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Manning Up: A look at Women in the Military and their Sense of Self

by

Kari E. Davis

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Manning Up: A look at Women in the Military and their Sense of Self

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Chapter One

Introduction

On June 1st, 2011, another group of soldiers from the battalion in Austin, MN Army National Guard deployed for (many of them the 3rd) a tour of duty overseas; this time the group will be going to Kuwait. Some of these young soldiers are new to the military, some are seasoned soldiers, and some are close to retiring from the military. Each has a distinct purpose within the deployment; each will have a job to do and a post to command. Many are scared, nervous, excited about their new adventure, or have a combination of all of these emotions bundled inside. These feelings are compounded as each day passes from the initial notification of deployment, to the actual deployment, and through their return from deployment.

Symbolic interaction assumes individuals shape the meaning of their social worlds through interactions with others in a shared context. Soldiers who see combat have different positions and identities than soldiers who have not seen combat. Therefore, role and identity processes within soldiers needs to be explored on both the interaction and contextual levels. The experiences of deployment should be explored in the sense soldiering has different contexts and also this contributes to the negotiation of meaning in soldiering. Given the obstacles soldiers face in their military career, further investigation was needed in defining the meaning of interaction in soldiers and how this develops and shapes soldier identity.

I completed a study on women in the military researching their sense of self and the shaping of their identity throughout their career. In this paper, I demonstrate the processes these women implemented as they become soldiers, went combat missions, all the while

attempting to maintain their femininity. Lastly, I analyze the emotion management techniques they implemented during their military careers and while re-adjusting to civilian life.

Women used various methods of coping throughout their military career. Women who have seen combat experienced some different emotions than women who serve only as non combat soldiers. Regardless of combat status, soldiers face various emotions during their military career; during combat, soldiers see difficult things and are forced to make complex choices. Combat soldiers use many of the same techniques non combat soldiers use; they also use some different techniques. Deployment in a combat zone is tough on soldiers; being away from their home, family, friends, and witnessing violence can have side effects. Often the women held onto these memories long term and it shaped who they had become post-military. Since soldiering is primarily dominated by men; women need to suppress their emotions to be successful, alter their perceptions of femininity, and reshape their sense of self to be successful in the military. To show these differences, we look to the women who serve in the United States military.

The military previously was an all male institution, at least when it came to combat troops. However, according to the United States Women in the Army (2011), women have served in the United States Army since 1775. They nursed the ill and wounded, laundered and mended clothing, and cooked for the troops in the camp on campaign. Currently, women represent about 13.4 percent of the active Army, 23.7 percent of the Army Reserve and 14 percent of the Army National Guard. Women now are welcome to join any branch of the military, to deploy, and be in combat areas, although there are several jobs women are not allowed to do due to the (male) perceived danger of the job. These jobs are left for men only, for example, men can only be in the infantry. As women continue to enter the military at higher rates, the military faces a difficult task to create an environment where women in soldiering roles can thrive.

More and more young adults sign up to serve our country to “be all they can be”, as the army slogan promises. Some branches are growing at higher rates than others but the numbers continue to rise. The five branches of US Military one can enlist in are: Army, Air Force, Marine Corp, Navy, and Coast Guard. In addition, one can sign up for the National Guard, the Air Guard, or the Reserves. The various roles a soldier has from enlistment, basic training, deployment, to reintegration following deployment can be fundamentally life changing.

According to the United States Department of Defense, in November 2009 there were 13,201 new recruits to the five branches of US Military, not including the reserves. With this number of new recruits, all branches either met or exceeded their goals for enlistment for fiscal year 2010. Meeting these enlistment goals enables the military to continue to expand at its projected growth rate. People are signing up to become soldiers, to do a job, and to serve at a higher rate. There haven’t been any studies I have identified exploring the significance in the shift of the sense of self on these military women.

Using a symbolic interactionist viewpoint, I examined these experiences, exploring the change of who they were and who they become in military women. Given the concepts of symbolic interaction where behavior is analyzed by the changing nature of symbols and how we socially construct the world around us, the military is studied through women soldier’s perspectives and experiences through narrative interviews. Soldier behavior can be seen as a series of actions and reactions among actors which is impacted by their social context, gendered conceptions of behavior, feelings, and interpretations of the setting.

Below, I first examine literature on the differences of men and women in nontraditional occupations. I also explore literature on careers with high occupational stress where one completes shift work has the potential to be dangerous in relation to the dangers of combat deployment to explore how the sense of self changes throughout career paths. This includes a

review of literature on gender performance and ideology relating to how women in the military achieve and maintain their gender ideals or sense of femininity. The second topic I review is literature on the role person merger in settings outside of your typical forty hour work week. The third topic is a review of literature on managing emotions in difficult settings away from home, relating them to my questions about women's management of emotion, identity, and gender performance within the military. Finally, I specify the methodology and analysis procedures I used to examine women's military experiences and reintegration after service.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this chapter, I review literature on gender theory, identity theory, and emotion management. This section covers a wide variety of research framing the soldier experience. There is a limited amount of research on women and the military and their identity shaping. I had to explore these issues using research on law enforcement, camp counselors, prison inmates, and nurses as subjects. These subjects demonstrate many similar experiences and feelings of women soldiers. I explain the literature on this correlation below.

Gender Theory

Candace West and Don Zimmerman (1987:126) state doing gender “involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interaction, and micro-political activities cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine ‘natures.’” Gender is an accomplishment and an achievement which is ongoing. The accomplishment becomes an internal process individuals complete to maintain their identity. Gender is enacted and displayed to others within interactions. As West and Zimmerman explain, “Gender activities emerge from and bolster claims to membership in a sex category” (1987:127). These displays and enactments focus on the performance characteristics of being a woman or a man. Doing gender involves piloting a given social situation so the result is observed and recognized by others as the accomplishment, or in some instances, the infringement of gender-appropriate behavior. Piloting a social situation is the involvement and interaction with others to display a sense of femininity or masculinity. To maintain and do gender is to perform with the persistent threat of being critiqued according to current norms of masculinity and femininity.

Our society tends to categorize both men and women into groups and label them with male dominated terms. Kleinman (2002) writes sexist language allows the male dominated population to make the women invisible. By making a group invisible, it makes it easier for the powerful, in this case, men, to do what they want with members of the group. Therefore, women in terms and speech become invisible by only referring to men, or “guys” of the group. Women are “linguistically a subset of men, through using terms like “mankind” and “guys,” then women are just objects” (Kleinman 2002:302). The military does this also. In Williams’ (1991) study, women are not labeled as Marines, but as Woman Marines, thus classifying them as different and lesser than their male counterparts. This kind of sexism in language is common, and these studies suggest that if women are linguistically considered objects, this becomes another barrier women must navigate to be successful in male dominated professions.

Williams (1991) studied women Marines on a base camp and male nurses to compare gender differences at work in the mid 1980’s. She finds Women marines are held to quite high standards of femininity. The marines take classes on femininity, are expected to wear makeup, dress, act, and demonstrate their womanliness. They are segregated from the men during basic training, and are held to personal conduct not applied to the male marines. At that time, “Only 20% of jobs are open to women” (Williams 1991: 3) and the military would not allow women in combat areas or in other “male centered” jobs. As one Marine Corps commander states, “War is man’s work....a battlefield would be enormous psychological distraction for the male who wants to think he’s fighting for a woman somewhere behind, not up there in the same foxhole. It tramples the male ego” (Williams 1991: 9). As this commander states, war is not for women; women on the battlefield are a distraction and he did not feel the men would be accepting of women on the battlefield. These women entered a branch of the military to do very “woman centered” jobs. They are the secretaries, the typists, and the ones in clerical positions. Women are to maintain their femininity. Williams finds drill sergeants pride

themselves on their ability to “turn new recruits into feminine women” (1991: 77). This belief and desire to be feminine has strong emotions associated with this as well. Williams (1991) finds women who portray themselves as weak so the men perform tasks for them are looked poorly upon by other women. Not only is there a sense and practice of femininity but there is a line and understanding that women should be able to pull their weight and not use their looks, body, or feminine effects to have things done for them by other men.

Poteyeva and Sun (2009) find women are expected to display the standard feelings and roles of their male co-workers; women are not supposed to show their femininity while working. Women officers are supposed to wear their uniform, hide their looks, and perform their job to the best of their ability. Poteyeva and Sun demonstrate, “There was evidence to support women do suffer from additional stressors on the job, such as lack of acceptance by male subculture” (2009: 516). The lack of acceptance in their ideas and displays of gender by their male counterparts can make it a more difficult environment for women during their military career.

As noted above, law enforcement is a predominantly male line of work. Dodge, Valcore, and Klinger (2010) find male officers express different views about women in law enforcement versus women on Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams. These authors report, “Women continue to make great strides in law enforcement, and notions regarding the other gender’s inability to adequately perform a traditionally male job have become passé” (2010: 281). Women do excel in law enforcement and have been promoted, have leadership roles on teams, and even command SWAT teams, although the authors note this is a rare occurrence.

Men have become more welcoming of women on SWAT teams; however, men then hold women to a higher standard of performance on the team. Men believe if women can go

through and pass the testing, they can become SWAT members. The physical requirements of the standard test are extremely difficult for a woman to pass. Most women do not think they have the upper body strength to complete the training and physical course needed to pass and become a SWAT member. Regardless of the physical requirements, most of these women believe SWAT is a good old boys' club and therefore do not want to make the attempt to apply to the local SWAT team. Of those women who choose to pursue specialized units like SWAT, many think they have to constantly prove themselves to the men of the group. One woman stated, "Although I feel women should be allowed onto SWAT teams, I do not want to be the first to be a 'trailblazer'" (Dodge et al 2010:228). Williams (1991) finds women Marines feel the same way. Many of these women want to be involved in combat or the infantry, but due to the segregation they are not allowed but think women should be allowed in these positions. Often women are reluctant to be the first; they are afraid to take on this role and cross the threshold into the male dominated turf of SWAT teams. Williams (1991) finds a desire in the women to be a part of combat so they can prove themselves or show the men of their unit they can do these jobs, but some of these women also said they didn't want to be the first; they wanted to be a follower. Dodge et al discuss another respondent who stated, "I think women can be as effective on a SWAT team as men, it would just be getting beyond the initial "only men can do this' attitude." (2010:228) Although some women are able to cross this threshold and do great work on SWAT teams, many are unable to maintain the SWAT identity and can struggle to be long term members of SWAT. The role of a SWAT member can be difficult to maintain, regardless of the gender of the participant. However, 58% of females in Dodge et al's (2010) study state they would have to prove they are capable of doing the job but the process of proving would be an almost impossible task. Williams (1991) finds women Marines in the mid 1980's also desire to be respected and acknowledge they need to prove themselves to be respected. A female marine explains taking her and another male marine, same military occupational specialty, and same job and the man, "He's not going to have to prove himself at

all, not one iota. He's going to be completely accepted until he messes up. I will not be accepted until I can prove I can do the job better than he can" (Williams 1991:5). Women in these studies expressed desire to be treated like one of the guys on the team but also a need to be respected for their ability to do the job as women. They understand they are treated differently and know often they will not be respected until they can show a reason to be respected. Again, these studies demonstrate officers and certain military personnel are valued more if they meet masculine ideals and standards in their daily work life. Given masculine institutions, like the military or a SWAT team, present an exaggerated picture of authoritarian masculinity and particularly emphasize physical fitness as one of the multiple ways to achieving masculinity, women have a difficult time capturing and maintaining femininity while pursuing a career within these institutions.

Gender identity and displays are explored in a longitudinal study by Chan, Dorn, and Marel (2010) of new police recruits. Both men and women as they are followed in their first week of the police academy and interviewed on the job 6 months, 18 months, and 24 months later to distinguish their views on doing and undoing gender in the police force. The authors used West and Zimmerman's (1987) concept of "doing gender" to frame their research. There were three viewpoints found in this study: both men and women officers were doing gender, undoing gender, or both doing and undoing gender. Doing gender is identified as having distinct difference between genders in performing tasks of policing with regards to handling routine police calls and crisis situations. This view suggests women should not be paired together in teams for safety reasons and should not be deployed on the front lines of policing for fear they would not be able to perform the tasks of policing safely and effectively as women. Undoing gender was present when respondents mentioned equality between the sexes in police calls and crisis situations in the viewpoint physical strength should not be a gender issue as men are not necessarily stronger. Finally, they classified some tasks as involving both

doing and undoing gender by stating women officers are different than men officers in their policing tasks and bring a greater range of responses to most situations. Those in this category believe men and women bring different skills to the team and value each other based on these skills. Unfortunately, women in this category are often looked at differently when they become pregnant, as their male cohorts sometimes treat them like they lose their police skills. This category did show value in having both sexes in a partnership as women and men each bring a different and valuable skill to solving problems and policing tasks. The authors found there is a distinct shift from an officer's original viewpoints throughout the study. Many officers in the first week of the academy thought there was equality between the sexes, illustrating the undoing gender perspective; however, 24 months later, many of these had shifted their views to the doing gender or to doing and undoing gender perspective, stating women officers handle situations in policing differently than men but they wish to work together as a part of a team. Overall, most women respondents' viewpoints shifted from an initial equality standpoint to either doing gender or tasks involved in doing and undoing gender. This shift shows women's on the job experiences impact their gendered viewpoints, and identities. Opinions of work and work life change throughout the years, many officers come into their positions with high hopes and these hopes often change given the policing environment they are in. This study reveals the viewpoints women and men have regarding their positions and functions of their job shift throughout a career path; women change their perceptions of equality between women and men throughout their career. As expected, female soldiers face many of the same issues in their careers in the military.

