspects of the conflict—the horrors, the privations, and the stress, as well as the political, social, and economic consequences of serving in this most controversial of America's wars" (Holm 1996: 5). A look through the literature will reveal the kind of war that soldiers of the Vietnam era were asked to fight. It sadly does not come as a surprise as to why Vietnam War veterans have faced extreme reintegration problems, problems that in many cases were never abated by the government that conscripted them to serve in the first place.

When the war on communism began to fail and "Western casualties began to seem disproportionate to their results" the American public began to revolt. According to Shaw, "The futility of the American casualties (58,000 soldier's dead and many more wounded) and the crime of the far greater numbers of Vietnamese killed combined to make a whole pattern of warfare seem increasingly illegitimate" (Shaw 2005:6). Vietnam is recognized as a point in American history where the public and the elites realized that war could not continue on in this manner (Shaw 2005). Public perceptions of the Vietnam War became innately political and negative, which led Vietnam veterans to experience different psychological challenges than pre-Vietnam era veterans (Holm 1996). These challenges tended to complicate re-entry after returning from war.

Many accounts of warfare remain techno centric, or "focused on the scientifically and technically advanced tool purportedly at its center (such as the machine gun, the atom bomb, or the computer)" (Lutz 2002:726). Lutz, providing an alternative use of the term, utilizes "mode of

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warfare" to emphasize the wider range of social features (such as post war re-entry) any "war making" leads to instead of a sole focus on the main weapons or military strategy being executed (726-727). Documentation in the historical record reveals that as the United States mode of warfare has changed over time, so have the characteristics of our enlisted forces.

According to Martin Shaw (2005), "wars are always profoundly important social events and social relations are not just context" (36). Fundamental changes that transformed warfare today were anticipated in sociological debates dating back to the 1970's and 1980's. The decline of the mass armies led to modes of warfare that encapsulated technologically advanced weapons and required skilled personnel (Shaw 2005). Robin Luckham (1984) pointed out that there were far reaching cultural ramifications for when western warfare changed from labor to capital-intensive militaries. According to Shaw, "the glorification of military institutions and values was replaced by 'armament culture'" (Shaw 2005:37). Mass participation in the military during industrialized warfare, shifted to "the privatized 'deterrence-science' militarism of the masses…a 'post-military society' was emerging in the West, in the sense that traditional forms of military mobilization and participation had been transcended. This trend would only deepen in the Cold War era" (2005:37). Far away bombing campaigns turned American warfare into a media event for the general American public. War as a 'spectator sport' (Mann 1987) and "virtual war" (Ignatieff 2001) has been widely reproduced in the sociological literature. These ideas stem from the media portrayal of modern Western warfare and its distance from the American spectator. Ignatieff asserts that, "When war becomes a spectator sport, the media becomes the decisive theater of operations" (Shaw 2005:37). Western military power is contextualized by Shaw as war in isolation as a response to attacks by non-western states or armed movements.

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The 'decline on mass armies' was a powerful trend that shaped the 'post military' landscape "in the sense that most people's lives were not affected by military institutions and wars" (Shaw 2005:7). Traditional social support for the military began to slip away as war did not directly impact their (civilians') lives as it once did. Points of contention did arise during the Cold War and Vietnam when weapons and wars impinged on people's lives. This tended to motivate the public to take action opposing military involvement, which explains the widespread protest over Vietnam (Shaw 2005). Vietnam veterans were demonized and widespread protest resulted because their actions could be seen on the television. Those actions directly went against the American psyche of soldiers being the good guys. A main change from classic to modern warfare happened after Vietnam when the U.S. government had to figure out how to continue using war without the costs that had tarnished its reputation. Shaw (2005) states that after the Vietnam War, the central issue of U.S. foreign policy became "how to re-legitimate war with publics" (7). The end of the draft and entry into an all-volunteer force was the result of this re-legitimation.

In sum, the mode of mass industrial warfare that emerged with industrialized capitalism in the 19th century created a social environment where the soldier and civilian were closely linked. Unlike today's conflicts where war is a "spectator sport", WWII affected every aspect of American life. Since the end of WWII there has been a reduction in the number of people serving in the armed forces. With smaller shares of people serving in the military, the outcome means fewer family connections to military service among civilians.

In a Pew Research Center report (2011), seventy-seven percent of adults ages fifty and older said they had an immediate family member (spouse, parent, sibling, or child) who had served in the military during WWII, as compared to recent conflicts when adults under fifty are

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much less likely to have family members who served in the military (The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era, 2011). According to the report, "Some 57% of those ages 30-49 say they have an immediate family member who served. And among those ages 18-29, the share is only one-third" (Pew Research 2011:1). Pew Research acknowledges that the gap in fewer family connections may be attributable to the fact that young adults may not yet have had the chance to have families of their own so fewer have opportunities to have immediate family members in the military. However, there is no denying that the gap is growing and adults under fifty who are married and have grown children are still less likely than those in older generations to have family members that serve(d) (Pew Research 2011). The Pew Research report revealed that 77 percent of veterans polled expressed that the public does not understand problems faced by the military. In turn, the report also noted that 71 percent of the general public expressed the same view (Pew Research 2011). Mentioning the change in family connections is important because it provides insight into how changes in warfare have shaped military-civilian relations as the size of the mass military has been significantly decreased over time.

The End of Conscription

The United States government has only relied on conscription, or compulsory military service four times throughout U.S. history: The Civil War (1863-1865), World War I (1917-1918), World War II (1940-1945), and the Cold War (1946-1947 and 1948-1973) (Eikenberry 2013). Military drafts have not been popular and have often times resulted in widespread protests against military involvement in conflicts abroad. However, according to Eikenberry (2013) the drafts associated with the two World Wars were generally supported. Popular opposition to the draft during President Johnson's term in office resulted in the draft becoming politically salient. Republican presidential candidate, Richard Nixon, used his promise to end military conscription

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as a method to motivate the population to vote him in as president (Eikenberry 2013). The American public supported ending the draft, yet it was a hotly contested issue inside Capitol Hill.

In 1969, Nixon organized an Advisory Commission on the All-Volunteer Armed Forces to develop a plan for implementing his promise to end conscription. Named after Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates, Jr., the Gates Commission was implemented and tasked with the development of a plan recommending the adoption of an all-/volunteer force. According to Eikenberry, the Commission made sure to include five noteworthy objections to its adoption. These objections included: potential isolation from society and threat to civilian control; with isolation, an erosion of civilian respect; the ranks likely to be disproportionally filled with blacks or those from low-/income backgrounds; a decline in the population's concern with foreign policy issues; and the nation more inclined to embark on ''military adventurism'' (Eikenberry 2013). The concerns of the Gates Commission in 1970 were seemingly prescient to contemporary civil-military relations given recent apprehensions of a growing disconnect between service members and civilians.

Most of the Gates Commission's recommendations held true, but there are three main unintended consequences of the all-volunteer force that are worthwhile to mention. The first unintended consequence is the great monetary expense of mobilization and the lack of civilian dialogue when it comes to frequent employment of the all-volunteer force. Defense spending does not take up the large percentage of the GDP that it once did. According to Eikenberry (2013), arguments against entitlements tend to take precedent in political debates concerning the allocation of public tax dollars (21). Secondly, due to frequent deployment of the all-volunteer force, there have been unintended consequences to our enlisted and reserve forces including personal stress and stress on family units from frequent deployments, combat trauma and stress,

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and other mental and social health consequences. These reintegration challenges trickle down to family members. The burden of over a decade of war on U.S. troops is just starting to reveal itself. The last unintended consequence of the all-volunteer military mentioned by Eikenberry (2013) is "the effect that the end of the obligation of military service has had on the civic virtue necessary to sustain a republic" (21). In other words, Americans want to feel that they are protected by the symbolic notion of safety and security that comes with a robust and powerful military, yet the majority of individuals do not care to share the responsibility of "manning the frontier" (Eikenberry 2013: 21). However, it is widely assumed due to the fallout of Vietnam that reinstatement of the draft would not be popular among citizens entering the voting booth.

This section provides a brief historical introduction and review of the military industrial complex and major transformations in American militarism that have changed the face of civil-military relations over time. When coupled with an understanding of a feminist approach we are better able to develop a better understanding of the history behind women's face-to-face involvement with militarization and the war making effort. It is concluded that there is a direct correlation changes to American militarism over time and contemporary reintegration challenges such as an increasing divide of misunderstanding that currently exists between service members and civilians. Additionally, a short assessment of the historical change from the draft to the all-volunteer force was provided in order to highlight the assembly of the current manpower structure of the contemporary U.S. military.

Veteran Reintegration and Potential Reintegration Challenges

According to the Institute of Medicine (2014), the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have sent more than 2.2 million troops overseas, resulting in more than 6,600 deaths and 48,000 injuries. They have been the longest sustained U.S. military operations since the Vietnam era (Institute of

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Medicine 2014). According to a recent report released by the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (2014), "each year for the next five years, more than 200,000 service members will transition from active duty to the civilian community. Many of them will face significant challenges as they reintegrate back into civilian society" (1). Some of these risk factors noted in the press are: high unemployment; homelessness; isolation; and suicide (Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 2014). It is important to note that not all military veterans experience reintegration challenges. In fact, most Iraq and Afghanistan veterans' report that their experiences overseas were rewarding and they return home with few difficulties (Institute of Medicine 2014). The challenges that are reported have to do with readjustment to life at home, reconnecting with family, finding work, or returning to school. The following section will expand on reintegration challenges and look into issues of access to care post military service.

There has been a growing body of literature documenting the negative health effects of war on military personnel who have served in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. It is a known fact that combat exposure leads to increased risk of mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and trouble dealing with feelings of anger and frustration (Demers 2011). According to Demers (2011), several studies have found that "economic strains, chronic debt, and income shortfall increases the likelihood of engaging in interpersonal violence upon return from deployment" (161). The majority of research on veteran reintegration is quantitative in nature and has for the most part focused on psychosocial adjustment within the context of PTSD (King et al 1998; Koenen et al 2003; Mazeo et al. 2003), adult anti-social behavior (Barrett et al 1996), and physical injury (Resnik and Allen 2007; Resnik, Plow and Jette 2009). Fewer studies have focused on the functional problems that Iraq and Afghanistan veterans face as they reintegrate

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into their home communities. Sayer et al. (2010) found that functional problems at home, school, and work were common among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who use VA medical care.

Qualitative studies on reintegration challenges are less prevalent in reintegration literature; yet often reveal more in-depth experiences based on reports of study participants. Erin Finley, an anthropologist well known for her work on PTSD with post 9/11 veterans, emphasizes through a series of war stories told by post 9/11 Iraq war veterans, that personal experiences and cultural politics cannot be separated. Both are dually important in understanding the vast experiences of soldiers diagnosed with PTSD. According to Finley, "Combat trauma (the personal) may occur during war (the political) but is unavoidably shaped by the meaning of the event to the individual (the personal), a meaning that is partly the product of a shared vocabulary for describing experience (the cultural)" (Finley 2011:158). Finley's work reiterates many other studies that show combat trauma as "only one of the many kinds of experiences" that increase the risk of developing PTSD (Finley 2011:158). Additionally, Finley notes that the inability to reintegrate in family and community while having to mediate through life circumstances like divorce, unemployment, and issues with one's family can exacerbate PTSD risk among veterans (Finley 2011:158). Current statistics estimate that roughly 31 percent of U.S. military personnel are returning from wartime deployments with the disorder (Sundin et al. 2010; Lende & Collura 2012).

Military and veteran suicide is an issue that has received substantial attention from the media, elected officials, the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs and veterans' organizations. The Department of Veterans Affairs released a new report stating that 22 veterans per day die by suicide. These alarming statistics have increased awareness and prevention efforts targeting veterans, active duty, and reserve military personnel and their family

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members. Oftentimes when we talk about reintegration challenges, we assume that it is just individuals returning from combat or the small percentage that experienced trauma that are facing challenges upon re-entry, suicide being one example.

In October of 2014 a roundtable event on military and veterans suicide was held at the James A. Haley Veterans hospital in Tampa, Florida. Representative Kathy Castor (D-FL14) hosted the event for the purpose of bringing together interested parties such as practitioners, scholars, and community organizations working to tackle the issue of suicide. A licensed professional counselor with the Haley Suicide Prevention Team, said, "studies have shown that only 10 percent of veterans who commit suicide have been in combat and only 40 percent had deployed" (O'Brien 2014). It is a common misnomer of the general public to assume that every service member has been deployed to a "combat zone". There are many service members who have not deployed at all. This is not to downplay the effect that combat has in shaping an individual's experience, as the strains of re-entry have been particularly serious for America's combat veterans. According to a 2011 Pew Research report, 76% of post-9/11 veterans who served in combat, say their military experience helped them get ahead, yet half (51%) say they had some difficulty readjusting to civilian life. Additionally, majorities of these combat veterans report strained family relations and frequent incidents of irritability or anger. Fully half (49%) say they have likely suffered from post-traumatic stress. And many question whether the government has done all it should to support them. Still, they express a deep sense of pride in their service and an increased appreciation for life (Pew Research 2011:49).

Cultural barriers have to do with ongoing stigma attributed to the diagnoses in public discourse. Finley highlights how highly politicized debates surrounding PTSD and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has become widely associated with the abandonment of Vietnam

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veterans and the VA's failures to provide adequate benefits and care for these individuals (Finely 2011:160). She emphasizes that there is a slow shift-taking place within the social world where "veterans, politicians, veterans' advocates and VA clinicians" circulate information and understanding on PTSD and best ways to provide care. Eventually, this "shifting of the model" may lead to an understanding of PTSD not just as "chronic suffering" but "one of recovery and resilience" (Finely 2011:160).

Barriers to seeking care may come in many different forms. According to Sayer et al. (2010), "veterans facing community reintegration problems may face barriers to help seeking beyond the cost of medical care" (596). Several studies note the stigma associated with mental health diagnoses is found to be a major barrier to treatment seeking among those returning from combat (Sayer et al. 2010; Finley 2011). Built over decades, the culture of the military prides itself on a structure of socialization that trains its members to carry out everyday tasks in ways that exemplify values of masculinity such as "toughness, stamina, and invincibility that reward those who push past their own limits to become cool and composed under fire" (Finley 2011:159). This kind of gender performance is a complex part of military culture and can further contribute to reintegration challenges.

An October 2014 report from the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff discusses the damage that misleading stereotypes about veterans have on the reintegration process. Some damaging stereotypes mentioned in the report have to do with: mental health stereotypes linking combat stress and PTSD to an increased propensity for violence; veterans having Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) being permanently damaged; veteran behavioral health challenges being specific to post 9/11 veterans; veterans being un-educated; and veterans not having relevant job skills (Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 2014). The report

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states that common stereotypes formed "an inaccurate national narrative about veterans…that stymie veterans' reintegration by increasing the divide of misunderstanding that currently exists between service members and civilians" (Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 2014:2).

Reintegration challenges are similar for men and women, yet there are distinctions that are important to discuss with regards to making sure that women have appropriate access to gender specific care. One of the most persistent problems facing women veterans as noted by the VA's Women Veterans Task Force, is the "need for culture change across the VA to reverse the enduring perception that a woman who comes to the VA for services is not a veteran herself, but a male veteran's wife, mother, or daughter" (DAV 2014:1). Reasons as to why women are less likely to self-identify as veterans has not been clearly articulated and is usually attributed to a lack of knowledge with regards to what qualifies one for veteran status. This dissertation research investigated reasons that women may choose to self-identify or not as veterans and under what circumstances they do or do not self-identify. Prior research has investigated women service member's positions as members of a gender minority while in the military. Reports dedicated to women's varying statuses based on age, rank, race/ethnicity have been linked to heightened vulnerability with regards to sexual harassment and sexual assault during the military (Cheney et al. 2015).

According to Gardiner (2013), veterans embody a "veteran masculinity that is in large part derivative of a military masculinity" (70). Although Gardiner's study focused specifically on the experiences of four male veterans, military masculinity infringes upon every aspect of a woman's military service. Gardiner and others have argued that military masculinity is defined as "a negation of the feminine" (Gardiner 2013:70). Veterans, both male and female retain a

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capacity to perform military masculinity in a way that exerts traits such as "obedience, sadism, and masochism" (Gardiner 2013:70). Having to "tough it out" and "endure the pain because pain is temporary" can inhibit veterans from wanting to seek care, which is a major barrier.

Ortner (2006) discusses the importance of paying attention to "cultural contradictions" when studying a population, as it is within these cultural contradictions that we can see the underlying motivations for human practice. As the previous example illustrates, service members often find themselves stuck between cultural contradictions that have only exacerbated stigma both inside and outside of the military institution. Even the best efforts of high-ranking leadership have failed to dispel existing stigma about mental illness including PTSD. Finley notes that too many service members have found themselves stuck between conflicting messages such as "we can help!", yet what they are also hearing is, "If you're broke we will kick you to the curb!" (Finley 2011:159). Due to the problems associated with stigma, innovative strategies are needed to deliver reintegration services to veterans. A seemingly simple strategy noted by Sayer et al. (2010) is found in labeling an intervention as a "community reintegration service" as opposed to mental health treatment. This approach has the potential to lead to veterans being more receptive to seeking mental health care related services (Sayer et al. 2010:596).

Theoretical Framework

The topic of veteran transition from service presents a unique intersection of multiple interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks. A feminist anthropological perspective was utilized meaning that a commitment was made towards examining the roles of a marginalized population. In the case of this study, the focus is women who served in the United States military and have transitioned out of military service. With this research, I contributed to a locus of previous work by "combining critical analysis with engaged research to produce knowledge that is empowering

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to women and that contributes to the struggle for gender justice" (Speed 2006:186). By contextualizing this study in feminist anthropology, anthropology of the military, and studies of gender and military service, I sought to demonstrate the ways in which relevant themes have impacted the population of women veterans through the practice of transition from military service. This project links national analysis conducted through both quantitative and qualitative research methods with an in-depth understanding of the ways in which a history of military service reveals elements of the performativity of militarized gender in women veterans' experiences. Through an exploration of sociocultural and gendered perspectives of military service and veteran transition, and with an emphasis on the issues of masculinity and military service, my work intended to fill lacunae in published studies of this particular topic.

Anthropology of the Military

The following section will discuss some of the foundational literature in anthropology that has been shaped by militarism. This first paragraph provides the reader with a brief historical development of the focus of militarism within the discipline of Anthropology. According to Gusterson (2007), anthropologists have been slow to make American militarism an object of study. To put the work on militarism into perspective, he notes,

> As new wars with high civilian casualty rates emerged in Africa, Central America, the former Eastern bloc, and South Asia, beginning in the 1980's anthropologists increasingly wrote about terror, torture, death squads, ethnic cleansing, guerilla movements, and the memory work inherent in making war and peace. Anthropologists have also begun to write about nuclear weapons and American militarism (Gusterson 2007:155).

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The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the "war on terror" stimulated a surge of critical analyses within critical ethnography of militarism and military contract ethnography (Gusterson 2007). Accordingly, there were anthropological attempts to make sense of the attacks on US soil in a special issue of Anthropological Quarterly at the end of 2001 (Kapferer 2004; Tsing 2004) but this work was "largely ungrounded in long term field research projects and tended to be more sharp than deep" (Gusterson 2007:164). Even though we are seeing an increased focus on American militarism in the field, anthropologists who work on war, militarism, and violence have largely ignored engagement with fieldwork.

A body of work within anthropology that has been emerging over the past several years falls within critical anthropology of the military. Ethnographic accounts of war and violence have focused on soldiers "as ideologically informed political actors" (Gutmann and Lutz 2010; Weiss 2014), "as working symbolically to make identity and meaning within the structures and cultures of military institutions" (Higate 2003; Irwin 2008), or "as actors positioned within a globalizing American process of militarization and imperialism" (Gill 2004; Lutz 2001, 2006, 2009). Other Anthropologists have focus on illness and injury and highlight "the symbolic, social, and institutional politics of pathology" (Finley 2011; Hautzinger and Scandlyn 2013; Kilshaw 2008; Young 1995). MacLeish (2013) and Wool (2015) have helped bring understanding to how war and violence impact soldiers' lives as they figure out how to deal with a new normal in the aftermath of disability and trauma. With a focus on the intimacies of their everyday lives, MacLeish conducted extensive fieldwork with active duty soldiers at Fort Hood. Wool spent her fieldwork with injured Army veterans who were recovering at Walter Reed, the largest military medical center in the country located in Bethesda, Maryland. Both MacLeish and Wool provide insight into "how ordinariness matters" yet is difficult to attain in life after war.

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The label "soldier" in the context as it has been written about in the discipline is meant to be inclusive, yet participants tend to be male unless the focus is turned that of the female caregiver of the wounded soldier. This study seeks to explore the gendered experiences of women in the armed forces so as to add depth to current analyses on life after the military.

Militarization vs. Militarism

Katherine Lutz (2002) defines militarization as something much more complex than "weapons wielded and bodies buried" (724). Militarization, to be more specific is "the process by which societies produce their capacity for collective violence" (Geyer 1989:79). The process of militarization,

> Involves an intensification of the labor and resources allocated to military purposes, including the shaping of other institutions in synchrony with military goals. Militarization is simultaneously a discursive process, involving a shift in in general societal beliefs and values in ways necessary to legitimate the use of force, the organization of large standing armies and their leaders, and the higher taxes or tribute used to pay for them (Lutz 2002: 724).

The way that militarization is measured is through the spending of a defense budget which is widely accepted by the American populace as a method of preserving freedom. The symbolic notion of preserving freedom is upheld through the manufacturing of jobs in factories and jobs in the different branches of the armed services. Serving in the military is understood to be a way to "prepare young people for life, making men out of boys and an educated workforce out of warriors through college benefits" (Lutz 2002: 724). Subsequently, militarization

> has also created what is taken as knowledge, particularly in the fields of physics and psychology, both significantly shaped by funding goals (Leslie 1993; Lutz

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> 1997)…It has redefined proper masculinity and sexuality (D'Amico 1997; Enloe 2000), further marginalizing anyone but the male heterosexual—the only category of person seen fit for the full citizenship conferred by combat (Lutz 2002: 724).

It is this last component entailing the redefinition of proper masculinity and sexuality that is foundational to this dissertation. A focus on masculinity as it is defined in the literature will be elaborated on shortly. First, I want to make the distinction between "militarization" and "militarism", which are often used interchangeably. "Militarism", again referring back to Lutz' discussion on the topic, is much narrower in scope than militarization. Militarization is conceptualized as more of a process, whereas militarism encompasses a focus on the political realm of a country and its "warlike values" (725). The term militarism is rarely applied to the United States and other countries whose wars are largely thought to take place only when provoked. After over a decade of wars in the Middle East, the nationalized rhetoric of the US as a peaceful nation is being challenged with unprecedented global protests taking place after the election of the forty-fifth president of the United States, Donald J Trump.

Cynthia Enloe, a well-known feminist and international relations scholar known for her extensive work on militarization, states that the way to understand militarization fully is by taking women's experiences of militarization seriously. She defines militarization as, "the step by step process by which a person or thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military, or comes to depend for its well-being on militaristic ideal…militarization, that is, involves cultural as well as institutional, ideological, and economic transformations" (Enloe 2004: 3). Militarization is a socio-political process that involves "the transformation of assumptions, the reassessment of priorities, and the evolution of values about the importance of militarism (Enloe 2004). Militarization impacts the lives of both men and women inside and outside of the military.

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It is a process of legitimization of dominant conceptions of masculinity deeply rooted within the way that a patriarchal society is organized (Enloe 2004). Enloe defines patriarchy (2004) as "the structural and ideological system that perpetuates the privileging of masculinity…and infantilizes, ignores and trivializes what is thought to be feminine" (4). The way that militarism and masculinity (which are not synonyms) play out in a society varies from culture to culture. Enloe argues that there can even be variations between militarized groups in the same country, which she demonstrates by highlighting the differences between the Nicaraguan Contras and the Nicaraguan Sandinistas (1993).

In Enloe's feminist analysis of militarism, women play specific feminine roles, which help with the successful implementation of militarized masculinity (1993). Women who are directly involved in the militarizing process may be wives or mothers of soldiers, they may be working in administrative positions in the Army, or they may be sex workers who appeal to the taste of soldiers working on military bases (1993). This research reveals the how militarization creeps into our daily routines. Enloe offers a comprehensive feminist analysis of militarization, which is relevant when looking at the experiences of women veterans. Her analysis is relevant when seeking to understand the direct and indirect ways that masculinity and femininity are militarized through the experiences of the interview participants while they were still in military service, yet falls short in providing a basis of understanding for what the prolonged impact is of militarization on masculinity and femininity after one leaves military service.

A Focus on Masculinity and Gender Performance

The conceptual frameworks developed by feminists studying militarization and military masculinities are useful for the purposes of this study. The concept of militarized masculinities refers to the process that takes place during soldiering where masculine identities become hyper-

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masculine (Mendez 2012). This concept is important in attempting to develop a conceptual lens through which to study the experiences of women veterans who have transitioned out of military service in the US. The purpose of militarized masculinity is to create an "ideal soldier" who embodies all of the core values of the institution that the former civilian is recruited to serve. The result of the successful indoctrination is a state of "Esprit de corps", or "a shared feeling of pride and loyalty to the group that the recruit is now a part of" (29). According to Mendez (2012), the ideal soldier created through militarized masculinities is one who is "strong, threatening, aggressive, loyal, rational, and heterosexual. The ideal soldier represses emotions, vulnerabilities, and compassions, all of which are perceived to be feminine qualities" (29). Women are rarely perceived as an "ideal soldier" because traditional gender norms recognize the ideal soldier as male. However, the characteristics that are used to mold the ideal soldier are imparted on individuals of any gendered identification recruited to join the ranks. Gender identity does not stop the embodiment of these characteristics. Embodiment of militarized masculinities can stick with a service member long after their duty has ended, resulting in a veteran habitus that may help or hinder the veteran in finding their footing after their military service has ended.

The impact that militarism has on women in uniform results in a constant negotiation of femaleness while in service and once out. Prior studies have analyzed how women deal with working within the constraints of institutionalized masculinity. They conclude that women may adopt conservative strategies that reproduce the hegemonic norms such as the continued subordination of women. These strategies are responsible for driving the status quo of institutional military culture instead of creating any kind of institutional change to military environments that might result in equality within the ranks (Winslow and Dunn 2002; Sorin

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2006; Hauser 2011; Sasson-Levy 2003; Carreiras 2006; Sion 2008). Additionally, studies conclude that women service members either imitate masculine behaviors similar to those being performed by their male counterparts, while attempting to distance themselves from traditional femininity. Part of this practice entails trivializing sexual harassment (Sasson-Levy 2003). It is also noted in the literature that women's "transformative agency" is limited due to the privileging of traditionally feminine aspects of themselves, which reproduces traditional femininity, and male privilege (Silva 2008). According to Bàdero (2015), these studies reduce the way that women deal with their "ambiguous status in the Army to a subordination- resistance dichotomy" (88). Reducing women's experiences in this masculine organization (Bàdaro is referring specifically to the Argentine Army) to this dichotomy he states, "leaves little room for the analysis of the ambiguities and changing meanings of women's practices" (89).

In order to explore these complexities and not essentialize or reduce women's experiences in the armed services to these simplified dichotomies, I build off of the anthropological work of Sherry Ortner (1996, 2006) who shows that female agency cannot be understood without taking into account the influence of power and the various projects that they are involved in (Bàdero 2015:89). It is these 'power games' that women are involved in that produces the subordination of women in a specific setting, yet enhance individual projects or produces a liberating effect when viewed in another sphere of influence or power such as the family or the community (Bàdero 2015, Ortner 2006). Saba Mahmood's (2005) study of urban middle-class Egyptian women who were placed in a marginal position during the Islamic revival movement shows that female autonomy can result from the same mechanisms that produced their subordination. Although the women experienced marginality, Mahmood argues that they gained more autonomy through family, friends, and other social ties. Likewise, Lazarus-Black

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(2001) concludes in her analysis with Trinidadian women seeking legal redress from domestic abuse that for women "agency, like power, is fluid and dynamic, belonging less to any one individual actor than to the highly contextualized interaction between parties at different sites along a shared process or the process of including women in higher education, professions, sports, or international development" (394). These studies, along with Bàdaro's ethnographic account with women who served in the Argentine Army show that female's agency "must be deduced from contextualized and specific power relations that enable different forms of subordination and autonomy" (89). Female agency cannot simply be reduced to the acceptance or rejection of male domination. In real situations, the exercise of power in these gendered institutions is full of contradiction and complexity.

There are few ethnographic accounts that highlight the complexities and experiences that military veterans face after service, let alone the experiences of women veterans after service. Yet, there has been increased focus in the area of military masculinity within anthropology over the past few years. Steven Gardiner (2006), cultural anthropologist and Army veteran, studied the ways in which changes in civil-military relations have affected some veterans. He based his fieldwork on examining how "mobilized veterans" continue to interpret and respond to these changes. Gardiner's conceptualization of a "veteran masculinity" expands on Aaron Belkin's (2012) analysis of "military masculinity". Belkin refers to military masculinity as "a set of beliefs, practices and attributes that can enable individuals—men and women—to claim authority on the basis of affirmative relationships with the military or with military ideas" (3). Gardiner posits that military masculinity stays with veterans after service but, "they are to retain a capacity to perform military hardness and suppress the extreme aspects of military masculinity: obedience, sadism, and masochism." Gardiner understands that there is an existence of a

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"militarized habitus" that the service member continues to embody (regardless of gender) long after their military service has ended. He discusses how the difficulties of negotiating gender performance in veteran settings are exacerbated by the extension of these spaces to women veterans, especially with regards to being included and represented in leadership capacities. The capability for the 'good old boys' clubs to continue "as is" may very well change as female veterans are the only demographic that is currently increasing.

Postmodern and Queer theorist Judith Butler has advanced a theory of gender performativity which is useful when considering how women veterans experience gender identity impacted by militarized masculinity and femininity as participants of armed groups. According to Butler, gender is "an open-ended process, a sequence of acts or events which does not originate and which is never fully or finally "realized" (Butler 1990 as quoted in Salih 2004: 90). Butler collapses the distinction between sex and gender stating that "sex by definition will be shown to have gender all along" meaning that all bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence (Salih 2004: 91). Butler adopts the position that gender is not something one is, but it is something one does. Gender, according to Butler, "is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal overtime to produce the appearance of substance, or a natural sort of being" (Butler 1990 as quoted by Salih 2004: 91). Gender, in other words is performed by the actor.

Butler's theory of gender performativity (2004) has been misconstrued to mean that subjects can decide when to change their gender as simply as they can decide when to change their clothes. In order to clarify her theory, in her 2004 book appropriately titles *Undoing Gender*, Butler argues that to "do" one's gender sometimes implies "undoing" certain notions of personhood.

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> If gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. Moreover, one does not "do" one's gender alone. One is always "doing" with or for another, even if the other is imaginary. What I call my "own" gender appears perhaps at times as something that I author or, indeed, own. But the terms that make up one's own gender are, from the start, outside of oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author (and that radically contests the notion of authorship itself) (1).

The subject is "done" by gender meaning that the agent is not free to select his or her gender "styles" (Butler's word). Gender is "the effect rather than the cause of a discourse which is always there first" (Salih 2004: 91). In Butler's words, gender is "a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and perform in the model of belief (Butler 1990:192).

When women join the US military, using Butler's framework, they often abandon, transform, and adopt different aspects of gender identity (in a performative way) while learning to adapt to life within the constraints of the military institution that they joined. Aspects of "militarized gender identity" (Mendez 2012) may be recognized as bodily gestures, movements, and styles that distinguish them from civilian women (Mendez 2012). These bodily gestures, movements, and styles are institutional standards set and enforced during the military indoctrination process. Indoctrination may take place through ROTC programs in high school and/or college and is formalized during boot camp. Successful completion of boot camp is symbolic of a rite of passage into the larger group. Some people may adopt aspects of militarized

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gender that are more extreme and noticeable than others. Branch of service, job during service, military unit placement, deployment experience, family environment before service, or level of education before service are examples of variables that may impact the degree to which one's identity is impacted during military service.

Female Agency

As previously noted, Ortner (2000) shows that female agency cannot be understood without taking into account the individual projects, intentions and desires, and experiences that women express and achieve through the different "power games" in which they are involved. At one level, agency is a kind of property of social subjects and is unequally distributed among them. In other words, some people get to "have" it and others do not; or some people get more of it and others less. (Ortner 2000: 151). People are social beings and are always involved in "webs of relations" like affection and solidarity or power and rivalry. Whatever "agency" they may have is always being negotiated. Ortner (2000) states,

> In this sense, people are never free agents, not only in the sense that they do not have freedom to formulate and realize their own goals in a social vacuum, but also in the sense that they do not have the ability to fully control those relations toward their own ends. As truly and inescapably social beings, they can only work within the many webs of relations that make up their social worlds (152).

Ortner argues in the context of what she calls serious games, that in the pursuit of projects, the subordination of other people is likely to result. Yet, the people who are subordinated still have agency. They have both power and projects of their own, and they continue to maintain the capacity for resistance whether in the most subtle to the most overt ways (Ortner 2000). It can be said that the same "power games" that produce subordination of women

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in military settings, can actually enhance individual projects or produce liberating effects when viewed in relation to other spheres of power after one's military service has ended. Taking the current project into consideration, female autonomy is recognized through community organization efforts that have been conceived out of the subordination and oppression experienced by study participants while in service. Ultimately, this autonomy has led to major institutional changes impacting women veterans such as changes in legislation such focused on military sexual assault (MST) and access to care.

Bàdaro's analysis argues that women in the Argentine Army "unintentionally challenge the holistic representation of the military individual that male soldiers are supposed to embody" (89). He concludes that identifying as "one of the guys" is a "moral, social, and professional performance" that allows women to carry out personal projects (89). Women are enacting a "paradoxical individuality" that does not try to eliminate either identity that the military depicts as opposite which is "woman" and "soldier". It is the various ways that women perform this paradoxical individuality that constitutes their primary source of agency (Bàdero 2015). It was necessary to focus on the reflections of women veteran participant experiences while in the service in order to better understand their transitional experiences from the US military. While most studies focus primarily on women serving in active units, this study fills a noticeable gap in anthropological literature by focusing on women veterans' experiences with transition from service. Building on Bàdero and Ortner, I argue that participants adapt to a professional gender performance in the military, which may have marginalizing effects on them during service. Yet, through the process of self-actualization that they go through after leaving the military, what results is the reclamation of their veteran identity and the re-affirmation of agency after service, ultimately leading to a redefining of femininity.