Identity Theory

Ralph Turner (1978) discusses how one's various roles change over time, how we learn and practice new roles, and how these roles then shape our identities. A person consists of all of the roles they are engaged in and play. This relates to one's ideas of self and identity; the

merger of role and person relates to the ability to identify with the new role. Turner (1978) indicated the role-person merge has three criteria. The first is one must have resistance to abandoning the role when it would seem reasonable. For example, one is failing at a role, but refuses to give the role up to move onto a different role. Secondly, the acquisition and internalization of the attitudes and beliefs appropriate to the role. The person now takes on the attitudes of the role they did not have before taking this role. Lastly, is the failure of role compartmentalization, or where the role continues after the setting changes. This demonstrates how putting the role into practice is and can also be a determinant of a role-person merge. This also demonstrates if one performs the role repeatedly, there is more likelihood to internalize the role's attitudes and beliefs and merge the role into one's identity. The role is no longer just performed in a situation; it defines the person. Roles are practiced, performed, and perfected, thus leading to a role-person merge. As Turner discusses, "When a role is deeply merged with the person, socialization in the role has pervasive effects in personality formation" (1979:1). Their role is developed using a process of interactions and negotiations within a given context.

Combat soldier identity is likewise shifting and merging throughout the soldier's career. Soldiers are being deployed at what appears to be a faster rate than ten years ago, due to the post 9/11/01 wars. Now, soldiers are leaving their homes for deployment for any length of time. They face difficult challenges throughout a combat mission and deployment, encounter new and dangerous activities, learn coping skills and become comfortable as a deployed soldier and then return home to a non combat society. These challenges potentially affect their sense of self.

Like combat soldiers leaving home for deployments overseas and potentially shifting their identity due to the complexity of deployment, Dennis Waskul (1998) explains the role person merge occurring in new camp counselors. Camp counselors also leave their home in

the beginning of the summer and return home after a summer long session of a Boy Scout camp. Although this is not a combat zone, the process of leaving home, learning a job, becoming comfortable and coming home a successful camp counselor is similar. This time period away from home creates many obstacles for the new camp counselor; experiencing emotions of excitement and anxiety, fear or apprehension in regards to their ability to do the job, and loneliness and worry about missing their family. During the time at camp, the luxuries of home are not available; they go from living in homes with TV, air conditioning, and telephones to living in cabins without these items. These counselors sleep on cots in large rooms with many other counselors with limited privacy or alone time. The average deployed soldier also faced many of these obstacles. The United States Army (2011) identifies deployed soldier barracks as similar to camp counselor's cabins and have limited access to luxuries of the American household. Soldier's cannot call home whenever they want, they do not see family, have limited entertainment compared to the United States, and they often have to walk across bases to shower.

Waskul's (1998) study notes significant changes in counselors as they learned their jobs, the culture and expectations of camp, and began working well together as a team. These changes are they come to camp feeling uneasy or apprehensive about learning a job and living without the luxuries of home. After a period of time, they begin to feel more comfortable with their surroundings, job, and being away from family. One counselor noted, "Especially since about the third week, I just became more confident with myself, and you know, yeah, I do know what I'm doing! I think I can answer the questions people have" (Waskul 1998:39). The more active the counselor is in the beginning stages at trying to do his or her job well, the more comfortable they found themselves throughout the summer. Like the counselor above, other participants also note they soon shifted from "acting" like camp counselors to actually feeling like camp counselors. They performed their duties away from home, learned the tasks, and

quickly are confident in their job. At this stage, a role-person merger is noted; the uniform, the role of counselor and the campers' perspective all merge into what is now the camp counselor from what was previously just a young adult. This counselor reports on her merge:

I feel much better about myself now than when I first got here. You may not be able to tell that, but I feel much better about myself. I know who I am. Just being with these people, getting to know them, and getting to know me. I know who I am now, and I like me a lot more. I'm a different person than I thought I was (1998:40).

The participant will always have this role; if for just one summer or many summers, it was not compartmentalized, the counselors began identifying themselves as the role of a camp counselor both during camp times and after. This establishes different experiences (like being a camp counselor) impacts our viewpoints and shapes our identities. Upon completion of the summer, the campers leave, the counselors pick up and return home to their previous lives. Once staff members return home, the motions of daily life again become central to their experiences while actions they once performed at camp fade; their "before" identities once again re-establish themselves as dominant. The positions of pre-camp counselor, camp counselor and post counselor merge within the person, changing their overall identity. With this merge, the camp counselor role, or any of the previous roles are not forgotten; instead, they are combined.

Role person merge theory may similarly be applicable to women's military experiences. In regard to a military deployment, each soldier has a difficult task of leaving his or her family and loved ones to serve in the military, Blais, Thompson, and McCreary (2009) suggest people who are in settings away from their homes can experience role person mergers. They may use emotion management as a result of the roles and positions they experience. As noted, soldiers deploy overseas and experience combat. Coming home can be quite difficult for them in the sense they are leaving a chaotic time and returning to a normal paced civilian world. This is potentially problematic. Blais, Thompson, and McCreary create a screening tool to address

various issues in reintegrating soldiers reviews the emotional changes brought on post-deployment. The screening tool, when implemented found there is a need for time to digress from combat zones; to merge post combat identity with combat identity so they can successfully reintegrate back to their home community. Both these studies reveal the process of the role-person merge developing in people who are separated from previous lives. They conform to the tasks at hand and one's sense of self shifts to respond to the social experiences.

The self and identity have also been examined within the context of careers in law enforcement, which share similar risks with military service. White et al (2010) finds police officers choose the profession for many reasons: job security, financial, desires for authority over others, or having the longing to help others or the community. Women officers primarily cited the desire to help others as their main reason for becoming an officer at the beginning of their career. However, women's views of their profession tend to change after several years on the force to reflect a more practical approach, for example they now could believe law enforcement is a paycheck or they are there to uphold the law and protect themselves and others. I speculate this is potentially from seeing the revolving door of the criminal justice system. These women explain the change in their sense of self throughout the career in law enforcement by their shift in perceptions of their nontraditional occupation. After practicing and performing their roles often, the sense of self shifts; their feelings about their employment change as their roles change throughout the law enforcement career path. White et al (2010) report women had a different reason than men for maintaining their law enforcement career from beginning of their career to the present. This shows a shift in their attitudes and beliefs about law enforcement and themselves.

In a different example, Scannell-Desch and Doherty (2009) look at military nurses to explain how nurses shift into a different nurse role so they can avoid and suppress emotions

which arise when treating wounded soldiers. A nurse role is a way of doing things eliminating their personal viewpoints, and pushing their emotions about the situation aside so they can focus on the medical task at hand. This compartmentalization of the role allows the nurse to do his/her job without being affected by his/her emotions at that time. This identity along with emotion suppression allows the nurse to be effective in the job but also to work through the trauma involved in the care of wounded soldiers. This also leads into a shift in who they feel they are after deployment. Nurses state they could never forget the things they saw and have apprehensions about the way they are able to suppress their feelings to do their job. A nurse in this study states, "I wonder if I'll ever be who I was before, I actually mourn the loss of the person I was before. I guess after an experience like war, you are never quite the same, and I must accept that" (Scannell-Desch and Doherty 2009:10). The nurses feel they are different from pre- to post-deployment. The role of the combat nurse overcame them, and even when they leave the combat zone they are still affected by this combat role. They learn to work through the stressors of combat life once they return home in order to successfully reintegrate. Nurses face a different sense of self due to the witnessing of violence during their deployment and from dealing with the wounded; soldiers of all military branches could have these issues also. Scannell-Desch and Doherty demonstrate emotion management and your sense of self can shift and develop depending on the level of violence one views. They show identity does change during periods away from home and while in combat. Regardless of the occupation, people are affected by the work they perform. They learn a role, perfect it, set their prior viewpoints aside, and then become this role. Often, keeping this role as a part of them after the role is finished. These articles also demonstrate similarities in military soldiers. They face many of the same challenges and need to learn roles, perfect them, and as I said earlier, the role often becomes a part of who they are. Their sense of self shifts and merges into a changed person because of this. I describe above an emotion management technique of

compartmentalizing personal feelings; I close this literature review with a further exploration of emotion management in people away from their home and in dangerous situations.

Emotion Management

Emotions are also managed on a daily basis, within interactions, and also within the military institution. The way a non combat soldier manages emotions could be different than a combat soldier. Arlie Hochschild (1979) states emotions can be better understood by examining the processes by which they are created, interpreted, and expressed through social interactions with others. The environment a person is in can directly affect the way emotions are handled; emotional experiences and behaviors are products of socialization and lifelong experiences. Hochschild demonstrates, “The individual often works on inducing or inhibiting feelings so as to render them ‘appropriate’ to a situation” (1979:551). Emotion management requires an individual to interpret a social situation, manage their feelings, and react in an appropriate manner to create an appropriate level of acceptance in the social setting. Thus, a portion of identity is created through emotion management.

As noted above, Scannell-Desch (2009) study military nurses and exploring their emotion suppression and compartmentalization as they put on a separate “nurse hat.” Nurses employ coping skills to manage their emotions to get through the tasks of the job. The trauma becomes normative; their ability to put on a “nurse hat” also becomes normative, thus easing anxiety. The nurses suppress the feelings of anxiety and fear a typical person would have while dealing with the wounded so they are able to effectively handle the situation. Nurses face the unknown of when they will get to go home, their morale suffers, and combat zones are difficult and stressful in the sense they are treating and seeing wounded soldiers. Scannell-Desch reports that, “psychosocial concerns centered on nurses not knowing when they would return home, certain leadership decisions perceived as hurting morale, and rumors and

misinformation add[ed] to the stress” (2009:4). Nurses feel all sorts of emotions during their experiences deployed to combat. Nurses learned to manage these emotions by developing coping skills like putting on the “nurse hat.” This shows a professional can suppress emotions to handle difficult and violent situations; and this management of emotions shapes identity and the sense of self.

Camp counselors are also able to shift into “counselor” mode to ease their anxiety and use coping skills to work through their summer managing emotions. The emotion management of Waskul’s (1998) camp counselors during their time at camp shows they were able to suppress emotions to do their job. The fear and anxiety noted at the beginning of the summer quickly dissipated once they became comfortable in their job.

In a different example, prison can also be emotionally challenging, as inmates are away from their home, confined, and at risk of violence and other emotional trauma. Both men and women adopt various roles in the inmate subculture to survive the pains of imprisonment. It is assumed one reason females feel the pains of imprisonment more harshly than males is because of the difficulty in being separated from their family and children. It is assumed women are the caretakers of children and often men are just the breadwinners. This also assumes men manage their emotions much differently than women. According to Trammel (2009) who studies men in prison in California, the men in her study value safety and the underground economy as well as maintaining a solid convict identity during their prison terms. Men often use violence to control their fellow inmates; people participate in this violence to save their convict identity. They establish gangs and have ring leaders; they police their own by using violence to reduce the risk of riots, and attempt to keep and maintain illegal drug trades. Trammel (2009) believes men value peace and profit during their prison term. This also suggests by creating a convict identity, they are able to turn to people similar to him/her to push through difficult times. Although, mildly different for women as Greer(2002) reports

women value relationships and often establish family groups with fellow inmates during their prison terms to fill the gap where her family and children would fill if she were out in the community. They turn to other prison mates to handle the duration of their sentence.

Kimberly Greer (2002) talks about women's responses to prison culture and how this can be difficult in general and especially difficult for women as they are separated from family and children. The culture of the prison brought on new feelings and the women had to learn ways to manage these emotions in the social setting of an institution. Women who were separated from their families and lifestyle during prison terms had different kinds of emotional issues to work through. Women note there is a need to manage emotions and suppress emotions; for example, many would cry in the shower to hide their emotions as showing emotion was considered by other inmates a sign of weakness. Greer states, "As reflected in the perceptions of respondents, their emotional experience while incarcerated encompassed 1) views of restricted emotional experience and 2) refinement of emotional management techniques" (2002:122). These women can shift their sense of self in order to deal with the emotions of being incarcerated. There is a fear of retaliation if they appear weak to others, therefore, the women involved have to manage their emotions at the social level so other inmates do not think they are weak and thus try to manipulate them. They attempt to suppress their emotions or try to ignore their emotions when they are in front of other inmates. Managing the emotional aspect of identity is difficult for these women; they mask their fears, anxiety, joy, anger, and many other emotions which defined who they were prior to incarceration in order to make it through their prison sentence. Women do use different coping strategies than men while in this social institution. They block their emotions and do not let themselves express them; they use humor, spirituality and self reflection as tools for emotion management while incarcerated, whereas men, as noted above, often used violence and aggression during their prison term.

People in different institutional environments exhibit different ways of managing emotions. Shinkfield and Graffam studied the emotional state related to reintegration of prisoners back to their communities. They report on emotion management in reintegration, "Preparation for release has included mainly provision of basic information and material support with little or no attention to the emotional impact of incarceration and release on ex-prisoners themselves" (2010:347). Returning home from prison has many steps and if portions of the reintegration process are missing and inmates are only provided basic information, it can be difficult to be successful back in the community. Prisoners begin preparing for release while they still have time to serve, they meet with prison officials to set up a reintegration plan, they make contacts with family and community members and attempt to prepare themselves for life after being in an institution.

Shinkfield and Graffam (2010) report emotional well-being was found to be difficult to manage post release; the ex-prisoners now face fear, anxiety, excitement, aggression, and frustration during reintegration. Prison time can be violent and this can cause problems with emotional stability post release. Ex-prisoners must work through their emotional issues in order to be successful post release. Practical support systems are helpful in reintegration; the more support an ex-prisoner receives, both before release and after release, the better his/her ability to manage emotions and feelings of depression and anxiety. All of these studies on the prison culture illustrate the process of emotion management in situations where people are away from previous lives. The military institution has many similarities to the prison institution. Both have a sense of hierarchy and demand emotion management as noted above. Soldiers too face a time of preparation for coming home, and hopefully, successfully reintegrating back into society. There are many emotions when you are in a combat zone one day and return to the civilian world a few days later. The techniques soldiers use in returning home from

deployments is explained below but are quite similar to the preparation process of inmates in returning home from prison.

As noted above, policing can be a stressful job; experiencing stress on a regular basis can also impact one's sense of self. White et al (2010) find women have a slightly higher sense of job satisfaction than their male officer counterparts. Individuals respond differently to stress; specifically, White et al (2010) finds female officers who encounter particularly stressful situations may respond and manage these emotions differently than men in same situations. A traffic stop can go wrong, a murder can occur, or an officer can be shot. Many things can occur in a typical 12 hour shift; most shifts do not have much of this action, but as it happens, an officer needs to be ready to act in accordance and manage the emotions of the situation. Poteyeva and Sun (2009) state police women who succumb to stressful situations and display emotions are considered weak and/or unprofessional compared to their male counterparts. It appears the acceptance into law enforcement for women is widening, but it also appears there is an expectation women must succumb to a masculine way of handling emotions. Women must suppress emotions and manage them differently than they would in an outside environment. This implies women have higher levels of stress to manage in a male dominated field as there is the expectation they should conform to the masculine norm of environment.

Occupational stress can add a difficult twist for women and men. Mostert and Rothman define occupational stress as "the mind-body arousal resulting from the physical and/or psychological demands associated with the job" (2006:481). They examine South African police officers who work in a violent and dangerous community resulting from the apartheid of the area. These officers deal with high stress on a regular basis, creating high levels of officer burn out. Burn out is predicted by stress because of job demands, lack of resources, and low emotional stability. Female officers were found to have different experiences than male officers in dealing with stress and burn out. Mostert and Rothman (2006) found gender, race, and age

as background variables shape how individuals react to stress and thus can be contributing factors of burn out, leading some into burn out earlier than others. Race, gender, and age affect burn out as taking pride in your work is higher in older adults and of minority backgrounds. Women also have a greater sense of pride in their work as they age. Two other factors leading officers towards burn out are officer's deal with stressful situations on a regular basis and those do not feel supported by their department in the sense of a team environment (Mostert and Rothman, 2006). This can make their ability to handle and manage stress difficult; as a result, their ability to react as a competent officer is at risk. This study demonstrates there are differences in managing the stressors of a difficult and violent work environment.

Another difficult work environment is soldiers deployed into combat zones. Combat zones are usually violent, chaotic and traumatic for participants. This work environment can have a dramatic effect on returning soldiers. Blais, Thompson, and McCreary (2009) note there is a need for digression in returning soldiers. As noted above, when soldiers leave for deployment and return home, role person merger has shifted their sense of self. A returning soldier needs time to manage their emotions about deployment right away and also have time for ongoing emotion management in the continuing stages. Blais et al (2009) developed and implement the Post Deployment Reintegration Scale, for returning soldiers measures how soldiers process their feelings and attitudes upon return to home life. A soldier's mental and emotional wellbeing change throughout deployment and reintegration. Soldier's experience many emotions during their military career and managing these emotions upon return is essential for soldiers in having a successful reintegration process. Several factors assist soldiers to have a successful reintegration factor. Soldiers who have a healthy family life throughout deployment are found to have a more positive reintegration process and therefore, the transitions at home are smoother. This shows there is a need for family support, military

support, and emotion management skill training for returning soldiers to cope with their new roles post reintegration.

Chapter Three

Methodological Approach

During a conversation I had about reintegration with a female soldier she told me she had been approached by a stranger who asked about her combat license plates. Instead of asking her when she served, the man inquired about her husband's service. She was ashamed and embarrassed this stranger could not see her as a combat soldier, and instead assumed a man held that role. She reports her time deployed had shaped a new sense of self. I noticed after talking to other soldiers and friends of soldiers that women in military are often overlooked as combat soldiers. Some people notice soldiers change when they return home from their duty but didn't understand why the change happens and do not understand what this means. As I stated above, my interest surrounds how the ideals of masculinity operate for women in the military, how women manage their emotions during their military career, and how this can transform the sense of self for a women soldier.

Sampling Method and Criteria:

This study explores role person merger and identity changes, emotion management, and gendered perceptions and experiences of women soldiers. To do this, I use the grounded theory approach described by Charmaz (2008). This approach employs semi-structured interviews intended to draw out narrative answers from respondents. I interviewed 11 respondents contacted through snow ball sampling. I recruited respondents through Facebook, email, and approached two known female soldiers and asked for participation. These women had military experience either during or post 9/11/01. All respondents were over 20 years old and served in any branch of the military for at least two years by the time of the interview. All respondents had an Honorable Discharge status. I asked background

questions to screen participants to see if they fit into my determined categories noted above. Five soldiers had non-combat zone experience, either a non-combat zone deployment or a stateside tour of duty. One of these soldiers was currently deployed to Kuwait, a safe zone and was home on a 15 day leave. She took time to meet and review her experiences. This interview was unexpected and welcomed and although it was her first deployment and she was not able to discuss some of the aspects like reintegration after a tour of duty or leaving the military, she was still able to provide excellent insights into her life as a soldier. Six soldiers had deployed in the Iraq/Afghanistan war. Of the six interviewees who had been deployed, three had been deployed twice and the others had one tour of duty in Iraq/Afghanistan.

I was able to find candidates who met my criteria; all respondents are women in their mid-twenties to early thirties, ranging from 24-33 years old, hailing from the Air Force (1), the Marines (1), the Army National Guard (4), and the Army Reserves (5). They are all of Caucasian decent, except one being of Philippino decent, although born and raised in Minnesota. Ten of the eleven grew up in Minnesota and lived in this state outside of their military experience. The last candidate grew up in Wisconsin but has lived in Minnesota since she left the military. Respondents served a minimum of four years with one soldier serving 12 years. The others had time of duty in the six to eight year range. The majority of respondents went into the military either right out of high school or in their first year of college; however, one joined later in life, enlisting when she was 24 years old without any college. Some have pursued college degrees since then. Eight of the candidates pursued higher education with the majority using the GI Bill to cover their education costs. Two of the respondents worked in security after leaving the military and one of these transitioned into a Veteran's Affairs position and never pursued schooling further. The careers of the women now are: a full time student, a waitress, a sales\marketing person, an active duty soldier, a manager in retail (2), a teacher, an

X-ray technician, a veteran's affairs officer, a security counselor, and an individual in the insurance profession.

Once referrals were given and I made initial contact to inquire about participation in the research, all agreed to be interviewed. Interviews took place in a setting of their choice. I met the women at restaurants or coffee shops, their place of employment, the library, and at a park. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in full and then the recordings were destroyed. The confidentiality of the respondents has been maintained through the use of pseudonyms in the transcripts. All respondents signed a consent form which outlined the nature of the research, as well as some of the possible harms and benefits associated with her participation. The consent form also noted that I am a mandated reporter through my profession as a County Agency Social Worker and informed them if any maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult is mentioned, it was my duty to report this information to the lead agency involved. All respondents signed consent and agreed to recorded interviews; there was no mention of such maltreatment in the interviews. All data has been stored on my home computer in a secured file, and recordings have been destroyed. Informed consent forms are stored in my advisor's office for three years and then will be destroyed.

Data Analysis:

The grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2008) consists of the researcher analyzing the data collected through systematic coding and memoing to understand participants' lived experiences and perspectives. Data is coded based on groupings to facilitate this. Grounded theory coding has two main phases; first, an initial phase involving naming each word, line, or segment of data followed by a second phase that is more focused; the most frequent or significant codes are sorted, synthesized, integrated, and organized (Charmaz 2008). I used this process to guide the analysis. Nvivo coding software was used to create codes defined by

what was seen in the data. I used initial coding and went line by line, segment by segment looking for theoretical data. The most established of these codes were noted and discussed in memos. These memos pulled together themes and arranged the response data, as well as guided subsequent interviews. The use of codes and memos also allowed the data to be moved steadily from the actual transcripts to a more theoretical point. By using this method, I identified these points from as many respondents as possible and developed them into the findings. The strongest and most widespread themes became findings.

Interview Questions:

The interview guide consisted of closed ended identification questions to begin and to obtain background information on their tours of duty, military status, rank, and other identifying information. I also included open ended questions about identity, gender, and roles from pre to post deployment; an example of the questions asked can be found in appendix A. I asked about how they defined themselves prior, during, and after reintegration back home. I asked them how the military affected their coping skills, their ability to manage feelings, and ideas about being a woman. Lastly, I asked about life after the military and how the military is still with them. I did ask further questions throughout the process, using these as base line questions, and using prompts to gain as extensive as possible information during the interview.

As noted above, a consent form was drafted and used to identify the study and parts listed above. Some of the information requested from the respondents was sensitive and emotional. Combat can be violent and dangerous and asking a soldier to remember this time and talk about their feelings, emotions, and life during soldiering was at times, difficult. Some soldiers became emotional during interviews; I asked if they wanted/needed a break and all declined stating they were fine and it was just a difficult thing to talk about.

Overall, these women participated in a study on their emotions, thoughts, and feeling during their military career. They are asked questions about their experiences, their feelings and emotion management techniques implemented. These women talked about their experiences which were often scary and traumatic. They spoke about how they have changed and what the experience means for them. I explore these ideas next in the findings section.

The women involved in this study come from various backgrounds and locations across Minnesota. Each woman's life before the military was fairly similar in the sense they were all young adults; all had just graduated from high school or were in their first year of college and decided to enlist. Some had a long term desire to enlist; others did so on a whim, or because someone they were close to was enlisting. Regardless, these women's lives before the military are mostly how a typical Midwestern teenager grows up. The women did typical teenager things. They hung out at friend's houses, watched movies, worked at afterschool jobs, and tried to have as much fun as possible. Life as they know it changed quickly when they enlisted and went off to basic training.

In chapter four, I describe the perceived differences in men and women soldiers through the eyes of the women and discuss the concepts of obtaining respect only after they exceed performance standards and prove themselves to the men of the military. I share my findings on the transition in femininity and the women's personal viewpoints about themselves. I demonstrate how these women "man up" to push them to exceed women's standards and be the best they can be. I close with discussion on the women's viewpoints of other women who do not meet these expectations, which further cemented their ideas of what a soldier is and should be.

Also during the interviews, I began to see a trend of women reshaping their identity to include the military as a part of who they are. In chapter five, I discuss the role person merge and how this develops in these women from their life prior to the military to their life as it is today. They start off being broken down and then conforming to the military standards in basic training, where their conception of themselves begins to transition. They then move into the next phase in which they talk about how they began to see themselves as a soldier and have confidence in themselves as soldiers. Lastly, each one of these women demonstrates that the military stays with them post reintegration into US society or through their transition out of the military. The role person merger occurs at various points throughout each of these women's lives.

After discussion on the role person merge, in chapter six, I review my findings on the emotion management of women soldiers. This includes and explores the most common ways these women managed their feelings and coped during their time in the military. I find that as women are forced to conform to the military way; they have to distance themselves from their emotions in order to be successful. These women use various methods for doing this successfully. I explain the tactics these soldiers incorporated into their daily lives to make it through the difficult situations and dangerous daily work of being in a combat zone. I also explain the differences between soldiers who have been deployed to combat zones compared with soldiers who haven't and review the changes in these soldier's coping strategies from before to after their military careers.

I then close with discussion and recommendations for a better and more successful route for women in the military. I suggest the military implement changes to their programming to create a safer environment for women and men of the military.

Chapter Four

Manning Up

I start this chapter by explaining the gender experiences of women in the military. I then explain the tactics the women implemented to overcome these experiences and the challenges they faced along the way. These women conformed to a male dominated military and their feelings about their femininity changed due to this. I show they not only conform to military standards but they conform to the men's standards and yearn for equality. I find as women conform to the men's standards, they have to eliminate or set aside expressing emotions and femininity in front of men in order to be respected. Those women who do not manage their emotions or display too much femininity are classified as inept soldiers.

Perceptions of Differential Treatment by Gender: Standards and Expectations

I find many perceived differences between the genders in their standards and expectations in the sense that the women of this sample believe men and women are treated differently and the military holds men and women to separate standards. This separation or difference is extended throughout their military careers. Every branch of the military has a basic training or boot camp. This 8-12 week period is a grueling mental and physical experience for soldiers where they leave home and go to a base to be trained into the military way. Each branch's' training is fairly similar consisting of men and women in the same camp training together. The only branch who segregates women from men during boot camp is the Marine Corp. There is no inter-mingling of sexes for the Marine Corp. This section will explore the differences women face during basic training and throughout their military careers. Many believe there is equal treatment except for physical training (PT) standards, some believe there

are differences between soldiers and then explain some of the problems with superiors, rules, and/or sexualization of women in the military.