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Chapter Summary

This ethnographic study on women veterans and their experiences with transition from military service is situated within Feminist Anthropology and adds to an existing body of literature on Anthropology of the Military. The reader has been provided with an overview of feminist research and I argue why a feminist ethnographic approach to research design and analysis is an appropriate and needed methodological framework for military veteran centered research. The complexity of civil-military relations complicates challenges with regards to veteran reintegration and will be explored further in the results chapter. This research has identified gaps in current published research by presenting the experiences of military transition as experienced by women veterans whose stories and voices are oftentimes hidden within the stories of the larger male veteran majority or only represented minimally in research, especially in a population found outside of the Veterans Health Administration. I was particularly interested in how the performance of militarized gender impacts participants' experiences after they leave military service, and how women perceive transition from military service with respect to their own self-identification and gendered views. The intent of conducting this study was to combine these various levels of analysis in order to present a novel view of women veterans' military experiences and transitional experiences from military service, and potentially fill gaps in current research and indicate directions for further study of this intriguing topic.

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Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the methodology employed in this study. Ethnography is a theory and a method used to frame this study. This ethnographic approach utilized qualitative and quantitative nixed methods. Specifically, I have engaged a feminist ethnographic (theoretical) approach to seeing and researching, and a feminist methodology for data collection and analysis. The study addresses the following research questions: 1) what are women veterans' perceptions of masculine and feminine gender roles within military culture? 2) How did women perform gender during military service? 3) What are women veterans' experiences with transition after military service? 4) How does military culture influence transition after service for women veterans? 5) How do community stakeholders understand reintegration and the challenges faced by women veterans? And 6) Do changed performances of gender within military culture contribute to post-military challenges? Figure 3.1 provides a visual description of the methods used in this dissertation.

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Figure 1: Research Methods

LeCompte and Schensul (2010) define ethnography as "a systematic approach to learning about the social and cultural life of communities, institutions, and other settings" (1). Ethnography uses rigorous research methods and data collection techniques to ensure the accuracy of data and reduction of personal bias. Additionally, it emphasizes and builds on the perspectives of the people in research settings and uses both inductive and deductive approaches for theory building in ways that are socially and culturally valid (1). One of the major differences between ethnography as science and other social and behavioral scientific methods of investigation is that ethnography assumes the researcher must first discover what people actually do and the reasons they give for doing it before interpreting why they are doing it through academic lenses and disciplines (2). Ethnographers employ the use of their own eyes and ears as the primary tools for data collection. They observe participants in "field" settings by interviewing and carefully recording what is seen by method of "thick description" as coined by

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Clifford Geertz (1973). Rigor through the use of methods like ethnographic interviewing, participant observation, and survey research as used in this study, represent an effort to ensure that data is collected carefully, thoroughly, and in ways that are understandable to others. Procedures used in ethnographic research can be implemented by other researchers and in other field sites producing scientifically valid and reliable data.

According to Hesse-Bibir, Leavy, and Yaiser (2004), "conducting research with a feminist perspective means exploring issues of feminist relevance with an awareness of difference, social power, and scientific oppression that is in service of political and social activism" (Rubino et al., 2007:199). Additionally, feminist ethnography can use traditional or experimental methods such as oral history, participant observation, and collaborative data analysis (Craven and Davis 2013). The present study was envisioned as one that will contribute an ethnographic perspective on veteran reintegration practices in a historical moment that is charged by politicized debates over existing inadequacies within the VA health care system. This dissertation employed a feminist mixed methods approach including survey research, qualitative interviewing, and participant observation.

My analysis of women veterans and transition is ''reflective'' and employs ''reflexivity'' for the purposes proposed by Gillie Bolton (2010) and Rodino-Colcino (2012): "to inform theory and practice not as a set of terminal and generalizable ''answers,'' but instead, to develop ''searching questions'' that lead to further questions, understanding, and fruitful practices" (543). My methodology utilized ''reflective practice'' described by Joseph Petit as ''the art of including yourself in your approach to your work, and acknowledging the influence of your position, assumptions and worldview on your understandings and actions'' (Rodino-Colcino 2012:543). Personal narrative, a form of reflexive practice, was intertwined throughout the research and

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writing process when I felt that my subjective experience could strengthen the discussion.

Faye Harrison (2013) asserts, "Ethnographic research and analysis designed to intervene in policy-related debates needs to resonate with policymakers' expectations—indeed their demand for generalizable evidence. Otherwise, ethnographers risk having their findings dismissed as merely 'anecdotal'" (xi). A stated goal of this research is to advance social change in the area of veteran reintegration specifically for female veterans. Regardless of feminist critiques of positivist research approaches, I am aware that to speak to politicians, policy makers, and other activists I may also be met with requests for scientifically valid, quantitative findings. To that end, I conducted an online survey that resulted in an unanticipated large sample that provided quantitative results of statistical significance that will be discussed following the qualitative methods section. However, it must be noted that the rigorous qualitative approach involving in-depth interviews yielded the most significant results presented in this study, as described below.

Quantitative Methods

As described in Chapter 1, this research is meant to contribute to a growing body of literature on veteran transition and help fill the existing gap in anthropology of the military on the intersections of gender, violence and military service as well as to provide data of interest to law makers, policy experts, and community stakeholders tasked how to appropriately tailor programs and services to meet the needs of the population. While the theorizing developed in this dissertation demanded the rigor of qualitative research and in-depth interviews with women veterans, a mixed methods approach involving quantitative data also adds support to the findings. Additionally, the quantitative results and participation in the voluntary online questionnaire resulted in greater numbers of completed surveys than anticipated. Given the

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difficulty and recruitment challenges noted in past research with the population, the unanticipated volume in voluntary participation from a sample outside of those enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs makes the quantitative results worthy of further investigation beyond the scope of this current study.

Target Population

The sample frame for this study was self-identified women military veterans who served in any branch of service in the US military for a time period of two years or more. Given the sensitive nature of the survey, voluntary participation was favored over a probability sample. However, the convenience sample was recruited for representativeness on a national basis.

Recruitment

An online survey announcement (located in appendix) was disseminated through social media outlets by means of a closed Twitter and Facebook page that were dedicated specifically for this study. Using social media for survey recruitment allowed for access to a national participant pool. I was contacted by WUSF, a local public media radio station in Tampa and asked to participate in an interview for their series "Off the Base". I was invited to talk about women veterans and the study being conducted. When the story was released online and posted on the study Facebook page and Twitter account, the announcement of the research and link to the online survey was picked up by veteran's service organizations such as American Women Veterans, Women Veterans Social Justice and Women Veterans Interactive. The organizations shared the article via their social media channels. This resulted in a larger than expected number of survey participants within a short time frame.

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Issues Concerning Veteran Access

A barrier to conducting research within the Department of Veterans Affairs is the requirement that the VA or an approved affiliate must either employ principal investigators. As a result, subject recruitment for this study was conducted outside of the VA system, relying on collaboration and support from social and other organizations to which veterans belong as voluntary members.

Informed Consent

The first page of the online survey contained a page for the sole purpose of obtaining informed consent from participants and a waiver of written documentation was approved by IRB for the online survey. After reading the informed consent page, participants needed to check "yes I give my informed consent to participate in this study" prior to being allowed to access the online survey. If they checked "no" they were unable to proceed to the study.

Procedures

An online- survey questionnaire was chosen for three reasons: 1) ease of access to a national population, 2) use for interview development and recruitment, and 3) anonymity of an online survey gave the potential to collect more honest information on potentially sensitive topics (Bernard 2003). Informed consent was mandatory prior to the start of the online survey. For the online survey, data were collected through a series of self-report multiple choice, and open-ended questions. Survey participants were asked to check a given answer or type in their answers in the spaces provided. The survey was estimated to take about 45 minutes to complete, although completion times ranged from thirty minutes to over two hours depending on how quickly the participant moved through the questions and whether or not they answered all of the questions. It was made clear that participation was completely voluntary. The final survey

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question provided a space for participants to type in their email addresses if they wanted to participate in a follow-up interview, which was to take place over the phone. If interested, survey participants were asked to provide a personal email address in the space provided at the end of the survey. Participants agreed to participate with the understanding that they could leave the survey unfinished at any time, or move to another question if they did not want to answer one that was asked. No compensation was provided to research participants and participation was completely voluntary.

Risks for participation in this study were considered minimal. To minimize any risk, no names, addresses, or other personal identifying information, except for personal email addresses for those interested in conducting a follow-up interview was collected. Due to some questions being sensitive in nature, phone numbers to the VA Helpline, suicide prevention hotline, and national suicide prevention hotline were made available at the beginning and end of the survey. All survey data were stored on a highly secured server that was both password and firewall-protected and only accessible to the principal investigator.

Understanding the importance of safety for all potential participants, the Facebook page used for recruiting purposes and study updates throughout the data collection and analysis process was kept in a "closed group status" meaning that nobody but the page administrator (the study principal investigator (PI)) could post to the page. Facebook users could privately message the PI through the Facebook page if they wanted to make contact with the study PI.

Instruments

The anonymous online survey was built using Qualtrics Survey Software (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). The survey can be referenced in Appendix E. It included a combination of 91 self-reported items broken into three different sections. The PI developed most of the items. The

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survey included the PTSD Checklist (PCL-C), which is a well-validated behavioral health measure. The survey asked about four different areas: demographics, military history, and post-military program and service utilization. The survey questionnaire collected both Likert-scale and open-ended questions. Prior to dissemination, four volunteers who provided feedback on survey design, and question structure took the survey. Prior to dissemination to the targeted population, all volunteer concerns were addressed.

As shown in Appendix E, 21 demographic questions requested respondents' state of residence, year of birth, current academic and employment status, highest level of education achieved, biological sex and gender identity, race and ethnic identity, marital status, highest level of parents' educational attainment, and house-hold income per year prior to and after military service. Questions about pre-military history and military service (n=61 questions) included year of enlistment, military actions/wars, date of discharge, and type of discharge (honorable, less than honorable, dishonorable). Questions were asked about military service specific to vocation, deployment history, and impact of military service on one's life, and experience of being a woman in the service. Health and behavioral health questions asked about military specific trauma or injury, prior treatment for a mental or emotional problem or a substance abuse problem. Participants were also asked if they understood the symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and if they have ever been diagnosed by a health professional as having PTSD. In order to better understand the overall health of the population, the survey asked participants to rate their perception of their overall health, from Excellent, Very good, Good, Fair, or Poor (Ware and Gandik ,1989). Questions exploring exposure to discrimination, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault pre, during, and post military service were also asked. The concluding section of the survey focused on veteran service utilization following the conclusion

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of the veteran's military service. With exception to the item on health rating, the other questions of the survey were used in order to collect descriptive health related information on the population and are not validated for the study at hand. For a current screen of behavioral health specific to PTSD, the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Checklist Civilian Version (PCL-C) was embedded within the survey (Bliese et al. 2008).

The PCL-C is a 17-item measure frequently used to assess problems related to any stressful experiences. For each item within this measure, respondents rate on a Likert scale (1=not at all, 2=a little bit, 3= moderately, 4= quite a bit, and 5= extremely) how much they were "bothered by that problem in the past month" (Bliese et al. 2008). Total scores for the PCL range from 17 to 85. Higher scores indicate greater impairment and items related to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition (DSM-IV) classification (Schonfeld et al. 2015; National Center for PTSD 2017; Bliese et al. 2008). The DSM-IV categorizes psychiatric diagnoses into this manual published by the American Psychiatric Association. The US Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for PTSD considers a score of 33 or higher to be necessary for a provisional diagnosis. Thus, the score of 33 has been implemented as the cut-off score to indicate PTSD for the purposes of this study.

Analysis of Quantitative Data

Quantitative findings were conducted using software available through Qualtrics Survey Software, Microsoft Excel and SPSS for exploratory data analysis and non-parametric tests resulting in the building of graphs, tables, and charts that assisted in providing me with a descriptive analysis of the population being studied. Lastly, ArcGIS was used for the mapping of survey participants. Aggregate data for state of residence was provided to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Rural Health who oversaw the development of the participant

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mapping. All data were stored on a password protected external drive that only the primary investigator has access to. Data from the Qualtrics program were downloaded into SPSS version 22.0 and a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for analyses.

Qualitative Methodology

Using themes (located in appendix) that were most represented in the open-ended responses from the online survey questionnaire an interview guide (Appendix E) was developed for an in-depth phenomenological investigation of lived experiences of women veterans.

Qualitative Sample

For the purpose of this study, women veterans include anyone who, through a single item question on the completed online survey, self-identified as a "woman veteran" and who reported serving in the US military for at least two years or more. Community stakeholders were defined as members of the military veteran's community in the United States and included members of organizations, community advocates, advocacy organizations, or non-profit organizations that incorporate assisting women veterans with transition from military service as part of their organizational mission. A total of 33 phone interviews were carried out with women veterans and community stakeholders (n=26 interviews with women veterans and n=7 interviews with community stakeholders). The original sampling goal for the interviews with women veterans was set at n=30 with n=26 being the final count. The sampling method is elaborated on in the next section.

Interview Recruitment

The sampling method for the interviews with women veterans was initiated by a question that was asked at the end of the online survey, asking for volunteers interested in participating in

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a follow-up interview to the survey. Two hundred and seventy-six email addresses were originally received from the survey sample. These email addressed were entered and randomized in an excel spreadsheet in order to begin the interview recruitment process. I reached out to the first 30 addresses on the randomized list for my first round of interview recruitment. I continued this method four times until my goal of thirty interviews with women veterans was scheduled. The final count is twenty-six interviews as I was unable to make contact with a few participants. I attempted to contact the participant three times in an effort to reschedule if the original appointment time was missed or canceled. After three attempts the participant was dropped from the study.

Community stakeholders were primarily recruited during participant observation at veteran community events. I personally approached the stakeholders who usually were speakers or tabling at the events, and personally asked if they would be interested in participating in an interview for this study. If they agreed, I asked for their contact information and would follow up with the stakeholder after the event. Additionally, when it was suggested that I contact a stakeholder suggested by a woman veteran during phone interview, I would research the organization online and attempt to make contact with the suggested stakeholder.

Procedures

Interviewing incorporated the idea that "knowledge can be produced in structured encounters organized around 'telling about experience'" (DeVault and Gross 2007:176). A feminist approach to interviewing is largely 'post-positivist' in that feminist interviewing "rejects the idea that social realities are simply 'there' for researchers to find" (DeVault and Gross 2007:176). Instead, post-positivism asserts that researchers understand "the social contexts of people's lives as historically situated and constituted through people's activities, and the research

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process itself as an integral aspect about the knowledge production of society" (DeVault and Gross 2007:176). Feminist interviewing can be a powerful research tool for "exploring women's experiences and the contexts that organize their experiences" (DeVault and Gross 2007:192).

Initial sampling goals were set at 30 phone interviews with women veterans and 10 interviews with community stakeholders. Actual scheduling yielded 26 phone interviews with women veterans and seven interviews with community stakeholders for a total of 31 interviews. Deviation from the initial goal number for the interviews was due to reaching saturation for the interviews with women veterans and scheduling challenges with the community stakeholders. It is important to mention the four of the community stakeholders also self-identified as women veterans. When this occurred, consent was requested and obtained from the participant to ask both sets of interview questions. These interviews were then dual purposed as women veteran and community stakeholder interviews. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and uploaded into ATLAS.ti v7.2 a qualitative software program, for analysis.

The phone interviews conducted were based on a set of questions formulated prior to the implementation of this phase of the study. I was informed by components of the conceptual model guiding the study (military history, participant understanding of gendered role-making during military service, and reintegration experience after military service), literature on veteran reintegration and feminist models of inquiry and preliminary data derived from the online survey. However, the phone interviews were semi-structured to guide the discussion as much as possible. For instance, if the person in question was more interested in talking to me about personal experiences as a military spouse as opposed to their experience as a member of the military, I did not interrupt or pressure them to talk about something else or focus primarily on the questions in the interview guide. I tried to softly guide the interview process with regards to

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the direction of the interview. As is a primary focus of feminist research, respecting individuals' preferences was key during the interview process. In addition, I let the participants know that they could ask any questions they would like to have answered about the interview topics or about the research, and they were always informed that they could stop their participation in the interview at any point in time. Through these efforts, which are by no means exhaustive of feminist approaches to methodology, I attempted to alleviate the power imbalances that exist between researcher and participants. All interviews were audio recorded with permission from interview participant using a password protected digital recorder. Additionally, all interviews were conducted in a private location in my home office.

Intersectional study design is positioned as a primary methodological concern for feminist researchers. "Intersectionality" is a core articulation developed through the scholarship of women of color. It refers to the overlapping of multiple forms of discrimination and oppression such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, disability status, sexuality, and age among others. When discussing intersectionality as a major feminist intersection, Craven and Davis (2016) discuss how conceptually, an intersectional analysis argues, "that all categories of identity and existence operate at the same time in a person's experience of oppression and subordination" (43). It is important to acknowledge that gender issues within the US military also operate in a racialized context. Women veterans of color experienced their military service and also transition from military service in a specific manner. This acknowledgement is important in intersectional analyses. This study acknowledges the importance of intersectionality. However, the analysis for this particular project remains primarily focused on gender.

Participant observation is a central method of ethnographic fieldwork. It involves extensive engagement and observation with the participants you are studying over an extended

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period of time. Often this timeframe may be a year or more. According to Bernard (2011), participant observation helps you add context to the study by assisting you with asking sensible questions in the native language. For this study, participant observation was conducted at veteran focused community events located primarily across the Tampa Bay area (n=23). Five additional observations were conducted at women veteran events in Washington, D.C., Denver, Colorado, San Antonio, TX and Santa Clara, CA. The events in Washington, DC, CA, and TX were conferences where there were dedicated sessions focused on women veterans. Each of these observations consisted of a panel discussion of women veterans who are enrolled in institutions of higher learning. The event in Colorado was a much more private event in that it was a retreat that I participated in with other women veterans. Prior to the start of the retreat, I publicly informed all participants of my positionality and provided a background of the study I was conducting for my dissertation research. I asked if anyone had any issues with my participation in the retreat. I was welcomed with open arms by everyone and encouraged to share my research announcement with them after the retreat. In an effort to not be invasive and distracting, or hinder the group process of the retreat, I made full effort to be present in my participation by taking my researcher hat off and fully engage in the event as a woman veteran. My field notes and reflection were written after the four-day event when I returned home. The total number of events observed including the women specific events and other veteran focused events was (n=28). Participant observation allowed me to conduct informal interviews and write up field notes based on my experiences at the events. These data provided me with an understanding of some of the types of community events offered for the population and why. It also provided an opportunity to meet with stakeholders and interact with other women veterans directly, providing context for this study.

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Informed Consent

A waiver of written documentation of informed consent was approved by IRB at USF. Therefore, the informed consent form was read to all participants prior to the start of the phone interview. All interview participants provided their verbal consent prior to participating in the interview. Participants were not referred to by name during the interview in order to maximize confidentiality. Referral information to VA health services and the VA crisis line was made available if requested by interview participant. Although safety protocols were in place, the participants never required them.

Qualitative Data Analysis

A grounded theory (Glazer and Strauss 1967) approach, using both inductive and deductive coding was used to identify categories and concepts that emerged from the text. An inductive analysis of the text was used to capture unanticipated categories of analysis and additional thematic codes that were not already included in the interview guide. An open coding process involves a line-by-line reading of the transcripts and survey questionnaire data. Using memoing (see Bernard 2003) and the technique of constant comparison (Bernard 2003), a hierarchical coding structure was developed with overarching themes and sub themes. Once the themes were coded and categorized, interpretive analysis, much of which occurred during coding, was used in building the theoretical basis of the analysis.

The data collected for this particular study was at times emotionally challenging to consume. Due to the close relationship between myself and the research topic, bracketing was used as a method to protect the researcher from the cumulative effects of examining emotionally charged material. It was necessary to employ this kind of research strategy to assist with inherent challenges faced when undergoing extensive fieldwork such as this, to protect against skewing

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the results and interpretations. Qualitative research is a subjective endeavor that, according to Tufford and Newman (2012), entails "the inevitable transmission of assumptions, values, interests, emotions and theories (hereafter referred to collectively as preconceptions), within and across the research project" (81). Because the researcher's preconceptions influence how data were gathered, interpreted, and presented, bracketing "facilitates the researcher reaching deeper levels of reflection across all stages of qualitative research: selecting a topic and population, designing the interview, collecting and interpreting data, and reporting findings." (Tufford and Newman 82). For this research endeavor, falling in line with grounded theory tradition, I subscribed to Creswell and Miller's definition of bracketing:

> researchers must acknowledge their beliefs and biases early in the research process to allow readers to understand their positions, and then 'bracket or suspend those researcher biases as the study proceeds ... individuals reflect on the social, cultural, and historical forces that shape their interpretation' (as cited by Tufford and Newman 2012: 83).

Feminist ethnographers such as Sandra Harding and Donna Haraway have challenged positivism as reproducing a privileged perspective. One of the strongest elements of feminist ethnography is that it "validates the epistemological importance of women's perspectives and contributions to society" (Craven and Davis 2016). Bracketing provides space for deep reflection and acknowledgment that as a member of this community my and other women veterans' voices are important and valid, and belong within the historical record.

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Native Anthropology: The Importance of Positionality and Challenges with Studying One's Own Society

As previously noted, part of what distinguishes feminist research from positivist approaches to knowledge production, is acknowledgement of the researchers situated location to the research process. Acknowledging the fact that I am a member of the community I will be studying, brings forward concerns with regards to conducting "native anthropology" or anthropology of one's own society. One challenge noted by Susan Krieger (1983), is that her insider status made it difficult to transform herself into a distant analyst, and she found that "it was not a simple matter to move from my experience of intimate involvement with the community to a sociological analysis of that experience" (Lewin 1995:325). Krieger struggled to confront the ambivalence of her "personal feelings toward the community" where she had lived and conducted her research. She realized through the process of exploring her own experiences that feelings similar to her own were important in the accounts of the women she had interviewed. She then was able to use those feelings to guide her larger analysis. The process of getting to this point, she warns, took well over a year of her struggling over her field notes. Similar to Kreiger, Kath Weston makes the observation that she always felt that she was asking her participants to talk about things that were as obvious to them as they were to her (Lewin 1995:325).

The advantages in studying one's own culture cannot be understated. Subjective knowledge production is now more widely accepted in contemporary anthropology than in previous decades. One of the major benefits native anthropologists have is easy access to the population that they have chosen to study. This closeness means that developing a respected rapport may not take as long or as much of an effort than that of a non-native anthropologist.

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Additionally, the native anthropologist is in a better position to understand the symbolic meanings behind ritual behaviors; offering intimate knowledge to certain dimensions of cultural behavior that a non-native anthropologist may struggle to comprehend. It is my hope that my subjective knowledge, relationships with those in my research population, and reflection and honesty throughout this process, will not hinder but enrich the final research product.

Researcher Positionality

Working as a bomb loader in a male dominated maintenance squadron during my four years of active duty and later as a part of an administrative team working in a fighter squadron put me in a unique position to experience how gender is performed within the military institution. Early on in my career I began to observe how the masculine culture of the military shaped the identity of those wearing the uniform. Judith Butler (1988) theorized gender as a performative act. She states that gender is a strategy of survival which can be grounds for punishment when not done right. According to Butler, "Discrete genders are part of what 'humanizes' individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished" (1988:522). This statement resonates with the performance of gender, as I experienced it as a young woman in the military. When I reflect on my experiences of being one of the few women in my squadron of over a couple of hundred men, I realize now the incredible impact that those years had on my identity.

During the years that I wore the uniform, I became accustomed to accepting the consistent objectification of my body as part of my normal everyday life. Seven years after my departure from active duty, I now acknowledge that I dealt with everyday sexism and sexual harassment on a regular basis. I responded by trying to blend in as much as possible by becoming "the guys best friend" and the person who could work with the team to do the job right the first

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time. For me, disregarding my feelings about how I was being treated and in a sense, disregarding my personal wellbeing, was all part of the job. The last thing that I wanted was to draw negative attention to myself while fulfilling that role. I felt that my silence guaranteed that I would not be seen as a nuisance to my shop or a weak link in the brotherhood that bonded everyone together. My silence and persistence to be perceived by others as tough and unbreakable was necessary for my existence and reputation within a cultural environment that promulgated the collective needs over the needs of the individual.

My own process of knowledge acquisition has resulted in my current position as doctoral student within an academic institution. It took many years for me to actualize the existence of the forces that were at work such as systems of dominance and power, which I now understand influenced my silence and unwillingness to speak up when faced with circumstances that made me uncomfortable at points throughout my military service and more recently after I transitioned out of military service. It is helpful to refer to the concept of "the lone girl" when assessing the experiences of women who serve in male-dominated military spaces (Cheney et al. 2014). Recent ethnographic research with U.S. women service members of Iraq and Afghanistan resonate with existing ethnographic work conducted among women in Israeli's Defense Forces (IDF). Cheney et al. state "as the gender minority (women) faced a constellation of circumstances that increased their risk for sexual harassment and sexual assault…furthermore, within a U.S. military context, women have been desexualized or hyper sexualized and have often been gender typed as dykes or whores, embodying an image of women as either tough and unfeminine and sexually undesirable, or weak and feminine and sexually attractive (Cheney et al. 2014:152). My behavior was a symptom and a response to the institutional marginalization that affects not just women in the military, but anyone that may fall outside of the dominant group.

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My experiences do not reflect the experiences of all women in the military. However, in speaking with other women veterans and researching literature on women in the military, I have learned that my experiences are also not unique.

Given my stated positionality, relying on subjective experience and personal narrative for knowledge production has played a crucial part in this research process. Viewing social science and personal narrative as "mutually serviceable" is still contested among some social scientists. However, I agree with Camilla Stivers (1993) and other feminist scholars who argue that there are ways to "facilitate this union" by "focusing directly on the issues that appear to divide the two" (410). Holding in line with a commitment to feminist research, we can do this by acknowledging that there is no such thing as removing the observer from the knowledge acquisition process. Stivers agrees, "to do so would be like trying to see without eyes" (1993:410). Additionally, Stivers emphasizes that there is no such thing as unbiased knowledge. Knowledge, she stresses, is always grounded in "intellectual assumptions and constitutive interests" (Stivers 1993:410). A third point to consider in the defense of personal narrative is that, "it is difficult--maybe impossible--to draw the kind of hard and fast line between a "fact" and "interpretation" that efforts to distinguish "history" from "literature" sometimes imply" (Stivers 1993:410). Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) makes a similar point in his landmark text, *Silencing the Past*, in that "human beings participate in history both as actors and narrators"(2). Tracing the process involved in the creation of history, Trouillot cautions "consumers" of history to be critically aware of the "silencing of the past" that occurs at the hands of the narrators of the historical record.

Ethical Considerations to Veteran Centered Research

As feminist ethnographers, we have to adapt, transform, and revolutionize our strategies

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in order to make sure that our work is socially and politically relevant to the people that we study. Concerns for ethical considerations are inherent to any research process and feminist activist methodologies are no exception. Aggarwal (2000) reminds us that feminist anthropologists cannot get swept away in the romanticism of activism. We need to be careful and not expect our participation "to be instantly collaborative, rewarding, or redemptive" (Aggarwall 2000:26). Lastly, she states that "writing with" rather than "writing about" cultures can be one way of using anthropological expertise for the direct benefit of the cultures we work in" (26).

Davis (2013) experienced inter-personal conflict with research participants when some women hoped that she could personally help increase their security in various policy arenas given her access and position as a researcher during a project on welfare policy in the United States (Craven and Davis 2013). Additionally, Anglin (2013) speaks about the "blurry bonds" between researched and researcher and how personal relationships need to be handled professionally throughout the research process. There is potential for ethical issues to arise and personal conflict may be generated when the author takes a critical stance towards what she is studying. If presenting research results to a government institution or organization, the feminist ethnographer needs to be aware of the role that "critique" plays in shaping the ethnographer and the final ethnographic endeavor.

Having insider status as a researcher may grant access to a population, yet being perceived as having "researcher greed" must always be a cause for concern. Adelman and Frey (2001) use the term "researcher greed" to describe "the desire on the part of the researchers to get the juiciest quotes and observations possible" (Rodino-Colcino 2013:548). The last thing that I would want to happen is for people in my own veteran community to feel like I am exploiting them because of "researcher greed".

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Ethical dilemmas need to be taken into consideration when working with vulnerable populations. It is possible that I may encounter military veterans who may or may not be dealing with challenges from past traumatic experiences. It can be assumed at this point of the process that some research participants will have prior trauma exposure associated with combat or prior trauma exposure not associated with combat. Preceding the start of the research process, options need to be addressed for what to do in potential situations where the safety of a participant may be jeopardized. Potential for re-traumatization is always a concern when interviewing participants about experiences that may be sensitive in nature. There are rules of confidentiality that we are expected to follow as researchers; however, in a situation where a participant may be experiencing undue stress, or reveal that they may harm themselves, or others, the researcher is obligated to seek immediate professional assistance. Having a process in place such as a referral program will be necessary in case there is a need for outside assistance or the presence of a mental health professional.

Given my "insider" status to this population, information may be shared by research participants that may not be made available to others. Deciding what segments of information should remain as private discourse and what is all right to disseminate to the public will have to be decided and agreed upon prior to the conclusion of the research study. One way to mediate this is through adherence to participant confidentiality by the use of pseudonyms and making sure all data are de-identified. Additionally, as is common with feminist activist approaches to research, allowing participants to read and approve the final product, may help alleviate future problems regarding the release of sensitive information come time of research distribution or publication.

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Research with veterans, and any research for that matter, needs to adhere to the AAA's Principals of Professional Responsibility which state that, "In research, anthropologists' paramount responsibility is to those they study. When there is a conflict of interest, these individuals must come first. Anthropologists must do everything in their power to protect the physical, social, and psychological welfare and to honor the dignity and privacy of those studied." (Whiteford and Trotter 2008).

Conclusion

I envision this study as one that will contribute a feminist ethnographic perspective on veteran reintegration practices in a historical moment that is charged by politicized debates over existing inadequacies within the VA system of care. The overall purpose of this dissertation is to understand female veteran's transition experiences, particularly the lasting impact that military masculinity might have after the participants leave the service and transition to their civilian lives. A methodology framed by a feminist ethnographic approach will allow for concerns of gender and power dynamics to be at the center of this analysis. The goal is to conduct politically relevant research that I can use to approach policy makers and ultimately influence their decisions when it comes to veteran reintegration. Maintaining a commitment to social change and the people at the center of my inquiry is what drives this study.

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Chapter 4: Results of Quantitative Data

Demographics

A total of (n=915 self-reporting as women veterans) respondents participated in the survey. It is important to note that the findings reported here are preliminary. Due to the unexpected large sample size that responded to the survey, a more in-depth analysis of survey data will ensue at a later date. The age range of respondents was 28 to 77, with a mean age of 46. Survey respondents' race and ethnicity (78.8% white or Caucasian American, 6.4% African American, 0.8% Asian American, 3.8% Native American, 0.7% Pacific Islander, 4.4% all other categories or multiple categories) and Hispanic or Latino (8.5%) which is comparable to the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (NCVAS) 2016 national demographics broken down by race and ethnicity.

Regarding the highest level of education attained in one's lifetime, 31.6% (n=289) have a graduate degree, 26.2% (n=240) have a four-year college degree, 15.2% (n=139) have a two-year college degree, 19.2% (n=176) have some college but no degree, and 2.1% (n=19) have a high school equivalent or GED. Fifty-three or (n=5.7%) of women veterans did not respond to this question. Over half (n=529 or 57.8%) of women veterans from this survey sample have a bachelor's degree or higher. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 32.7% of women age 25 or higher possessed a bachelor's degree or higher. This particular sample suggests that women veterans attain higher education degrees at a higher rate than the general population of women in the US. Fourteen percent (n=128) said that they are currently using their military education benefits, 56.1% (n=513) said that they previously used some or all of their military

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education benefits, and 24.2% (n=222) said that they never used any of their education benefits. Fifty-two or 5.6% of survey respondents did not answer this question.

The majority of respondents (n=402 or 43.9%) in this study were employed full time for wages. Subsequently, 7.4% (n=68) were employed part time for wages, 4.1% (38) were self-employed full time, 6.9% (n=63) did not have paid employment and were homemakers, 11.4% (n=104) were students, 15.9% (n=146) were retired, 4.8% (44) were out of work with no wages, and 14.2% (n=130) were unable to work due to a disability. Forty-nine or 5.3% of respondents described their current employment as "other" and in the space provided were allotted to describe their current employment situation. Answers varied but most of them fell into categories such as "Disabled but working part time", "homeless", and "caregiver".

The map (Figure 3.1) on the next page shows a visual representation of the geographic location of survey respondents. Every state is represented except for Rhode Island and Delaware. It is inconclusive why there were not respondents from these states. Table 3.1, delivers demographics from online survey respondents providing descriptive statistics on the population. It is broken down by enlisted, officer, and both (meaning women who served in the enlisted forces and as an officer throughout their military career).