The women of this study identify several differences between themselves and the men of their units and companies. Many speak of being treated the same as the men in their specific units but there are many differences in the way men and women perform in the military as a whole. The largest difference is in the PT standards. Women do not have to perform physically at the same level as men. All of the women identify differences between the male and female bodies with the hip placement, legs, and muscle tone as preventing them from performing at the same level as the men. I suggest this is a learned thought process from their training in the military. Although it may not have been part of their direct curriculum, these differences were highlighted in interactions with drill sergeants and higher ranking officers. As Brooklyn points out, she is not sure where she learned about these differences, but believes she picked up on them during her basic training experience. She describes some of the differences between men and women soldiers and where she learns about these differences.

Brooklyn: I feel like it's probably something they've [drill sergeants] mentioned before, like I know when we were in basic training people would ask about [physical differences], ok, like our sit ups are the same but our pushups are way less than theirs. I think I have to 19 pushups and men have to do like 42 for minimum [in 2 minutes]. And their max is like insane and our max is like 26 or something like, I can't remember what it is but its super low, like 31, our max is less than their minimum. So, it's really weird, there's guys I can do more pushups then, So yah, I think it [learned differences in physique] is probably something we've heard from them, maybe not something they preach, but something if someone would ask, it's their logic, but I don't know like any girls, there was always a guy who was way better than the girls at PT, like our PT max for the guys was always ridiculous compared to the PT max for the girls. But, I don't know obviously, there were girls better than some guys too.

Brooklyn acknowledges the difference in physique as she explains some of the PT standards and believes this was learned during her basic training. The physical differences are a justification to other soldiers for the lower standards. As I explain in other areas, many of the

women push themselves to meet the men's standards, but if you are young woman in basic training the men's standards are quite difficult to attain.

Some of the other differences include how these women are treated while soldiering. The women's standards are different. Below, Natalie talks about the standards and how she set aside the different standards to be in the middle. Her drill sergeant encourages her to not be the last and emphasizes that she just needs to pass the PT tests. The drill sergeant then points out that women often shoot better than men and this is something men just need to deal with. Natalie finds she is well qualified when it comes to weaponry skills and is impressed when her drill sergeant gives the men of her unit a hard time as women shoot better than men.

Natalie: Like running was always a bit of a struggle, so was upper body but I never wasn't passing, always at least passing which was good. I remember my drill sergeants saying do not be the last one, the one doesn't pass, and you'll be fine and this was true. So otherwise, stay focused. I never touched a rifle before in my life, but I actually kind of had a knack for doing it well. I do remember the drill sergeants busting the guy's chops. You think you're going to go out there [shooting range] and shoot better than the girls, I don't want to hear any of you talking about the females because chances are our females will shoot better than you, it's statistically proven! He had a real fun time busting the guy's chops and then after we went out and proved he was right. It made us girls laugh, Drill Sergeant Chardonnay, for a second he was human. It was true.

Natalie believes that although the PT standards are different there are times where the men need to adjust to the women being better at tasks and this is sometimes difficult for the men. As Williams (1991) also points out, the military did testing during the mid 1900's on the tasks women can do better than men and also found shooting was one of them. Sarah has a similar situation when she was qualifying for weaponry. Her drill sergeants blatantly pointed out if a woman does better than men, then the men are wrong.

Sarah: So there's evident difference there, and I remember one time, we were, we were going out to a range and to uh, fire our weapons and stuff and one of our drill sergeants, was like, if there is a female standing up [pushing themselves on the course] and you're a male and you're not, you're wrong. Which, I didn't agree with at all, like why?

This drill sergeant doesn't point out to the soldiers women have the capability to shoot better than men. He reverts back to ridiculing the men when they don't perform as well as women. My findings suggest the PT standards provide a basis for competition between soldiers and when men do not compete at the level of women, they are ridiculed. This suggests women's importance in the military is not as strong because men are ridiculed when the competition, in this case, the women beat them. In general soldiers and civilians tend to refer to both men and women in man-like or male dominated terms. In this study, the women are not specified as being women, but rather as soldiers or in a man-like terms such as "you guys", "you soldiers", "private", and/or by their last name. Women learn to use male dominated terms early on in their military careers. From basic training to deployments, women are sworn at, degraded, and referred to in "male approved" terms. Not a single soldier spoke about being referred to as "Miss" or "Ma'am;" it was always by their last name or rank. They heard men being referred to as "sissies and pussies" when the men couldn't or weren't pushing themselves to their greatest ability. Even the women who did not go through basic training with men spoke about their assumptions or how they heard the men were razzed for their inadequacies by referring to them as female genitalia. For example, the men were called sissies, pussies, and other derogatory things when they did not measure up to the men's standards; potentially defining women as objects or things rather than respected members of the military.

Men are supposed to push themselves to the highest standards and are mocked if they do not measure up. The women I studied experienced some of this. I explain in more detail in the section below, but my respondents generally report not being held to the same standards or performance expectations. When women do not push themselves to higher standards, these women feel they are let off much easier than the men. Men are asked to step up and push themselves but as Brooklyn points out, women just need to try. The women of this study

were not the ones that did not complete their requirements; they were not the ones who just tried and were passed onto the next challenge. Each of them pushed themselves to their highest self standards. Below, Brooklyn describes the differences in expectations between men and women and what the consequences for men are if they do not measure up to the standards.

Brooklyn: I mean, obviously the PT standards and um, I don't know, not really. Um, I guess, they obviously expected when we would go to obstacle courses, if a guy didn't finish all of the task force, I think X force was the first obstacle course we went to, it's all like monkey bars and like rope climbs and stuff like and the girls, all you had to do is like attempt the rope climb and they'd be like ok, like skip, or you're obviously not going to get up. If guys didn't make it, they harped on them. Like every other male did this, how come you can't? But, otherwise, I think we were pretty, it was pretty standard across the board beside the physical stuff. I mean obviously, men have more upper body strength than we [women] do anyways.

We see again the standards are different but the experiences between men and women of the military are different also. Brooklyn explains that drill sergeants do not harp on women like they do men when women can't meet standards or do PT tests. The experience she describes is during the beginning on her basic training experience, so it is unknown if there is a difference in situations towards the end of basic training.

Based on my interviews with women soldiers, I also suggest that women are expected to perform at a lower functioning level than men. Men of the military assume women are not able to perform to the same standards as they are. These women report that men assume men need to do the male dominated tasks since they are better at it. Williams (1991) discusses the many lines of work women are not allowed to do, such as infantry and any job in combat. Women were allowed to be nurses and support personnel only in a time of war prior to 1973, after 1973 women are allowed to enlist in peace time. Since then, many changes have taken place but often the women report men still do not give them credit for the work they do regardless of combat status during their enlistment. Mary describes her feelings about

performing her job with her male battle buddy. Although they both went to AIT for truck driving, her male battle buddy would insist on driving and make her feel inept to perform the job.

Mary: There was sometimes when I felt like um, the guy I was battle buddies with, I drove my truck with he would treat me, and I know it was because I was a girl and I couldn't do it. Like, we're going someplace and he's like I better drive.

Although they both are trained to drive trucks, her battle buddy would have to drive; this upset her and she feels this treatment is due to her gender. These women may not have been harped on by drill sergeants but they were discriminated against by their male counterparts. The assumption is there that women cannot perform tasks at the same level as men even if they go through the same training and schooling as men do. I suggest this difference between soldiers is not just learned from gender socialization in society but possibly also learned from the differences in expectations of men and women starting in PT, as enforced by their drill sergeants. This demonstrates an impact on women. Their standards are lower, their expectations are lower and therefore, women are seen as lower. The only way for women to gain a sense of equality is if they exceed their standards or meet the expectations of the men. Below, Carrie describes her basic training experience and the different expectations she faces; she describes being pushed by female drill sergeants and herself so she could feel equal to the men. She notes more equality in performance expectations. She is expected to push herself at all times, regardless of the standards which were expected. She speculates this equality is due to having a female in a position of power to equal things out.

Carrie: Granted, I mean they have their different PT scores and everything like but not with my platoon. There was another platoon with a couple of females who felt they didn't get the same respect and stuff like that. But in my platoon we had a couple pretty good drill sergeants and we had a female drill sergeant and I don't know if this helped. But actually, our female drill sergeant was harder on us girls than the men. But no, we had to do the same as all the guys, and you know granted, I don't remember how many pushups I had to do in my 2 minute period but males had to do like twice as many but they are built differently. But I don't really remember feeling any, except for always getting yelled at for your hair falling out.

Although she did not speculate on why she thought the women are treated differently, Carrie describes her experiences as pretty similar to the men because she believes her female drill sergeant made it this way. Some of my interviewees thought there wasn't a difference between men and women in performance expectations during their basic training experience. All of my interviewees spoke about differences in the standards they were expected to meet. My findings suggest there are times where there is equality in performance expectations but the standards expected between men and women soldiers differ.

There are times when all soldiers are treated similarly. I find that group consequences for misbehavior, poor conduct, or any other infraction of military rules are instances where the women report all soldiers are treated the same. Often, they discussed getting "smoked" or having intense physical exercises as punishment when someone would make an error or mistake during basic training/boot camp. Each interviewee explains the experience of getting "smoked" for soldier inadequacies or misconduct. The women report there are no differences for women compared to men; they will comply and perform up to principles and guidelines of group punishment. They are allowed to go down to their knees (for pushups) after a time period but, as some point out, being smoked can go on for a few minutes or for an hour. Wendy explains getting "smoked" and how decision to stop happens, "We do pushups, sit ups, flutter kicks right there on the floor where ever we were to the point someone would break down crying before we would stop." This demonstrates that women are expected to perform at the same level as men until someone cannot take the punishment anymore. Not a single woman mentioned they were the one to give up; it is assumed they let others be the ones who couldn't take it and would cry so the consequence would stop.

The women from this study report differential treatment by gender all throughout their military careers, not just in basic training. Even though there are many similarities in how women are treated I suggest they are treated differently than men throughout their careers. As

Wendy points out, her current company doesn't know how to deal with women. She is new to this unit and is currently deployed in Kuwait, a safe zone. Every other company on this deployment can wear civilian clothes when they are not working. Her unit cannot because as she notes, it might illustrate they are women and this would distract the men.

Wendy: Before the deployment, nothing big, you were just another soldier. There was no difference between men and women in my original Gulf Company. You are just all one big happy family. The unit I'm in now, they don't know to deal with females; they don't know how to handle them. Everybody else at Camp Patriot is allowed to wear civilian clothes when off duty, we are not allowed to, we're not allowed to look like females.

Q: Have they come right now and said that?

Wendy: Yes. We're soldiers, not males and females. They are afraid males are going to get distracted because we joined an all male unit.

Wendy believes her superiors think the men will be distracted by women if they are allowed to wear civilian clothes and possibly display femininity. Several of the respondents talk about wearing their uniform and how it doesn't fit them very well, as it is men's clothing. Many spoke about the fit as unflattering and make them feel less like a woman. Wendy informs us that the military tells them they are soldiers, not men and women. Going back to AIT, Mary discusses her AIT graduation experience when she felt wearing a skirt for graduation was pointless and hideous as they spent the previous several weeks making her feel like a man and a soldier.

Mary: I don't like to wear dresses and so, at graduation for AIT, they made the women wear their skirts and I was so mad, I was like really! First off, they are like green and polyester and they are hideous and I did make a comment, I'm like, you treat us like men this whole time and now you're going to make us wear a skirt. And we had a female drill sergeant at AIT and she took us to get these pumps, black pumps I had to wear with them and they were just hideous.

I suggest the military sends mixed messages to women. As Mary notes, she has to wear a skirt and pumps at graduation and thus display femininity, but spent the previous weeks conforming to male military standards. I also suggest the military does not want to handle the

differences between men and women as it is more difficult than their perceived notion of equality; they just want to handle soldiers thus eliminating any perceptions of difference between men and women. Based on these interviews, I believe the military ignores the differences in soldiers and continues to allow lower standards so women continue to be at a level below the men. I find that women “man up” to the men’s standards so they can begin to feel equal instead of lesser than them.

My findings suggest even though some soldiers in this study verbalize there are no differences between men and women soldiers other than the PT standards there are actually large differences in the gender experiences of women and men soldiers. Not only are the standards different, but the interaction and direction from men to women and treatment given to women are perceived differently in these women. These women often spoke about the different ways they are treated compared to men and being frustrated with this. Next, I explain further on the difference in the ways superiors treat men and women soldiers.

Superior Soldier Treatment

I suggest that many superiors are not fond of women in the military. Many of the women talk about having excellent drill sergeants, superiors, and fellow soldiers and describe feelings of respect throughout their military career. I acknowledge that every single woman in this study has great things to say about their experiences and working with the men of their units. Every woman studied speaks highly of several of their superiors and about the rules of the military. It became a way of life for them. These soldiers are very proud of their service and their ability to be successful at times throughout their careers. At the same time, many of the women I interviewed also mentioned that superiors and others in positions of authority vocalized their opposition to women in the military. The amount of women in the military and women in leadership roles are growing every year but I do suggest based on the women

studied that most of women of the military also have some negative experience with superiors. The women studied have been treated poorly just because of their gender. Jane describes her treatment starting in boot camp and MP School. She had a drill sergeant who was quite vocal about his dislike for women in the military.