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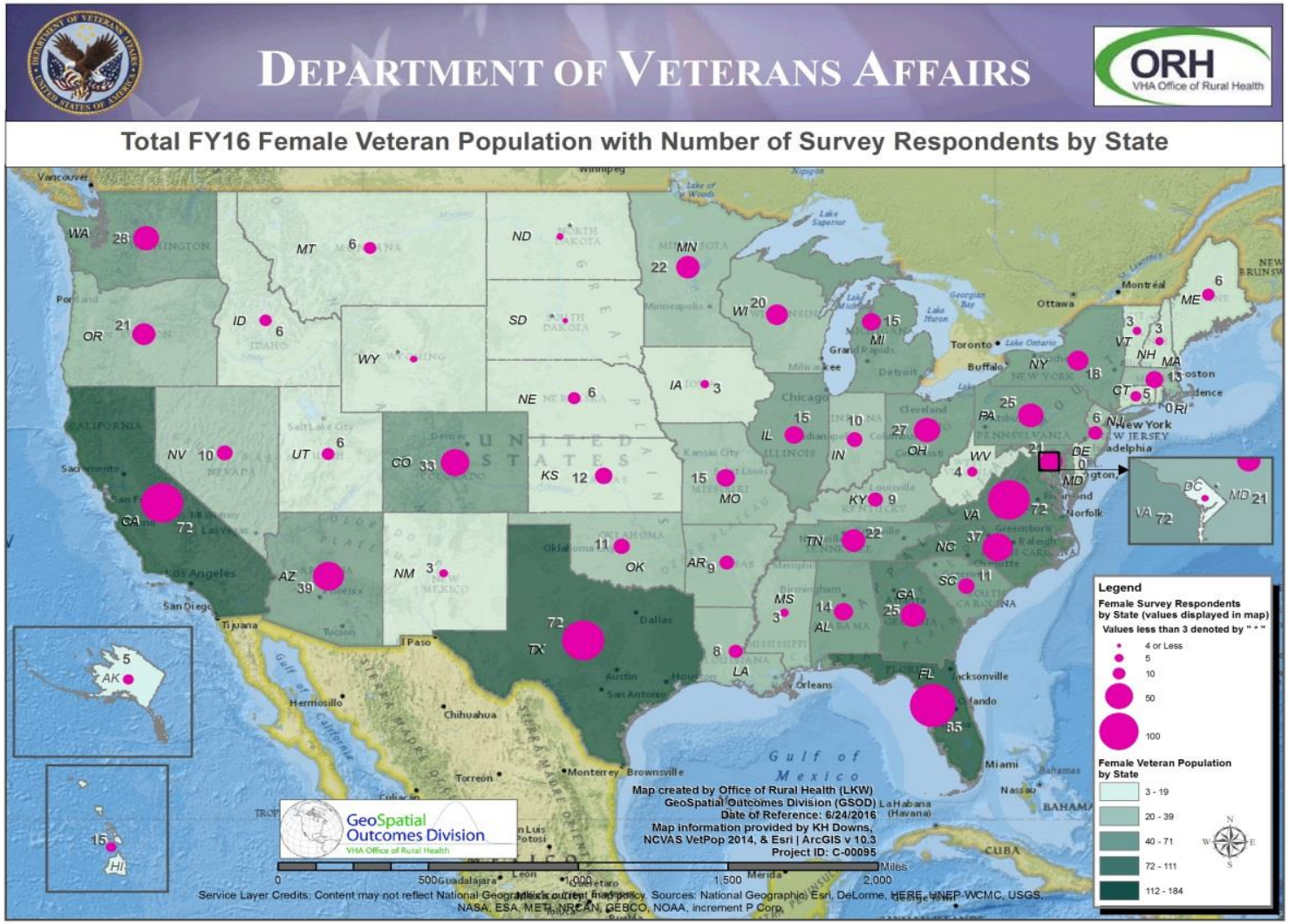

Figure 2: FY 16 Female Veteran Survey Population

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Table 1: Online Survey Demographics

		Officer	Enlisted	Both	Total
Age	**Mean**	48	46	46	46.6
	SD	12	12	12	12
	Range	28-77	22-77	24-67	22-77
		n (%)	**n (%)**	**n (%)**	**n (%)**
Branch of Service	Air Force (active)	33 (3.9%)	147 (17.4%)	7 (.8%)	187 (22.1%)
	Army (active)	32 (3.8%)	258 (30.5%)	19 (2.2%)	309 (36.5%)
	Marine Corps (active)	6 (.7%)	82 (9.7%)	4 (.5%)	92 (10.9%)
	Navy (active)	19 (2.2%)	114 (13.5%)	7 (.8%)	140 (16.6%)
	Reserves	12 (1.4%)	41 (4.9%)	5 (.6%)	58 (6.9%)
	Guard	5 (.6%)	42 (5%)	4 (.5%)	51 (6.0%)
	Coast Guard (active)		8 (.9%)		8 (0.9%)
	Total	107 (12.7%)	692 (81.9%)	46 (5.4%)	845 (100%)
Deployed Yes/No	Yes	79 (9.3%)	323 (38.4%)	28 (3.3%)	430 (51.1%)
	No	28 (3.4%)	366 (43.5%)	18 (2.1%)	412 (48.9%)
	Total	107 (12.7%)	689 (81.8%)	46 (5.5%)	842 (100%)
Military Action or War* **	Operation Enduring Freedom	26 (4.4%)	90 (15.2%)	6 (1.01%)	122 (20.6%)
	Operation Iraqi Freedom	45 (7.6%)	166 (28%)	14 (2.4%)	225 (38%)
	Persian Gulf War	13 (2.2%)	58 (9.8%)	9 (1.5%)	80 (13.5%)
	Operation New Dawn	5 (.8%)	23 (3.9%)	2 (.3%)	30 (5.1%)
	Other	29 (4.9%)	94 (15.9%)	12 (2%)	135 (22.8%)
	Total	118 (19.9%)	431 (72.8%)	43 (7.2%)	592 (100%)
LGBTQI*	Yes	3 (.4%)	103 (12.4%)	5 (.6%)	111 (13.3%)
	No	104 (12.5%)	578 (69.3%)	41 (4.9%)	723 (86.7%)
	Total	107 (12.8%)	681 (81.7%)	46 (5.5%)	834 (100%)
Race/Ethnicity * **	White	98 (10.3%)	606 (63.9%)	43 (4.5%)	747 (78.8%)
	Hispanic/Latino	5 (.5%)	53 (5.6%)	3 (.3%)	61 (6.4%)
	African American	3 (.3%)	42 (4.4%)	2 (.2%)	47 (5%)
	Asian American	1 (.1%)	5 (.5%)	2 (.2%)	8 (.8%)
	Native American	1 (.1%)	34 (3.6%)	1 (.1%)	36 (3.8%)
	Pacific Islander	3 (.3%)	4 (0.4%)		7 (.7%)
	Other	3 (.3%)	37 (3.9%)	2 (.2%)	42 (4.4%)
	Total	114 (12%)	781 (82.4%)	53 (5.6%)	948 (100%
Level of Education	High school or GED equivalent		19 (2.3%)		19 (2.3%)
	Some college (no degree)	1 (0.1%)	173 (20.6%)		174 (20.8%)
	2-year college degree	1 (.1%)	129 (15.4%)	2 (.2%)	132 (15.8%)
	4-year college degree	24 (2.9%)	194 (23.2%)	13 (1.5%)	231 (27.6%)
	graduate degree (please list)	80 (9.5%)	172 (20.5%)	30 (3.6%)	282 (33.7%)
	Total	106 (12.6%)	687 (82%)	45 (5.4%)	838 (100%)
Household Income Per Year	Below $15,000 a year	2 (.2%)	56 (7%)	3 (.4%)	61 (7.6%)
	$15,000 to $25,000 a year	5 (.6%)	61 (7.6%)		66 (8.2%)
	$25,000 to $35,000 a year	3 (.4%)	68 (8.5%)	5 (.6%)	76 (9.5%)
	$35,000 to $45,000 a year	3 (.4%)	74 (9.2%)	2 (.2%)	79 (9.9%)
	$45,000 to $55,000 a year	4 (.5%)	59 (7.4%)	2 (.2%)	65 (8.1%)
	$55,000 to $65,000 a year	8 (1%)	69 (8.6%)	3 (.4%)	80 (10%)
	$65,000 to $80,000 a year	13 (1.6%)	78 (9.7%)	3 (.4%)	94 (11.7%)
	$80,000 to $100,000 a year	19 (2.4%)	80 (80%)	7 (.9%)	106 (13.2%)
	Over $100,000 a year	46 (5.7%)	109 (13.6%)	19 (2.4%)	174 (21.7%)
	Total	103 (12.9%)	654 (81.6%)	44 (5.5%)	801 (100%)

***Note: Not mutually exclusive

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Military Service

Respondents to the survey self-reported that they served in all branches across the military including the guard and reserves. According to the demographics collected, 22.1% (n=187) served in active duty Air Force, 36.5% (n=309) served in active duty Army, 10.9% (n=92) served active duty in the Marine Corp, 16.6% (n=140) were active duty Navy, and 0.9% (n=8) served in the Coast Guard. 6.9% (n=58) of respondents served in the reserves, 6% (n=51) served in the guard, with a total of 845 reporting on this question. This question was not mutually exclusive, meaning that respondents could have served in more than one branch of service.

The majority of respondents reported a history of deployment, with 51.1% stating that they deployed to one or more theaters and 48.9% (n=412) stating that they did not deploy at all during their time in service. For those who answered yes to having deployed, 20.6% (n=122) deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), 38% (n=225) deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), 13.5% (n=80) deployed in support of the first Persian Gulf War, 5.1% (n=30) deployed for Operation New Dawn and 22.8% (n=135) marked "other military wars or actions" including Operation Southern Watch in Saudi Arabia, Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq, and Operation Provide Promise in the Balkans.

When asked to describe their overall experience in the military, the majority of respondents described it positively, with 8.5% (n=78) reporting that their military experience was "delightful", 30.1% (n=276) described it as "very good", and 25.3% (n=232) said that it was "good". Conversely, some participants indicated a less positive experience with 8.7% (n=80)

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describing their military experience as “fair”, 2.1% (n=19) as “poor”, and 4.3% (n=39) as “regretful”.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

The following reports the frequencies for questions that focused more generally on self-reporting for mental health and emotional issues and substance abuse while in the military and after service. When asked if ever treated for a mental health or emotional problem during military service, 26.4% (n=242) with 668 reporting answered “yes”. When asked if ever treated for a mental health or emotional problem after leaving military service 32.3% (n=296) out of 662 respondents answered “yes”. Specific diagnoses reported by respondents to the open-ended question asking about mental health and emotional diagnoses will be reported in chapter 6 with the qualitative findings. When asked if ever treated for a substance abuse issue while in military service, 3.8% (n=35) answered “yes” out of 669 respondents and 4.1% (n=38) answered “yes” when asked if treated for a substance abuse problem after leaving military service.

PTSD

Results for the PTSD Checklist Civilian Version (PCL-C) indicated that nearly half (48.3%) of the (n=661) participants screened positive for PTSD with a score of 33 or higher using a total severity score method (See Table 3). A reliability rating using Cronbach’s Alpha is (.951) suggesting this result to be reliable. DSM criteria for a PTSD diagnosis requires an alternative scoring method grouping certain PCL-C indicators together in order to further assess symptomatic responses. The DSM criteria for a positive diagnosis is as follows: 1) symptomatic response to at least 1 “B” item (Questions 1-5); symptomatic response to at least 3 “C” items (Questions 6-12); and symptomatic response to at least 2 “D” items (Questions 13-17). Results for cluster response “B” (see Table 4) indicates that 40.1% (n=265) are symptomatic for PTSD.

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Results for cluster response "C" (see Table 5) indicates that 38.3% (n=253) are symptomatic for PTSD. Results for cluster response "D" (see Table 6) indicates that 77.2% (n=510) are symptomatic for PTSD. When asked if ever diagnosed by a healthcare professional (doctor, psychologist) as having PTSD, 23.7% (n=217) out of 667 respondents said "yes" and when asked if they ever received counseling or other care for PTSD 21.7% (199) out of 665 respondents said "yes".

Table 2: Symptomatic of PTSD Based on PCL-C Score of 33 or greater

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No PTSD	342	51.7	51.7	51.7
	PTSD	319	48.3	48.3	100.0
	Total	661	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: PCL-C Symptomatic Indicators for Cluster B

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not symptomatic for B	396	59.9	59.9	59.9
	Symptomatic for B	265	40.1	40.1	100.0
	Total	661	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: PCL-C Symptomatic Indicators for Cluster C

Table		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not symptomatic for C	408	61.7	61.7	61.7
	Symptomatic for C	253	38.3	38.3	100.0
	Total	661	100.0	100.0	

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Table 5: PCL-C Symptomatic Indicators for Cluster D

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not symptomatic for D	151	22.8	22.8	22.8
	Symptomatic for D	510	77.2	77.2	100.0
	Total	661	100.0	100.0	

Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, and other Gendered Maltreatment During Military Service

The majority of participants in this study (n=598 of 780 respondents) self-reported that they experienced events that they consider to be unjust or discriminatory during their military service. Specific answers to the open-ended follow-up question about the unjust and discriminatory events will be reported in the following qualitative results chapter. When asked if they were treated as equally as the men that they served with, 42.8% (n=392) answered "no" out of 723 total respondents. With regards to verbal sexual harassment by an officer of higher rank, 22.5% (n=206) reported "yes". When asked if they experienced verbal sexual harassment by a fellow enlisted service member, 39.8% (n=365) answered "yes". 9.9% (n=91) reported experiencing "Groping, inappropriate touching by an officer of higher rank", and 26.5% (243) answered "yes" when asked about "Groping, inappropriate touching by a fellow enlisted service member". As for the question that asked about "unwanted advances, suggestions by an officer of higher rank" 22.9% (n=210) answered "yes". When asked the same question about "unwanted advances, suggestions by a fellow enlisted service member 40.5% (n=371) answered "yes". When asked about sexual assault by an officer of higher rank, 5.6% (n=51) answered "yes". When asked if they ever experienced sexual assault by a fellow enlisted service member 17.7% (n=162) answered "yes".

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Veteran Identity

Inquiry was made into the self-identification of "veteran" by asking respondents "Do you consider yourself to be a military veteran?" Out of 640 responses, just 2.5% (n=23) answered "no". The question, "When speaking with other people, do you let them know that you are a veteran?" was asked. 26.9% (n=246) answered "yes", 37.8% (n=346) answered "maybe", and 4.7% (n=43) answered "no". Answers to a follow up question asking for reasons why respondents choose not to self-identify will be reported in the qualitative findings in chapter 6.

Utilization of Veteran Services

Inquiring into the use of VA program and service utilization, the question "Are you currently utilizing health and/or wellness services at a VA, Vet Center, of other provider?" was asked. With a total of 505 respondents to this question, 28.7% (n=263) said they use the "VA", 2.3% (n=21) said they use a vet center, and 24.1% (n=221) selected "other provider". "Other provider" was described as "i.e. your church, a non-profit veteran's service organization, or use of private health insurance". A text response was solicited for those who selected "other". The qualitative results for these questions will be reported in chapter 6. When inquiring into access to a women veteran's health clinic within the respondents VA or Vet Center, 26.7% (n=245) answered "yes" and just 74 answered "No". The total response rate for this question was 319. Most respondent selected "I don't know" (n=260) when asked "As a woman veteran, do you feel that you are treated equally and provided equal opportunities to participate in veteran services as male veterans?" 22.2% (n=203) answered "yes" and 17.8% (n=163) answered "no". 82.2% of respondents (n=511) believe that women-specific programming for military veterans is important, as compared to 3.2% (n=20) that responded "no", and 14.6% (n=91) that responded, "I don't know".

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Conclusion

This chapter revealed quantitative findings of the online survey. Demographics for respondents to the online survey have been provided, along with results of the standardized measure called the Post Traumatic Stress Scale Civilian version (PCL-C). The results of this study indicate that a sizeable percentage of respondents self-reported challenges that coincide with mental health complications and emotional problems, and many respondents self-reported a history of sexual harassment and, or sexual assault during military service. The PCL-C was chosen based on studies reporting that women service members experience PTSD at a rate equal to or higher than their male counterparts.

There are some limitations when interpreting the findings. First, I was limited to the self-report of women veterans agreeing to complete the online survey. Validation of military service was not required in the form of a DD-214, which is a Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty that service members receive when they separate from active duty. Members of the Guard and Reserves receive a DD-214 when they serve 90 days or more on active duty. Another certificate that can be used to verify military service is a DD Form 256, Discharge Certificate. Members of the Regular Reserves, Guard, or Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) receive this certificate upon completion of their service agreement. It is possible that if verification was required using these certificates, the outcomes would have been different. However, not asking for verification is one of the reasons that I was able to obtain the sample size that I did. Asking for this documentation for verification purposes would have taken extensive time and likely dissuaded people from taking the anonymous online survey. Its anonymity and ease of application helped with the recruitment process.

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Despite the limitations, the findings reveal that a significant portion of women veterans experienced behavioral health distress while in service, and after leaving military service. Behavioral health distress, particularly PTSD, are noted in the literature as complicating transition from military service regardless of service era, age, or branch of service. The results are being used at this point primarily to provide descriptive statistics of the study population. Further examination is needed using an intersectional analysis to compare sub groups within the population based on age, service era, race and ethnicity, socio-demographic, sexuality and disability status.

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Chapter 5: Results of Qualitative Data & Discussion of Q1, Q2, and Q3

Introduction

This study examined women veterans' personal perspectives of military masculinity and how this impacted their experiences in their transition from military service. Research questions include: 1) What are women veterans' perceptions of masculine and feminine gender roles within military culture? 2) How did women perform gender during military service? 3) What are women veteran's experiences with transition from military service? 4) How does military culture influence transition after service for women veterans? 5) How do community stakeholders understand reintegration and the challenges faced by women veterans? And 6) Do changed performances of gender within military culture contribute to post-military challenges? The following two chapters will provide the results of the qualitative data and a discussion focused on the research questions, providing evidence derived from the results of the study. Quantitative results are discussed in combination with the qualitative data when thought to strengthen the analysis. For this chapter, the discussion will focus on research questions 1, 2 and 3.

Interview Demographics

Initially, I sought respondents for in-depth phenomenological research. I targeted two groups: women veteran community stakeholders and women veterans. Participants for interviews with women veterans were recruited through the online survey. A final question requesting participation for follow-up telephone interviews was asked. Survey participants interested in being contacted for a follow-up interview provided an email address as a point of contact. Surprisingly, the survey recorded 916 respondents, and 276 volunteer email addresses from

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respondents interested in doing follow-up telephone interviews. The greater than expected sample size to the online survey and the large amount of volunteer email addresses I received from interested interview participants is a telling finding in and of itself. The high level of participation in this subject area tells me that woman veterans responded because of a deep interest in sharing their experiences of military service and of transition from service with a larger audience. Their participation also sends a message that they understand the importance of participating in research that can help advance resources for the population. A final remark left by a survey respondent stated, "I pray this study helps women veterans who don't seem to have support or solutions that should have been implemented years ago."

The majority of research on women veterans focuses on the portion of the population that uses VA services. It is important to note that there is an upward trend in the volume of research focusing on this population. More articles have been written in the five years following the 2004 national VA women's health research agenda setting conference, than were published in the previous twenty-five years prior to the conference (Frayne et al. 2013). The fact that the number of women using the VHA has more than doubled over the past decade is generally understood among policy makers. However, because women constitute less than ten percent of the population in the VHA, recruitment of women veterans for research can be very challenging in a single facility. Usually, investigators have to recruit through multiple facilities to make sure they get enough participation to move forward with a study (Frayne et al., 2013). Multi-sited research can be challenging especially when funding and personnel are limited.

When this dissertation research was initiated, I was not yet provided WOC (Without Compensation) status with the Center of Innovation on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (CINDRR) a VA research facility located in Tampa, FL. Even after being hired as a research

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assistant at CINDRR, I still had to wait over six months for my WOC status to be cleared. These and other reasons hindered my ability to recruit at this time from a VA specific population. Thus, I made the decision to attempt recruitment outside of the VA, in hopes to get a sample that may or may not use programs and services through the VA. To my surprise, my recruitment strategy was successful in that within a few short weeks after the online survey was disseminated, 916 women veterans had responded. The focus of my dissertation remains on a phenomenological analysis of a smaller number of individual cases through qualitative interviewing, but I will also speak to some of the findings from the larger sample since it provides extremely rich written content to the qualitative survey questions asked.

The age range of the 26 women veteran interview participants was 26 to 67. Nearly a third (n=8) of the participants were veterans of the US Army, another third (n=9) of the Navy, and the remaining were from the Marine Corps (n=2), Air Force (n=3), or Army National Guard (n=2). Two participants served in a combination of branches or services (n=2). Over half of the interview participants were white (n=19), while the remainder was more or less evenly split among African American (n=2), American Indian (n=2), or Hispanic (n=2). As for the highest level of education attained in one's lifetime, all but one had completed at least some college (n=25), and nearly a third completed an Associate's degree or above (n=16), including 4 with post-graduate degrees. All officers held a master's degree or above (n=3). The majority of interview participants self-reported in having a service-connected disability (n=18). Sixteen of whom were enlisted and 2 who were officers. Although the study specifically targeted veterans whose gender identity is "woman", two participants self-reported their gendered identity as "transgender". The decision was made to still include them in the study because the identity of "woman veteran" was still a part of their life whether they identified as a "woman" during

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military service or as transgender female to male now. A total of (n=5) participants identified as LGBTQI*.

Reading the answers to the open-ended questions received from the online survey made me want to investigate more deeply how women veterans understand gendered role making during military service. In order to better understand gender role making in a military setting and what it means to be a woman in a military setting, I paid close attention to the participant's perception of self pre-military, during military, and after military service. I asked them questions about their family's expectations of women's roles in society before they joined the military, what their perceptions of "being a woman" were in a military setting, and how being a military service member may have changed how they view themselves as a woman today. In interviews, I probed to get an idea of the participant's perception of military culture, and how they felt the military culture they experienced impacted their transition and life after service. For certain categories, I combine supportive data from the online survey when it complemented and strengthened the interview data. The major themes discussed are 1) Characteristics of the Ideal Service Member, 2) Reasons for Joining, 3) Family's Perception of Gender Roles, 4) Perception of Military Service, 5) Impact of Military Service, 6) Gender Maltreatment During Service, 7) Participants definition of military transition, and 8) Participants experience with military transition.

I will begin this section by referring to the results and discussing question 1) What are women veteran's perceptions of masculine and feminine gender roles within military culture? and 2) How did women veterans perform gender during military service? These were challenging questions to investigate with participants as their understanding and interpretation of the concept of "gender" varied. Starting the participant interviews off by inquiring about the

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perceived characteristics of the ideal service member provided a way for me to begin to understand how the participants perceived masculinity and femininity and gender role making within military culture and then inquire how this ideal measured up to the reality of their lived experiences. The final section will discuss the third research question: What are women veteran's experiences with transition from military service and provide a discussion based on the data.

Characteristics of the Ideal Service Member

It can be challenging to build rapport with research participants, especially when interviews are over the phone and only last for an hour or two. In order to break the ice in the beginning of the phone interviews, I asked participants to brainstorm ten characteristics that they felt make an ideal service member. After they came up with the ten ideal service member characteristics, I repeated their list back to them and asked if they considered any of the characteristics to be more masculine or feminine. The purpose of this activity was to use the portrait of the ideal service member painted by the participants to see how they conceptualized an ideal service member and what their preconceived notions of masculinity and femininity are within the context of a military setting.

The ten most frequent adjectives listed by participants were "committed", "dedicated", "flexible", "hard working", "honorable", "has integrity", "resilient", "loyal", "respectful", and "has a sense of humor". When asked if any of the characteristics they listed for the ideal service member were masculine or feminine in nature, the majority of participants answered "no". Few participants classified certain characteristics as more masculine such as being loyal, being a problem solver, being disciplined, and focused. Other adjectives used to describe the ideal service member that some participant's felt were more feminine include: creative, detail oriented, honest, courageous, empathetic, sensitive, good follower, selfless, and great listener. However,

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the occurrence of participants classifying certain characteristics as masculine or feminine during the interviews was rare. In each instance where characteristics were thought to be more masculine or feminine, participants would frame their response by stating, "society may classify these as traditionally masculine/feminine" but this was not usually the participants' personal perception. Even though many of the interview participants faced significant hardship and adversity as service members, there was not one instance where the ideal service member was perceived to be male. According to the participants, as long as the ideal service member embodied a certain set of traits or characteristics, then the gender of the service member did not matter.

When the direction of the interview was turned to the question "what makes a good female service member?" additional characteristics were added by participants such as "having thick skin", "not being easily offended", and "being able to take things with a grain of salt" all of which fit under the umbrella of being "tough". The additional traits and characteristics added for the ideal female service member were adapted through military training by the participants as primary coping skills and offered up as advice for future female military service members in order to be productive in a military environment. As noted by one participant, "you (females) have to work harder just to be seen as an equal". According to another, when "Working with men, you kind of have to learn which things you should be offended by, and which things to just leave alone". In an ideal military setting, participants noted that gender would not matter or be a factor in the performance of the service member. According to one participant, "there are not supposed to be female Marines or male Marines. There are just supposed to be Marines". The statement above is an expression of the ideal and unfortunately does not accurately portray the stories of service as told during participant interviews.

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When analyzing the category of "Reasons for Joining the Military", many codes emerged. These codes are listed in Table 6.1 in the left column, with example statements in the right column of the table. Often times, survey and interview participants provided multiple reasons for joining military service.

Table 6: Participant's Reasons for Joining Military Service

Code	Example Statements
Education benefits	- After being booted from my mom's house I realized I'd never be able to make it into college on my own, so I decided to serve for the educational benefits. - Had $60k in student loan debt and needed the education repayment. - I needed money for college and needed to get away from a horrible home situation.
Compelled after 9/11	- I wanted to defend our country after 9/11. I wanted to feel like I belonged and to fight for the principals in which this country was founded. I wanted the American Dream.
Patriotism-Desire to serve	- Defend my country and protect my family.
Family History of Service	- Followed in my father's footsteps. -It was the family's business…
Recommended by friend/family	- A friend talked me into it.

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Seeking Opportunity	-A girlfriend of mine took the leap first. She was in a similar situation. Smart and hardworking, living a dead-end life. I was followed by my younger sister. - A series of career batteries in a period of indecision indicated that I could be successful in the military. - After 2 years of college I wanted something more challenging and also wanted to get as far away from my family as possible. - Better future for my daughter. -Needed job security and health care
Adventure or Travel	- Wanted to travel the world
Always wanted to serve	- Always knew I wanted to be a part of the military. I always wanted to be in medical. I watched the war on TV and met the soldiers who returned to LA from Vietnam. This just confirmed my passion to want to help.
Unstable or abusive home life	- Alcoholic. Needed to get out of town. -Because my boyfriend was beating me up and I needed to get out of town.
Advance skillset	- Because I wanted to get a skillset where I could help others. -I wanted to acquire more marketable skills and had no money for tuition.
Boredom	- Because I was bored of what I was doing and had no purpose. - Boredom and 1985 Reagonomics…

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Prove oneself	- Because my brother who is 1 year older than me joined the Marine Corps. We all did very well in school, but I thought I needed to prove that I wasn't just a smart pretty girl. I was/am tough. - Because someone told me that I would fail at it. -Wanted the challenge of serving in the best branch of the Armed forces and do something different than what was expected of me. - Once my parents said I couldn't do it I wanted to prove them wrong. - I needed to prove to myself that I was strong and that I could do anything.
No desire for college	- Had no desire to go to college. Liked the change I saw in some friends who had already joined.

Data revealed an extensive link to a family history of service for the majority of women veterans who participated in this study. In the online survey 79% of respondents (n=725) answered "yes" when asked if others in their family served in the military. The theme of family history of service was also identified in the smaller interview sample as a factor that influenced the participant's reason for joining the military. One participant stated, "I had a challenging home life, but I came from a long line of military people. It was just expected that I was going to do that too".

Additionally, the need for benefits, primarily education benefits, was revealed as a reason that participants joined the military. Some participants had existing student loans or could not afford to go to college otherwise. According to one interview participant,

> I wanted to go away to a four-year college and my parents said no, we can't afford it…one of my aunts did have a bachelor's degree but she was still paying it

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> off until she was fifty and I was like, I don't want to be paying off school loans until I'm fifty. The military has great education benefits that was my initial motivation was the education benefits. Initially I thought I would just do my four years, get out and move back home. Then somewhere along the way I realized that it was pretty fun and easy so I reenlisted. But then towards the end of that enlistment I got really burnt out and I was done (Interview with Participant 07).

Using the military as a means to find some kind of upward mobility or better opportunity than what was available to them prior service was a sub category within "reasons for joining". The youngest participant that I interviewed explained to me that she joined at the age of seventeen with her parents' consent because this was her only option of "escaping" the disparate living situation that she grew up in. She stated,

> I joined after 9/11 in July of 2003. I wish I could say that I joined (the Army) because I have this need to serve my country but honestly that, that just wasn't the case for me. For me, my family was very poor growing up…I mean to the point where, you know, we didn't have food in the house and lived in a car several times, so I didn't have the best family environment. So I would say I joined to escape that environment. Nobody ever talked to me about college. Because in my mind, we were too poor to even consider going to college. This was the only option to be successful in life (Interview with Participant 09).

Military career advertising through various media outlets was an effective recruitment tool that successfully piqued participants' interest in joining. Wanting to experience "adventure" and a means to travel was enough to get Elise to sign on the dotted line. According to Elise, "Growing up in a small town in Massachusetts was not my idea of a sense of adventure. I didn't

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want to go to college. I didn't know what I wanted to do. But I knew I wanted to see something besides eastern Massachusetts."

"Patriotism" is provided as a primary reason for joining military service and most often linked to the former service of a male family member. Participants simply stated that they joined because they felt it was "the patriotic thing to do" or the "right thing to do". Growing up in a rural area and "needing a way out" of poverty and/or small-town America is a common theme among participants. For example, one participant mentioned, "the military was the only way out. My grandfather was military, my uncle was military. So not only was it family tradition to join, but it was a financial way out". Another stated, "the only other option was to work in fast food". Using the military as a stepping stone to go to college were the most popular reasons provided by women veterans as to why they joined the military. Higher education not being an option was a reality for roughly half of the interview participants. The following quote provides an example of intersecting reasons for joining the military, including a history of trauma, poverty, wanting an education, and needing to escape a dangerous situation:

> Well, I had several things that happened to me in my life before I joined the Navy. And part of wanting to be in the Navy was not fitting personally with the expectations of what females were where I lived. Even after high school my family was very poor so going to college was not an option that I was aware of because the school system was poor too so there was no talk about financial aid or scholarship. I thought I would never escape. And I was escaping from past traumatic experiences in my life. When I went in, I went in with the mentality that I was going to be the hardest, toughest, pardon my language, bitch that ever entered the Navy (Interview with Participant 03).

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The participant above reveals that joining the military was not a typical role that women from where she was from were encouraged to do, as the military space was considered to be a man's place of work. I found this theme being discussed not only by women veterans who served decades ago, but from women who joined in the post 9/11 era. In joining the military, women are resisting traditional gender roles in pursuit of attainment of a higher economic class from where they began. For this participant, college was not thought to be an option and it sounds like she was never presented with many alternatives with how to gain more skills and education during her pre-military life. Growing up in a poor school system limited her options and in her mind, joining the military was the only option that she perceived could gain her any kind of upward mobility from the life she grew up in. The military for this participant and so many others was truly understood to be the only way out of poverty and often, abusive home situations.

Because joining the military "in order to escape" an unstable or abusive situation is a relevant theme, I turn to supporting data received through the online survey. When asked, "Before you joined the military, did you experience mental or physical abuse by a stranger or someone you know?", 25% of respondents answered "yes" out of a total of (n=495) respondents who answered the question. When asked, "Before you joined the military, did anyone ever use force or the threat of force to have sex with you?" with (n=675) reporting, 18% said "yes". Prior research in both the civilian and military populations has demonstrated that females who experience childhood sexual assault (CSA) are more likely to experience re-victimization in adulthood than females who did not experience CSA. This conclusion is also relevant to males who experience CSA (Schry et. al., 2016; Katz et al., 2010; Ullman et al., 2009; Aosved et al., 2011). These data are significant given that roughly a quarter of those who answered the question self-report a history of violence, meaning that they are at a greater risk of being re-victimized

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later in life. Further analysis of the survey sample is needed to see how many of the 25% of respondents who answered "yes" to having a history of mental and/or physical abuse, or of the 18% who answered "yes" to experiencing force or the threat of force to have sex prior to military service, were actually re-victimized during military service.

Participant's Family's Perception of Gender Roles

When asked if their family supported their decision to join the military, 22% of the online survey respondents (n=667) answered "No". Interviews with the smaller interview sample reveal examples of themes of disapproval that women veterans experienced with their family members. Some family members thought the military was too dangerous for their daughters, or family members perceived a career in the service as better suited for men.

Overall, family support for participant's decision to join the military varied and was based on family's perception of gender roles. For some, their families did not support the participant's decision to join the military because to them, the military is still a man's world and women should not venture into this space. Reflecting on her decision to join the military and her mother's disapproval of this decision, Participant 04 stated,

> Well, they never thought I should be there. I never told any of them when I joined. I took the ASVAB [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery] and made this decision, you know, I never really even thought about it. I never talked to anyone about my decision. When my mother found out she told me that I didn't need to be in there…that I need to keep my mouth shut. The rest of my family would say, 'Nah, that's just (name excluded), she is a free spirit. She does whatever she wants'. Even today, my brothers and sisters, they don't honor my service. Nobody in my family knows what to say about me being in the military.

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> But when they talk about my cousin, they say, "Oh he was a Marine. Uncle Gordon was in the Air Force, he was an engineer". You know what I mean? Our Dad was in the Navy. Recently, I reminded my brother, "you know I'm a veteran, right?" But he didn't even acknowledge it (Interview with Participant 04).

It was common for women to discuss how the service of male family members was honored; yet their own military service was disregarded or sometimes not even acknowledged. One participant told me the story of how she joined the military without first discussing it with her family because she knew her father would be totally against it even though her brother had just joined and everyone in the family was exceptionally proud of him for his service. She said,

> My Dad was not supportive at all, even though my brother had joined the military at the same time that I did…my brother was a hero. But he was not supportive of me at all. He came to my graduation at boot camp but he never wanted me to stay in. You know, my dad is a little old school…even though my [job in the military] was a First Sergeant and I was a Commander…but like, he always respected my brothers career more. He would talk to my brother about his deployments and about his accomplishments and to other men…but he won't talk to me about any of that stuff. Even still. My Dad believes that women should be, you know, wives of men and that's it (Interview with Participant 03).