Jane: But the instructor we had in MP school despised females in the military. He was very upfront about it, he was like woman don't belong in the marine corp., you're not getting by just because you're chicks, you know, we all worked together as a unit

This drill sergeant assumes women are incompetent to do the job and vocalizes his beliefs that the women in her unit will not get by just because they are women. Jane believes this drill sergeant's opinion is that women should not be in the Marine Corps and since the Marine Corps has already let women in; it is his job to uphold military standards with no exceptions for women. I suggest that these women were respected because they didn't slack off and they pushed themselves for equality between men and women soldiers. Other respondents report having superiors who they truly felt did not like women in the military and made it well know to others.

Not only do the women describe differential treatment in gender by superiors and peers, but they are put in many difficult situations just because they are women. The military responded to these incidents by requiring battle buddies and some other rule changes. Battle buddies for women are much different than the men. Women are required to be with their battle buddies not only when they are working, but when they aren't working. This buddy system is set up so no woman is left alone. Mary describes her beliefs on battle buddies and the double standard they created. Men and women cannot go into each other's rooms without their battle buddies present during combat deployments.

Mary: when were over there, you couldn't be in the same room with a guy, or it had to be um, even if it was just like more than 1, it was a huge deal if you, like if 3 girls and guys were in the same room, so our barracks set up was a little different and there was

never, no guys could ever be in our room, and we couldn't go in theirs. So, we had a middle place where we could co-mingle but that was about it.

Mary describes having a battle buddy as an inconvenience because she had to make sure there were even ratios of men to women and make sure you are never alone with the opposite sex. As several deployed soldiers point out, it is much harder to find another woman or two to join them during the activities they enjoy. Carrie reports finding someone to go to church with was a difficult task because it was hard to find two people to take her early on Sunday mornings and then come back an hour later to pick her up just to go back to the barracks. Routine behaviors became difficult for women due to these barriers, creating a double standard of accountability and freedom.

Below, Gretchen describes another incidence of a double standard. A group of soldiers comprised of both men and women were caught drinking, partying, and playing sexual card games on a dry (no-alcohol) base during a combat deployment. The men were just as at fault as the women were, but as Gretchen explains the women were the ones who were removed from the base. And not just the women involved, ALL of the women on the base were removed so there are no other "distractions" for this commander's soldiers. Gretchen reports some of the men were given consequences, but none of the men were kicked off this particular base for this incident. After they were sent to a different base, they no longer had the luxuries they had prior, thus indicating a double standard as the men were not sanctioned equally. .

Gretchen: It's a double standard, you can't be stupid and if you're stupid, you probably get what you deserve. So obviously, this woman doesn't have no respect [for herself], no respect at this time. So we were kicked off the base.

Q: So, explain that? What happened?

Gretchen: So the Special Forces commander was like, you want to bring this kind of drama? And see his boys were involved but his guys weren't in trouble, you know, they are the Special Forces, so you know, so if they say, you guys are the problem you get kicked out, so we got kicked off the base

Q: and then what?

Gretchen: So we lived with the infantry and it was shitty. So, if you lived with the Special Forces base, things are good, they take care of you, food is really good, the living conditions are great, and I had internet in my room. I was like living the dream, but yah, we got booted and living with the infantry with every other soldier. It's like the conditions are good, so when I say this don't get me wrong, but it's like section 8 housing. They like section off this big area, it was great, at least we were in shacks but, it wasn't like what we had.

As Gretchen explains, their unit on this base was given consequences and removed for one woman's poor choices. The commander was not willing to see past this and believes women bring "drama" and therefore, the unit needed to be sent off his base. This incident was brought up in both Gretchen's and Natalie's interviews as a turning point and a large display of double standards enacted by superiors. As I've shown, not only is there a difference between men and women soldiers in performance expectations, and the ways women were treated by their peers, there is also a difference in their treatment from superiors and applications of policy and sanction enforcement. My findings suggest women do face a double standard on certain things as their value as soldiers does not measure up to the same value as the men of the military. Again, I find these women are not respected just by being a member of the military, but need to show they are capable and then are respected. For men, the moment they enlist, it appears they become respected members of the military. Not only are women soldiers viewed as lesser than their male counterparts, they also experience sexualization and objectification from others around them while serving. I explain my findings on the sexualization of women in the military next.

Sexualization of Women Soldiers

My respondents report incidents of sexual assaults during deployments and basic training. Each woman deployed to a combat zone spoke about how they began to feel stir crazy or anxious when they were away from home or on their combat deployments. Several of

the women not deployed to combat and all of my respondents who were deployed to combat zones spoke about incidents of rape of other women. Each respondent was asked about sexual harassment and assault and ten out of eleven had stories of some sort. As Mary explains, it is very hard to understand the assaults. She went to Iraq thinking she could trust the men in her unit and thankfully, nothing happened to the women of her platoon, but it happened to others. She suspected it was happening to younger and lower ranking soldiers.

Mary: Um, not to anybody that was in our platoon or our company. But there was like rapes and stuff that would happen on the base which is scary because you know, you trust everybody so you never knew when it would happen.

Q: Soldier on soldier, superior soldier or?

Mary: I don't know, really who it was. It was mostly the females were usually younger and lower ranking but I don't know who the guys would have been.

She reports never knowing when a rape did happen; it could happen at any moment by any one of the men she was deployed with. Some of the women talk about being on edge often due to their fears of being raped or assaulted. Natalie spoke about an incident where she thought she would be raped and had to lock herself into the latrine for the rest of the night while her potential perpetrator walked around the building chanting she "can't be in there forever." Incidents like these made the women feel like they needed to be on guard at all times.

Often, women need to address incidents of sexual harassment so the harassment stops. I find that women are objectified by the men of the military and are treated disrespectfully in a sexual manner. Wendy describes her boundaries about sexual harassment and how she deals with it during her current working environment. Wendy fits in well with the men she is deployed with and spends a good portion of her time with men; she jokes, laughs, and tries to make the best of her deployment. Sometimes this joking is sexual and she was a part of it. As she explains, she had an incident where it went beyond just a joke and became advancement; something she would not stand for.

Wendy: Um, just rude comments, like we were talking about one of the other sergeants, we always joke about how she got her rank, she got a [E]six [ranking level] well, when they left she was a four and that 22 month deployment by the time everyone got back, she was a [E]six, so everybody is like she must have been sucking a lot of dick to get and his comment to me was, well you can always start with me. That crosses the line. I'm a very open female with the guys, um, I mean, there's sexual jokes all the time, it doesn't bother me, shit half the time, I'm in with them on it, but when it comes to making comments about doing things, no, that's a whole new level. So, when it comes to the guys, a lot of times its just joking around with them, stuff like , they just treat me like another guy and I think that's why I get along with the guys so well.

She discusses her ability to be treated like one of the guys but when it went past just joking and a sergeant asked her to perform a sexual act on him, this was too far. I demonstrate in a later section a possible explanation of why Wendy believes she fits in better with the men of her unit compared to the women. In that section, I describe in detail on how these women tend to set aside their femininity and act in a more masculine way. This is something Wendy has done in this instance. She reports that while most of the men she was deployed with were able to see her as one of the guys, this sergeant still saw her as a sex object.

Most of the women in this study are able to ignore sexual advancements and move on without letting it trouble them. They are able to set aside the words that are said and not let it bother them. Below, Carrie describes handling sexual advancements and how it was non-problematic in her unit because they respected each other. They also stood up for each other and Carrie would either confront instances when they arose or the men of her unit would confront harassers on her behalf. Carrie discusses instances of sexual harassment and assaults in other battalions and how her army unit responded.

Carrie: Oh yah, never by any of our guys because we all respected each other. But there were guys out there that would hit on you, they would try whatever, um, we as a battalion never had any problems but I knew of other battalions I had to go and help out there were a couple rape cases. And, for a long time there we had to always have and it makes me mad because I hate being discriminated against, but all females for quite a long time always had to have a battle buddy with them. Either another girl or another

guy we really, really trusted. And sometimes they wouldn't let a guy with you, you had to have two guys with you unless you were outside the Chu area, or living quarters, you had to have somebody with you. But that's because, one time a girl got pulled in [while she was alone]and somebody sexually assaulted her in a porter john and another times somebody walked into some girls Chu, they knew that her battle buddy wasn't there and they sexually assaulted her in her own living quarters and so, unfortunately, just like here in the US, there are pigs everywhere. You know guys, once they have been away from [sex] for a while, they think they deserve it, we never had in our battalion; we all respect each other. But you saw it in a couple of the other ones.

Carrie describes a woman raped in her own living quarters; an area which is supposed to be safe. She feels some men are "pigs" and states harassment happens both in the United States and on foreign grounds during these deployments. Thankfully, Carrie never had to deal with any type of assault during her tour of duty in Iraq, but many others did. Lola and Danielle deny much knowledge of sexual harassment of themselves or others; they are grateful they didn't endure this. Unlike Carrie, they didn't have or know of instances of rape; they heard rumors but did not have confirmed information. My interviewees all believe sexual assaults happened often and it is unfortunate; some did not have firsthand knowledge, but most did.

These assaults often created a shift in their viewpoint of the military. Natalie describes how she became cynical and bitter towards the military and men in general. She started to feel like prey during her deployment and believed that men did not respect her. Gretchen was on the same deployment as Natalie and saw this happening to "her" soldier, to Natalie, a member of her unit and couldn't stop it. Natalie's opinion of the military changed throughout her deployment and her deployment didn't end well. She thought superiors and fellow soldiers did not respect her. Since this respect was gone, she fell victim to many sexual advances, near assaults, and harassment. Here she describes an incident of harassment and how standing up for herself did nothing and got her into more trouble with a master sergeant.

Natalie: So then, I don't know, I remember, it started little things started making me bitter and cynical, I started getting uncomfy. There would be a master sergeant who would say "hey girl" [sexually] and lick their bottom lip. I would be real snappy. Like Master sergeant, my first name is Specialist and my last name is Portman, don't ever

talk to me again. And then I would get harsh treatment from him if I was in the chow hall line by him, he would be correcting me on my uniform. Because I had mouthed back to him when he was talking to me inappropriately.

Here is an incidence where standing up for herself did not work. During her deployment, Natalie started feeling like the men were coming onto her more. She describes in other areas how she felt like prey and the men were hunting her. My findings suggest some women are harassed for unknown reasons, some for known reasons, but regardless of the situation it is disrespectful and discriminatory. It may be this incident happened after her respect was already diminished; the time frame is unknown. This obviously puts a damper on women's desire to stand up for themselves; as with Natalie, they run the risk of being further maltreated or receiving consequences for correcting inappropriate behavior.

Sarah, Jane, Gretchen, Mary, Wendy, Heather, and Carrie all had times where they stood up for themselves against sexual comments and advancements and the situation got better. The others either did not have incidents of harassment or did report times where they had to confront harassment. Sarah even describes times where she wished she had a paint ball gun to shoot every one of the men who looked at her in a sexual way when she would go to the pool on her deployment. Jane talks about telling men to "fuck off" when they would make advances to her. In the male dominated military, several of the women spoke of coaching other women or being coached by other women soldiers to be smart, respectful, and to be careful about their actions. The women of this study learned that men do not respect you as women but see women as objects or something to pass the time. My findings have given light to a double standard; a view held by superiors and fellow soldiers that women are not equal to the men of the military. As Gretchen describes, men can do so much more and not have consequences for their actions; or not nearly the consequences they need.

Gretchen: In a male dominated military, if you are smart woman, call it a double standard, call it unfair, you have got to be extra, extra good if you don't want, you don't want anything to come back on you. So, you know a guy could screw anything he wants

and he could be great, that's fine, nobody's going to tell, it's definitely a double standard.

As Gretchen points out, men can "screw anything" without consequences but if a woman acts similarly, they are not respected. It doesn't even have to happen, a rumor of sexual behavior in women and this causes a loss of respect. I close this section with information that the military is trying to change. There are regular briefings both on deployment and in the United States on sexual harassment and what can and should be done. The unfortunate thing is women who do not feel comfortable going to a superior to report these instances for fear of retaliation suffer retaliation either from their superior or from their fellow soldiers. The male dominated military still views women as objects at times and many of the women studied have accepted this and believe that sexual harassment comes with the territory and they just need to deal with it individually. Several of the women were able to brush this off and not let it affect them. As I mentioned above, the military is trying to combat against this. They are having briefings, and as Sarah describes, "If I had a dollar for every sexual harassment briefing I went to, I would be rich." Obviously, this is a facetious statement, but it does illustrate the military as an institution is trying to stop sexual harassment, or at least educate its soldiers on the harmful effects of this.

Holding Self to Higher Standards and Gaining Respect

The women of this study needed to show they can perform their jobs beyond well and demonstrate to others they are dependable and hardworking. Not only this, but I find that women need to dress, act, and perform like a male soldier. I have described the differences the women of this study faced in their military careers. I now explain the ways the women are fighting against these differences, conforming to the military way, and finding ways to be successful and respected soldiers.