Shelley had what she referred to as a very successful career in the military, having served twenty-three years from 1991 to 2014 as an enlisted member in the Army. She later commissioned as an officer, eventually attaining the position of a company commander. She discussed how her father always respected her brother more even though they had both achieved so much during their military careers. I could hear how much this bothered her by the change in

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the tone of her voice. Yet, regardless of family disapproval for her choice of career, Shelley, and many of the women interviewed for this study persisted and resisted traditional gender roles through their choice to serve.

One of the youngest interview participants, just twenty-five years old at the time of the interview, shared how she joined the Army right out of high school. She described her decision to join the Army "as a progressive move". Unfortunately, her decision to join the Army became a catalyst for her disenfranchisement from her immediate family after getting to her first duty station. She said that her family did make the effort to come to her graduation from basic training and acknowledged that she "had proved them wrong" but from her perspective, it was clear that they were not proud of what she felt "was the biggest accomplishment" of her life. This young woman, "wanted to be on her own" like so many of the participants interviewed for this study. Leaving her hometown and joining the military subjected her to a much bigger world than what she grew up around. Eventually, she ended up in an inter-racial marriage with an African American man who was also in the Army. She told me that her marriage to a man of a different race than her white-identified family "upset everyone back home and ultimately led to them not wanting to have anything to do with her or her family". With little family or social support, this participant had a challenging transition after serving three years of active duty service in a heavily male dominated military police unit in the Army.

Not all participants came from family's who expressed disapproval of their decisions to join the military. One participant described her family as being "fairly liberal". She said, "They wanted for me whatever I wanted to make me happy. They were fairly surprised when I said I was joining the Air Force just because the county I am from does not have a very big military presence and not a whole lot of people join the military in our community" (Interview with

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Participant 14). This participant described her family as upper middle class. Continuing with this discussion, she said,

> So when I told them I was going to join the Air Force, they were surprised because it was not a lifelong dream of mine. It was more a spur of the moment decision. I went to the recruiter one day then the next thing you know I was signing up. I guess I hadn't put a whole lot of thought into it. My family didn't try to talk me out of it and they were more supportive than anything. When I made it through basic training and they came to my graduation they were super proud of me. Then they were like, "yeah go Air Force!" (Interview with Participant 14)

For the interview participant above, joining the military was outside of the norm for someone in her family to do. However, she still had the support of her family unlike the example above. Admitting to still having difficulties after leaving the military, having the support of her family during and after her time in the military became a positive facilitator to her transition from service.

Perception of Military Service

Some participants had a difficult time articulating their perception of their military service. For most women veterans, their lives during service consisted of a mixture of both positive and negative experiences, resulting in complicated and often time's contradictory emotions and memories. I can assume that the challenge to articulate is also because several noted that they have never been asked about their military service before and the interview questions likely flooded their minds with memories that they had not thought about in quite a long time. Several participants stated that they felt their military service "opened doors" for them after they got out. This is exemplified in the following statement: "I feel that my military service

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opened doors for me in many different aspects. Although it hasn't always been this way, nowadays when people hear I was in the military, you know, they see me in a positive way automatically". Yet, although her perception of her service seemed generally positive, this same soldier acknowledged and discussed at length how tough it was gaining respect from her male peers. As a coping strategy, she said that she made it a point to see the military as a job rather than "a lifestyle". For this soldier, compartmentalizing the Army as "a job" as opposed to allowing the Army to take over her entire identity or be her "lifestyle" was essential to her completing her enlistment. She said,

> I wasn't buddy-buddy with anybody. I had soldiers who served underneath me who would go out to the bars together with their previous squad leaders and drink. I was never that person because I wanted to set boundaries…I think that had a lot to deal with why the men I worked with saw me as a soldier rather than, you know, a potential sexual experience. I made those boundaries right off the bat. (Interview with Participant 22)

Serving twenty-two years in the Army as an officer took a lot of patience and dedication. The Army marketing slogan of "we do more before nine in the morning than most people do all day" is what attracted Participant 12 to enlist. She told me, "I really loved that, I really wanted to be that person. I have always been healthy, an overachiever." As time moved forward and Mary gained rank and leadership as an officer, she eventually ended up as a company commander. I asked her what it took for her to get that level of leadership. She told me that she,

> really wanted it (the responsibility, the leadership, the respect of the soldiers beneath her)…but going back, knowing what I do now, I might not have made the same decisions. Looking back, in order to have this career I gave up too much of

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> my personality to conform to what the military wanted. I feel like I gave up a lot of my (long pause) fun side and my creative side because I didn't feel like those were rewarded. (Interview with Participant 12)

The participant above said she had a "successful" military career, but during her retirement, she is trying to get back to doing the things she always loved where she can exert her "creative side", the side she had to tuck away in a box during all of the years she spent in the Army. "Sacrifice" was never absent from the stories of women's military service that were shared with me. Participants perceive the theme of "sacrifice" differently. Some "sacrificed" time spent with family during deployments. Others discussed "sacrificing" certain aspects of their personal identity that did not fit within the ideal soldier narrative as expressed by the participant above. Many participants "sacrificed" a tangible part of their body, if they were wounded during their time in service. Many others felt they "sacrificed" their mental health because of a commitment to serve in the military.

It is important to consider how participants negotiated their femaleness while in the military, which will be expressed in many different examples throughout this analysis. In the first example quote in this section, the soldier recognized early in her career the damage that certain labels (bitch/dyke/whore) would do to her status within the ranks. For this participant, social activities such as partying or drinking, common social activities mentioned by participants, were presumed to hinder women soldier's ability to achieve the "real soldier" status. Out of a commitment to be recognized as a real soldier, she chose social isolation as a method of non-engagement, disavowing herself from both female and male support systems.

Perceptions of service were often times based on whether or not the participant felt they gained any type of positive skillset or lifelong benefit from their enlistment. Interestingly, it was

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rare to find a participant who spoke of their service as something that they regretted, even when faced with trauma during service. In fact, only one out of the twenty-six interview participants expressed complete disdain for the time she had spent in the military. Even for participants who had experienced a traumatic event or instance(s) that they consider unjust or discriminatory, they expressed that having endured that challenge made them feel that they were "stronger" or "tougher" on the outset. The category of "positive aspects of military service" described by participants were shared in their stories about learning and developing the confidence to lead, experiencing feelings of accomplishment or "empowerment", going through situations that led to an understanding that mistakes lead to consequences, finding camaraderie and long-term friendships with the people they served with, and by learning discipline to work towards goal accomplishment.

The title of this dissertation echoes the answer that one participant provided after being asked to describe her military experience. This statement reflects the complex and contradictory nature of what it means for many veterans to be a woman in a military setting. She stated, "It kind of sounds weird. But I would say that it (her experience in the Army) was beautifully awful because there were beautiful aspects of it, but there were a lot of awful aspects of it too." Many of the women veterans who participated in this study have endured serious mistreatment on behalf of wanting to serve in something that they perceived as "bigger than themselves". The following section will provide the results for emerging categories "impact of military service", "gender maltreatment", and "changed gender performance".

Impact of Military Service

Figure 6.1 provides an example of the coding process used during analysis of the theme "impact of military service". Table 6.2 provides codes and example statements for the category

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"Impact of Military Service". There were many different examples provided by survey and interview participants regarding positive attributes or benefits that women veterans feel they have attained through their service. Some of these were in the form of tangible benefits such as education benefits, which allowed them to pay for college, obtaining a security clearance, which led to a good paying job after service, or job training skills such as those in logistics or management that gave them a professional boost after service. Almost all women veterans interviewed stated that they came out of the military with an increased level of self-confidence, work ethic, and discipline, which resonate with the cultural values of military service. One participant said, "Being in the Army for me gave me self-confidence and direction. I was able to support my family and give them a good life. After getting out of the Army, I was given priority in getting a job at the Post Office and furthering my ability to support my family."

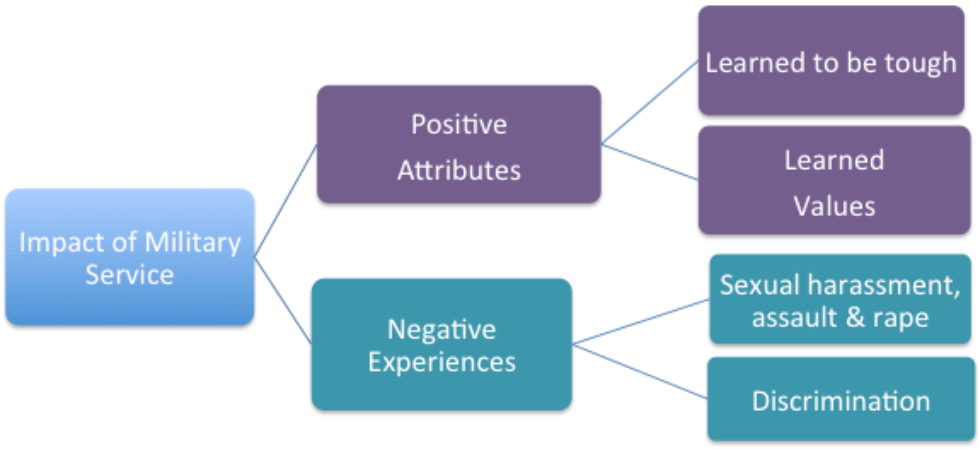

Figure 3: Impact of Military Service

In further analysis of the domain of "impact of military service", sub themes that are both positive and negative emerge. It was common to have conversations with participants who spoke

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at length about some of the undesirable side effects of their military service. This study reveals overwhelming evidence of various forms of gendered maltreatment experienced by women veteran participants. The following section will report in depth on gendered maltreatment and provide qualitative examples of how gendered maltreatment during service continues to impact the participants' lives after leaving military service. One survey participant reflected,

> "My military experience impacted my life greatly in both good and bad ways. I now have permanent injury and live in chronic pain daily, I have issues from the near rape. But I also learned how to endeavor over hardships, make my way through like no matter what is thrown at me, and I have a value system many people my age don't possess. I love my time in the military and have made the most of the cards I was dealt regarding my injury" (anonymous survey respondent).

Within this quote that I am using as an example, the participant experienced inequality and sexual assault during military service. Yet she reflects on what she gained from the military such as strength and a value system that she feels sets her apart from others. Even for women veterans who have an extensive history of military related trauma, they often reflected on the strengths they gained. When asked about the impact of military service on their lives as a whole, I often received the response of "It has helped to make me the person I am today." Overall, participants value the leadership experience they gained during service. Most participants are selective in when they self-identify as a military veteran. If identifying as a military veteran is perceived to positively influence their status or elevate the power that they have in certain situations, then they will identify as a veteran if it is to their benefit. Some participants feel that the public values

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military service and it is often equated with a natural ability to lead. According to one-woman veteran, “Where ever I am I end up in leadership positions even though I do not seek them out”.

Connecting this to the theoretical framing of the discussion, I observed an incredible female autonomy in grassroots collective action occurring among groups of women veterans who are seeking to challenge the status quo of how women and other minority groups are treated within military institutions and in other areas of social justice after they get out. This autonomy or the freedom or independence of one’s own actions has been conceived out of the subordination some women experienced in other spheres of their lives, the military being one example.

Table 7: Self-reported Statements on Impact of Military Service

Codes	**Example Statements**
Positive Impact on personal and Professional Development	-Learned work ethic and discipline -Earned confidence -Learned about goal completion -Taught to adapt to most situations -Taught to think quickly on my feet -Taught me organization -Taught me logistics -Gained appreciation and respect for other cultures -Helped foster my propensity toward leadership and volunteerism -Instilled structure in my life

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	-Learned about integrity -Learned about team building -I got to travel -I got to start my education -Made me a stronger person -Made me have more tolerance and compassion for people who are different -Maturity, selfless service, perspective on the important things in life, grounded -Learned about dedication and service to others -Made me stand up for myself and be more assertive. -I am a better person because of it -Earned and saved money -Learned better coping mechanisms -Not afraid to work or go beyond what is expected of me during employment -Got a security clearance -Gave purpose and pride -Gave sense of accomplishment -Helped pay for higher education -More reliable
Negative Impact on Behavioral and Physical Health	-Experience nightmares and heartache from my service -MST nearly ruined my life

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	-Suffer severe anxiety attacks due to military experience -Had emotional and behavioral issues that have taken years to recover from. -Medical and mental health was impacted negatively by the sexual harassment and MST -Wear and tear on my body -Obtained a service connected disability -Multiple surgeries from getting hurt -Have permanent disabilities -Introduced to alcohol and drugs -Depression -Suicide -Was healthy before deploying and not healthy now -Constantly I edge since leaving the service -Not as outgoing and focused as I once was
Positive Impact on Relationships	-Met my current/former spouse/significant other while in the military -Closer to my husband -Built lifelong friendships -Met people all over the world, even in combat zones - Have met and become friends with some of the best people -Understand other veteran's experiences better

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Negative Impact on Relationships	-I don't trust people -I don't trust people, especially women -Made me become reclusive -Have trouble meeting new people -I have few close friends -Socially isolated because I don't know where I fit in after military
Impact of gendered maltreatment	-Stress from lack of support because I was a female -Made me stronger but more aware of the prejudices in the military. I was always an optimist and believed men and women were equals until I joined the military. -Made me strong but bitter towards all of service men. -MST nearly ruined my life -Due to MST I am unable to hold a job -Physical, mental, emotional abuse from husband in the Navy led to distrust of men -Untrusting of any men in positions of power

Gender Maltreatment during Service

While conducting participant observations or while interviewing and speaking casually with women veterans and current military members, some military service women expressed to me that they are tired of hearing about military sexual trauma and assault. These women felt that women service members and women veterans are being painted with a biased brush because of

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the attention and focus that has been given to military sexual trauma (MST) over the years. I have thought about this frequently while writing up the results for this study. I decided to mention this perspective because my intention in doing this research is to make sure that participants' experiences are accurately portrayed. I acknowledge the existence of the aforementioned perspective, and acknowledge that there are many women whose personal experience in the military does not include a history of gender maltreatment. However, the results of this study having to do with gender maltreatment during service must be accurately reported. To not do so would be to dishonor the trust and experiences of so many who shared the personal accounts of sexualized aggression and assault and have asked to have their stories told.

Participants discussed gender maltreatment in various forms. Several women veterans stated that female service members were "judged" and "scrutinized" at a higher level than male service members. This was exactly the experience described to me by the Marine quoted below. She discussed how hard it was for her to meet the standards of physical fitness because of the "magnifying glass" she was always under. She said,

> Female Marines are judged; they are scrutinized at a higher level than male Marines are. When I was in the total of female Marines was at 6 percent. I don't believe I was purposefully held to a higher standard, but I was definitely put under a magnifying glass for physical fitness. As a female Marine, if you are not on top of your game there, you get a lot of shit for it…There's a lot more to lose, a lot more respect to lose on the line if you are a female Marine. The stakes are a lot higher because there aren't that many of us (Participant 15).

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Another Marine also reiterated the heightened scrutiny based on gender. Although, she added that the high judgment created increased levels of competition between women within the units she served in. She said,

> Everybody ends up judging all the females on performance…which is kind of daunting sometimes. In the units I have been in, there tends to be discord between women because we all know that we are being judged by each other's performance…if someone is like more flirty or doesn't pull their own weight then whatever the perception is, then you end up being tarred with that brush. That created a lot of friction between women and caused us not to ban together. (Interview with Participant 17)

The atmosphere of needing to "prove oneself" dissipated for some service members depending on the career field that they moved into after boot camp. Women are almost always the gender minority in the military, however, some career fields, particularly medical or administrative career fields tend to have higher percentages of women. Women who were often times the only female in their immediate workplace, or one of just a handful, discussed having to combat gender stereotypes and gender maltreatment at a much more frequent rate.

For one woman who identified as an officer, life was described as very isolating. She recalled a couple of instances where she felt the burn of consistent gender stereotyping and a treatment differential due to her gender. She explained to me how during her deployment males and females could not visit each other living quarters. "I had a good friend who was a male…I would constantly get asked if we were sleeping together just because we would go to lunch together" (Interview with Participant 16). She was told by other officers to make sure that she

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didn't spend too much time with any single person. Switching topics, she told me about another instance, but the person she was interacting with was another female. She said,

> I was a Captain. I had a female Lieutenant who came to me with a professional question. This was during a black out fog so we couldn't talk with the door open. So she comes into my quarters at night and I invite her in because she can't just stand in the doorway. We couldn't just stand on the porch because she wanted to have a private conversation with me… what ended up happening is that I counseled for having this female lieutenant enter my room because clearly we are lesbians. (Interview with Participant 16)

Many women expressed that women are categorized as being "bitches, dykes, or whores". Reciprocating the "living under a microscope" theme, the Captain who shared the above story said that as an officer, especially during deployment she became extremely isolated because no matter who she associated with, male or female, it was assumed that she was acting unprofessionally and likely sleeping with them.

Being a Woman in a Military Setting

When asked "what does it mean to be a woman in a military setting?", some veterans stated that they did not see the separation between women and men in their units. One participant stated, "I mean, you see the physical, obviously, and you see like different characteristics, but, (long hesitation) I was a soldier. I wasn't a woman in the Army. I saw myself as a soldier. So this question is a hard one for me to answer" (Interview with Participant 04). Probing a little bit more, I asked her, "Did you feel like you were treated like a soldier?" She responded, "I'm sorry?" I repeated my question, "Did you feel like you were treated like a soldier?" There was another long pause and I heard her sigh through the phone. She responded,

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> Yes. I…Well; I mean…Let me rephrase that. Not at first. I think there needs…there's kind of a process that men go through when there is a female who comes to their unit. They either see women as a potential sexual partner, or they see her as a coworker. I think it takes longer for them to establish (females) as coworkers. So after a while, yes, I felt like I was treated like a soldier, but not at first. (Interview with Participant 04).

The theme of "being under a microscope", "having to prove yourself", and at first being seen as "a sex object until you proved yourself" was experienced by women regardless of service era. Interview participants who served thirty years ago as well as those who served during the post 9/11 shared similar perspectives with regards to having to prove themselves in order to not be considered a sex object by the men they served with. We like to tell ourselves that things have changed. But with regards to the way that women are sexualized it is believed by the dominant class that they are breaking in to a male space, the stories regardless of service era still carry striking similarities of sexist military environments.

For women that had assumed leadership positions where there were male soldiers below them, experiencing disrespect because of their gender was common. This seemed especially apparent when women veterans shared stories of missions that participated in during deployment. According to one woman in the Army, the only reason she was "allowed" to argue with her male platoon leader is because she had the rank to do so. She said,

> My platoon leader was not used to working with women so he used to try and put me down all of the time but I was always arguing with him because I had the rank to do it. On my first mission out there, we had fatalities. On my very first mission.

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> It was like Murphy's Law. Our leader was taken off the road. After that, I was given my own team. (Interview with Participant 14)

At the time of this deployment to Iraq, the participant quoted below was only 24. She had celebrated her twenty-fifth birthday in Baghdad when she was on a mission. When she got handed the job of convoy operator, she had twelve soldiers on her team. She had gained the respect of her team, but when she ran into other companies or teams, she experienced a lot of disrespect from them. She said,

> People had told me that they don't work with women or that they don't take orders from women and that sort of things. But my team stood up for me. They were my family and that is why I say I would do anything for them because they would do anything for me. I experienced the bad but it was more good. (Interview with Participant 05)

For women who served in combat operations such as the soldier quoted above, little details were ever revealed about the missions, how they felt about the missions or the war effort, or their political stances in general. The soldier above fought for her team, because her team fought for her. But as a woman, she was not just fighting in a war like her male colleagues. She was fighting an additional battle, one that the rest of her male colleagues could not relate to. Her leadership was not just assumed. She had to first prove she could be a leader and a soldier because her gender subordinated her. She was not recognized as a "real soldier" by the people who took the same oath of service that she did.

Pregnancy was suggested to pose a challenge for some women during service. It is not uncommon for pregnancy to be used as a justification as to why women should not be allowed in certain jobs in the military. This was especially apparent in the comment threads of articles

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written after the first two women passed the Army's elite Ranger training last year. Those opposed to women in combat argue that a lot of resources are put into job training. When a woman gets pregnant, she can no longer work certain jobs and is not able to deploy, or she is sent home from deployment. Therefore, it is argued that once pregnant, resources have been wasted on training a female who is now unable to fulfill the mission and the mission is supposed to come first. The pregnant woman is taking up the spot of a man who will never be at risk of becoming pregnant. The woman, because of her gender and ability to bear a child is not only tagged as unfit for service, but as getting pregnant because she does not want to deploy. In 2011 Army soldier Bethany Saros (2011) wrote a compelling personal narrative for the online publication Salon, about her experience with pregnancy in the Army. She spoke towards the stigma attached to females getting pregnant before or during deployments. She said,

> One of the stigmas attached to a female getting pregnant on a deployment is the assumption that she did it on purpose. It's whispered about any time the word "pregnancy" comes up right before and during a combat tour. The unspoken code is that a good soldier will have an abortion, continue the mission, and get some sympathy because she chose duty over motherhood. But for the woman who chooses motherhood over duty, well, she must have been trying to get out of deployment (Sarros 2011).

Participants in this study reiterated the stigma discussed by Bethany. For one participant, the discrimination started when she was no longer able to wear her regular BDU's (battle dress uniform) and had to wear a maternity uniform. She said,

> It was like I was invisible. Even though my rank was still clearly displayed on my uniform, I could walk by people and they wouldn't even look at me let alone

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> salute me. And so, I guess if you're a pregnant female you can't be somebody that needs to be paid attention to…it's like being pregnant absolves you of all leadership qualities. Obviously, people who are pregnant aren't leaders. (Interview with Participant 19)

As shown in the example above, for this officer, pregnancy was thought of as a shameful act. Women service members are disrespected, and the pregnancy often times results with their leadership status erased. They become "invisible" once the pregnancy becomes public knowledge. Although not a direct finding of this data, I have personally witnessed women hiding their pregnancies for as long as possible because of pregnancy discrimination from their peers and also leadership. In the particular case that happened within a unit where I served, a fellow service member was afraid of how the pregnancy would hurt her career as one of the only women in the unit, so she did not tell anyone until others questioned her health in the unit once her physical appearance began to change. This can be especially daunting for a service member who gets pregnant early in her military career. Fear of reprisal or punishment and disrespect for pregnancy during military service is a real threat to some female service members.

Changes in Gendered Performance as a Result of Military Service

During interviews, some participants revealed observable changes to their own behavior that they are now able to reflect upon post military service. The changes discussed had to do primarily with gender presentation and expression in a physical sense, and also revealed a theme of wanting to reclaim certain levels of gendered expression that they felt they had put away during their service. This pattern is shown in the following quote provided by a Marine:

> I actually found that suppressing my more feminine characteristics that I do have was beneficial (during service). It was beneficial to my day-to-day operation as a

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> Marine. However, I found that when I got out, I went back towards wanting to reclaim those for myself. This day I rarely wear pants. I almost exclusively wear dresses because it just feels more comfortable. I had to swing to one extreme, one masculine extreme—and part of it was to avoid comments, harassment, and that sort of thing. I felt like I had to keep that under wraps. There's another reason—I didn't want people knowing about my sexual taste because the question would be like, "Oh great! Can we watch?" No, I would say, you may not [laughs]. Maybe they were half kidding but Marines are very highly sexualized. It's a really charged environment and I didn't want to put out any signals one way or another. That would not have done me any good. (Interview with Participant 15)

The youngest participant enrolled in the study is a twenty-five year old Army veteran who served for two years 2009 to 2011. She opened up about how before she joined the military, she thought she was pretty and beautiful. She said,

> I always got my nails done, and I would wear flats with little designs on them and stuff. And then after being in the military I don't do any of that anymore. I don't wear makeup, I don't do my nails, I still cut my nails short (even after getting out). I used to get my hair curled all the time and wear it down and after being in the military, every day I still put it in a bun. I don't wear flats, I don't wear any girly kind of shoes. I wear boots and sneakers. That's it. I'm not as girly as I was before. (Interview with Participant 23)

For the Marine and the soldier quoted above, adapting to their environments meant changing how they presented themselves in dress and appearance while in and out of uniform. Their prior military gender expression was one that that described as very feminine. Both sharing

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how they loved to wear dresses and makeup, yet gave this style preference up almost entirely after entering active duty in the Marine Corps and in the Army. Additionally, as a Marine who identifies herself as a lesbian, the participant felt that keeping her sexuality to herself was important primarily because of the sexualized attention she received when this information was publicly known. Important to note is that this Marine served after the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell. The data reveals more extreme levels in changes to gender performance and expression in the Army and the Marines. This is important as it highlights that culture and practices vary among the branches of service.

When asked to describe what it meant being a woman in a military setting, one interview participant responded, "life changing". It was common for women service members to describe being a woman in a military setting as much different from what they were taught growing up. Some described being raised in households where women were supposed to be "soft and helpful" and in some cases, "submissive". One participant explained that, "In the military you don't take a back seat ever. In the military, you speak your mind, you speak loudly, you speak confidently. You present yourself as confident, as assertive" (Interview with Participant 09). For another participant who described her pre-military self as a "quiet, shy, nerd not winning any popularity contests as a kid", stated that while in the military she learned things she never thought she would learn. She stated,

> In the military as a woman you just change. You can't help it. It is a world that is completely separate from everything that you have ever known…but I was taught to be proud of my accomplishments and that those accomplishments should be recognized. I was taught that there was nothing I couldn't do. (Interview with Participant 09)

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The participant quoted above described the mentorship that was critical to her development as a young officer. She had a supervisor who would come into her office and tell her things about a job she was supposed to do that sounded "ridiculous" to her. At first, she was hesitant to ever speak up because she was early in her career. She reflected about a point in time where she realized the importance in being "more assertive" when working with other people. After being given a task by her supervisor that "was clearly wrong", she told him "okay, Sir" and went back to her desk to work on it. After a few minutes of deep contemplation, she got up, walked to his office and knocked on his door. She said to him, "Sir, I don't think that this is the right thing to do". His response to her was, "Yes, I was waiting for you to tell me that. If you knew it was wrong from the get go why didn't you speak up and say something? You need to learn to step up with your opinion and be confident". For service member, mentorship was critical in her development as an officer. In talking about what she learned as an officer she said, "That kind of mentorship and guidance like really helped me develop the ability to know my stuff, to express my opinion to a group assertively, and back that up with facts, with data." (Interview with Participant 09)

Interestingly, this same veteran also discussed a practice of "code switching" that was part of her everyday reality. She said, "in my unit there were only ever a couple of people that knew me personally. Most people only knew me as an officer…if that makes any sense. And those are very different things. Me as a person is very different than as a Lieutenant Colonel" (Interview with Participant 09). We had talked about this more in depth and she told me that she had "two very different personas" while in the military. This was the way that she "got through it all".

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Another officer interviewed, discussed some of the barriers that she felt hold women back in professional workspaces and most definitely in the military. She said,

> As a young officer I learned that men always felt confident, they never showed doubt. And I think that women frequently doubt ourselves. And we verbalize that doubt in some ways. So I learned that in order to be successful I had to show no doubt, just like a man, even if I was unsure if the decision I was making was the right one. (Interview with Participant 12)

For all of the women interviewed, changes to gender performance or gender presentation, although in some cases used as a coping method in a sexually charged male dominated environment, were perceived as positive attributes. The most common descriptors provided by women veterans with regards to the attributes gained during military service are similar to those characteristics used previously to describe the ideal service member. Women described learning how to be confident, assertive, and tough, all traits that they associate with military masculinity. However, military masculinity in this sense was a positive force in their lives, regardless of the presence of any bad experiences such as military related trauma.

Participant Experiences with Gender Maltreatment

During the phone interviews, I did not ask women about sexual trauma or harassment. However, if it came up, I checked in with the participant to see if she wanted to discuss it further if this is what she wants to do. In staying in line with the safety protocol for the study, I always made sure to let her know that if she felt uncomfortable we could move on or stop the interview and continue at another time. Thirty-one percent (n=8) of interview participants brought up instances of military sexual assault during their time serving in the United States military. To reiterate the quantitative findings from the online survey as reported in the previous chapter,

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5.6% (n=51) respondents answered "yes" when asked about sexual assault by an officer of higher rank. When asked if they ever experienced sexual assault by a fellow enlisted service member 17.7% (n=162) answered "yes".

There was never an instance where MST or sexual harassment came up, that the interviewee chose to move on. Interview participants always wanted to make sure that their stories were recorded; that they were being heard. For some, this was the first time participating in an interview that had to do with women veterans. Therefore, they felt compelled to share even the most intimate details of their service and trauma. To honor them and their stories I listened with intention and thanked them for this period of trust between us. This dissertation research just touches the surface of these stories. It was during the collection of the interviews and hearing the stories from my sisters, that I had to practice an intense level of self-care in order to make sure that I could move forward past data collection, but also analysis and writing. It was during these conversations and reflections that I drew in depth from the experience and wisdom of my feminist anthropologist mentors.

The prolonged impact of MST and military related harassment is devastating and often times is not addressed until years after the participant's service has ended, sometimes decades. Participants of this study, who shared stories of MST and the implications that it has had on their lives after service, often spoke not just about the incident that resulted in the trauma, but about their struggle in dealing with various comorbidities occurring because of the trauma. Multiple attempts at suicide, sometimes several co-occurring behavioral health diagnoses and relationship challenges whether intimate in nature or platonic resulting in isolation of the veteran, are mentioned as the most disruptive forces in life after MST. Participants also discussed some of the

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rehabilitation programs they have participated in while searching for a way to move forward in their lives.

According to one woman veteran,

> As a result of the rapes, assaults and harassment, after I discharged I tried to commit suicide. My life was forever altered. When I was discharged (from military service) I was told I no longer had any benefits. So until my 40's and the emergence of the Internet, there was nothing. Eventually I came across the VA.gov site. There, I saw a small bit of information about sexual trauma. I finally couldn't handle the struggle of indecision and contacted the only woman on the list. Today, after 8 years of therapy with the VA, and 8 years of group therapy (and counting) I receive full benefits for PTSD as a result of sexual trauma (MST). The only reason I do is because I tracked down my female commander (miraculously) who wrote a letter confirming the results of all of what happened, but she only knew of one instance. That was only because a female Sergeant caught me running away with my uniform all apart and forced me to report it. I also had a friend who found me through a forum on the Internet who took up my cause. She was a New York lawyer and was relentless. And that's how I have the life I know today. I have had much difficulty with relationships. Currently I have been single for 15 plus years. My therapy work has given me friendships that are safe, but I haven't been able to venture any further than that. (Interview with Participant 03)

A woman veteran who did not seek treatment for MST until over a decade after she walked away from her military enlistment is the author of quote above. It demonstrates the

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prolonged impact that MST can have on the individual. The depth of the trauma permeates not just into the survivor's personal relationships, but often inhibits their ability to perform in social settings and maintain employment for extended periods of time. The participant below discusses how she longs to maintain employment, but she states that her PTSD caused from MST has impacted her self-esteem in such a way that her potential to obtain jobs that she is qualified for is inhibited. She said,

> I am denied jobs that I qualify for because men, who served during the same years, are given veteran preference and I am not. Due to PTSD stemming from MST I have issues with self-esteem and confidence so I opt for the easy and low paying jobs like clerical work. I have a service dog to help me with anxiety and this has limited my range of employment. It also causes potential employers to turn toward other candidates. Despite all this I am very proud of my service career. (Interview with vet 24)

The final sentence of her quote is a common theme that I often heard from participants who discussed the impact of trauma caused by sexual assault in the military. The participants all wanted to serve and they are proud of their military service regardless of the unfortunate events that happened to them. When reflecting on her military service, one participant noted that her "life has been impacted in positive and negative ways. On one hand, I learned and did so much and that experience can never be taken away. On the other hand, my life was nearly ruined by MST" (Interview with Participant 08). According to another participant:

> I am proud of my service and in many ways it made me stronger. It gave me the discipline I needed to complete college. I got to see the world and have an adventure. On the other hand, I suffer from PTSD from MST, which has made my

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symptoms of bipolar unbearable. I am not able to hold a job at this point in time. (Interview with Participant 11)

One participant who served in the Navy attributed sexual assault and harassment in the military as being intertwined with military culture. She said,

Participant: "Unfortunately things happened. The navy was a positive experience for me and I would do it again, you bet. And do I miss it? You bet I do. But the other experiences shaped me as a person. And they shouldn't have happened. But they did."

Interviewer: "Do you want to share any of those experiences?

Participant: Sure. They were as simple as my chief…again; it is a culture thing…It I was going to go out and have a few drinks with you… go back to the boat together. It was as simple as my chief telling me to meet him in the burst locker in 15 minutes. To me, I thought I was hanging out with people that I could trust. Unfortunately it ended with me being drugged and sexually assaulted. More than once. By different people". (Interview with Participant 13)

An occurrence of sexual assault often times results not in the participant regretting their military service, but in distrust for those whom they thought they could trust. Participants discussed various physical and behavioral health comorbidities resulting from trauma associated with sexual assault, the most common being PTS accompanied by social isolation. Social isolation gravely impacts participant's lives, the inability to maintain relationships and an inability to maintain gainful employment being prominent sub themes derived from the data when there is a history of sexual assault. Due to past occurrences of sexual assault being difficult to prove because of unreported incidents, participants may find themselves in situations where

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they are facing economic turmoil, which can lead to homelessness. Sexual assault was the common denominator among three interview participants who discussed challenges with homelessness during their transition from service.

Transition from Military Service: Participants Understanding

The participant's discussed military transition not as a single event occurring after one leaves the service, but as multiple periods in time across the service member's military career. For those unfamiliar with military service, "transition" may be thought of as a process of events that occur only after a military member moves from military service to civilian life. However, from the participant's perspectives as presented here, several different transitions may have occurred during their time in the military and after their service ended, each presenting with its own unique challenges.

Figure 6.1 below provides a visual picture of the different kinds of career trajectories experienced by the interview participants in this study. Each arrow indicates an experience with a process of transition. This graphic is not exhaustive as it only illustrates the career trajectories of some of the participants in order to provide the reader with an example of when a military transition might occur. Additionally, it is important to note that others outside of this interview sample could very well experience other military career trajectories not pictured in the graphic. A military transition can take place within the context of transitioning home from deployment and also transitioning out of the military, whether this is from active duty to a civilian role or from active duty to the Reserves or National Guard.