I find these women hold themselves to higher standards than others, both men and women to gain perceived respect as these women do not settle for the standards for their age class or gender, instead try to push themselves to meet higher standards of physical training. The women studied demonstrate the desire to be equal to other soldiers. My findings suggest these women do not identify with being equal and respected until they show they can pull their weight or display their toughness. They push themselves to higher standards, perceiving that exceeding female standards is the only way to gain respect from superior officers and men soldiers.

I suggest that these women's desire to be treated equally by exceeding their standards and fighting against difference is a way to "man up." They wish to be a respected member of the military and as I have shown, many men do not treat them this way. I suggest that in order to manage these differences and gain respect from others, women must exceed their standards and "man up." Once they "man up" they are able to prove and distinguish themselves as respectable soldiers. Although this respect may not be true respect, it is perceived by the women as respect and therefore, something they strive for. They need to stand up for themselves from day one of basic training; they need to keep appropriate boundaries, and push themselves to meet men's physical standards. I explain now how women hold themselves to higher standards in order to gain respect for their abilities.

As I discuss above, the military has different standards for men and women. The women learn and report their bodies are constructed differently than men's which makes running, pushups, and sit ups more difficult. The military is well aware of these differences and has created different standards for women than men to pass physical training (PT) requirements. Women have to do much less; running times are longer, sit up and pushup requirements are less. None of these women were able to tell me exactly what the standards are; they are no longer able to remember. However, many of my interviewees discuss how

they exceeded the women's standards and wanted to push themselves beyond the minimum requirements. Andie discusses the standards she held herself to and how missing the sharp shooter scoring by one point led to disappointment in herself:

Andie: 100%. You can get 100% at each PT test. Certain amounts, you'd get points for, [like] my PT test I got really good scores and I don't know, I just try to compete for weapons qualifications. Like there's sharp shooter, marksman, and I'd try to get sharp shooter.

Ten respondents spoke often about pushing themselves to exceed standards in order to feel respected because of these abilities. Below, I explain Gretchen's experiences on physical training requirements. She talked about her PT scores as comparable to the men's and feels she gained a level of respect from other men because of it.

Gretchen: I think so, and I think I was respected, you know, I mean, I could PT better than most of the guys could, many of the guys, you know what I mean and again was an important thing.

And again:

Gretchen: just really high standards for myself and others, um you know, I really tried to act out what I always wanted and though the military should be, um, you know I was respected because of it. You know, I really didn't take bullshit, I worked really hard and I never, ever gave anybody a reason to think I was full of kind of emotion bagged soldier or that kind of a shit bag soldier.

Above, she talks about her fantasy world of what the military should be and she conforms to these expectations. She acknowledges it is important for herself to be able to PT as good as the guys; she directly ties her performance into being respected. She also shows men expect women to be emotional and she goes above and beyond to prove to the men she is *not* emotional, but a respectable soldier. Below, Jane talks about how she pushed herself to meet higher standards. She had an instructor in military police school who did not want women in the military, and she describes making herself perform at an increased expectation due to this. These expectations made her push harder to perform to her highest level.

Jane: But the instructor we had in MP [Military Police] school despised females in the military. He was very upfront about it; he was like woman don't belong in the marine corp. You're [women] not getting by just because you're chicks! You know, we all worked together as a unit. is the first time male and female were mixed , but you know, it was his [instructors], type of attitude pushed all of us in the class further. And there was no settling for this, like you have to perform at the same standard as everybody else. I don't care about what the regulations say. I ran harder, did more pushups, and did more pull ups you know? I studied just as hard, and I think having [those higher] expectations made me personally more accountable for what I was doing, you know? I don't care if there are different standards for male and female; I don't care! [That] was kind of my mentality throughout the marine corp. Especially like in the MP Field too. We [men and women MP's] both have to do the same job and there is no excuse just because I'm a woman. That's not good enough. So, I pushed myself harder.

Again, this demonstrates the women are taught early on in their military career they have to push themselves to increased expectations because many men, like Jane's instructor, do not think women should be in all branches of the military. Ten out of 11 soldiers in this sample had something or some part of their training they pushed themselves on. Wendy states, "In basic, I would push myself so hard I would puke." The overwhelming majority of my interviewees pushed themselves beyond basic standards, and in this case, even went so far to disregard their physical health so they could be viewed as equal or respected as much as men soldiers.

Brooklyn's prior life consisted of being a homecoming queen and she was very much into the way her body looked, the clothes she wore, and her appearance. One wouldn't think this would be the type to join the military, let alone hold herself to higher standards, but she did. She wanted to be respected by the men of her platoon. Although she was made fun of for other things, being competitive at men's standards wasn't one of them. Brooklyn describes how she pushes herself and is respected because she didn't whine, complain, or not do something because of her looks, gender, or abilities.

Brooklyn: I know the guys definitely thought a lot higher of me at basic training than a lot of the other girls because I never didn't finish. I always finished the course; I'm like super competitive when it comes to that [finishing course]. So I wanted to be one of the

girls could do this, while still trying to slide under the radar and not be too noticed. I knew like a lot of the guys just had a lot more respect for me because I wasn't being a big baby about anything. I would try anything they wanted us to do and a lot of the girls were too scared to do this or too scared to do that [obstacle courses or challenges]. I'm not afraid of heights, I'm not, and you know if you want me to put on a gas mask and sleep in it for 3 hours, fine whatever.

Brooklyn shows by pushing herself to perform the best lead to being respected by other male soldiers. She was willing to try anything, willing to push herself, and was respected because of it. The stereotypical thoughts about a homecoming queen did not apply once she conformed to the military life; she pushed herself just as hard, if not harder than most of the other soldiers of her group. I suggest that my respondents went through a process of "manning up" and worked to exceed performance goals in order to gain respect from others and bolster their own sense of confidence in themselves as soldiers.

High Expectations of Other Women

Those women who did not meet performance goals or did not push themselves were judged by the women of this study. The women of this sample believe they are respected members of the military. Many have risen up in the ranks to become sergeants or staff sergeants, which are upper level rankings in the military pyramid. They believe they worked hard during their military careers and earned their rankings. My respondents believe other women should thrive to be as respected as they are. Often, interviewees report women do not measure up to their standards of what being a women in the military should be. Their feelings about femininity and emotion management also transfers into the way these women look at other women soldiers and the way women soldiers should act. Several women talk about feelings about other soldiers who do not measure up to the standards they have set for themselves. There are instances where other female soldiers are not measuring up to the standards of emotion management or job duties and they have negative feelings about this person. Below, Sarah talks about her female commander and during her leadership time frame

would not suppress her emotions and would show them openly. This was troublesome for Sarah and she thought this commander was giving a bad name to women in command and women in the military.

Sarah: But, yah, I mean, females are like my first deployment, I can't believe I didn't mention this but my commander was a female and um and there was certain things about her I didn't really care for. Like, I didn't think were very appropriate, like there were several occasions where she would cry, and I'm just like, that's really not the thing to do.

Q: As an officer or what do you mean by not the thing to do?

Sarah: Or as a commander, like she was in charge of, for the convoy into Baghdad. We were different, they were called serials, we would line up and it would be a long convoy train of vehicles. Each one was called a serial or a CHOC, and she was a CHOC commander and their final briefing before moving out, she was bawling, [It was like] is that what people need right now? No! Not really, I just like, thought she could have handled herself a lot better than she did because I didn't really feel like she was giving a good name for the you know, the females in command who do a good job, don't bawl, like don't, you know, show a sign of weakness. I mean there are [women in command who do a good job], it's not an easy thing to do, and I'm not even going to pretend it would be a simple feat. Don't cry you big baby or whatever, it is scary and I'm sure, overwhelming. Yes, and you're in charge, and I don't know, you just, as a commander; she wasn't a good commander, a good person, yes, but not a good leader. But, and it's hard because you know there aren't as many female leaders in those positions, so the few we have, it's like, really? You can't do that to us, come on! You know? So, I don't know, I've had good and bad female leadership but, I don't know, seems to be kind of more scrutinized or judged more just because there aren't as many. And it's hard when you run into a situation, or man, you're making it easy for people to say, that's why females shouldn't be in command, or whatever you know?

This shows Sarah believes a real leader holds herself accountable and suppresses her emotions. She does not think crying in front of the people you command makes a good statement for women in the military. I find these women believe conforming to the standards in place is the only way to gain respect; if you are a woman in the military, you need to hold yourself to a higher standard to show that women are appropriate for the jobs they have. I suggest women expect themselves and other women to suppress their feelings in order to make it through daily life in the military. The women in this sample describe learning to

manage yourself in a way showing you pull your own weight to gain respect as a woman in the military. When the soldiers are paired with inept soldiers (in their eyes) they are upset, want to get away from dealing with this person, and talk poorly about that person's abilities. Every soldier spoke about women they did not respect because they were having sex with other soldiers or were fraternizing with superiors. These women feel the women having sex with superiors were doing it to advance themselves or to get off easier; this was distasteful for all of the women interviewed. Women who were perceived as sleeping their way up the patriarchal chain were looked at poorly. According to the interviewees men expected women to act this way and the women had to prove to others this was not the case for them. Natalie describes her feelings about a fellow soldier who was having sex with a sergeant superior, "There was one who was trying to sleep with our drill sergeant, dirty little thing, she was his pet and it pissed us off and he didn't see it. It was disgusting, she was a chronic liar. God, I hated that bitch, Ramirez. God!" Natalie shows that Ramirez was hated by fellow soldiers because she was believed to be having sex with a drill sergeant. I suggest women also hold each other to a higher standard. Women who push themselves, carry their weight, and do not have sex with superiors are more respected by both men and women of the military. The women of this sample push themselves and each other to perform at a higher level, a better standard, just so they are able to give and receive respect equally.

Standing up for yourself to Gain Respect

I find that sometimes pushing yourself to exceed expectations does not automatically qualify these women for respect. Sometimes, the women's only way to gain respect is to verbalize and confront or display to the men of their units their abilities. The women in this sample not only needed to show their abilities but they need to verbalize them to the men because the men refused to see them. Interviewees often had to speak out against discrimination even if they had already shown they were capable to doing the task.

Below, I show Sarah's issues where she had to inform the men of her unit she was a capable soldier and could do her job well. She had advised the men she was not on a combat deployment to relax, but she was there to do her job and be a part of the team. She stands up for herself by confronting the men soldiers to prove she is a capable generator mechanic. These men did not know her prior to deployment and she was transferred to this unit recently and the men are not aware of her expertise in this area. She found out they would go out on missions to fix generators without her. She had to show she wasn't an inept soldier and could and would do her job.

Sarah: So, they [men soldiers] decided they didn't need us [women of the unit] and we got dropped from mission and we got picked up with Louisiana so then we went to Ft. Hood Texas. They [the base superiors] didn't have a spot for us; they didn't have anywhere to put us. So we did a NTC rotation, which is the National Training Center, in Ft. Irvin, California [then Iraq]. And that's where [I found out] the generator guys were going out without me. They just left me to sit there and rot in the female tent until I found out they were going out there [missions to fix generators] and was like what the hell? And [I] said to them, what the hell am I doing here? I'm not here to sweat on my cot playing phase 10 all day! Hitting the dirt every time we get mortared, you know?

And again

Sarah: I did feel like, I said before when I had to demand to work with the generator mechanics, obviously, I wasn't viewed [equal to men], I wasn't being taken seriously and they didn't know me. They [men soldiers] just kind of brushed me off and I kind of laid into them a little bit, and I don't know, I guess they got to know my personality and it was like, alright [after].

Sarah stands up for herself early on in the deployment to show she is not a door mat but a capable generator mechanic who deserves the chance to do the job she was sent to Iraq to do. Sarah explains how the women are just disregarded and easily shipped around to other bases. She describes how she stood up for herself to show the men of the unit she was able to do the job and wanted to do it. It was not until she confronted them and they allowed her to come out on jobs and then they got to know here she was respected.

As noted above, men look at women as weak until they are able to prove they are worthy of respect. I find these women feel this pressure. They each talk about having to stand up for themselves or prove their abilities to be respected in their jobs. The women fear retaliation in the form of sexual harassment or assault if they come across as weak to the men soldiers. But, as Gretchen says, "So I don't think it was an issue for me, I wasn't hit on a lot, I was pretty well respected." She feels things did not happen to her because she was respected. Jane also had instances where she needed to stand up for herself verbally. Here, she talks about how she lashes out at the guys in response to unwanted sexual advances. Her ability to stand up for herself gained some respect from her fellow soldiers. They knew she wouldn't put up with being disrespected or sexually harassed

Jane: I don't think I was ever singled out per say. If someone said anything inappropriate to me, I'd say, "fuck you" you know, you had to defend yourself verbally. I didn't have any particular incidents with this person is harassing me, I'm not comfortable. It was you need to leave me alone, don't talk to me.

My findings suggest women who are able to prove their abilities and stand up for themselves are the ones who gain respect of the men they soldier with. I also find once these women are respected, they appear to not be victims of sexual harassment or assault by other men of their company or it is taken in a joking manner and not seriously. They would see this as an act in good fun and brush it off. Regardless of deployment, the interviewees all spoke about the ways they are treated by men. This group of women got along well with men of the military. Each had a group of friends which included men they spent time with both on the job and off. They were able to trust both men and women after time together.