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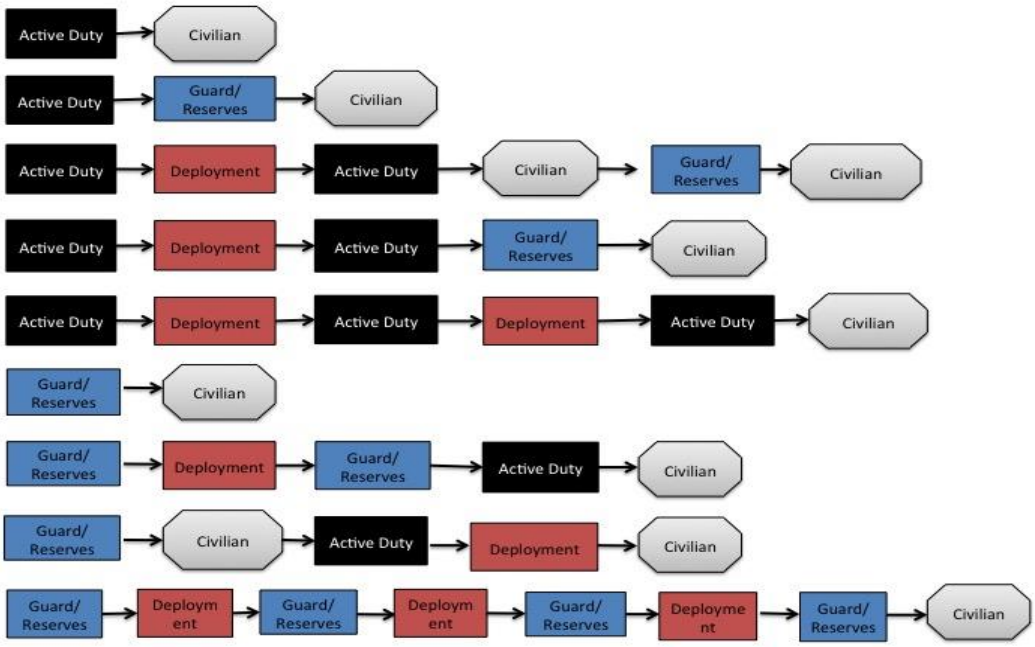

Figure 4: Participant Military Career Trajectories

The following section includes participants' understanding and definitions of military transition in relation to their own experiences. Describing military transition as a "different way of thinking" was a common theme. This is described in the following example— (Transitioning from military service is) "a completely different way of thinking in many cases. Because all of a sudden you're going from a world where being one-hundred percent physically fit and giving one-hundred percent all of the time is an expectation and the norm" (Interview with Participant 16).

Participants often defined "transition" within the context of moving from one career to the next, which is demonstrated in the following example:

> I would define (transition) as changing your occupational task, because that is what it is, whether you are going from active duty to now you're going to be

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> reserves or now you're going to be National Guard…so I would say changing your occupational status. (Interview with Participant 12).

Changing your occupational status may occur while wearing the uniform. Most participants who served for a period of time over six years often described having participated in more than one career field. Changing occupational status also happens after leaving the military, going from the military to an institution of higher learning, or from the military to a job in the civilian sector. Additionally, for those who are disabled and released from military service, a transition occurs when medically retired. According to another participant, military transition was described as:

> If you're talking military to civilian, it means where you were active duty and you are no longer active duty and you have gone into the civilian world. Maybe now you have no association with the military, or maybe you are now in the reserves…or maybe you have no association with the military whatsoever and you're retired…and I have done both. (Interview with Participant 6)

Transition was also defined as time period of rediscovery:

> From my point of view when I define military transition it's the part of trying to rediscover who you are. Because you are this very defined person when you're in the military. You have a very defined role. You have a very defined purpose. When you transition to civilian life none of that is there anymore. You have to try and make all the decisions for yourself. (Interview with Participant 14)

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Transitional Challenges

Figure 6.2 provides a visual of the domain "barriers to military transition" and some codes that were found during the analysis of the interviews collected with women veteran participants.

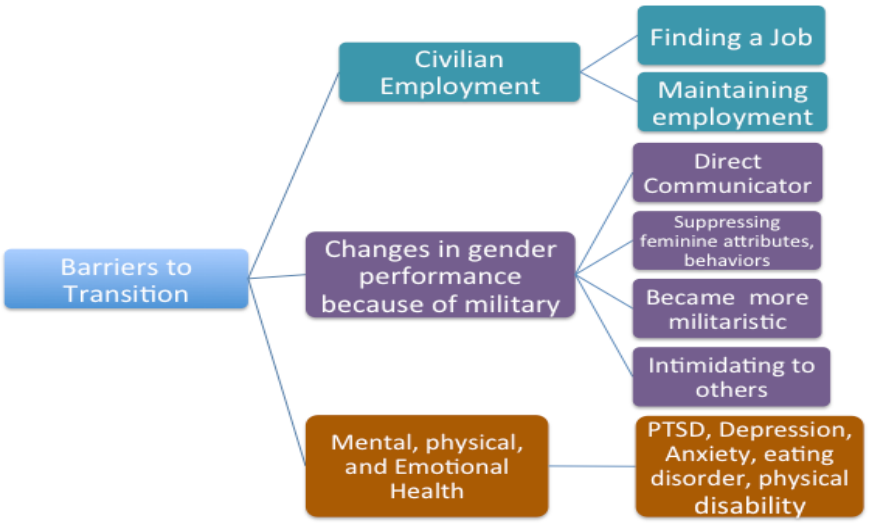

Figure 5: Barriers to Transition

Loss of Respect

The act of switching jobs after leaving military service is a challenge associated with military transition. However, there also the perceived loss of respect, rank and order that made the transition to a new environment outside of the military even more difficult for participants. While reflecting on her transition from military service, a participant said,

> I think you have to be strong. Sometimes you're not taken seriously. Sometimes your credentials, the things that you did in the military that you could do on the outside, are not taken seriously. Especially in the medical field. Sometimes civilian jobs don't feel we were trained well enough when really it is the exact opposite. We were probably trained better than anybody. (Interview with Participant 03)

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A prior Army officer told me how she felt she had gained a high level of respect from her colleagues while serving. She was an officer, achieving the rank of major in the Army. She has a very positive outlook of the Army because she feels that as an officer, she was treated very well. The Army, she said, "took care of her" and it led to career advancement that she was proud of. In discussing her transition after her retirement, she said challenges arose from being caught in "the unknown". She knew what to expect with the Army and having to transition into a position as a civilian that she really had no understanding about, was intimidating to her. When she retired, she was older and had to enter into a completely different career field. She felt like she was eighteen again having to deal with a great sense of instability career wise. The second challenge was having to deal with what she felt was a loss in the level of respect she was used to during military service because of the rank that she had acquired. Participants serving in officer capacities were the only ones to mention a sense of loss due to not having the recognition for rank that they were previously accustomed to while in service.

Dealing with Disability

Twenty-eight years of military service had a heavy impact on this participants' life. In the "civilian world…a lot of your day-to-day decisions aren't critical and don't affect people's lives in such a significant way" (Interview with Participant 12). She revealed that she is currently classified as 100% disabled, in part for musculo-skeletal issues with her low back and for mental health diagnoses. After her transition out of the Army in 2006, she became aware of a difference in how disabilities are perceived inside of the Army and outside of the Army. In the Army, a disability becomes just another reason for "them to kick you out" even after years of dedication and honorable service. The feelings of being discarded and launched into an unfamiliar setting

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outside of the regimented military institution that she was accustomed for three decades, led to feelings of despair, confusion and hopelessness.

Homelessness

Two of the interview participants mentioned their struggles with homelessness after service. When asked about seeking any kind of services available to veterans post military service, Keisha said,

> Honestly, I tried about a year ago when basically my kids and I were in transition from moving from Alabama where their father is from, back to Massachusetts where I am from. We didn't have any place to stay. I couldn't find work so I tried calling the local VA office and I was told they couldn't do anything for me because their funding was frozen and they didn't know when the funds were going to be unfrozen. They couldn't offer me any help. I tried going through the VA to at least find a home for my children and was told by the woman that she didn't believe my story. She didn't believe that we were in the situation we were in and that if we were really in that bad of a situation we should try a local government program. But I had already called around looking for these and was basically told by them that they couldn't help me either. I mean the VA gave me a list of some local places to call but I didn't have any luck.

Impact to Identity

The following example describes the impact that military service and trauma during service has on the participants' identity and transition from military service.

> You can't carry over who you were before because it just doesn't fit in the civilian world…anywhere. Even if you get to almost the same identical job that

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> you did while you were in the service you can't be that person in the civilian world. So I think it's that redefining who you are, trying to find out where you fit. When I was going through my own transition from service, I did not realize that or understand that (who she was in the military would not fit into her now civilian role). So for me, that moment in my life was very difficult. It was a struggle. There was a lot of depression. I had post-traumatic stress. I didn't understand what was going on in my life and that was before there was an open conversation about MST (military sexual trauma) and about post-traumatic stress (PTSD). And so it was a very dark time for during that period. (Interview with Participant 07)

Being Uprooted and Deployment Stress

The above participant joined the Army after serving in ROTC during college from 1995 through 1998. She commissioned in 1998 and was active duty for four years until 2002. After her active duty enlistment, she was put into a status of "inactive ready reserve" meaning that she could still be called up in times of war. This is exactly what ended up happening. Participant 07 served in the Army Reserve from 2004 through 2010, then decided to continue her service and transferred into the Army National Guard from 2010 through to 2013. She has a total of seventeen years time in service and reached the rank of lieutenant colonel. With three deployments having shaped her understanding of military transition, she discussed how coming home from her last deployment to Iraq was extremely difficult. She was extremely suicidal and was drinking heavily. I asked her if she wanted to talk about if she felt these challenges were due to her deployment and she said that she definitely did because she was not struggling emotionally like this prior to the deployment. She knew that she needed some kind of assistance and begrudgingly went to the Vet Center in the town she was living in. This was not successful

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as she said she was pushed to speak with "female psychologists who had zero military experience…and tried to hug her". She is not a hugger so she did not react well to this invasion of personal space. Like many participants that at one point or another found themselves in crisis, she knew she needed help but was not being connected to the appropriate services, or given the opportunity to have a say in what type of services she felt could help her out at this time.

Veterans who were deployed after 9/11 and were activated and deployed while in the Army National Guard or Army Reserves often faced deployments that were extensive in length often lasting twelve months or more in duration. One participant discussed having gone on three deployments overseas after 9/11. Two of these deployments were a year in length, and the last deployment of her career was eighteen months in length and was for her the hardest one. Not only was this deployment extremely long, she was very isolated in the sense that she lacked a lot of contact with "other Americans" throughout its duration. She explained to me how she was the only person located at her particular location running multifunctional logistics for cargo aircraft flying out of Afghanistan and into this forward operating base that she was located at. She was in charge of getting the cargo planes back to a port where they would be shipped back to the United States or wherever they needed to go. The one thing that may have made her transition less stressful than it was for others after the deployment is that she was single and had no children waiting for her return at home. Yet, for those with families, these lengthy deployments created intense strains on familial relationships due to the absence of a parent or spouse missing out on important events such as birthdays, holidays, illnesses, and even deaths in the family and the inability to return home for a funeral.

Frequent changes in military orders resulted in participants having to move from base to base, some experienced this regularly. Having spent nine years in active duty, Participant 19

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reflected on how tired she got from "constantly being uprooted". As soon as she "got really tight with people" she had to pack up and start over so it was difficult for her to build and maintain close friendships. In the nine years that she was on active duty, having served from 2000- 2009 in the Air Force, this participant was stationed at three bases and had been deployed four times. Like most of the participants, she was proud of her service and said she "would not trade it for anything", but having to be mobile so frequently led to her being burnt out which was her main reason for getting out.

Lack of Reintegration Information and Services

One of the few Marine interview participants discussed the lack of reintegration services when available when she came home from deployment to Iraq in 2005. It was standard protocol for returning Marines to receive what enlisted members referred to as the "Don't beat your wife brief". Participant 04 discussed its brief contents as having minimal value. She provided an overview of it stating, "Basically, they said don't come home and hit your wife and beat your kids. That's not okay". When she transitioned out of the Marine Corps in 2008, she said she was mandated to attend a couple of classes but none of them prepared her for her transition after the service. She said, "they just let you go and that's the biggest overall issue I had". Like many others I talked to, she was not informed that she qualified for services at her local VA hospital after leaving the Marine Corps.

In discussing some challenges participants faced with military transition, they often talked about "not fitting in" or feeling like they were always "intimidating people at work". Women service members are facing a double bind upon leaving military service and transitioning to the civilian workforce. What I observed is that the professional gender performance that they adapted to and that worked for them while in the military ends up creating

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friction for them after they leave. This is because US society still largely functions under binary understandings of traditional masculine and feminine behavior. Many women service members fall outside of these traditional gendered norms in that they learned to communicate directly, take action instead of sitting on the sidelines, not back down when faced with hardship. Many said that they are perceived as intimidating by their civilian peers. Overall, the characteristics that they were describing about themselves are considered to be traditionally masculine traits. The challenge they discussed connects to negotiating femaleness. Ultimately, the result for many women service members was isolation after service due to an inability to fit into feminine civilian roles.

Transition From Service Member to Military Spouse

Four interview participants "transitioned" into the role of military spouse. In the example below, the participant felt that she did not experience a true military transition until her spouse left the service. Another participant revealed that she felt she did not transition at all once she became a military spouse because her identity as military spouse actually trumped her identity as a veteran. She described feeling as though her own service did not count at all. Defining military transition, Participant 08 noted,

> I never transitioned out of the military for another twenty years after my discharge because within six months I married a sailor. So, I continued to be attached to the Navy still…Being a Navy wife, I kind of had one foot in the door in the Navy and one foot in the door of civilian life, you know, being a Navy wife. (Interview with Participant 08)

In considering the multiple and intersecting identities of women veteran interview participants, participants described the identity of "military spouse" being took publicly

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acknowledged over as opposed to the participants' identity as a veteran. This is observed in the following quote:

> I was in what they call the roll back program in the 80's where I had to separate from the service early or re-enlist for another four years. My husband at the time was in the process of becoming an officer. So at that time, they didn't want enlisted and officers to be married at all. It didn't even matter if you were married before becoming an officer. They still frowned on it. So they would have discriminated against him for promotion. So I opted to get out after speaking to many family and friends, two of which were generals. Unfortunately, I didn't have the GI bill because I was with the Vietnam era where you had to pay into it. At that time, supporting a family on enlisted pay, I couldn't afford to pay into an education program. So I didn't participate in that. I didn't have medical available to me because the VA was not set up to take care of women. I did attempt to go to the VA hospital once, but I was turned down for services because of my gender. I was pretty angry at the military for a lot of years…. I feel like I didn't transition out of the service when I got out because I became a wife. Ultimately, my service didn't count. I wasn't a veteran in the eyes of my community. (Interview with Participant 11)

In the example below, this participant describes being treated as a "second class citizen" once she transitioned into the role of military spouse.

> I heard this before I got out but it was just second-hand information so I thought people were being dramatic. But when you go from being an active duty service member to being a military spouse, you seriously become a second-class citizen.

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> You know, I know all of the lingo. I would arrange our PCS (permanent change of station) moves and talk to all of the branch managers. But when they heard me identify as the spouse, it was like nobody would talk to me. (Interview with Participant 15)

Caregiving and the Practice of Self Care

One participant identified as a caregiver for her (former) husband who was severely wounded after stepping on an IED in Afghanistan in April of 2012. At this time, she happened to be pregnant with their third child. Her date of separation also happened to be in 2012 and she described the challenges she faced in the months leading up to her date of separation. She said,

> Before my husband got hurt, there was a lot of information thrown at me that I didn't really grasp. Like I didn't know how to do a disability claim. I had no idea as far as using my education benefits where I should go. I mean, I had been told I think, but it is so much information at once that I didn't have a chance to retain any of that information…But then when I went to Walter Reed with my husband there was a much slower transition process for him. I would go to the briefings and all of that with him. It was a much fuller process at this facility and I got more usable information from them. When he (her husband) got hurt, I was already enrolled in college and I was getting ready to use my education benefits. But I had to take a step back and obviously couldn't do that (start school). I changed everything to go be with him and be his caregiver. While I think I made the proper steps to have a clean transition from the military and into the civilian world…I obviously got thrown a huge curve ball in my life. It (him getting injured) changed everything. It was definitely overwhelming.

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The biggest challenge she mentioned, even before her husband was injured and in the months leading up to her date of separation was not having time for herself. She said,

> I was the training NCO (non-commissioned officer) for my company so I still had a lot of responsibilities…so while I should have been focusing on preparing myself and my family for my transition out of the Army, I still felt there was a lot of responsibility hanging over me at my job, you know to make certain meetings and do certain things. I didn't have enough time to really focus on me and my transition process because I had all these other responsibilities with my job. (Interview with Participant 09)

This participant and her husband ended up separating. Yet, in many aspects she still fulfills the role of being his primary caregiver. Women who identify as veterans and as caregivers are an understudied area.

Facilitators to Transition Discussed by Participants

The primary theme "facilitator to military transition" was explored with interview participants. Sub themes emerged including "having a strong personal work ethic", "access to steady employment and income", "obtaining an education outside of the military", "mentorship", "a strong presence of female mentors", and "strong social network and support". With regards to a strong social network, participants mentioned that the most impactful support came from family members or close friends. The following includes example statements provided by participants.

Having Primary Needs Met

Whether participants were transitioning out of the military completely, or were serving in the guard or reserves and coming off of a deployment, having gainful employment and a steady

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income was brought up as a positive facilitator to transition from military service. As noted by one participant, "Out of my three deployments, the last one when I came back from Iraq was the worst for me. It was really terrible. The thing that helped me navigate without completely collapsing was the fact that I had a stable, salaried position that was waiting for me. Plus, I was already through school, I owned a home. For me, financial stability was key" (Interview with Participant 09). In this example, stability with regards to housing, educational attainment, and financial earning potential helped facilitate this participant's transition after a very challenging deployment. She admitted to struggling through some emotional challenges due to grief and combat trauma. However, since her basic needs were being met, she was able to "compartmentalize" the emotional challenges and get help, while not having to worry about having her basic needs met. This was common among the officers interviewed as opposed to service members who were enlisted. Those who are enlisted are less apt to own a home, have employment lined up after service, and already have obtained a higher education which ultimately leads to a higher earning potential and increased opportunity for career advancement. Additionally, having a stable yet flexible working environment upon return helped participants transition after a deployment and also when transitioning out of service completely. As mentioned by a participant, "I had leeway in my job. I had a salaried position that allowed me to work from home if I needed to. This helped me compartmentalize any kind of personal struggle that I was having. I could get help and it didn't bleed into the rest of my life" (Interview with Participant 09).

Mentorship in Higher Education

Going to college after leaving the military is a life path that many participants chose. Struggling during her undergrad, Participant 13 was considering dropping out of college. She

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told me that she felt she had a lot more "power and responsibility" while she was in the military. When she went to college, she was "just a college student" (Interview with Participant 13). It was the encouragement and mentorship that came from a female professor that assisted in keeping her on the path to not just graduating with her Bachelor's degree, but eventually achieving her doctorate. "Don't do yourself a disservice by denying yourself an education", is what this professor told her after she had confided in her with her situation. Courtney stated,

> She showed me statistics of how many people obtained bachelor's degrees and how few of those are women. Then she did the same to show the stats for a Master's degree, and then a doctorate… and how even less of those are women. She told me, 'if you do nothing in life, you should at least strive to be one of the few'. I think of that moment because I had no purpose, I had no direction. That's what motivated me and at the same time it gave me a sense of purpose. (Interview with Participant 13)

Another important aspect that came up during my conversation with Participant 13 was the length of time that she felt it took her to obtain the status of "a healthy functioning adult" after she left the military. She said,

> I feel like I didn't figure myself out until like four years ago…almost ten years post separation. A lot of this time, I spent a great deal of time denying being a veteran. When I went to my undergraduate I really didn't talk about it much in class. It wasn't until about four years after that I started to embrace that (her veteran status). This is a hard point for me…trying to be a veteran and a regular person…a regular student in my field with emasculating or intimidating people

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and all those things I had done in the past. Ways I learned to treat people when I was in the military. (Interview with Participant 13)

The last example provides a necessary segway into the theme of "participants perception of military masculinity" which is a prominent theme impacting the transitional experiences of women veterans after leaving military service. This will be explored in the following chapter. As I write, another scandal is unfolding within all branches of the US military. An online news publication called "Task and Purpose", broke an important story in early March 2017 about hundreds of Marines sharing explicit photos of servicewomen on social media platforms. According to an investigation by Reveal News and The Warhorse, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service is investigating hundreds of Marines for compiling and sharing thousands of naked photos of servicewomen, often times without their consent through Facebook and Google Drive (Keller, 2017). The organized Facebook group calls themselves "Marines United" and has over 30,000 followers. Content ranged from sexist insults to threats of rape, with an unnerving amount of current service members and veterans cheering and supporting the dehumanizing rhetoric about women in uniform. This example is yet another example describing acts of gender maltreatment impacting women service members. As the discussion is moving to a focus on military masculinity, a deeper understanding of the culture within the US military will be exposed.

Chapter Summary

Themes analyzed from the qualitative data obtained through phone interviews with women veterans, have been presented in this chapter in accordance with data that supports the discussion for Q1, Q2, and Q3. Participant understanding of military transition for was explored along with barriers and facilitators to transition for women veterans. Primary themes discussed

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include participants' perception of the ideal service member, reasons for joining the military, family's perception of gender roles, participant's perception of military service, impact of participants' military service on their lives, and various forms of gender maltreatment experienced during military service as described by participants. Additionally, barriers to transition because of gendered maltreatment during service have been explored.

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Chapter 6: Results of Qualitative Data & Discussion to Q3, Q4, Q5

Introduction

The following chapter includes the results of the qualitative data and a discussion to answer research questions 4) How does military culture influence transition after service for women veterans? 5) How do community stakeholders understand reintegration and the challenges faced by women veterans? And 6) Do changed performances of gender within military culture contribute to post-military challenges?

Participant's Perceptions of Military Masculinity

Many of the discussions I had with women service members implicitly moved into a focus on military masculinity. In this section, I illustrate interview participants' cultural perceptions of military masculinity as drawn from their experiences while in service. Next, I will move into data that reveals how military masculinity continues to impact participants after leaving military service.

Participants define military masculinity as being a "stereotype", or "an attitude", that is "macho, condescending, dismissive, arrogant, and superior." One participant describes military masculinity as, "what you are supposed to be. You are supposed to be very physically fit, emotionally strong, mentally strong, good at your job, ready to meet new people and kill them. You are supposed to be the stereotypical guy on the military recruiting poster defending the nation. It is a really high standard to live up to".

Military masculinity is considered "non-gendered" to some participants. Participant 09 said, "(Military masculinity) is more about the way that you present yourself. It is about being

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assertive, about being more confident". For others, military masculinity encompasses a performance of an hyper-masculinity that is "in complete disconnect with the female soldier…unless she is being made fun of, mocked, or being treated unfairly out of anger. Military masculinity is used to discredit the female soldier. It is used to minimize what we're there for" (Interview with Participant 20). Military masculinity is:

> This superhuman expectation of being hyper masculine or larger than life. Literally, you need to think you are ten foot tall and bullet proof. There is this perception that they instill in our head in boot camp, especially for men…you can go out there and do anything. For grunts this is what you are bred to do. You are bred to go out there in the line of fire and shoot as many bad guys as you can before you die and the guy behind you is trained to do the same thing before there are no more bullets coming. That's your job. You have got to be the toughest of the tough and the strongest of the strong, able to take on anything. This goes for both genders. (Interview with Participant 23)

Participants identified military masculinity to be a standard of performance, regardless of gender or military branch. Participants reveal performing gender in ways that align with this military ideal as a necessary mode of conduct while in service. According to one participant,

> Even though I don't identify as male, you know, either in my sex or in my gender, if I am going to make it in a room full of people who do, then I'm going to display those similar traits. I'm going to bring those masculinized traits to the forefront.

Military masculinity is perceived to be a set of guidelines that a successful service member must conform to in order to be successful in military service. When asked if the service member was

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unable to conform to the standards of military masculinity, participants answered, "then they would figure out a way (to conform) or get kicked out".

Military masculinity is thought to be gender-less. Participant 02 told me that she didn't like the word "masculinity" because it sounded like it seems to imply that the characteristics associated with military masculinity are "just a man's characteristics". She perceives military masculinity to be "what a military leader needs to exhibit" regardless of sex or gender. She said, "it doesn't matter whether you're male or female, it matters whether you exude confidence in yourself and in your ability to make decisions and lead people" (Interview with Participant 02).

Impact of Military Masculinity

Military masculinity is perceived as impacting relationships while in service. One soldier who served in the Army attributes military masculinity to being responsible for the lasting bond between male soldiers and ultimately, the isolation experienced by many female soldiers and female veterans. While discussing her perception of military masculinity and its impact on her, she said,

> It seems like males tend to be better at keeping in touch with their battle buddies and the people in their units. They seem to keep the level of social support they had in service when they get out more than the females do. I think that has a lot to do with the fact that there is less conflict between your roles in the military and your role in civilian life (Interview with Participant 17).

Many interview participants acknowledged that they experienced a pervasive existence of extreme performances and overt expressions of behavior that they feel is an outcome produced from military masculinity (from male and female military members) such as "engaging in bullying, fighting and violent behavior" and "disrespectful and sexually aggressive behavior

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primarily towards women in uniform". The inability of commands to control these aspects of military masculinity creates a highly toxic environment where abuses in power pollute the entire system and in some circumstances, can lead to the loss of service members, valuable human capital that volunteered for military service. This has primarily been an issue after incidences of sexual assault. The lasting trauma and stress caused to the survivor may lead to a separation from service after the term of enlistment has been met or an early discharge for other reasons.

Military masculinity is charged by participants as being responsible for gendered maltreatment during military service, a prominent theme discussed in an earlier section. Experiences of gendered maltreatment were discussed most often in the form of "othering" of female service members by male service members as shown in the following example:

> The military is a highly patriarchal system. When I got to my first duty station the sergeant in charge told me he didn't want me there. He believed that women belonged at home. He said to me, 'my wife is at home. I don't understand why you are here. I feel sorry for your husband. You should be at home'. I have never forgotten this. He had issues with the fact that I am very large chested. For normal workdays we would take off our BDU tops. You have a t-shirt on underneath. He told me, 'you can't take off your uniform top. I wouldn't want my wife to walk in here and see you just wearing a t-shirt'. It was really rare for the people I worked with who were married to not have a wife that stayed home with the kids. I'm not sure if it is like that in every service, but most of the girls stayed at home. You have kids, you keep the fires burning. It was like stepping back into the 1950's. It was really strange, but the message was clear, like, this is the boy's club and you are not welcome here (Interview with Participant 07).

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A significant finding of this research and a point that must be acknowledged in order to understand women veterans' gendered experiences is that military masculinity as described by participants contributes to a lasting military habitus that in spite of potential toxicity, is at the same time perceived to have positive impact on women's lives post military service. The following section will discuss this more in depth how military masculinity impacts women veterans after military service.

Often times, pervasive attributes of military masculinity that seem to have stuck with participants well after service are thought of as personal strengths derived from military masculinity. Being resilient is a trait that participants feel they acquired because of military masculinity: "military masculinity gave me resilience to tackle any kind of challenges that might come my way. Resilience is the ability to adapt and overcome. In order to succeed in the Army, you have to have that mentality" (Interview with Participant 14).

Some participants connect the positive outcome (of military service) of "having the ability to adapt to any situation" to military masculinity. This is alluded to in the following example:

> Even though military masculinity can lead to some people being overly aggressive, I don't see it as a bad thing. I didn't come into the military as a person who could just easily adapt to certain situations. I came into the military as a person who was pretty rough around the edges. I learned that there are certain things that are the way they are and you can either adapt and learn how to do your job around those things or you can get all worked up and have a bad experience. (Interview with Participant 08)

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After experiencing a negative event early on in her career in the Army, one participant described being told early in her career that she did not belong in the service. However, she attributes being told that she was not cut out for the Army as the facilitator that gave her the willpower she needed to stay. She said,

> It made me dig deeper and fight harder to stay. If I had been accepted by everyone maybe I wouldn't have stayed in as long as I did. In those first few years when I was treated like an outsider, it made me very protective of how everyone treated each other. I was especially protective over how men treated women, in the sense of men telling women that they didn't belong in the Army. Gay soldiers too. I felt like because I had this negative experience with military masculinity in the beginning, by being told I didn't belong there, I owed it to other people to make sure that somebody defended them. For this I fought harder. I fought to address problems when they started. We shouldn't lose good people in the military because they are told they don't belong there while others stand by and do nothing. (Interview with Participant 08)

Military masculinity is a complex phenomenon because it is accompanied by contradiction as noted in the example above. As noted, a negative experience early in her career led to this participant having an awareness of gender maltreatment and ultimately, she credits this experience for her advocacy work with other minority veterans who also experienced maltreatment from their peers. She succinctly articulated that,

> The negative aspect of military masculinity is the abuse of power that takes place by people who want to push the power they have to their limits…and it isn't just men who are abusing power. I know a lot of men who actually left the military

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> because they experienced themselves an abuse of power by someone who outranked them. People who were real assets to the Army walked away and left it behind because someone who outranked them was abusive. Abuse of power is a huge problem in the Army. I don't think it's a gender problem. I think it's a power problem…and it has to do with toxic leaders not being weeded out. (Interview with Participant 08)

Experiences with fellow service members whose behavior was associated by the participants as relating to an abuse of power, is identified as a major reason for participants ending their enlistments early (especially by those who served in the Army). While discussing abuses of power, one participant stated, "you are getting so many mixed messages when you are in the military. For instance, we had so many MP's (military police) being cited for domestic violence. So we know there is a problem…but these are the people that are the ones policing and arresting everyone else!" (Interview with Participant 06).

I argue that military masculinity is responsible for the manufacturing of cultural contradictions that are a part of the service members lived reality. These cultural contradictions are expressed and described by participants in this case as producing barriers to help seeking when in distress. The following is an example of a participant acknowledging depression, yet, isolating herself from seeking services that would help her due to the overwhelming fear of being perceived as "weak". The ideal soldier is not weak; they exude mental and physical toughness all of the time. She stated,

> I told myself all of the time that I could do this. I felt really depressed but I would tell myself, 'you can't tell other people that you are depressed. You have to take care of this on your own'. If I did tell people that I was

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> weak. And this might upset my career in the military. So most of us just cope with it. We find a way. Just do it. There is nothing that I can't do. (Interview with Participant 06)

Participants for the most part felt that they performed military masculinity as "a way to fit in" while they were subsumed within a military environment. Some interview participants even described military masculinity as a conscious act that over time they have learned to use to their advantage in certain situations. Jeanette is an environmental activist. She told me that whenever she goes to speak at public events or to different groups she consciously employs behavioral characteristics that she associates with military masculinity or wear symbolic material such as her Disabled American Veteran (DAV) pin that will portray her as being affiliated with the military. She said, "I consciously put on symbols that will trigger for people to know that I'm a veteran. I do that because I think it gives me power and influence".

While collecting data, I was particularly interested in whether or not the participants felt that military masculinity impacted their lives after leaving the service. One of the participants who identified as a Marine, provided me with an example to illustrate how military masculinity, which she blamed as being the force which allowed for "abuses of power" to thrive in military environments, impacted her during service and then when she got out. She said,

> I was stationed in a small town so there was no way to get away from it (referring to military masculinity). There were so few women that men would go to any length to get what they wanted from the women. One time, I was pulled over on base by a base police officer. This was not for an infraction. It was just because he had seen me before and wanted to get my telephone number. This is the abuse of power that goes along with this patriarchy. It was like they all thought, 'I can do

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> what I want. You are in the boy's club. You either put up with it or you are a bad sport and it's going to get way worse if you are a bad sport'. (Interview with Participant 06)

She elaborated on how it was a relief when she left the Marine Corps because this kind of gender maltreatment is now much less pervasive. Although she still deals with micro aggressions and sexism, she finds it much at much less of scale than what she dealt with in the Marines. She ended our conversation by stating, "I still have issues with this kind of stuff when I go to the VA with the old guys. Some people are great and some people I run into are like, 'where is your husband?' I just say, 'we are not having this conversation right now'" (Interview with Participant 06).

Transitioning to the 'Civilian' Workforce

When reflecting on the impact of military masculinity in their civilian lives, several participants noted that civilian places of employment are the most challenging for them to mediate. They attribute this to the way that they were acculturated into a military environment. They adapted to military environments where "acting hard" and "needing to be tough" was necessary not just for them to perform successfully and gain respect among their peers, but as a coping mechanism for them to thwart off being sexualized. One participant sums this experience up by stating, "all of a sudden I was supposed to be in a much more nurturing kind of role than I was coming from in the military. I mean, if I was a company commander in the military you wouldn't expect me to bring bagels to a meeting." For another participant, she said that she "couldn't stand that people (in civilian workforces) whined all of the time". This participant acknowledged that there was a change in gender performance that took place during her military service. She said, "My patience is really short now (working in a civilian field). I don't have any

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tolerance for people that don't have any common sense. I just do a lot of things that the guys I served with would do. I think military masculinity has a lot to do with that". The last point I would like to make with regards to the impact that military masculinity can have on the service member as derived from the data, has to do with feelings of loss produced when power associated with military masculinity is "taken away" after exiting military service.