Once the women of this sample proved themselves to the level of gaining respect the men step in and start protecting the women further. The women spoke about hanging out with the other men and how no one would "mess with them" because they were surrounded by men. They also state if someone tried, they often didn't have to stick up for themselves

because the men are right there sticking up for them. Mary, Gretchen, Jane, Carrie, Wendy, and Sarah all had incidents where they would tell the person off first; then their “brothers” as they referred to them, step in afterwards and really give them a piece of their minds to get person to back off. This is usually in response to unwanted and inappropriate sexual advances.

Below, Jane talks about her appreciation for the brotherhood of soldiers. She was a military police officer and while on deployment in Japan, faced several instances where she was the only female. Her physical appearance brought on much attention from other Japanese and Americans. Her fellow military police officers and marines would surround her and take care of her so she wouldn't have to defend herself; the men took care of it.

Jane: Being in the Marine Corp, like when I was in Japan, there was like one female for every 50 guys. So in itself, being like blonde hair and blue eyes, and the only American woman within literally you know 10 mile perimeter, I think probably garnered me a lot more attention it normally would. Which is pretty typical especially in Japan; they say girls are one ticket away from ugly. Just because girls, [American women] are so rare there, being I was an MP, everywhere I went, I was surrounded by other MP's. And whether or not they were trying to get involved or not, I don't know, but they were like big brothers to me. Like nobody could just come over and talk to me. I was surrounded by a good a group of hefty dudes everywhere I went and they protected me. And you know, took care of me and we didn't have anything to worry about as far as. I was not really walking around by myself.

Jane explains that fitting in with the guys had several advantages, one of which was the men protected her; or at least she felt protected by them. She didn't have to worry about being approached by people she didn't know and she didn't have to worry about any civilian natives approaching her sexually. She was quite grateful of the protection they provided. I find the women accepted this protection from others. Sarah had a similar experience during a deployment and thought the soldiers she was respected by stand up for her against unwanted sexual advances or conversation. Once the women of this sample are respected soldiers they accept the protection the men provide, regardless if they have to provide protection for

themselves. Most of the women welcomed the opportunities which came with being respected by and fitting in with the men of their units and companies. They want to fit in with the group. Although Lola did not report instances where men soldiers stood up for her she spoke about the relationships she had with the men of her hospital setting and then being respected by her husband's friends. Andie too said there really weren't incidents of sexual harassment she remembers during her military career toward herself or the women she knew. With that said, even though Lola and Andie did not face an incident of unwanted sexual advances, I would suggest a similar desire to fit in with the men and be protected by the men. Both have stories about being respected by fellow air force and army men and women. I suggest the women of this study equate being protected by the men as being respected by them. Getting along well with the men of their units was important to them, they believed cohesiveness and being taken care of meant they were respected by other soldiers. The women also describe instances where women who were not respected were not protected by the men. Although somewhat backwards, I suggest the women are treated like one of the guys once they are respected and are treated poorly if they are not respected. Overall, I suggest with these women, standing up for themselves and doing things to fit in with the men of their units is another form of "manning up."

Femininity and Conforming to the Male Dominated Military Practices

I suggest the women of this study must inhibit their expression of femininity in order to conform to military practices. The definition of femininity that I use is the stereotypical one. The women of this study discuss their femininity in terms of hair, nails, make up, clothing and body image. It's not that I suggest this is the only way to be feminine but I am merely portraying the definitions of the women in this study. I find that women are not able to display their femininity or must display it secretly or minimally during working military hours. The military is a male dominated institution and the women studied discuss their feelings that they

must conform to this male dominated institution in order to have successful careers. According to Sergeant Michael Volkin (2006), "The Army wants to break you down and build you up in their image." (www.ultimatebasictraining.com: extracted 3/24/2012). Soldiers are broken down from their prior image and built back up into the image of the military. I find these women are forced to comply with not only the military standards but also the men's expectations of their behavior and actions. They must displace their feminine side to be a part of the military or they are not respected as they work so hard to be. They learn to set aside their feminine side and "man up" to meet the expectations of military standards. Jane talks about how her drill instructor held everyone to a neutral standard. She had to push herself to conform and to meet these standards. Even though she had to push herself to meet this neutral standard, it was still quite masculine. My sample reports the military retained masculine standards of dress and behavior expectations. Most of the women interviewed describe their uniform as being a reason they did not feel feminine anymore thus allowing a masculine neutral standard. The women all describe wearing uniforms which are in men's sizing and cut. Their daily uniform didn't fit; their dress uniform was a women's cut but many shared their dislike for the standards. Each soldier describes how their uniform fit, mostly ill-fitting, and you could not tell where the curves are. Wendy said, "You can't tell how big a person's boobs are in uniform. We'll put it that way!" Sarah reports if you had curves showing, they would put you in the next biggest size.

I suggest that in these women their uniform is a way the military strips them of their sense of femininity. Natalie states she felt, "sexless" and Heidi too felt "like a man" when she wears her uniform since it did not fit her body type. Since men have a smaller back side and broader chests, completely opposite of women, obviously, these clothing items won't fit correctly. They are expected to wear masculine uniforms, man up and push themselves to

meet masculine expectations but then are expected to wear a skirt at graduation. This didn't feel right to most; it sent a mixed message and was confusing to them.

As I demonstrate above, I find a pattern which suggests these women pushed themselves to conform to the military starting in basic training. I do, however, suggest a slight difference between combat and non combat soldiers. Combat soldiers go through a period of loosing femininity during their deployments and they then try to display their femininity in ways to regain sense of femininity after a time period on combat deployments. I explain some of my findings on both cases below.

I find these women try to find ways to display their femininity regardless of deployment status. Each woman interviewed had specific things she liked to do. Gretchen would sometimes have a soft French manicure; Jane also kept her nails nicely manicured. Brooklyn likes to dress up and go out on her weekend drills to show the other men she is a woman. She also told a story from basic where someone smuggled in a tweezers and she was quite excited to be able to pluck her eyebrows. Tweezers are considered contraband during basic training so there was a problem when drill sergeants found out. The military standards of nail, hair, and dress allow only soft French manicures, a tight bun, limited make up, and a pressed uniform with shined boots. These women are not allowed to express their femininity in bold ways. They were trained to know soft touches like French manicures or a swipe of mascara are the only acceptable ways to display their femininity. Brooklyn describes her frustration as she was learning the standards for make up back during her drill weekends. She has brown hair and wore black eye liner; this apparently is wrong, you need to have your eyeliner the same color as your hair. She then describes the standards and she believes they are difficult to meet since prior to the military, she really liked to show off her femininity.

Brooklyn: Now we can wear like eye shadow and stuff, it just has to be natural tones, it doesn't make sense, I can wear eye shadow but I can't wear thin black eyeliner. The

rules are weird. We can paint our nails but it has to be a natural tone, but they can't be French tip. Like honestly, French tip is the most natural looking thing you can have your nails so how is not ok, I don't know if it's because it gives it the illusion your nails are long and you're not allowed to have long nails. Your nails can't be longer than the tips of your fingers, not everybody follows but that's the general rule. So that's the only thing I can think of because it gives the illusion of long finger nails So I mean, they literally strip you of all feminine, you know?

She describes the military stripping her of her femininity and keeps her to minimal standards. However, this is ironic compared to Williams (1991) study as those women are made to express their femininity in a very bold manner; definitely displaying a shift in the face of women in the military in the past 25 years. Here, Jane talks about the ways she maintained a sense of womanhood during her military career. She would often be addressed as "Sir" because she believes from the side or front; others cannot tell whether she is a man or woman.

Jane: so, yah, I kept my hair long so I always had a bun, we were in Japan, they were like Jones we're going to find you, your bun sticks out like a sore thumb, and I was like no you're not. But anyway, so, um, but yah, I always had my nails done, always tried to wear makeup or I didn't really do much but I wore makeup and kept my nails and at least had mascara on, but if a marines coming up, approaching me from the front compared to the back, I would get called sir all the time, and not by intention, oh, it was like, oh, now I see your hair. Like you can't tell when you're walking straight at somebody.

Jane shows wearing mascara and keeping her nails appropriate were high on her priority list. She also excuses the behaviors of others when person is not able to determine if she is a man or woman. Despite her attempts to display her gender, she still had others address her as a man. I demonstrate even if women are displaying their gender to the standards of the military, they are often not addressed as the correct gender. I believe this further allows a women's level of confidence in their femininity to falter thus leading to another form of manning up. They lose their femininity, are treated like men, and have to meet dress standards during their working hours as soldiers.

Many of the women describe ways they lose their femininity. Lola also describes being yelled at for her hair not meeting the expectations of her male superior. She could not conform to these expectations at first because she didn't know what to do about them. Lola reports that women are limited to two to three minute showers during her basic and AIT time periods. She discusses first how women complained about not being able to wear makeup and not having enough time to get ready. As Lola describes, it is nearly impossible to shower in two minutes; it is difficult for any women to maintain their femininity when they cannot and do not feel clean due to a short shower.

Lola: Um, ya, like there was these girls complained about not being able to put make up, like oh my god, we don't have enough time use the bathroom, we have to take a 2 minute shower.

Q: You had 2 minutes to take a shower?

Lola: It was like, literally, a conveyor line. It was like a locker room shower, there were showers along each wall. I remember putting like shampoo in my hair and body wash in my hand and already scrubbing myself before I got in the shower, they were pretty fast showers!

Q: Were you even able to get clean in 2 minutes?

Lola: No, not really, I remember there would be cold water and I just made sure the soap was rinsed off me.

Like Lola, other respondents in this sample thought they did not have enough time to shower or get ready in the morning. Often, these women are waking up at three or four in the morning already and did not believe they were given adequate time to prepare for the day and they began to find this preparation unimportant. Instead, the women showered at night. Brooklyn describes five showers to accommodate 60 girls during basic training; they turned on all the showers and would walk under them like a conveyor line to shampoo first, then walk and rinse, condition, and then walk and rinse. Another problem these women faced was damage to their hair during basic. At no point are they allowed to have their hair down. After showering they had to put their hair up into the bun to return to their barracks. As Brooklyn describes, this

can cause mold to form in your hair, she reports her hair was damaged and broken when she returned home because you couldn't have a blow dryer and couldn't leave your hair down to dry. She also describes her frustration with her inability to feel like a woman during basic training.

Brooklyn: Um, well like at basic training, basic was the worst of all of it because I mean you didn't get to anything for yourself. There were girls had mold growing in their hair because you always had to have your hair pulled back, so when you get out of the shower, you couldn't go to your room unless your hair was up, so it wasn't like you got to go out of the shower and then you got to lay in bed and put your hair down, you couldn't have a blow dryer so you couldn't dry your hair so our hair was disgusting by the time I was done with basic. It was so damaged because you know, just having it up all the time, it was broken, you know what I mean? So, I just remember, coming out of basic and like I am nasty, they didn't let us wax or pluck our eye brows or anything for the full 3 months, that's a lot longer than you think it is. Um but yah, we couldn't like use anything smelled good. You couldn't have like scented deodorant or scented hairspray or scented body wash, nothing could have a scent. I'm not really sure what the whole idea behind was, I'm assuming, actually, I have no idea. We would always say they didn't want us to smell good for the guys. That was our joke in our barracks. There was nothing, you had, you had nothing to set yourself aside as for being a female. Like absolutely nothing, I don't know, that sucked!

I find again that the military doesn't quite accommodate the needs of women. These women had to learn to let go of their femininity standards due to exhaustion and the military's standards. You couldn't use fragrances, leave your hair down, your uniform didn't fit, and you couldn't display your femininity outwardly as Brooklyn pointed out. Although each woman does describe other women who would take the time to put on makeup, not a single one of the women interviewed described this as something they would do.

These women were forced to lower their standards on their own femininity to meet military standards, wear uniforms, and participate in daily life as a soldier. Many found ways to feel feminine even though the military tries to limit this. As I state above, I find a distinct difference in women who have been deployed to combat zones than women who did not experience combat duty in this study. Women, especially the ones who were deployed,

thought their ability to show their femininity was limited starting in basic training but more so during combat deployments. I find it wasn't that they couldn't express their femininity, but the time constraints and standards are so restrictive it wasn't worth it to them. Mary discusses the reasons she didn't wear makeup during her time in basic training and during her time in Iraq. She believes it is related to the heat. She didn't want to have makeup melting off her face.

Mary: You didn't wear any make up in basic, and then you always had your hair back in those little dorky buns but that was just there though. In Iraq, you could wear makeup but I never did, I didn't care. Because when it's 140 degrees, I didn't want to have makeup melting on my face too. So, I think it probably just aged me because we were out [side] and then you slept really weird hours, you worked hard, you always had this Kevlar on, and so you came home and had dorky tan lines. Like you had like a mark on your cheek and chin, so your chin was brown and right here [Jaw line] was like white.

Mary discusses her feelings about wearing a bun and also about wearing her Kevlar. She believes this was part of losing her sense of femininity; she always was in gear and this created bad tan lines by which she was embarrassed. Gretchen also has similar embarrassment about her appearance. Below, she explains her feelings about wearing makeup and after several months of not wearing it and others notice she put a little concealer and mascara on.

Gretchen: But I didn't, we were allowed to except for it's funny, you go 6 months without wearing makeup and you put a little concealer under your eyes and guys notice , are you wearing makeup and the guys start looking at you differently, seriously, because everybody's' in the same boat. It's just kind of a long time, [to go without makeup].