Being one of the few women in their unit's means that often times, women service members were always in the spotlight. Having worked hard, Participant 08 "did not put up with anybody's crap", and she felt she "earned the respect of the guys that she worked with over time". When she got out of the Army, she went to college. However, she struggled and even dropped out because the pressure of not fitting in got to her. She said that the military gave her "a sense of entitlement" that she should be contributing to something bigger. She said,

> I should be doing something more important than just sitting in a classroom. That person who is teaching me this stuff has no clue what we were doing. They have probably never had any interaction with anyone outside of college classes. (Talking about war in a classroom) They don't know what they are even talking about, they've never been there. When I was in class I had this sense that I was better than them. Then I got really depressed because I realized that when I left the military any kind of power I had gained from military masculinity had been taken away from me (when she got out). (Interview with Participant 08)

This participant felt that her "power" had been taken away because she was no longer in an environment where she could effectively perform military masculinity. The behaviors and attitudes she attributed as outcomes of military masculinity, had became

an effective tool for communication and negotiating her daily life while in service. She stated,

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> We create military masculinity to mask how we feel in that environment. We create it so that we will do these things that no common person, no normal person will do. Then, when they take us out of that environment and shove us into the real world, you don't have military masculinity to rely on any more and then everything becomes a struggle. It becomes an identity crisis. (Interview with Participant 08)

Identifying as a Veteran after Service

For the majority of interview participants, identifying as a military veteran is situational. Primarily, the majority of women interviewed said that they did not feel identifying as a military veteran is important except for clerical or administrative reasons. When asked to fill out a form, participants said they would check the box for "veteran". One participant said, "It really depends on who I am talking to and what the group feel is. I'm not embarrassed of it (her service), but I guess there has been a lot of negativity surrounding the military because of the politics of it all. So, I try to feel out who I am talking to at first." Another participant stated,

> I don't put myself in the position of self-identifying if I'm going to intimidate somebody. But I'm also not ashamed of the rank I made. I earned it. So, it really depends on the circumstances of the situation. I have no problem identifying as the Chief or a female veteran, I just find that it is intimidating for a lot of people. (Interview with Participant 14)

Participant 14 above, uses the adjective "intimidating" to regulate when she chooses to self-identify as "the Chief of a female veteran". This kind of selective process was observed in interviews with several other women as well. Women are selective in choosing when and where to openly identify as a "veteran". Being "intimidating" does not fall in line with traditional

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feminine behavioral characteristics and is often perceived as a negative trait for women, resulting in stressful social situations or even discrimination. Therefore, not identifying as a veteran publicly is the alternative many of them choose. Agency to choose when to identify as a veteran is a key concept here. The majority of the women veterans I interviewed were aware that they met the qualifications of "veteran" as determined by the policy definition. There was only one instance where a veteran who identified as a Vietnam veteran stated that there was a point in time after her service where she did not know that her military service qualified her to be a "veteran". She elaborated that during this time she thought a veteran was defined as a man who had deployed overseas.

The one interview participant who stated that she almost always openly identifies herself as a military veteran also identified her racial and ethnic identity as American Indian. Having faced a lot of adversity and racism in her life, ownership of her veteran identity and status is important to her. She said,

> I grew up in a small town of 3000 where everyone was always questioning my (racial and ethnic) identity. My dad always told me that I needed to identify as white, not a Native American. My dad got beat up a lot in school. My grandfather would get beat up every day so he quit school when he was in the 5th grade. The reason I identify as a veteran is because of that. My family was trying to hide who they were because of discrimination. I went through some crazy things as a kid because my dad wasn't white. But I am not hiding who I am just because someone wants to try and say whatever to me. (Interview with Participant 03)

Participants who said that they choose to not identify as a military veteran, are those women who stated that they are ashamed of their service. The primary reason given for feeling

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ashamed is a history of trauma, mainly MST. The following provides an example quote from a participant who discussed MST related trauma as being the reason that she chose to deny her military service for many years. This participant left military service almost two decades ago and claimed that it was just recently that she began acknowledging that she served when asked. She said,

> I only started identifying as a military veteran very recently. I have had no pride in it, I have been embarrassed about it. I had been getting therapy for almost ten years from (name omitted—participant said this was a free county mental health clinic). Then, I heard a report on the news about like 1,400 women being sexually assaulted in Iraq and I had a meltdown. I started having bad dreams and ever since then my ears have been ringing. I had so much anxiety. I have no trust for men. This was so triggering…the thought of what was happening to women…I don't know how to describe this to you but it was like it was happening to me all over again. (Interview with Participant 06)

Among participants, identifying only as a veteran on résumé's and in job interviews is common. Some participants felt that publicly claiming veteran's status helped them on the career search, yet just as many felt that identifying as a military veteran hindered their employability in the civilian workforce. A participant who just completed medical school and is actively seeking a medical residency, said that she is considering taking her military experience off of her resume and recruitment materials because too often she is asked awkwardly and out of the blue, questions about how she copes with PTSD. This demonstrates how there is an existing stigma about military service members having PTSD despite the focus of recent public awareness campaigns aimed to educate the broader public about this issue.

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There was only one interview participant who did not identify as a military veteran because she was not aware of her veteran status. She said, "When I got out of the service, I became a wife and my service didn't count. I wasn't a veteran in the eyes of my country". I asked her, "Did you see yourself as a veteran at that time?" She answered, "I was a mom and a wife". I followed up, "When did you start to identify as a veteran?" She answered, "I can tell you exactly when. When my daughter started talking about going into the military. Then I started remembering my career. That was just eight years ago".

In sum, everyone except for one participant stated that they were aware that they qualified as a veteran under the law. Most of the participants will choose to self-identify as a veteran if asked for clerical or administrative reasons, but always assess the advantages or disadvantages of self-identifying if in a social situation. Some participants choose not to self-identify if it is perceived that revealing their veteran status may be intimidating to others, or if they feel self-identification may lead to negative stereotyping on job applications or during interviews or other professional settings.

Knowledge of and Participation in Veteran Service Organizations after Service

Barriers to participation in veteran's service organizations include: not having the time, being turned off by a bad experience, not wanting to be labeled as a veteran, and not wanting to affiliate with the military at all. The likelihood of participants wanting to go back to an organization for assistance is greatly inhibited after just one negative experience. This is observed in the example below provided by an Iraq war veteran. When asked if she has ever used any kinds of programs and services, whether governmental, nonprofit, or private, she stated,

> Honestly, I tried about a year ago when my kids and I were in transition while moving from Alabama, where their father is from, to Massachusetts, where I am

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> from. We didn't have any place to stay and I couldn't find work so I kept calling the VA office. But they kept saying they couldn't do anything for me because their funding was frozen and they didn't know when it was going to be unfrozen. They couldn't offer me any help. I also tried to go through the VA national home for children. Basically, the lady told me she didn't believe my story. She didn't believe we were in this bad situation and if we really were in this bad of a situation then I needed to go qualify for a local government program, which I had already called around looking for. She said she would email me a list but the list she sent were places I already tried. Nothing. (Interview with Participant 05)

I asked what would have helped her during this time and she said that housing assistance was most important. She stated,

> What would have really helped me was being able to find a home because it took me a while. We tried to stay with my Dad and step mom but after a month they told us we needed to go. I eventually got a job, but then we didn't have anywhere to stay and I couldn't afford day care. We were basically back and forth between hotels until I found a shitty apartment online. It was a broken-down place. So, what I really needed was help finding a home, so I could get my feet on the ground. I already had a job and if I could have just had a little bit of help getting a home I could have had daycare and everything set up. But no one would help us. Everyone said they couldn't. (Interview with Participant 05)

VSO's that host events and activities focused specifically on bringing women veterans together were among the most common events and programs (asides from VA health services) mentioned by participants as being worthwhile or of interest to them. Retreats for women

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veterans, specifically in Alaska, were mentioned by two participants as being important to transitional services for women veterans. Another participant discussed her participation with an organization called the Women Veterans Alliance. She said that there are multiple events per month that bring women veterans together. Primarily they "just hang out" but they also do a lot of volunteering together at events such as Veteran Stand Downs. When asked what it was that she liked about the women veteran's alliance, she said,

> Before I joined the Women Veterans Alliance I joined the VFW. While I respect the people at the VFW and I think it is important to have a VFW for some people, I went in there and the men were calling me sweetie and honey. They would say, you know, you need to have that or, you aren't going to get that…in a woman veterans group you are going to be respected for your service. They aren't going to see you as just another female. That's how men treated me at the VFW. (Interview with Participant 14)

The participant who provided the example above was drawn to participation with a VSO because of the importance of being around others who could relate to her stories. She said,

> If you try to tell a civilian a story about the military, unless they are a military wife or unless they have some kind of military affiliation or connection, they just aren't going to be on board with hearing every story. They just aren't going to understand a lot of things. So, for me it was having that military person to talk to where I don't have to explain what a DD214 is or all these other words that just became a part of my vocabulary. (Interview with Participant 14)

Yet, for other participants, participation with VSO's brought unwanted attention to their gender rather than recognition for their service affiliation. For others, participation in VSO's was

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avoided because it drew attention to their veteran status, an identity that they choose to not be affiliated with in public spaces.

Interview participants primarily acknowledged familiarity with Veterans Service Organizations (VSO's) belonging to what is commonly known as "the old guard" and to healthcare services offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. "Old Guard" organizations include Disabled American Veterans (DAV), The American Legion, and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). However, active participation in these organizations was not popular among participants because of negative experiences usually affiliated with maltreatment due to their gender when membership was previously attempted. One participant stated,

> My husband and I volunteered to work on campus offices for veterans and processed education benefits. That's the only thing I ever did involving veterans that I actually liked. The only reason I never got involved in anything else was because any time we ever got involved in the American Legion of VFW, the women were told to be auxiliary members. I'm just not in to the bake sale auxiliary membership. (Interview with Participant 22)

Stating her reason for not wanting to be involved with VSO's, one participant brought up "hero worshipping". She said,

> I really don't appreciate this this whole hero worship of veterans. I don't think it is deserved and I don't appreciate it. I have thought of getting involved in VSO's, but every time there is just too much of this going on. There is not enough like legitimate one to one discussion…or connection between veterans. Like it was all these people who just wanted to like, 'oh veterans are the best ever'. Well no. Veterans are just people. I just didn't connect with it. I don't want to be labeled as

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> a veteran because everybody has their agendas for what a veteran is and what that label means…so I just don't want to be labeled as a veteran. I get involved in activities where people don't identify me as a veteran. And most of the time I don't tell people I am a veteran either. (Interview with Participant 17)

Trying to draw out more of what the participant meant by "hero worship" I asked her to explain the term. She said,

> It is fine when they thank me for my service. But my question would be like…what are you really thanking me for? What do you really know about the military? I never actually say that to anyone who thanks me because they are likely doing so out of a level of respect. But again…it's like what are you thanking me for? You don't even know me. (Interview with Participant 17)

Avoidance of being stereotyped was also provided as a reason why participants did not want to participate in VSO's. One participant explained that, "There is this perception that I am owed something because I am a veteran. Or, that I got PTSD because I am a veteran. Or, you know, I've got PTSD and they're going to save me." (Interview with Participant 17)

Community Stakeholder Perceptions of Women Veterans and Transition

A convenience sample of seven community stakeholders was recruited to participate in this study. An original goal of ten-community stakeholder was set, however, challenges with interview scheduling resulted in a smaller sample size than expected. For the purpose of this research, women veteran community stakeholders were defined as representatives from local, state, national, private, government, and nonprofit organizations that make it a part of their organizational mission to provide transition assistance programming and support for women veterans. The stakeholders who participated were individuals who responded to an online

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announcement on Facebook and Twitter, or who I met during fieldwork at community event observations. Respondents were interviewed in semi-structured phone interviews that lasted one to two hours in length. An interview guide (Appendix F) was used during the interviews and all interviews were transcribed verbatim. Primary codes were initially based on the interview questions and in-vivo coding was used to create secondary codes. Analysis of the codes was developed into themes that ground the analyses for this section.

Limitations of Stakeholder Sample

The stakeholder sample is not representative of any specific geographic location, which is identified as a limitation of this sample. Rather, the focus for recruitment during data collection was in obtaining representation from various sectors of the veteran community including local and federal government, non-profit, and private organizations, using a convenience sampling method. A more strategic sampling method focusing on a specific geographic location such as the larger Tampa Bay community, which has a relatively large veteran population, would be beneficial. Future research may consider utilizing community mapping of veteran's programs and services that is region specific. This would not only be helpful to veteran service organizations and stakeholders, but to the community of women veterans who noted challenges in finding programs and services that they qualify for.

I made several attempts to get an interview participant from the Department of Veterans Affairs who is instrumental in shaping VA health care policy for women veterans. At the time I carried out data collection, I was employed as a research assistant with a VA research facility and had attended many VA centered events for women veterans. I had informal contacts with individuals involved in developing policy affecting women veterans and was open about my research. While there was informal knowledge about the research, policy officials were hesitant

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to speak with me, even off record. This usually came in the form of emails that were not answered and phone calls that were not returned. Although, I had many casual conversations with people involved setting veterans policy, there was a definite hesitancy from policy officials to speak with me in the form of a formal interview. I attribute this to the heightened media attention that the VA has received due to various scandals that have taken place over the past year in connection with this federal agency and the fact that my study was not an official "VA study". Nonetheless, due to my position as an employee within the VA, my experience could not help but shape my analysis and provide insight into primary policy initiatives about the population I studied.

Community Stakeholder Demographics

Community stakeholder interview participants represented veteran's organizations in the sectors of local government, federal government, and the non-profit sector. Their age ranged from 32 to 68. Some (n=5) self-identified as military veterans and two were not military veterans, although both of the non-veterans stated that they had family members who had served or are currently serving in the US military. Two stakeholders self-identified as "white" with regards to race and ethnicity, two self-identified as "Black or African American", one stakeholder identified as "Arab American", and one stakeholder identified as "Mexican American". All of the stakeholders interviewed had a bachelor's degree or higher and all but two have been working with women veterans for more than five years.

The community stakeholders interviewed were participants from non-profit organizations focusing on higher education (n=2), one who served as the Director in a veteran's service office at a well-known private university in the north east, and one who served on the executive staff for a nonprofit veteran's service organization in the space of advocacy for higher education.

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Interviews were held with non-profit veteran's organizations whose specific focus is with women veterans. These three organizations provide direct outreach to the targeted population and lobbying at their local, their state and federal levels (n=3). Additionally, Andrea Assaf, who requested to be identified by name in any written work for this project was also interviewed. Andrea is the founder and artistic director for Art2Action, Inc. whose mission is to create, develop, and produce original theater, interdisciplinary performances, performative acts and progressive cultural organizing. Art2Action has a focus on veteran programming and has worked directly with women veterans over the course of several years. Lastly, I was able to interview an outreach coordinator for a county veteran's service office in Houston, Texas.

Continuing to Serve after Service

Five out of the seven community stakeholders are prior service members and all related their career goals, aspirations, and reasons for wanting to work in veteran's services to their own time in service and/or experience with transitioning after service. The growth that we have seen in the area of veteran services over the past decade is due to individual service members' interests in wanting to make sure that the population receives the benefits that are allotted to them. This is particularly important for women veterans as they are fighting for equal treatment after serving in an institution that was designed to provide for male service members. Many of the women veteran stakeholders experienced their own struggles with receiving care after service, and this propelled them to found their own organizations to assist the population. When asked about who should be involved in conversations surrounding policy and programming development, all stakeholders reiterated that members of the greater community meaning individuals and organizations in the civilian sector, need to be a part of the conversation alongside insiders to the veteran community.

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Stakeholder Understanding of Military Transition for Women Veterans

The following sections provide the consensus from stakeholder interviews as well as highlight specific examples with interview quotes. Stakeholders took the position that transition for women veterans is still evolving and will continue to evolve as more women enter military service. It is for this reason, they felt, that a continued research focus on women veterans needs to be a priority. Many of them noted that it was not until the late 1980's that women were even able to receive health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the DVA system is still evolving from an institution that previously only served men. For a long time, as noted by a stakeholder who is a veteran and founded an advocacy organization specifically for women veterans and has been working alongside the population for over ten years, "women were expected to exit the military and jump back into civilian life without any help whatsoever". During our conversation she said that she believes that the resources for the most part are available. However, there is a disconnect between "appropriateness of service, availability of services specifically for minority veterans, and how veteran women and others find out and receive those services". She told me that the funding is available to provide services for the population, but the biggest issue is that women veterans are "not always identified for the services, welcomed to use the services, and if they are welcomed the services are not always appropriate for what they need."

When answering the interview question, "how do you define military transition for women veterans", "woman-ness" and the negotiation of gender throughout and after service was discussed as a prominent theme. A current member of the Army National Guard who is now the Director of a veteran's office at a private university in the North East known for its "veteran friendliness", observed that transition, ultimately for women who join the military at young ages

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directly out of high school, seem to go through a process of relearning how to present themselves as a woman after service. She stated that she does not link this to any kind of traditional role assignment women are expected to be in service. Women who join the military, she noted, tend to be "more progressive-leaning" in that they are already "undermining traditional gender roles just by joining in the first place". Joining the military as a resistance to traditional gender roles is a common theme elaborated on by interview participants themselves.

During a conversation at an event I attended, another woman who had an extensive career in the Army National Guard, linked the "often-misunderstood nature of women veterans" and transitional challenges to this notion of identity and re-affiliating oneself with a sense of "woman-ness". In a discussion with a high ranking military general who was not clear on why this was an issue, she stated "Sir, what you need to understand is that when many men join the service they are not having to give up part of their identity. For many women, to fit the military mold, they are giving up their femininity to excel in the institution." I argue throughout this dissertation that this negotiation of militarized gender may benefit the individual and the institution during service. However, it can pose problems during transition from service. Participants describe these challenges as struggles with fitting in, finding a new community to be a part of, and in general becoming comfortable with oneself post military service.

Barriers to Transition from Military Service for Women Veterans

Stakeholders identified two primary types of barriers in providing services to women veterans: challenges with outreach to the population and making sure that those who are in the greatest need are receiving the services that will help them meet their basic needs. Stakeholders feel that there is an immediate need for resource facilitation in the areas of access to employment, housing, food insecurity, and resource facilitation for wellness services and

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healthcare. However, in order to provide these services, methods of outreach need to be effective. In order to provide effective outreach, the stakeholders need to be able to identify those who are in need. This can be especially challenging with women veterans who choose to not self-identify as a veteran. In this section I will discuss some specific examples provided by stakeholders during the interviews.

Travel to a physical VA facility to receive services was noted as a significant barrier to resource facilitation. Stakeholders argued for the need for additional access to telemedicine, telehealth, and virtual resource facilitation. Although this seems to be a VA priority, an insignificant number of veterans actually have access to telemedicine. Stakeholders also emphasized the need of access to care for low-income veterans who do not have the socio-economic resources that allow them travel to use programs and services. This is especially challenging for low-income veterans living in rural areas. Access to affordable childcare or transportation to make appointments, hinders veteran access to resources. These barriers limit women from using available resources consistently.

For one stakeholder who identifies as a woman veteran of color, another barrier to use of veteran services is in part due in part to the lack of diversity in the makeup of boards and program service providers. She stated, "people in charge of the programs and services often do not look like them". Elaborating on this topic and reflecting on her own experiences in interacting directly with other veteran service providers, she said that "the board and program leadership responsible for making the priorities for these veteran sub-populations are white males in positions of power who often fail to seek out or include diverse membership of the veteran and military community in goal setting". Therefore, the end result is program misalignment with the needs of the target populations.

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The "problem of militarization of programs and services" was suggested to be a barrier to participation for not just women veterans, but many veterans in general. Militarizing programs and services in ways that emulate military culture will not attract women veterans to participate or use them. A stakeholder who identifies herself as an MST survivor stated,

We need to get past this return to the boot camp, operation type of thing. It is a huge pet peeve of mine because from a psycho-social point of view, when I leave the military, you are asking me to get rid of something completely…but then everything available for me is set up in this militarized capacity.

She noted that the data collected from people who utilize the programs and services from her non-profit organization communicated that a re-militarized marketing strategy does not make them want to use a program or service. This is especially true for veterans who experienced trauma related to their military service, or those who see it as just part of their past. For marginalized individuals, being forced into participate in a culture that they feel has a goal of "re-militarizing" them will not lead to greater participation. "once they leave it behind they want to leave it behind".

A commonly discussed, yet under-researched barrier to accessing resources for transition assistance has to do with how women are often overlooked as being veterans. Stakeholders suggested that women are continually being excluded and recognized as veterans. This leads to the underutilization of services in general for women veterans. Several online campaigns initiated over the past year are seeking to change the public's perception of whom a veteran is and who serves with the hope of changing gendered stereotypes of "who serves".

A stakeholder and prior service member who works with women transitioning into higher education, described the transition challenges that she has observed in women veterans over the

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past five years. The challenge goes back to the theme of how "womanhood" is identified by the service member. She discussed at length, how while in the military, women often try to hide gender attributes that could be perceived as making them weak. Some do not associate with a gendered category at all, as hard as this may be, because the military is still a very gendered institution delineated by biological sex of the person serving. Because of the transitional process some women go through in service becomes complicated when they transition back to civilian life, trying to redefine their femininity and re-examine their "womanhood." The stakeholder observes that they seem to have to go through this process of re-defining gender and re-examining their womanhood all over again. So, in essence, there is a dual transition taking place and the performance and expression of gender and sexuality is continually in question.

In order to adapt to military service, some women, including stakeholders who identified as women veterans, discussed observed changes in their own behavior that occurred during service with regards to the way that they adapted their own gendered expression when figuring out how to "fit in" or thwart off the sexualizing male gaze while in service. This kind adapted behavior was described by participants as not wearing makeup like they did prior to service, communicating by using "shop talk" which incorporates a lot of swear words and making fun of other people, and exercising body posturing that is thought to be un-feminine and aggressive in nature. One participant noted that looking back, she now recognizes that she was "modeling the behavior of the guys" she worked with so that she had a better chance at fitting in so as not be seen as feminine and weak. This adaptive behavior did not just wear off after the service member left their military environment once their enlistment was up. This is interpreted as a lasting habitus that continues to impact the veteran after service in both positive and negative ways. The aforementioned stakeholder observed that the women she serves in her office feel that they "no

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longer fit with civilian culture". This discussion was focused primarily in the ways the civilian workforce perceives womanhood. She noted that, "their identity seems to be lost in translation".

> In the military, similar to corporate culture, many women who are in leadership positions do not want to be judged as a woman, they want to be seen as an airman, soldier, sailor, Marine. You don't want your gender to be the topic of conversation… like, oh she is a good soldier for a woman.

Several of the stakeholders interviewed alluded to the challenges that they were having during their own experiences with transition from military service. They related to the population they were serving because they were noticing many of the same difficulties being mentioned by the clients they serve. The most prevalent theme recognized by all of the stakeholders interviewed is that there is a phenomenon-taking place where some women veterans are not "embracing" their gender while in service, whatever this may look like. Not embracing their gender seems to lead to challenges with identity after service, often being referred to by the stakeholder as an "identity crisis". When the stakeholders were asked if men face this same challenge with gender identification, the overarching answer was no. According to one stakeholder, militarized gendered identity "is embraced as a stereotypical masculine gendered performance that society holds up and embraces. The men are always seen as America's heroes. They do not have to fight for their recognition".

Facilitators to Transition After Service: Stakeholder Perspective

Successful transition begins with stability. Not having a job and suffering a loss in income after service leads to instability, and sometimes can trigger mental and emotional challenges that can lead to a crisis. Ideally, as discussed by several stakeholders, transition facilitation would start prior to when the veteran leaves the service. The most common

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facilitators to transition discussed during stakeholder interviews consist of using transition assistance programming administered through online learning and educational technology to advance transition prior to leaving the service, facilitation of peer support programming, connecting veterans to appropriate programs, and helping veterans access socio economic support such as access to day care and reliable transportation.

Stakeholders note that women veterans are different from men veterans in that women, more often than men are caregivers to other disabled veterans, caregivers to parents who may or may not have served, caregivers to children who are too young to stay home by themselves while women utilize the services or too medically fragile to stay home by themselves. Stakeholders also mentioned the importance of providing support for childcare, or care for another person, reliable transportation or stipends they can use to access transportation, making services and appointments virtual to facilitate transition.

Community Stakeholder Recommendations for Increased Effectiveness in Transition Assistance for Women Veterans

The most common recommendation discussed among community stakeholders was the need for collaboration between service providers, including those at the local, state, and federal level, and government and non-governmental sectors. Stakeholders mentioned repeatedly the challenge that they have had in coordinating community care initiatives with the VA, primarily because of the vast bureaucracy, inefficiency, and time it takes to get anything done with the VA.

Further Analysis: Redefining and Managing Femaleness Even After Military Service Has Ended

Gender is a concept that does not lend itself to easy interpretation and committing to understanding the gender performance of military women takes stamina and patience as

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participants understanding of gender differs from person to person, depending on their life experiences. Gender is complex and intersubjective in its construction. In other words, people through their social and cultural interactions with each other construct and interpret the meanings associated with gender. Feminists, according to Peterson (1999), investigate and question the "implicit naturalness" of the categories of male and female that we use to label both sex and gender. Even though biological differences between people classified as male and people classified as female can be understood as sex, and socially constituted differences between these categorized groups can be understood as gender, it is often difficult to tell which differences are biological and which are socially constructed. Sjoberg (2007) elaborates that even "the biological dichotomy between male and female is the product of the social construction of simplicity where complexity exists" (84). Commonly misunderstood is that sex is not limited to those people classified biologically as 'male' and 'female'. Binary thinking about sex fails to include people who fall into the categories of asexual, intersexual, and transsexual. Masculinities and femininities define the stereotypes dictated by binary thinking of sex and gender. As reminded by Sjoberg (2007), these stereotypes are the behavioral norms and rules assigned to people based on their perceived membership in sex categories. Understanding gender as a social construction implies that gender is not static. Rather, it is a contingent and changing social fact and process (Sjoberg 2007:84).

Suggesting that the construction of gender is highly complex and understood within social norms does not mean that it is fake or made up. It is widely understood that genders are lived differently by people throughout the world and this has been demonstrated in anthropological studies throughout the ages. Still, it would be unrepresentative to characterize a gendered experience as if there was something that all those perceived to be men or all those

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perceived to be women shared in life experience. Instead, as demonstrated by this research, each person categorized as a woman veteran is different. As stated by Hooper (2001), "she has her own culture, body, language, identity and personality. Gender is lived differently in different places, bodies and locations. Gendering's are diverse, as are their mechanisms and processes" (Hooper 2001: 25 as cited in Sjoberg 2007:85). Women's relationships with the US military is one place where gendered discourses stand out and warrant further investigation as more women continue to enter military service and are now filling jobs previously only available to males.

As discussed by Enloe (2000) and Sjoberg (2007), women's connection to the military, fall into different categories. One story portrays women as in need of the protection that the military can provide them (Elshtain 1987). The women in these stories, as Elshtain (1992) notes, are Beautiful Souls, not involved in war-making but reliant on war to survive. Women's vulnerability justifies fighting wars. Another depiction is one where women are resources that militaries use to win wars (Moon 1997). Some women sustain the economy at home while men are away at war; while others serve the men fighting those wars – as nurses, as entertainment and as prostitutes (Moon 1997 as cited in Sjoberg 2007). Enloe (2000) writes about American women's relationship with the US military serving within its ranks as soldiers (Enloe 2000). Women soldiers are relied upon most when militaries have a hard time getting all of the "manpower" that they need to fulfill jobs needed to carry out campaigns overseas. Even though soldiering has generally appealed to men, recruitment numbers diminish when controversial wars are being initiated, stories about abuse of soldiers make headlines, or pay cuts to troops are carried out in the national budget (Enloe 2000). Recruitment has taken a hit during the post 9/11 era as the US continues to embed itself in a never-ending war cycle in the Middle East. It is no surprise that the US Senate approved a measure over the past year that would require women to

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register for the draft (Steinhauwer 2016). As of April 27, 2017, the military policy bill has been restructured and the language, which would have required women to register, has been removed. However, this act that was pushed in conjunction with the opening of combat arms positions to women, is widely supported among the current administration. Adding on to this conversation, we have to include the category of military connected women who are not just serving, but those who previously served. This is an important category for inclusion given that their collaboration and collective action after service because of their experiences is what often leads to military institutional transformation and change in US policy affecting the institution.

Militarized femininity as stated by Enloe (1993) is "militarism that relies on control of femininity generally and women specifically" (174). The integration of women into the US military is adding women to the forces, but the process has paid little attention to the discursive and performative elements of gender dichotomies. Although some may conclude that gender integration will result in equality within the services, the result, as argued by Enloe (2000, 2003) and Sjoberg (2007) has been the preservation of the discursive structures of gender subordination. Although I will not argue against the persistence of gender subordination as suggested by the results of gender maltreatment drawn from this study, I do believe that most studies simplify women's experiences into two specific groups: women either neutralize their feminine characteristics or accentuate hyper sexualized behavior. This complicit behavior is argued to reinforce traditional views of femininity (Sasson-Levy 2003; Sion 2008). However, what most studies fail to recognize by reducing women's experiences in the military to these existing dichotomies, is that they possess agency and the ability to act, even if this agency is not recognized at the time as a political agency. In agreement with Bàdaro, I argue that the issue with these simplified assumptions is that they minimize the multiple meanings women attribute to

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their military service and the various modalities of agency that they can find within the power relations that they are involved in (Bàdaro 2015). This research builds on Bàdaro's research in that the primary focus is not just on how women exercise modalities of agency while in service. I also elaborate on the modalities of agency that they exercise while transitioning from service and how we can transform current transitional interventions meant to assist the population so that women veterans actually recognize their agency and explore the complexity behind their multiple and intersecting identities. Only identifying as "veteran" or not identifying as veteran at all is stifling women veteran's ability to move through the process of transition from military service, and ultimately to the next phase of their lives. Yet once agency is recognized, female autonomy is the result. Thus, female autonomy becomes the catalyst for collective action forcing institutional transformation.

Research question 4 asks how military culture influences transition from service for women veterans. Most participants associate military masculinity as being the driving force behind military culture. Often times they used the words military masculinity to describe military culture in its entirety. As revealed in the definitions of military masculinity provided by participants, certain aspects of military masculinity create and continue to perpetuate a culture that is still considered to be hostile to women and to people who do not fit the military masculine ideal. Yet, there are other aspects related to military masculinity that are described as behavioral characteristics embodied by participants during their military service. These behavioral characteristics and traits create a veteran habitus that resonates throughout their everyday lives even decades after service.

Gardiner observed in his research that when more women vets reach the 20-year distance from service, involvement in veteran's organizations seems to increase. He predicts that it is

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likely that some of the same struggles for recognition accompanying women's expanding roles on active duty will be replicated within the veterans' groups (also a finding of this study). As this happens, he states, that veteran masculinity will become more complicated and female veterans can lay claim to the authority that comes with veteran masculinity (Gardner 2006). In the end, this does not depend on biology. Rather, this performance and recognition depends on soldierly disposition, which I argue is perceived in many ways as a positive force in women's personal lives, yet can exacerbate challenges for women veterans during their transition from military service. This is because for women, a soldierly disposition is not perceived to be traditionally feminine. Rather, upon entrance into the civilian workforce it can be perceived as threatening and is not embraced as it is when performed to the heteronormative standard.

What became obvious during the research, analysis and writing of this dissertation is that essentialist/categorical definitions for women clearly exist in the military. This was demonstrated through the connected experiences of women across branches of service, career fields, and service eras, including the stories of gender maltreatment and the continued effects that their service has on them even years after leaving. The costs of war are mostly invisible to the larger US populace because they have been shrouded by a convincing popular culture propaganda and public relations campaign convincing them that "war builds character, makes men, and grants freedom to the nation and a kind of super-citizenship to those who wage it" (Lutz 2002: 724). Keeping in tune with a military that appeals to men means that the military institution cannot surrender its masculinized culture, because to do so would result in few men wanting to join. In fact, we are watching this political tightrope play out now as current and former service members blast the Army for becoming weak after allowing one of the first female soldiers to earn the

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coveted Ranger tab in the summer of 2016 to now become the first woman in the Army's infantry.

Bàdero's analysis argues that women in the Argentine Army "unintentionally challenge the holistic representation of the military individual that male soldiers are supposed to embody" (89). He concludes that identifying as "one of the guys" is a "moral, social, and professional performance" that allows women to carry out personal projects (89). Women are enacting a "paradoxical individuality" that does not try to eliminate either identity that the military depicts as opposite which is "woman" and "soldier". It is the various ways that women perform this paradoxical individuality that constitutes their primary source of agency (Bàdero 2015). It was necessary to focus on the reflections of women veteran participant experiences while in the service in order to better understand their transitional experiences within the context of US militarism. While most studies focus primarily on women serving in active units, this study fills a noticeable gap in anthropological literature by focusing on women veterans' experiences with transition from service.

Building on Bàdero and Ortner, I argue that participants adapt to a professional gender performance in the military which may have marginalizing effects on them during service and even after they get out. Yet, through the process of military transition, the reclamation of their veteran identity, and the re-affirmation of agency after service, participants can/are redefining femininity regardless of if there is a purposeful intentionality to resist or restructure military culture. If recognizing their agency and exploring their identity other than "veteran" is part of the transitional equation, how can programs and services assist in this endeavor after military service? Ultimately, this is the question that veteran service organizations need to ask and incorporate in their transitional programming.

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I agree with Broyles (2014) who believes that "conflicting identities must be recognized and held in tension in order to not essentialize (and so consequently silence) women's experiences" (2). Gender roles are still thrust upon women throughout all facets of society, and even though there is progression, we are being hindered by public rhetoric and people in leadership positions who diminish the accomplishments of women, victim blame, and perpetuate rape culture. The uphill climb is now steeper given that we have a president of the United States who brags openly about groping women without their consent and has been accused of sexual misconduct with more than a dozen women in his lifetime. To make matters worse, he "tweeted", in 2013 that "26,000 unreported sexual assaults in the military-only 238 convictions. What did these geniuses expect when they put men & women together?" (Diaz 2016). Many interpret this statement to mean that he may try to jeopardize the effort for total gender integration in the US military's combat units.

As stated by Broyles (2014) it is important to understand that "these gender roles are also assumed by women as a means of negotiating the internal dissonance created by the need to remain true to themselves and at the same time perform equally well, be equally tough, be good service members. This may require them to function if not in masculine forms at least androgynously" (2). Yet it is this androgynous performance that creates tension during transition from service because society still functions in a way where traditional femininity is held as standard and all others are still typecast as outsiders.

A New York Times Op-ed discusses the gender expectations and feelings of isolation the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service—created in august 1942) group experienced. According to this current research, these are still the primary issues facing the

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women veterans of the more recent Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. Cara Hoffman (March 31, 2014) is quoted in this article. She states,

> The injury wasn't new, and neither was the insult. Rebecca, a combat veteran of two tours of duty, had been waiting at the V.A. hospital for close to an hour when the office manager asked if she was there to pick up her husband. No, she said, fighting back her exasperation. She was there because of a spinal injury she sustained while fighting in Afghanistan.

Hoffman goes on to say, "It's not that their stories are poorly told [women's stories of combat]. It's that their stories are simply not told in literature, film and popular culture (1).

The last statement about the stories of women service members not being told in film, literature, and pop culture has generated attention from women veterans seeking to close this gender gap. This is an example of observed collective action noted in data collected for this study. Women veterans who have utilized narrative exploration as a tool to explore their multiple and intersecting identities have written their own war narratives and are encouraging other women veterans to explore and write about their own experiences in order to close the gender gap within popular culture and force society to normalize the reality of women serving in the armed forces. As stated in this same op-ed,

> Male soldiers' experiences make up the foundation of art and literature: From "The Odyssey" to "The Things They Carried," the heroic or tragic protagonist's face is familiar, timeless and, without exception, male. The story of men in combat is taught globally, examined broadly, celebrated and vilified in fiction, exploited by either side of the aisle in politics.

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Because of this, assisting women veterans with story development and also listening to their stories is a critical area of exploration that is integral to reintegration assistance for the population. In the current genre of war narratives, women are often cast as victims, wives, or nurses; anything but soldiers who see battle or play a critical role in today's military. Most war narratives and documentaries where women are the focus, generally display content on military sexual assault, a terrible epidemic of violence that needs to be revealed and ended. However, it is important to note that although prevalent, it is not something that represents the full experience of women in the military.

Society at large is guilty of perpetuating a masculine vision of what it means to be a service member. In thinking about the services offered to veterans and speaking in the specific context of higher education and the role college can play in both aiding transitions and in enabling self-selected identity choices, Baechtold and Salwa (2009) emphasize that

> Service members need to make meaning of what they have seen and experienced while at war. The process of meaning making is related to the idea of shifting from accepting knowledge from an authority to constructing knowledge for oneself, based on individual learning and experiences (38).

Higher education is an area that some participants identified as an exceptional obstacle that they needed to figure out how to mediate after leaving military service. However, given the potential of institutions of higher learning to assist in identity development after military service and the increasing rates of service member's use of educational benefits, discussing how this setting can be used to assist with identity development after military service is an important conversation to develop and have with professors and those interacting with military connected students on campuses. According to Broyles (2014),

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> women veterans are not unlike any other student whose self-actualization we hope to foster, and by the same token, because their stories are stories of war and hardship, and loss, but also of adventure, of heroism, of responsibility, they are unlike any of our other students…Understanding the development of women veterans require[s] making a connection between what these women experienced during their military service and how those experiences may or may not relate to how they make meaning of their experiences as college students (38).

Broyles (2014) and Baechtold and Salwa (2009) draw from two important points originally made in Herbert (1998) and Josselson (1987) that is very relevant to the study at hand. First, "women who enter a male-dominated setting must learn to redefine and manage 'femaleness'" (Herbert, 1998, p. 21). Herbert emphasizes that women in the military feel pressures to act either more feminine, more masculine, or both" (39) which is a point duplicated in the findings of this study. In addition, adding relevancy is the idea that "women in the military are forced into a more conscious and deliberate role as armed forces members and are not allowed a natural expression of gender... removal of the forced military identity causes a crisis of identity for female veterans as they struggle to re-assume roles as civilians" (40).

Although a couple of participants of the interview sample mention compartmentalizing their job as separate from their lifestyles outside of the hours they were actually working (technically you are on-duty twenty-four hours a day), it is more common for participants to discuss their military occupation as who they were. In other words, more often than not, there was not a separation between the identity of being a soldier, airman, marine, sailor or coastguardsman and who they were outside of service. The institutional standard is that you are a service member twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty five days a year with no break

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in between. In speaking about the identity of women in the military, Josselson writes, "When their military occupation is removed and a new vocation must be found in a college or university setting, many women veterans…construct a new identity [not easily] that is specifically related to gender in order to make meaning of the collegiate environment" (40). This is also true of participants in the study as several mentioned reclaiming more feminine characteristics post military service by expressing gender in a way that is more feminized by wearing makeup or dresses as this was not something that they did during their military service.

One of the most significant findings of this study is that participants describe what I refer to as a lasting veteran habitus. Although necessary during military service, this lasting habitus creates a double bind for many women as they transition from service. Characteristics of a lasting habitus are described by the participants in the context of embodiment of androgynous characteristics or behavior associated with military masculinity. Although there are clearly toxic aspects to military masculinity as mentioned previously, there are also positive attributes associated with military masculinity. Participants discuss embodying and employing these positive attributes of military masculinity even many years after their separation from service. I argue that these attributes, when paired with the recognition of multiple and often times intersecting identities after service lead to a re-affirmation of agency post military service. This equation provides for a very strong base of resiliency and a powerful female autonomy that can or is being used in movement building for social change. This recognition of female autonomy within the population of women veteran's leads to a powerful subversion of hegemonic masculinity after service ultimately challenging heteronormative norms which I argue is changing the institutional conception of what the military subject is supposed to be.

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Being a "veteran" in US society lends itself to a near sacred status for those who fit the hetero-normative ideal. However, for those who fail to fit the ideal, access to veteranized-power is routinely denied and history of military service is disregarded and ignored. Having thick skin, not being easily offended, taking things with a grain of salt, and finding the motivation to work harder in order to be seen as an equal, are the coping mechanisms and mechanisms of survival that women veterans had to rely on in a military setting to get through the day to day. Participants carry this lasting habitus with them after their service ends and throughout interviews described how their time in service has shaped them as the women they are today.

As participants move through what they describe as a "process" of transition from military service, most acknowledged feeling lost within a liminal state between self and service (for some this lasted longer than for others). For a small number of participants, this state of liminality persists as they struggle with healing after military related trauma, mental and/or physical disabilities, and other comorbidities affecting their health and wellbeing. For those who discussed transition from military service not as a thing of the present but as a stage of their life that happened in the past, a noted marker of finding success after service has to do with the reclaiming of her identity as veteran and a recognition of her multiple and often intersecting identities. Aside from helping transitioning veterans meet their basic needs after military service, veteran service organizations can also assist in storytelling and narrative exploration as a suggested method to help the veteran recognize their multiple and intersecting identities. Female autonomy arises from the recognition of the mechanisms (military masculinity) that produced their domination while in service.

Once the veteran reclaims her identity as a veteran and over time recognizes her multiple and often intersecting identities other than "veteran", she re-affirms her agency. Once this

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recognition and re-affirmation of self takes place, military masculinities are drawn upon when deemed situationally appropriate. I observe this in certain settings where identifying as a veteran provides a benefit. The "veteran" label is a form of social capital particularly respected in areas significant to public policy like the national defense arena. Yet again, it is important to note that veteran privilege is most available to those who perform gender in a way that is closest to societal perceptions of the ideal service member, i.e. the heterosexual white male combat veteran. Participants who fall outside of this category do not have claim to the same social status as those who meet the heteronormative ideal. Those that embody androgynous characteristics acknowledged as those adapted during military service, continually walk a gendered tight rope between performing gender in a way that feels comfortable to them, yet may lead to discriminatory treatment in civilian employment settings where traditional views on femininity are often held as a standard. This is an example of how the military paradox continues once they leave the service.

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Chapter 7: Conclusion and Applied Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the gendered performances of women service members. I explored how they constructed, maintained and reproduced their identity within the institution and once they left military service. Additionally, the study explored the consequences produced by militarism and explored the consequences face by women during military service and as they transitioned out of military service. Due to prevalence of gender maltreatment such as sexual harassment and sexual assault, the consequences of it are just one of many considerations that must be taken into account when ensuring that women have access to gender-appropriate services through the Department of Veterans Affairs making this study and others that focus on women service relevant for increased attention.

This research is meant to contribute to a growing body of literature on veteran transition and help fill the existing gap in anthropology of the military on the intersections of gender, gendered role-making, and military service. My hope is that this research will be of interest to law makers, policy experts, and community stakeholders tasked with identifying the short-term and long-term challenges affecting women veterans as they transition to civilian life after service, and how to appropriately tailor programs and services to meet the needs of the population. Primary findings have led to

The greater than expected sample size to the online survey and the large amount of volunteer email addresses I received from interested interview participants is a telling finding in and of itself. The high level of participation in this subject area tells me that women veterans responded because of a deep interest in sharing their experiences of military service and of

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transition from service with a larger audience. Their participation also sends a message that they understand the importance of participating in research that can help advance resources for the population. A final remark left by a survey respondent stated, "I pray this study helps women veterans who don't seem to have support or solutions that should have been implemented years ago."

Limitations of Study

Despite its contributions to an area of scholarship recognized as needing much more attention, this study is not without limitations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via telephone. Although this method provided enough data for this study, it is possible that alternative data collection methods such as face-to-face interviewing could reveal different results. However, the anonymity of the telephone interviews may have resulted in more open conversations where participants were not afraid of revealing experiences more sensitive in nature. At the same time, interviewing by telephone can be awkward and does not allow for rapport to be built between researcher and participant. Future research should incorporate a community practice framework, focusing on specific sub demographics within the larger women veteran population. Given the sample size, this will be doable at a later date.

A more strategic sampling method focusing on a specific geographic location such as the larger Tampa Bay community, which has a relatively large veteran population, would be beneficial. Future research may consider utilizing community mapping of veteran's programs and services that is region specific. This would not only be helpful to veteran service organizations and stakeholders, but to the community of women veterans who noted challenges in finding programs and services that they qualify for.

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Intersectional study design is positioned as a primary methodological concern for feminist researchers. "Intersectionality" is a core articulation developed through the scholarship of women of color. It refers to the overlapping of multiple forms of discrimination and oppression such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, disability status, sexuality, and age among others. When discussing intersectionality as a major feminist intersection, Craven and Davis (2016) discuss how conceptually, an intersectional analysis argues, "that all categories of identity and existence operate at the same time in a person's experience of oppression and subordination" (43). It is important to acknowledge that gender issues within the US military also operate in a racialized context. Women veterans of color experienced their military service and also transition from military service in a specific manner. This acknowledgement is important in intersectional analyses. This study acknowledges the importance of intersectionality. However, the analysis for this particular project remains primarily focused on gender. Future studies should incorporate an intersectional analysis and seek to explore more in depth the transition experiences of minority veterans including women veterans of color and LGBTQI veterans.

While the identity negotiations reported in this study may resonate with other communities, it is also possible these findings do not generalize to other women outside of this study who served in the military. Further scholarship, breaking down some of the broader themes represented in this ethnographic study is needed to understand how other stories may relate to those presented here. For the most part, women participants of this study participated in atypical feminine roles while serving in the United States Military. Additionally, all reported serving in predominantly male units during service. It will be interesting to see if similar themes are found in future research focused on women veterans given the fact that now, women will be filling combat roles that they were previously banned from participating in. Future research, should

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examine how women veterans negotiated their transition from masculinized military roles to specific professions within the private sector or non-profit or advocacy work. A deeper intersectional investigation of women veterans belonging to various demographic categories may lead to greater insight into the effects such a transition might have had on their gender identity. Further, examination of this potentially difficult transition may provide insight into the part that women veterans are playing in shaping the feminist movement in its current form.

Applied Implications and Recommendations

The applied implications for this study are primarily focused on creating an environment for women veterans transitioning from military service that is supportive and holistic in nature. In order to do this, we have to look beyond the VA because the Department of Veterans Affairs is just one piece of this puzzle. We have to look towards the services being provided by community service organizations, as it is these organizations that are filling the gaps that VA services are unable or sometimes unwilling to provide, primarily when interventions are not included in approved VA treatment practices. We have seen significant progress with regards to expanding services for women veterans, and with regards to health care services. This is observable in most major VA hospitals where it is now more commonplace to have separate women's clinics. However, access to VA care and availability of programs and services varies geographically, depending on the physical location of the veteran. I argue that quality care for military veterans spans far beyond the reach of services provided through VA which is why I stress throughout this conclusion that there is a need for increased collaboration with community service organizations beyond that of current institutional practices which have been reported as less than desirable by stakeholders interviewed for this study.

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Research indicates that many veterans do not utilize VA programs and services. A study conducted by Nelson, Starkebaum, & Reiber (2007) analyzed data from almost 24,000 veterans interviewed as part of the 2000 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System and found that 86.9% did not use VA health care. A recent report from the Congressional Research Service (2014) shows that there are 21.6 million veterans in the U.S., of which 9.1 million are enrolled in the VA, and among the latter, only 5.9 million actually use health services. Of particular concern are the veterans of the post 9-11 era who have served in Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom or "OIF") and Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom or "OEF"), who are experiencing higher rates of PTSD, depression, suicide risk, traumatic brain injury, and spinal cord injury in comparison to previous cohorts of veterans. Recent news reports have focused on lengthy waiting list times and allegations about lack of care.

According to Meehan (2006) women veterans continue to play an increasing role in U.S. military service making up roughly fifteen percent of the active enlisted force, seventeen percent of the National Guard forces and twenty percent of new military recruits (Bean-Mayberry et al 2010). A 2010 Pew Research report revealed that the number of active duty enlisted women has grown from about 42,000 in 1973, to 167,000 in 2010. Important to note is that during this same timeframe (1973-2010) the enlisted force as a whole has seen a decrease of roughly 738,000 service members (Patten and Parker 2010). Within the Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare system, women are one of the fastest growing users of programs and services (Bean-Mayberry et al. 2010). According to Hayes and Krauthmeyer (2009) "of the more than 100,000 OEF/OIF women veterans, over forty-four percent have enrolled for healthcare" (Bean-Mayberry et al. 2010: 84) making them a large part of the veteran community needing access to programs and services.

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Although there are many similarities between readjustment issues for men and women (Street et al 2009), research indicates that there are distinct differences in women's military experiences when compared to their male cohorts (Bean-Mayberry et al. 2010; Carlson 2013; Street et al 2009; Patton and Parker 2010). Cheney et al (2014) propose that women veterans' experiences in VA care can emulate their experiences in the military. Their research revealed that women share three common experiences:

> First, they are highly visible and capture a disproportionate amount of attention from those in dominant position in VA settings (e.g., male Veterans, providers), and their behaviors are scrutinized and judged. Second, polarization, or in this case the exaggeration of gender differences, creates boundaries between male Veterans (i.e., the dominant group) and women Veterans (i.e., the minority group), reaffirming solidarity among men and fostering a sense of isolation and disconnection among women. Last, assimilation of the encapsulation of women Veterans into stereotypical gender roles distorts women's behaviors and social identities, exaggerating socially undesirable and gender-typed behavioral characteristics (e.g., complaining) (Cheney et al. 2014:151).

The significance in this statement is that these differences can affect the health outcomes of women veterans if variables like access to care and barriers to care are not conceptualized in a gendered perspective based on the experiences of women themselves.

Applied implications for this study start at the micro level in that community veteran's organizations assisting women veterans with discovering their multiple and often times intersecting identities by exploring and telling their stories need support and collaboration from larger institutions such as the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.

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This will produce a feedback loop between local or federal government organizations striving to increase the quality of care for women veterans, community based support organizations that are pounding the pavement conducting outreach to find women veterans after they leave military service, and the veteran who may not have a good understanding of programs and services available to her. The applied outcome of this theory of action is that community service organizations become the catalyst for outreach to the population of women veterans, many of whom distrust government entities that they have heard or personally experienced operate in the same realm of misogynistic practices or principles as the military. For many women, trust that things have changed needs to be reinstated and affirmed by a mediating actor prior to the veteran going to the VA for her care. I see community service organizations filling this intermediary role. Based on the interviews with community service organizations in this study, further research needs to investigate the barriers to collaboration between the Department of Veterans Affairs and community service organizations, what support is provided to community service organizations found to provide effective services to women veterans, and what constitutes effective services.

Role of Anthropologists in Providing the Best Services for Women Veterans

As a Health Science Research Assistant at the Center of Innovation on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (CINDRR), a VA research facility located in Tampa, Florida, I spent a lot of time considering the role that Anthropologist's play or can play with regards to providing the best care for women veterans within the VA. Cheney et al. (2014) continue to use anthropological frameworks of gender and violence to shed light on the ways in which military- and VA-specific constructions of gender roles and norms and power dynamics embedded in institutional hierarchies (e.g., military, VA health care system) shape violent acts against

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servicewomen and women veterans. The authors have shown how the critical lens brought by anthropologists into their work at the VA prepares them "to engage in conversations about why and for what purposes investigators need to consider the role of gender in the delivery and effectiveness of mental health care (Cheney et al., 2014; Strauss et al., 2012)". Additionally, Cheney notes that anthropological training "also qualifies us to engage in debates on what gender-sensitive models of care mean and how best to address culturally specific constructions of gender and structures of power in the delivery of health care to women Veterans (Cheney 2014).". I would like to extend this statement beyond addressing the delivery of health care to women veterans inside of the VA. Previously, I have stressed the need for increased collaboration with community service providers as almost every stakeholder interviewed mentioned challenges with regards to VA partnership and collaboration. Although there is a VA office of community engagement, stakeholders either did not know that this office existed, or felt that it failed to assist them in forging any kind of partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs. As demonstrated by this research and other studies, about thirty percent of women veterans receive their care within the VA. With an increase in the number of women serving in today's military, we have to focus on holistic community care objectives that include community collaboration between the VA and community partners in order to perform outreach and expand services to the population.

With the election of a new US president last year, there were unsure sentiments about what the future of the VA would look like given aggressive actions from conservative legislators voicing a move towards privatization of VA services, a move that did not sit well with the majority of veteran's service organizations advocating on behalf of the population on Capitol Hill. There was overwhelming support and also an air of relief felt from employees that I work

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with over the appointment of Dr. David Shulkin as Secretary of the VA. Previously, Dr. Shulkin served as the VA's Undersecretary for Health for eighteen months leading the health system which encompasses over 1,700 sites and serves roughly nine million veterans. Understanding the need for greater collaboration with community run and private health services, Dr. Shulkin recently stated publicly that a new and improved "Choice program" known as Choice 2.0 will be unveiled by this fall (Shane 2017). The original "Choice Card" program was enacted by Congress in 2014 in an effort to stop an ongoing and very public deliberation over VA wait times, one of the many VA scandals to hit the twenty-four hour news cycle over the past several years. The premise of the Choice card was to provide VA patients facing wait times of over thirty days or significant travel to a VA facility, the option to see an outside provider for their care instead (Shane 2017). The issue with the original program is that patients continued to face challenges in navigating the program due to the red tape and rules affiliated with the program. Additionally, private sector providers were hesitant to participate given challenges with reimbursement and billing after agreeing to see VA patients. Dr. Shulkin's extension of the program is meant to remedy the onslaught of these issues, streamline processes, and make the program easier for veterans to navigate so that they can receive the highest quality of care available to them. Given the projected increase in women veterans over the upcoming years and the findings and feedback provided from this research in that just over thirty percent of women are using VA health care, improving processes through Choice 2.0 will greatly impact access and quality of care for this portion of the population, especially those living in rural areas where access to gender specific care is not easily available or available at all. However, research needs to be supported that investigate the failings of the original Choice program so that adequate solutions can be included in the new proposal for the legislation. The timeline for

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implementation of Choice 2.0 is short, which was also the case for the original program, and likely one of the primary causes for its weaknesses.

Recognizing and Re-affirming Agency After Military Service: From the Author's Point of View

Our perspectives, according to Feminist sociologists Dorothy E. Smith and Patricia Hill Collins, always involve multiple intersecting factors. This is because individual's knowledge and opinions are derived from personal experiences that take place in different social locations. Feminists have placed a high level of value on personal experience and how it informs and often becomes part of our scholarship, thus making it crucial to always be aware of our positionality and discuss the inevitable impacts of our identity in our writing (Davis and Craven 2016). In writing this dissertation, I was reminded of Lila Abu-Lughod's insights into how much an ethnographer can learn about one's positionality through fieldwork. Abu-Lughod is a Palestinian-American anthropologist and has written extensively about her experiences conducting what she refers to as "halfie anthropology" fieldwork. She used this term to discuss fieldwork being conducted by "bicultural or multicultural anthropologists who share a partial belonging with those involved in their research" (Davis and Craven 2016). Our identities as "insiders" and "outsiders" always matter to the ethnographic encounter and will shape the narrative produced through fieldwork. For the feminist ethnographer, it is imperative to always be aware of the positionality and to openly discuss how our identity impacts the work that we are doing.

Although this dissertation research is not considered auto ethnographic in its entirety, reflexivity as a method is important to feminist scholarship. As suggested by Ruth Behar (2017), when conducting research with populations that are a part of our own history and heritage,

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erasing our presence in our writing is not possible. As I tell the stories of others, I also want to understand who I am through this process. Behar (2017) states:

> For many of us who are doing academic work about our own communities or our own diasporas, it is ethically necessary that we write in the first person. To be absent from the text would be a betrayal. But the challenge of writing in the first person is how to place yourself in the story gracefully, so you don't overwhelm the narrative. You're walking a tightrope, taking the risk of failing both to do good academic work *an*d good personal writing.

In the following paragraphs of this concluding chapter, I will reflect on the intersection of my military service, this project, and my research and advocacy work with and for women veterans, a population that I am a part of.

I grew up conceptualizing the notion of "freedom" to mean being able to live in a country without fear of persecution, that everybody has a fundamental guarantee to fairness, justice and liberty as granted by the Constitution of the United States. I joined the military because I thought I was doing the right thing, the most "patriotic" thing, by joining an institution that I truly believed protected these rights and others. I was proud of my decision to join. For many years in the aftermath of my service I found myself struggling to deal with conflicting emotions that are a byproduct of the eight and a half years that I spent as a service member during the post 9-11 war era, an era that is still ongoing today sixteen years after my initial enlistment.

Like so many participants in this study, I embodied military masculinity in the way I carried myself, the way I talked shop, the way I exercised, the way I bottled up my pain and my fear. I always challenged myself to not surpass just the physical fitness standards set for females, but meet the physical fitness standards set for males. I needed them to know that I could carry

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myself and that I was just as fit as them. I needed to convince them that I could successfully be a member of their team.

Just like the participants of this study, I tried to become the military ideal to the best of my ability, even though I knew this was an unreachable standard. It was never enough for me to just fulfill my duties on the job; I needed to exceed them. I needed to always do more and to challenge myself to take on more responsibility even at the times when I felt like the weight of the pressure to not fail or disappoint the men in my unit was enough to make my knees buckle. I needed to outperform every other female regardless of task. The military breeds an environment thick with competition. The weak are ostracized and disrespected, discarded by being made to work a desk job. Those who admit to psychological distress are sent to medical where they await their medical discharge for a psychiatric diagnosis that will deem them unfit for continued service.

I could never falter for any show of weakness, even a tear, would welcome pity. I endured sexual harassment; I could not escape the male gaze. I accepted the rape whistle when I deployed to Iraq never questioning out loud how this would stop a predator from raping me. I listened to how she was victim blamed after being found in the common area with her pants around her ankles, unconscious from drinking too much alcohol or maybe having been drugged. They said it was her fault for being such a slut but I knew that she could have been any of us. We all kept silent as they sent her home from our deployment, never asking why her perpetrator(s) were never named. Silence was my refuge, as it kept me hidden from their reprimand. Those who broke the silence were demonized. I just wanted to get home. I always operated with a laser pointed at my forehead, no matter how hard I voluntarily or involuntarily tried to be, “just like one of the guys”.

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Reflecting on the stories told to me by the participants of this study, what we have in common is that we were the minority working with only a handful of other women while on duty. We worked in a variety of male dominated career fields ranging from aircraft maintenance, weapons and ordinance, military police, mortuary affairs, linguistics, interrogator, combat medic, tank maintainer, civil affairs, broadcast journalism, truck and convoy operation, air traffic control and intelligence. As a female in a military setting, we always stand out.

I simultaneously used my involvement in a storytelling event held in Tampa this past September as an opportunity for participant observation. This event was for military service members and first responders. It consisted of a seminar where we learned storytelling techniques from theater coaches and later told our stories using the method we learned to a live audience. Within my group, a prior service special operations soldier said that while in the Army, he made it a point to always stay in what he called, "the grey zone". He said, "I think of myself as the grey man and I always operate around a level three so that I don't draw unnecessary attention to myself. The key to being successful in the Army is to always blend in". I remember thinking about how great it would have been, and how much easier my time in the military would have been if I too, could have operated in a "grey zone" like the one this soldier discussed. However, for women in any branch of service, a "grey zone" does not exist. We cannot just blend in and hide in the shadows. Even if through adaptive measures we alter our gendered performance to fit more with the military ideal, we always stand out.

When I first enlisted in the military I felt proud. Back then, I was too ill informed too care that I voluntarily participated in an institution responsible for the global manufacturing of violence, a mission at odds with the person I have become. The feelings of pride became replaced with feelings of shame and guilt. The shame led me to cower in classrooms when asked

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about my service or why I would volunteer myself for this never-ending war. The shame led me to not speak about my service for years or willingly identify as a veteran in public if asked if any of us were in the room. Upon leaving, just as I had experienced as a woman in the military, I failed to feel that I belonged upon my exit from the institutional doors. Yet, it is this shame that produced an intense need to understand militarism and the impact of militarism on the individual, the global reach of my countries militarism, and what purpose our service in the military really served. In a constant battle with this shame and its resulting isolation, I needed to find others who could help me understand why I felt a growing distance form between me and my friends and my family.

Years of questioning my service, the self-doubt, the frustration from feeling like I was lost within my own back yard, all while simultaneously silently screaming at myself to be tough, to stop crying, to keep moving forward, to quit feeling sorry for myself drove me forward. These contradicting emotions were a catalyst for a four-thousand mile bicycle ride that took me across the country in search of something that would make me feel alive, that would lift the umbrella of shame and reinstate the respect I once had for the country where I live. This bike ride was my attempt at healing the moral injury left over from my military service. It was on this bike ride across the country where other women veterans, all-searching for their own paths, joined me. With them is when I began to recognize that I was more than just a cog like I was as a service member. I began to reclaim my identity as a veteran and as a woman on this journey, the very identities that I had cast away and hid for so long. Although I always had agency, it was at this point in my life where I recognized its presence. While on this bike ride I felt a connection with these women that over powered the numbness and all of the anger that had built up; it was the sharing of their stories that resulted in the conception of this project. It was on this bike ride that

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I recognized the collective power we generated together, a collective power that we would use to climb mountains.

I am sharing this personal reflection because the similarities between my experience and the participants of this study are deeply connected, sometimes in an uncanny way. My experience with military masculinity scarred me, yet simultaneously the outcomes of that experience are what drive me forward, what have made me into who I am. The thick calloused skin I developed provides a shield against lacerations born in the battle we continue to fight against patriarchy, the father of misogyny, gender maltreatment, marginalization and injustice in all of its forms.

Conclusion

My goal has been to create a holistic and comprehensive study. The data as presented does just that. It is impossible to understand women veterans and their experiences with transition from service without attempting to understand first their experiences while in service, the impact of the institutional constraints that they served under, and the framework of support that is available once they leave the military. Without understanding the past, we cannot transform the future of programs and services to better meet the needs of the population. Ethnographic methods are well suited for veterans' research, particularly those derived from a feminist standpoint, because these methods support a commitment to paying attention to marginality and power differentials in the areas of gender, race, class, nationality, sexuality, ability, among others, thus challenging marginalization and injustice in order to produce change.

My overarching conclusion after analyzing the results of the online survey, after completing interviews with community stakeholders and twenty-six women veterans, and after attending numerous events focused on veteran reintegration, is that we can provide as many

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services for this population as we see fit, yet without acknowledgement of their stories and a true knowing of the spaces that they have occupied in the military, then we will continue to fail them. There will not be increased numbers of women veterans using the services available through the Department of Veterans Affairs including VHA and VBA unless, as concluded by Cheney et al (2014), there is an end to the replication of military- and VA-specific constructions of gender roles, norms and power dynamics embedded in institutional hierarchies (e.g., military, VA health care system) that shape violent acts against servicewomen and women veterans and rob them of the history of their military service.

It is for these reasons that we have to ensure that there is increased support and collaboration between federal, state, and community based organizations. Women veterans benefit from contributing to safe spaces where they are able to connect with each other. These spaces must utilize effective interventions that assist with the recognition of our multiple and often intersecting identities. When the service member recognizes that they are much more than "just a veteran", personal and professional growth will result. It is in these spaces where stories of service are explored and where healing ultimately begins.

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Endnotes

Chapter 5

1. Before moving forward with this discussion, it is important to state that I am not suggesting that my arguments or observations apply to all women veterans. Additionally, the experiences of being a woman in the US Armed Forces are not universal.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study
Pro #21489

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.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called: *Women Veterans and Re-Entry after Military Service: An Anthropological and Intersectional Analysis.* The person who is in charge of this research study is Kiersten Downs. 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. Antoinette Jackson, Assistant Professor of Applied Anthropology at the University of South Florida.

The research will be conducted over the phone or in a location that is agreed to by the participant and the Principal Investigator.

Purpose of the study
This research study focuses on women who served in the United States military. The interview questions will focus on women veteran's experiences and perceptions about military life, about returning to civilian life, and about the types of services they have received since being discharged.

Why are you being asked to take part?
We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are a woman veteran who served in the United States military for an enlistment period of two or more years.

Study Procedures:
If you take part in this study, you will be asked to:

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- If you take part in this study, you will be asked to complete either a phone interview or an in-person interview. The interview will be approximately one to two hours in length. If you would like the interview to be in person, you will be invited to the Social Science building at the university of South Florida, where a private room will be reserved for the interview. Or, if another location is desired that is more convenient to the interview participant, the participant and the Principal Investigator will agree upon a location. Your participation is completely voluntary. You will be asked if you agree to the interview being audio recorded. The only person that will have access to the audio recording is the Principal Investigator and Dr. Antoinette Jackson, who is overseeing this dissertation research. The audio recording will not contain your name or any identifying information. Immediately after the interview, the recorded data will be transferred to an external drive which is password protected. The only person that has access to the external drive is the Principal Investigator. The recorded data will be stored for 5 years after the final report is submitted. After 5 years, the data will be completely erased from the external drive.

- If any question makes you feel uncomfortable, you can choose to skip that question and move on. Risks to you are considered minimal. We have taken every possible precaution to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of the information we receive.

Total Number of Participants
A total of 60 individuals will participate in the study at all sites.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal
You do not have to participate in this research study. 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.

Benefits
You will receive no benefit(s) by participating in this research study.

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. We have taken every possible precaution to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of the information we receive. To minimize any risk: No names, addresses, or other personal IDs are collected, so your responses are confidential and your identity on the survey is unknown to the researchers; The researchers will only analyze the results of all people who respond without singling out any one person; The interviewer will provide you with a list of information about services available to you as a veteran; Survey data are stored on a highly secured server that is both password and firewall-protected and only accessible to the researchers.

Compensation
You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study

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Costs
It will not cost you anything to take part in the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality
We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. Anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. These individuals include:

- 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, and individuals who provide oversight to ensure that we are doing the study in the right way.
- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.

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.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints
If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an unanticipated problem, call Kiersten Downs at 813-476-2153.
If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, 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
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

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 confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

_____ _____
Signature of Person obtaining Informed Consent Date

_____
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

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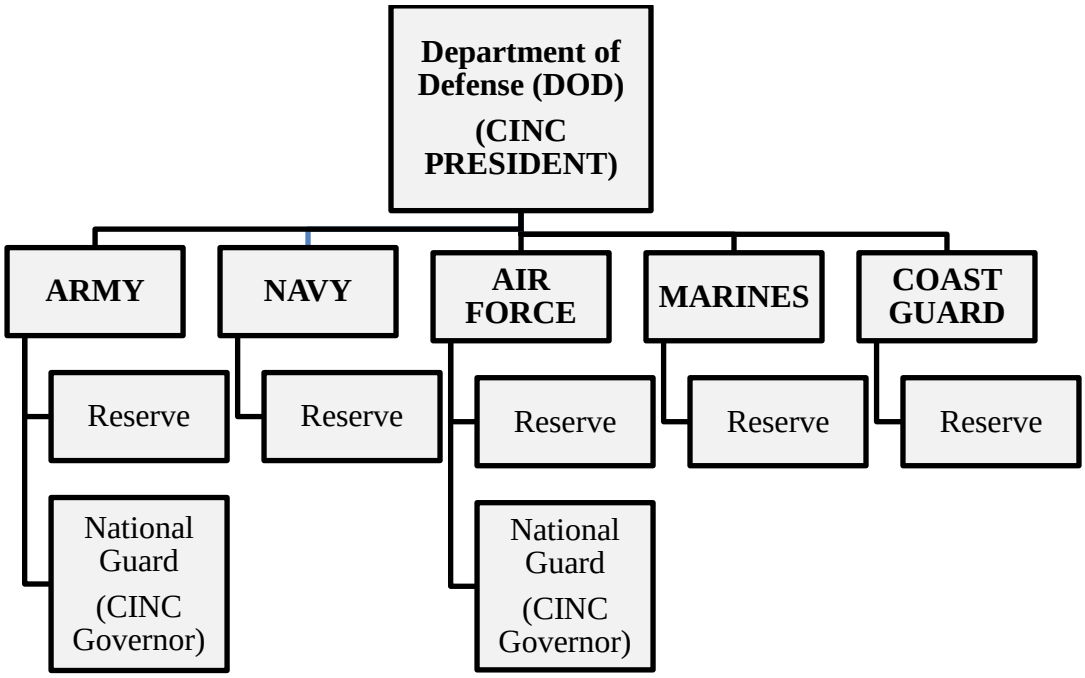
Appendix B: Military Structure



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Appendix C: Enlisted Rank Structure

	NAVY	ARMY	AIR FORCE	MARINE CORPS	COAST GUARD
E-1	Seaman Recruit	Private	Airman Basic	Private	Seaman Recruit
E-2	Seaman Apprentice	Private E-2	Airman	Private First Class	Seaman Apprentice
E-3	Seaman	Private First Class	Airman First Class	Lance Corporal	Seaman
E-4	Petty Officer Third Class	Corporal / Specialist	Senior Airman	Corporal	Petty Officer Third Class
E-5	Petty Officer Second Class	Sergeant	Staff Sergeant	Sergeant	Petty Officer Second Class
E-6	Petty Officer First Class	Staff Sergeant	Technical Sergeant	Staff Sergeant	Petty Officer First Class
E-7	Chief Petty Officer	Sergeant First Class	Master Sergeant / First Sergeant	Gunnery Sergeant	Chief Petty Officer
E-8	Senior Chief Petty Officer	Master Sergeant / First Sergeant	Senior Master Sergeant / First Sergeant	Master Sergeant / First Sergeant	Senior Chief Petty Officer
E-9	Master Chief Petty Officer	Sergeant Major	Chief Master Sergeant / First Sergeant	Sergeant Major	Master Chief Petty Officer
	Fleet/Command Master Chief Petty Officer	Command Sergeant Major	Command Chief Master Sergeant	Master Gunnery Sergeant	Command Master Chief Petty Officer
Special	Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy	Sergeant Major of the Army	Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force	Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps	Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard

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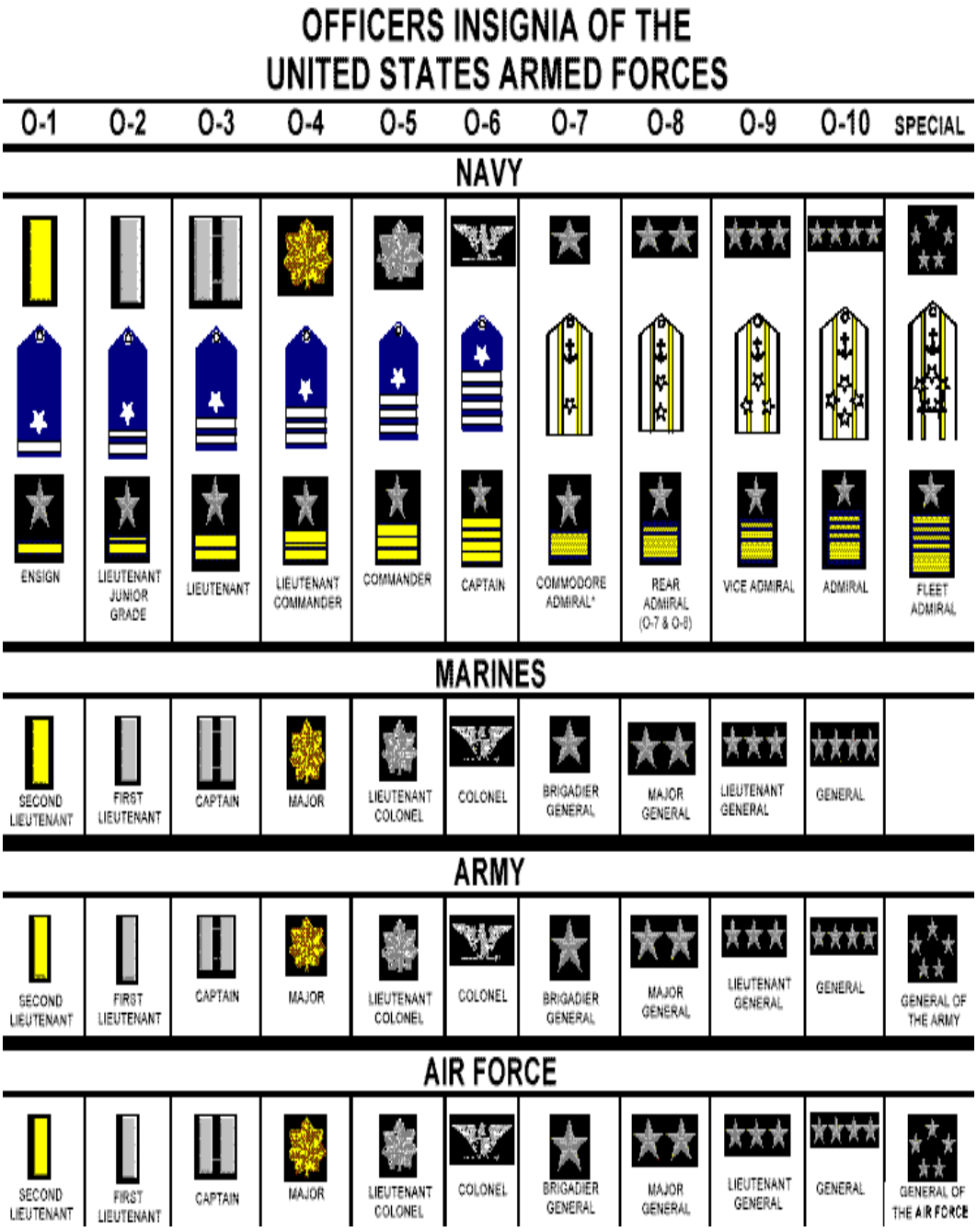
Appendix D: Officers Insignia of the US Armed Forces



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Appendix E: Online Survey

Check **"Yes"** if you agree to participate. Checking **"No"** will take you to the end of the survey.

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

If you are in need of emergency assistance please contact the **Veterans Crisis Line**. The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text.

Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, chat online, or send a text message to **838255** to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The Veterans Crisis Line website is: ://www.veteranscrisisline.net/
Q1.2 What is your year of birth?
Q1.3 What state do you currently live in?

Q1.4 The following questions ask about your gender identity, sexual orientation, and race and ethnicity. As with all questions in this survey, answering is entirely optional and you may decline to answer.

Q1.5 I identify my biological sex as?

- ○ Female
- ○ Intersex
- ○ Male
- ○ FTM (Female to Male)
- ○ MTF (Male to Female)
- ○ Other (Please Specify) _____

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Q96 I identify my gender identity as?

- ○ Woman
- ○ Man
- ○ Fill in the blank _____

Q1.6 Do you identify as LGBTQ?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Q1.7 Are you of Hispanic/Latino origin?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Decline to Answer

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Q1.8 Which best describes your race/ethnicity? (check all that apply or insert your answer in the text box provided).

- ☐ White
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian American
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other _____

Q1.9 Which best describes your current marital status and year of the event? (Check all that apply).

- ☐ Never married
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Separated

Q1.10 For individuals married more than once, how many times have you been married? (Please skip to next question if this does not apply to you).

_____

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Q1.11 What is the highest level of education you attained prior to entering the military?

- ○ High school or GED equivalent
- ○ Some college (No degree)
- ○ 2-year college degree
- ○ 4-year college degree
- ○ Graduate degree (Please list)

_____

Q1.12 What is the highest level of education you have achieved in your lifetime?

- ○ Never attended school or only attended kindergarten
- ○ Less than high school (list highest grade completed)

_____

- ○ High school or GED equivalent
- ○ Some college (no degree)
- ○ 2-year college degree
- ○ 4-year college degree
- ○ Graduate degree (please list) _____

Q1.14 Have you used or are you currently using military education benefits?

- ○ Currently using education benefits
- ○ Previously used some or all of my education benefits
- ○ Never used any education benefits

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Q1.15 Which best describes your current employment status? (Check all that apply).

- ☐ Employed for wages - Full time
- ☐ Employed for wages - Part time
- ☐ Self Employed - Full time
- ☐ A homemaker (no paid employment)
- ☐ A college student (undergraduate)
- ☐ A college student (graduate level)
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Out of Work (indicate approximate number of months out of work): _____
- ☐ Unable to work due to disability
- ☐ Other (please describe) _____

Q1.16 If currently employed, what is your job title? (If not employed please skip or type NA).

_____

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Q1.17 What is your household income per year?

- ○ Below $15,000 a year
- ○ $15,000 to $25,000 a year
- ○ $25,000 to $35,000 a year
- ○ $35,000 to $45,000 a year
- ○ $45,000 to $55,000 a year
- ○ $55,000 to $65,000 a year
- ○ $65,000 to $80,000 a year
- ○ $80,000 to $100,000 a year
- ○ Over $100,000 a year

Q1.18 What was the highest level of education your mother attained?

- ○ Never attended school or only attended kindergarten
- ○ Less than high school (List highest grade completed) _____
- ○ High school or GED equivalent
- ○ Some college (No degree)
- ○ 2-year college degree
- ○ 4-year college degree
- ○ Graduate degree (please list) _____

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Q1.19 What was the highest level of education your father attained?

- ○ Never attended school or only attended kindergarten
- ○ Less than high school (List highest grade completed)

_____

- ○ High school or GED equivalent
- ○ Some college (No degree)
- ○ 2-year college degree
- ○ 4-year college degree
- ○ Graduate degree (Please list) _____

Q1.20 What was your gross household income per year **prior** to your military service? (By gross household income, we mean the total amount of income made by all working age people living in the household where you lived before entering the military).

- ○ Below $15,000 a year
- ○ $15,000 to $25,000 a year
- ○ $25,000 to $35,000 a year
- ○ $35,000 to $45,000 a year
- ○ $45,000 to $55,000 a year
- ○ $55,000 to $65,000 a year
- ○ $65,000 to $80,000 a year
- ○ $80,000 to $100,000 a year
- ○ Over $100,000 a year

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Q2.1 In what branch of service did you serve?

- ○ Air Force (active)
- ○ Army (active)
- ○ Marine Corps (active)
- ○ Navy (active)
- ○ Coast Guard (active)
- ○ Reserves (Indicate branch in space provided)

_____

- ○ Guard (Indicate branch in space provided)

_____

Q2.2 In what year did you first enlist in or enter the Military? If more than one time, what was the year of the first entry?

_____

Q2.3 In what year were you discharged from military service? If more than one discharge, please select most recent.

_____

Q2.4 Were you honorably discharged?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No - please indicate why not honorably discharged:

_____

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Q2.5 How many years has it been since your date of discharge from military service?

- 0 to 1 years
- 2 to 4 years
- 4 to 7 years
- 7 to 10 years
- 10 or more years

Q2.6 Did you serve in an officer or enlisted capacity?

- Officer
- Enlisted
- Both

Q2.7 What was the highest rank you achieved in the military?

_____

Q2.8 What was your job(s) while serving in the military?

_____

Q2.9 Did you deploy while in military service?

- yes
- No

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Q2.10 If you did deploy, please check any of the following military actions/wars in which you served:

- ☐ Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom or OEF)
- ☐ Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom or OIF)
- ☐ Operation New Dawn
- ☐ Persian Gulf War 1990-91
- ☐ Other war zone/military action (please describe)

_____

Q2.11 The following questions will give you the opportunity to tell us more about your experiences serving as a woman in the military. Please answer openly and truthfully.

Q2.12 Among your parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, who in your family served in the military?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2.13 Did your family support your decision to join the military?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No (if no, why not)? _____

Q2.14 How would you describe your home environment prior to joining the military?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

Q2.15 Why did you decide to join the military?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2.16 What were some of the positive or negative aspects of your job while serving in the military?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2.17 Did you experience any incidents that you would consider unjust or discriminatory while serving in the military?

- Yes
- No

Q2.18 If yes, can you describe any events that you consider to be unjust or discriminatory while you were serving in the military?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Q2.19 Please describe how you feel your military experience has impacted your life.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2.20 How would you describe your military experience?

- ○ Regretful
- ○ Poor
- ○ Fair
- ○ Good
- ○ Very Good
- ○ Delightful

Q2.21 What was it like being a woman in the military?

_____

Q2.22 In general, do you feel like you were treated as equally as the men you served with?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Q2.23 If no, can you give some examples of how you were treated differently?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

Q2.24 If yes, why do you feel you were treated equally? Can you provide any examples of situations where you were treated as an equal to your male colleagues?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2.25 If you deployed during your military experience, what were some positive or negative aspects of your military deployment experience or experiences? (If you did not deploy please skip this question or put N/A).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2.26 Did you experience any events that you consider to be unjust or discriminatory during your deployments?

- Yes
- No
- N/A (I did not deploy)

Q2.27 If yes, can you describe the event or events that you consider to be unjust or discriminatory during your deployment or deployments?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Q2.28 The following group of questions may be sensitive in nature and ask about exposure to violence, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and sexual trauma. As with all questions in this survey, if the questions make you uncomfortable feel free to skip those questions.

Q94 **Before** you joined the military; did you experience mental or physical abuse by a stranger or someone close to you?

- Yes (
- No

Q2.29 **Before** you joined the military, did you ever experience any unwanted sexual attention, like verbal remarks, touching, or pressure for sexual favors?

- Yes
- No

Q2.30 **Before** you joined the military, did anyone ever use force or the threat of force to have sex with you against your will?

- Yes
- No

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Q2.31 While in the military, did you ever experience any of the following forms of harassment or sexual trauma? If so, by whom?

	By an officer of higher rank? (1)	By a fellow enlisted service member? (2)	By someone outside of the military? (3)
Verbal sexual harassment (1)	☐	☐	☐
Sexual assault (2)	☐	☐	☐
Groping, inappropriate touching (3)	☐	☐	☐
Unwanted advances, suggestions (4)	☐	☐	☐
Unwanted kissing (5)	☐	☐	☐
Receiving unwanted messages of a sexual nature such as emails, pictures, texts, printed materials (6)	☐	☐	☐
Sexual advances with the promise of retaliation if rejected. (8)	☐	☐	☐
Stalking (9)	☐	☐	☐
Other form of harassment (describe) (7)	☐	☐	☐

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Q95 **After** leaving the military, did you experience mental or physical abuse by a stranger or someone close to you?

- Yes
- No

Q2.32 **After** leaving the military, did you ever experience any unwanted sexual attention, like verbal remarks, touching, or pressure for sexual favors?

- Yes
- No

Q2.33 **After** leaving the military, did anyone ever use force or the threat of force to have sex with you against your will?

- Yes
- No

Q2.34 Were you ever hospitalized for a military-related injury or health problem at any time during your military service?

- No
- Yes (please describe the problem)

_____

Q2.35 **After** you left the military, were you ever hospitalized for a military-related injury or health problem?

- No
- Yes (Please describe the problem)

_____

Q2.36 While in the military, were you ever treated for mental health or emotional problems?

- No
- Yes (please describe the problem)

_____

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Q2.37 **After** you left the military, were you ever treated for mental health or emotional problems?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes (Please describe the problem)

_____

Q2.38 While in the military were you ever treated for a substance abuse problem?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes (please describe the problem)

_____

Q2.39 **After** leaving the military, were you ever treated for a substance abuse problem?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes (please describe the problem)

_____

Q2.40 Were you ever diagnosed by a health care professional (doctor, psychologist, etc.) as having PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

Q2.41 Did you ever receive counseling or other care for PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)?

- ○ No
- ○ Yes

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Q2.42 In general, would you say your health is:

- ○ Excellent
- ○ Very Good
- ○ Good
- ○ Fair
- ○ Poor

Q2.43 How much of the time in the last month were you bothered by:

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	Not at all (1)	A little bit (2)	Moderately (3)	Quite a Bit (4)	Extremely (5)
a. Repeated, disturbing memories, thoughts, or images of a stressful experience from the past?	○	○	○	○	○
b. Repeated, disturbing dreams of a stressful experience from the past?	○	○	○	○	○
c. Suddenly acting or feeling as if a stressful experience were happening again (as if you were reliving it)?	○	○	○	○	○
d. Feeling very upset when something reminded you of a stressful experience from the past?	○	○	○	○	○

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e.Having physical reactions (e.g., heart pounding, trouble breathing, or sweating) when something reminded you of a stressful experience from the past?	○	○	○	○	○
f. Avoid thinking about or talking about a stressful experience from the past or avoid having feelings related to it?	○	○	○	○	○
g. Avoid activities or situations because they remind you of a stressful experience from the past?	○	○	○	○	○
h. Trouble remembering important parts of a stressful experience from the past?	○	○	○	○	○

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Q2.44 ...(continued) How much of the time in the last month were you bothered by:

	Not at all (1)	A little bit (2)	Moderately (3)	Quite a Bit (4)	Extremely (5)
i. Loss of interest in things that you used to enjoy?	○	○	○	○	○
j. Feeling distant or cut off from other people?	○	○	○	○	○
k. Feeling emotionally numb or being unable to have loving feelings for those close to you?	○	○	○	○	○
l. Feeling as if your future will somehow be cut short?	○	○	○	○	○
m. Trouble falling or staying asleep?	○	○	○	○	○
n. Feeling irritable or having angry outbursts?	○	○	○	○	○
o. Having difficulty concentrating?	○	○	○	○	○
p. Being “super alert” or watchful on guard?	○	○	○	○	○
q. Feeling jumpy or easily startled?	○	○	○	○	○

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Q2.45 If you were in a supervisory or leadership position while in the military, did you ever experience insubordination, attitudes, or resistance by those you were leading?

- ○ Never
- ○ Occasionally
- ○ Very Often
- ○ Always
- ○ N/A (I was not in a supervisory or leadership position) (

Q2.46 If yes, can you provide an example of any insubordination, attitudes, or resistance you experienced by those you were leading?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2.47 Were there any other women who served with you in your unit?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Q2.48 If yes, how would you describe your relationships with the other women in your unit?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Q2.49 Did you ever feel that you were in competition or have conflicts with the other women with whom you served?

- ○ Not At All
- ○ Occasionally
- ○ Frequently

Q2.50 If you answered frequently or occasionally, can you explain why you felt competition or conflict with other women occurred? Can you provide an example of when this occurred?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2.51 How would you describe your relationships with the men in your unit?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2.52 In what ways do you feel that your experiences serving in the military affect you today?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Q2.53 How would you describe your experience with re-entry into civilian life after you left the military?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2.54 Do you consider yourself to be a military veteran?

- Yes
- No

Q2.55 If yes, why do you consider yourself to be a military veteran?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2.56 If no, why do you not consider yourself to be a military veteran?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Q2.57 When speaking with other people, do you let them know that you are a veteran?

- ○ Yes (4)
- ○ Maybe (5)
- ○ No (6)

Q2.58 If yes, why do you feel it is important to let people know you are a veteran?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2.59 If you answered no or maybe, under what circumstances would you NOT tell people you are a military veteran?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q3.1 Are you currently receiving mental health counseling?

- ○ Yes (indicate the number of months)

_____

- ○ No

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Q3.2 Are you currently utilizing health and/or wellness services at a VA, Vet Center, or other provider?

- ○ VA
- ○ Vet Center
- ○ Other provider (Please indicate nature of facility- i.e. your church, a non-profit veterans service organization, you use private health insurance)

_____

Q3.3 Does your VA or vet center have a women's veteran's health clinic?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Q3.4 If you are NOT using VA or vet center services and choose to use other service providers for your health and wellness care, please tell us why:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q3.5 What other services for veterans are you currently using (this can be ANY service to include federal, private, or not for profit)?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Q3.6 As a woman veteran, do you feel that you are treated equally and provided equal opportunities to participate in veteran services as male veterans?

- ○ Yes
- ○ I don't know
- ○ No

Q3.7 If yes, can you tell us why you feel you are treated equally as a veteran and provided equal opportunities to participate in veteran services as male veterans?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q3.8 If no, can you explain why you feel you are NOT treated equally or provided equal opportunities to participate in veteran services as male veterans? Can you give an example to help us understand your answer?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q3.9 The following questions refer to your experiences using 'women-specific programming'. By 'women-specific programming' we mean programs or services meant to be used by women only. These can include a broad range of programs and services such as general healthcare, mental healthcare, recreation and retreats, among others that you may use or have used.

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Q3.10 Do you believe that women-specific programming for military veterans is important?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

Q3.11 If yes, what are some of the reasons why you feel women-specific programming is important?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q3.12 What programs and services would you be most interested in utilizing or attending?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q3.13 Is there anything else that you would like us to know? (By clicking 'NEXT' you will be taken to the last page of the survey where you can click the 'SUBMIT' button).

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q4.1 Thank you for participating in this survey and contributing to current research efforts focusing on women veterans. If you are interested in being contacted for a 30 to 60 minute

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follow-up interview in order to provide us with a deeper understanding of your experiences, please input your email address in the space below. A member of the research team will contact you. If you have any questions regarding this research, feel free to contact Kiersten Downs at WomenVetsResearch15@gmail.com

_____

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Appendix F: Women Veterans Interview Guide

Note: After turning recorder on state assigned participant identification #, date, time of day, interviewer name, and mention that consent has been completed and confirms that they do or do not want a copy of their consent form.

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Thank you for your willingness to be interviewed today. I appreciate you taking the time out of your busy schedule. As stated in the informed consent, the goal of this study is to learn from your experiences with re-entry after military service.

My name is <insert name> and I will be conducting your interview today. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Applied Anthropology at the University of South Florida. I would like to hear your experiences with transition after you served in the military. People see things in different ways, so there are no RIGHT or WRONG answers to any of the questions. Please feel free to skip any question that you are uncomfortable with answering.

I would like to audiotape the interview for later analysis. No information that can identify you will be used on notes or other written materials collected from you. When you are referring to someone else please use their title and not their name. Notes from interviews and recordings will be kept in a locked area.

----*Start the recorder*---

Interview Questions (60 to 90 minutes)

Demographic Questions:

1) What year were you born?

2) How do you identify yourself racially/ethnically? Do others identify you the same way?

3) How do you identify your sex?
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Intersex
    d. MT Female
    e. FtM Male
    f. Other (Please Specify)

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4) How do you identify your gender?
    a. Man
    b. Woman
    c. Trans*
    d. _____ (fill in the blank)
    e. Prefer not to disclose

5) What years did you serve in the military?

6) Did you serve in an enlisted or officer capacity?

7) What branch of service?

8) What was your job while in the service?

9) Do you have a service-connected disability?
    a. If yes, what percent?

10) Do you identify with the LGBTQ community?

11) What is your highest level of education?

12) What is your gross annual income?

→*After asking the participant all of the demographic questions, move into an interview icebreaker by conducting a pile sort activity. The goal of the pile sorting activity is to get a better understanding of what the participant identifies as feminine and masculine characteristics or traits within a military context. Ask participants:*

1) I would like you to come up with a list of at least ten characteristics that you think make a good Soldier/Airman/Marine/Seaman/Coastie. (Participant will proceed to list terms)

2) The next activity will categorize the characteristics into masculine and feminine categories. The goal is to see which characteristics the participant ranks as masculine or feminine.

a. "is this characteristic a masculine train or a feminine trait?"

3) How do you think gender impacts the characteristics you just mentioned?

4) What does transition mean?

5) What was your experience like transitioning out of the military?

6) What challenges have you or did you face during your transition experience?

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7) What does it mean to "be a woman" in a military setting?

8) What does it mean to "be a man" in a military setting?

9) Did your family have expectations of you as a woman that changed after you went into the military? If so, how?

10) In what ways did joining the military change how you view yourself as a woman?

11) How would you define the term, "military masculinity"?

12) How do you think military masculinity contributed to the challenges you might have face either during your time in service or after you left?

13) Do you think that male veterans are impacted by military masculinity? why or why not?

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Appendix G: Community Stakeholder Interview Questions

Note: After turning recorder on state Stakeholder ID, date, time of day, interviewer name, and mention that consent has been completed and confirms that they do or do not want a copy of their consent form.

I. Introduction (5 minutes)

Thank you for your willingness to be interviewed today. I appreciate your taking the time out of your busy schedule. As stated in the informed consent, the goal of this study is to learn from your experiences with regards to assisting Women Veterans with transition after military service. My name is Kiersten Downs and I will be conducting your interview today. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Applied Anthropology at the University of South Florida. I would like to hear your opinions about transition assistance for women veterans. People see things in different ways, so there are no RIGHT or WRONG answers to any of the questions. I would like to audiotape the interview for later analysis. No information that can identify you will be used on notes or other written materials collected from you. When you are referring to someone else please use their title and not their name. Notes from interviews and recordings will be kept in a locked area.

---

1. In your experience, what does transition after military service mean for women veterans? In terms of living at home, living in the community, work, family life?
   - What elements should it include?
   - How would you describe a successful transition for women veterans after military service?
   - Does this differ from male veterans?

2. What are your organization's goals for transition assistance for Women Veterans?
   - Does this differ if the veteran is a male?
   - How do you develop goals for transition assistance?
   - Who should be involved in developing goals for transition assistance?

3. What are some things that facilitate a successful transition post military service for women veterans?
   - Prompts: Programs, services, policies, support, family, geographic location
   - What about women veterans who might have a disability?

4. What are some of the barriers to a successful transition post military service for women veterans?
   - Prompts: Programs, services, policies, support, family, geographic location
   - Does this differ for male veterans?
   - What are some strategies to overcome those barriers?

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5. What would make community reintegration easier for women veterans? (e.g. programs, services, policies, technologies, other resources)?

- What are important priorities that you feel need to be improved?
- How do you think this should happen?

6. Can you tell us about the services or programs that you work with that assist women veterans with community reintegration?

- What is the best way to let them know about these programs?

7. How do you see your (or your organizations) role in helping Women Veterans with transition after military service?

Summary: Facilitator summarizes main points from focus group and asks, "Does this summary sound complete?"

Final question: Is there anything else you would like to add?

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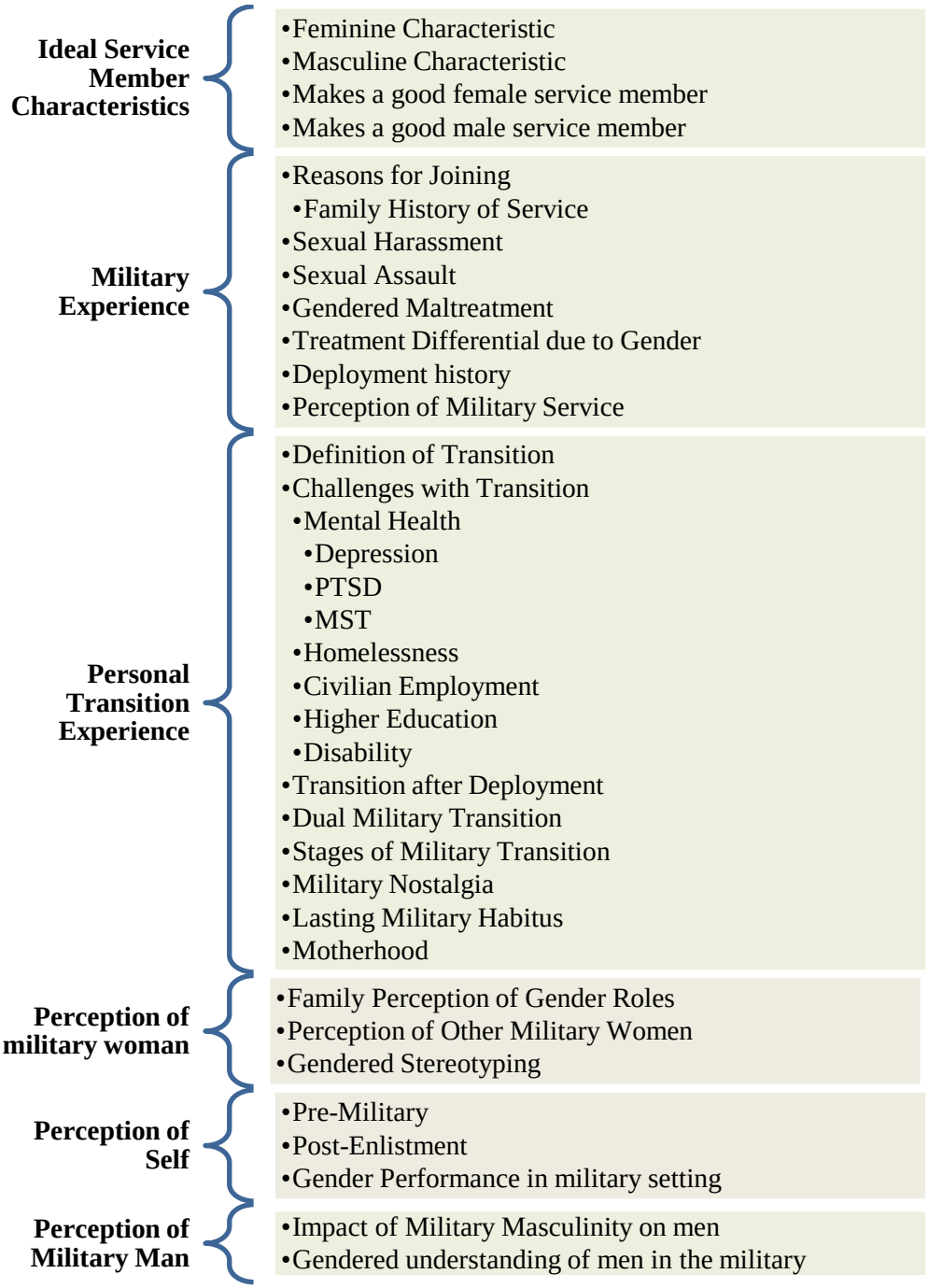
Appendix H: Primary and Sub Codes for Interviews with Women Veterans



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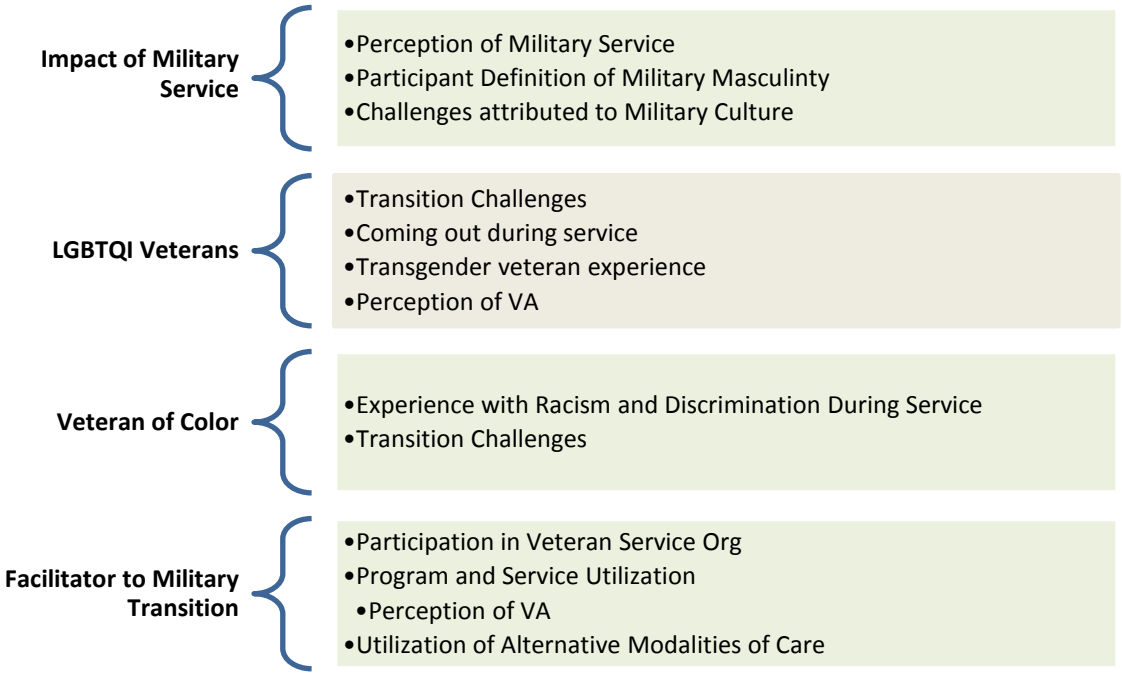

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Appendix I: Primary and Sub Codes for Stakeholder Interviews

Understanding of 'Transition' for women veterans	•Elements of Transition •Description of Sucessful Transition •Difference for Male Veterans
Organizational Goals for Transition Assistance	•Difference for Male Veterans •Method of Goal Development •Primary Stakeholders for Goal Development
Faciliators of Successful Transition	•Facilitator for Disabled Veterans •Programs and Services •Policies
Barriers to Transition	•Programs and/or services •Policies •Strategies to Overcome Barriers •Different for Male Veterans
Strategies to Improve Transition Assistance	•Priorities for Improvement •Methods for Improving Transition Assistance
Program and Services in place for Women Veterans	•Outreach Strategy •Marketing Strategy
Perception of Organizational Role	•Key player

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Appendix J: Characteristics of Ideal Service Member

Sub Code	Frequency	Sub Code	Frequency
ability to follow direction	1	Independent	1
adapt to structure:	1	Ingenuities	1
athletic	1	Has Integrity	5
attention to detail	2	Intelligent	2
Selfless	1	Loyal	7
Able to work independently	1	Able to make quick decisions	1
Strong mentally	2	Mature	2
Strong physically	2	Meticulous	1
Cares about a work-life balance	1	Non-judgmental	1
Clean cut	1	Observant	1
Has cognitive ability	1	Organized	1
Collaborative	1	Patient	2
Committed	3	Patriotic	2
Has common sense	1	Physically fit	2
Compassionate	1	Problem Solver	2
Able to conform	1	Professional	1
Has conviction	1	Resilient	4
Courageous	1	Respectful	4
Dedicated	4	Respect Authority	1
Dependable	1	Respect for Others	1
Detail Oriented	1	Sense of Humor	5
Determined	1	Sharp Appearance	1
Disciplined	1	Well rounded	1
Empathetic	2	Strong	1
Has faith in fellow human beings	1	Strong moral fiber	1
Fast runner	1	Have tact	1
Flexible	3	Be able to take direction	1
Focused	2	Team player	7
Able to follow orders	1	Have tenacity	1

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Has fortitude	1	Be able to think outside of the box	1
Genuine	1	Have thick skin	2
Goal directed	1	Tough	1
Good athlete	1	Be an independent thinker	1
Good follower	2	Thoughtful	1
Has good judgment	2	Tolerant	1
Good leader	2	Trustworthy	2
Has a positive outlook	1	Want to get dirty	1
Great listener	2	Have a wholesome look	1
Hard worker	3	Be willing to continue to learn	2
Has Endurance	1	Willingness	1
Has to be tough	1	Willingness to be open	1
Have high morals	1	Willingness to help others	2
Honorable	9	Willingness to listen	1
		Willingness to get the job done	1

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