Gretchen's experiences are similar to the other combat soldiers of this sample. I find each woman expresses femininity after being deployed for some time. Natalie, Carrie, and Heidi also did things to maintain their femininity during deployments. All three of these women ordered sexier undergarments to wear under their uniform or during their down times when they could wear civilian clothes. Carrie also turned her living quarters into a pink and girly palace. She describes below how she maintained her femininity during deployment by wearing pink, decorating her barracks in pink, having nice smelling lotions and body sprays, and

wearing makeup on occasion. She did run into some problems with wearing makeup as she describes, the heat caused her eye lashes to melt together.

Carrie: Oh yes, in our sleeping areas we were able to wear civilian clothes and I had my pink. I wore my pink and that was the time I could wear my pink. So, I you know, pink shirts, pink pants, you know I had old navy sweatpants and then every once in awhile, I didn't put a lot of makeup because of the heat, you didn't want to wake up earlier to put it on but I would put mascara on. That was the way I would do it. But I would paint my toe nails, can't have fingernail polish but we would go and have girls night and we'd do little pedicures and we'd paint our toenails and stuff like. So, we tried as much as we can and like I said, we, our room always smelled, as the boys would say, it smells like a girl in here! You know, we'd have our body sprays to help us feel nice and clean and you found a deodorant smelled nice and pretty and um, yah, just we'd order things from bath and body for our showers, we have like the really smelly soaps and lotions and so when you took your shower you felt clean and fresh for a while,

Q: A little while, so how did the guys react to the mascara, the smells, any problems?

Carrie: Oh, no, I mean sometimes we got picked on but mostly, the one time we got picked on, it was July and it was so hot out, it was like 130something degrees outside and we were walking and it was just us medics, and we were walking back from eating chow, and I was like, wait, stop, I can't see, [they ask] what do you mean you can't see? And I was like I can't open my eyes, my lashes melted together! They melted together from the mascara and I couldn't open my eyes and I was like just a second and I reach underneath and pried them apart! And they were like 's what you get for wearing mascara and trying to look all girly and everything and I'm like, you want me looking girly, it gives me a nice feeling.

Carrie describes expressing her femininity made her feel good about herself. Even though she was picked on for having her eyelashes melt together, it was still worth it for her so she could feel feminine. Again, Gretchen discusses the ways she made herself feel more feminine on deployment.

Gretchen: Well, if it was anything I could have when my nails were grown out, like I could have done a really natural French tip. Even in that situation [combat deployment], I could have done a really matted color on my nails or a French tip natural. It can't be too white on the tips and [I could have] gotten away with it, but or at least it wouldn't have been an issue with dress code, but people would notice it and was kind of uncomfortable. But that kind of stuff, we would sometimes do mani's [manicures] and pedi's [pedicures] at night, kinds of stuff, you know, some people after awhile started to wear makeup, um, I guess. Maybe sleep in like some normal pajamas, so but that's it, I mean you're not dancing around in a dress really, anywhere! Ha ha

She talks about her level of conformity; she still wanted to fit in with the other soldiers but was struggling to feel feminine. She again touches on feeling uncomfortable while displaying herself as a woman because the men of her unit would notice and comment. This was unwanted attention; she was not displaying her femininity for them but for herself. As my findings show above, during combat deployments, all six women had specific things from having girls nights, wearing makeup on occasion, wearing regular night time clothing, to painting their fingernails or toenails to make themselves feel more like a woman. These women didn't have to think about what to wear or how to look as the military defines this; but each took pride and sometimes embarrassment in expressing femininity, even just to themselves. The daily life of a combat soldier was quite male oriented given dress and behavior standards. The heat, sand, time constraints, military institution, and many other factors played a role in why these women were not able to openly express their femininity but on combat deployments these women found ways to privately and openly show off expressions of femininity.

My findings suggest the male dominated environment of deployments prohibit the expression and display of femininity during working hours. Not only do these women try to display their gender in private or off duty, I also find these women conform to the men's standards of daily routines by limiting their sense of self and their ability to feel feminine. This could be a utilitarian approach where they do so out of ease, time, and necessity but I suggest this is due to their desire to conform and "man up" to be a soldier and member of the military. I suggest the level of conformity to the military standards shape these women's sense of self.

I discovered that women also learn the benefits they bring to the military regarding their physique. Sarah describes how she learns when she is an asset and when she is not. She is showing she conformed to the men's standards by learning this process and knowing the limitations of being a woman in the military. She demonstrates the best way to get ahead is by

using the smartest approach during physical tasks. In her case, choosing a larger man to perform heavy load tasks rather than choosing a smaller man. This continues to put women at a lower level than men of the military but many soldiers are accepting of this which is a contradiction to their desire for equality.

Sarah: I mean, I think I gained a healthy respect though for like when you're going to be an asset, be an asset where you can be, but know your limitations. When they are moving a bunch of heavy shit and trying to do it quickly, get out of the way. That's why they have the 250lb guy, you know, the big dude's moving the shit. Because they want to do it and get it done quickly and have no body get hurt. Because I mean, I'm not here to say, you know women just can't do something's, they can do it! But like, you take 150lb guy and a 250 lb guy who are you going to chose to pick to carry a heavy load? If you pick the 150lb guy, you're going to have to pick up their slack all the time. Just calling a spade a spade because we had this female who would always try to be she-rah. And it's like, really, we could all get in there and do but you're being more of a hindrance than a help.

This continues to put women at a lower level than men of the military but many soldiers are accepting of this which is a contradiction to their desire for equality. Sarah concludes this statement by discussing another woman who would try to get involved but was not able to meet the standards needed and caused more problems being in the way than she was trying to help solve. Here again, this shows women are an asset to the military at times but Sarah believes women need to learn when they are an asset and when to drop back, thus "manning up" and adapting to men's ideologies about the military. As Williams (1991) writes about the gender differences in expectations, I too find many similarities here. Williams describes the women of the military whom she researched were allowed to use umbrellas but the men are not. Senior officers thought it would be too "wimpy" to use an umbrella (1991:48). Similar to this, my respondents are taught they are too wimpy to do certain jobs and must learn to be an asset only when it is acceptable to the men leaving women in a lesser position overall.

My findings then suggest women in the military start conforming to military standards early on, from learning the history and structure, to completing physical training requirements to

measuring up to others. There is a process of manning up and meeting the men's standards. They learn early in basic training there are differences between soldiers but many faced the same performance expectations at times. They have to conform to military standards and conform to standards they set for themselves in order to be respected. They also hold fellow women soldiers to these expectations. I suggest these women do not feel men respect women until they have measured up to these expectations. At the point of respect; these men then step in and start taking care of and standing up for the women as brothers do. These women saw the men as family in this sense.

I also find most of these women pushed themselves to meet men's standards and tried to man up to these standards. Early on, they are taught showing weakness is not respected in the military. Through this, they learn they need to hold themselves to a higher standard and prove to others they are able to be a good soldier. The military is a male dominated institution. These women loose a sense of who they are as an individual, they are built back up as a team member, and they have to fit in with the other men, and show they are capable of doing what men can do then, and only then are they given respect.

Chapter Five

Identity and Role Person Merge

This chapter explores how these women's identities are shaped by the military and reviews the self change they experienced due to their enlistment and career in the military. As I have explained in my literature review on role person merge (Turner 1978; Waskul 1998), a transition happens while partaking in a role. The role is practiced, perfected, performed, and then possibly a part of role stays with you after the role is no longer active. My findings suggest this transition does occur in the women interviewed. I find a pattern suggesting a role person merge with the role of a soldier becoming them and staying with them. I now explain this process. I describe first their prior lives, how they learned to conform to military standards, build confidence in themselves as soldiers, and the resulting shifting ideas about themselves. Lastly, I explain getting used to their roles and the military role becoming a part of who they are, which stays with them outside of their military career. I also explain the difference my findings suggest in the role person merge being more prevalent in combat deployed soldiers than non combat deployed soldiers.

Prior Lives

As I mentioned above, the respondents before their service are your typical teenagers and young adults. Some are in sports and some activities, but all talk about their experiences with friends. They defined themselves through the peer groups they interacted with and the activities they participated in. One was a homecoming queen, some were tomboys, and some were your typical American teenagers who enjoyed hanging out with friends. Some of the women in the sample had good grades and some participated in illegal drinking and drug use.

Below, Gretchen talks about her life prior to the military and the reasons behind her choice to enlist. Her life was spent partying, drinking, and breaking rules. She discusses an incident which results in her enlistment in the military. She threw a party and her parents found out. Her dad had an anxiety attack due to worrying about her and her future. She chose to enlist during her Dad's hospitalization.

Gretchen: Well, my parents are Harley riders so my dad said we're going to go out with some friends, and we'll be home about eleven at night, this was noon. So I was like, oh, eleven pm, ok, I'm going to throw a party! So we're drinking you know, the whole bit! And my parents come home and my dad ends up chasing down a bunch my friends, stealing their cases [of beer], tells me don't go anywhere and calls the cops on me and I take a breathalyzer. So anyways, I go to sleep that night and I wake up the next morning and no one's home except my brother, and I'm like where is everybody? He's like Dad went to hospital and I'm like, oh, why's that? He said, "He thinks he's having a heart attack." So, I'm like oh! Anyways, he's probably 55 at the time so we go to the hospital. My brother and I do and he didn't have a heart attack, he had an anxiety attack. This was like the icing on the cake because I was just a terror child my entire life. So anyways, just seeing my dad lying in the hospital bed and I was like wow, I did that. I just changed; did a one-eighty and chose to enlist.

Gretchen's story depicts the struggles she had prior to military. She broke rules, didn't listen to her parents, and feels like she gave her dad an anxiety attack due to her delinquency. She enlisted in the military for a chance to move on; a chance to prove to herself and her family she could make something of herself. Mary, Carrie, and Andie identified themselves prior to enlistment as student athletes and were involved in many student activities. Many felt the desire to enlist in the military when they were early teens. Several had extended family in the military and grew up hearing stories about experiences of others.

Jane, Lola, and Sarah all spoke about spending time with friends, working, and stated they really didn't have plans to join prior to enlisting. Heidi and several others depicted the educational benefits of the GI Bill or a calling to be a part of something bigger than they were; several cited the terrorist attacks of 9/11/01 as a reason for enlisting so they could have purpose in their life and protect America. Some of them knew other soldiers and were given hints at what to expect of their career but most didn't quite know what to expect when they

signed the paperwork to join the military. Here Jane discusses what she expected when she signed up for the military. She was quite surprised on the long hours and didn't quite understand what actually would be happening during her boot camp and military experience.

Jane: I expected to be paid, you know have something to do, you know be a marine. But I don't think I fully grasp [being a marine] at 18 [years old] on what I would be doing, I don't think I realized going into in we were working 12 hour shifts, plus an hour of PT and meetings before. You know? Three [days] on [working], two off, three on, you know?

Jane explains how she was surprised by the hours and days of working, the physical training, and other meetings she would be required to attend each day. I find similar expectations in the other respondents. Although each of these women had specific reasons for their enlistment they were not all prepared for what actually happened. Prior to this, they were average teenagers living their lives and the focus was on themselves. The process of enlistment started to shape them into adults. From enlistment they are broken down and reshaped into soldiers and then leave the military with a part of their soldiering still with them. I now explain my findings on the shaping of these women's sense of self during their military careers and suggest this demonstrates a role person merge within this sample.

Breaking You Down to Build You Back Up

I suggest the military engages in a process of breaking soldiers down to build them back up as soldiers. According to Sgt. Volkin (2006) this is a tactic drill sergeants and the military institution implements so recruits change their prior ways and become soldiers and a member of the team. Many of these soldiers believe they partake in what they refer to as group think; or thinking as a team first and an individual second. According to the women of this study the military does this breaking down during basic training. If soldiers make an error, dress incorrectly, act out, or even look at a superior wrongly in basic training, there are consequences.

Most of these women arrived at basic training with little knowledge or expectation of what was coming ahead. Some had heard stories from peers or family members but none of them were expecting quite what happened. Each woman spoke about stepping off the bus onto the base and having drill sergeants waiting for them, yelling and screaming to get them to comply. They are scared and since they have no prior knowledge, are unsure why they are being yelled at and several reported it was difficult to deal with. Many have never been yelled at their entire lives so when they step off the bus and are ambushed, it's a whole new experience for them. I assume this tactic is used to gain compliance. The women of this sample felt uncomfortable being yelled at so they would try to avoid situations which put them in that position again. Again, I suggest this learned compliance leads to conforming to the military way of life. Carrie describes her first days of basic training; she hadn't been sworn at or ridiculed ever before. She was mocked because she packed heavily since she was going to be gone for two years of training. She was not expecting to be yelled and cursed at like she was. It was frightening for her.

Carrie: Um, I got I went to Ft. Jackson, SC. Uh, and you get there, you arrive at the Airport and there's these drill sergeant and they are just instantly yelling at you. I remember pulling in I had these huge suitcases. When I joined, I was going to be an x-ray tech, so I was going to basic for 8 weeks and go right from there to San Antonio for over a year and half of training. And back then, we did medic training first and then x-ray tech and x-ray tech itself was a whole year of training. So I was packing for a whole year. Needless to say, I remember the drill sergeant looking at me, "What are you doing?", cussing at me, and I was like Oh, somebody's swearing at me and was, was like my biggest ah!! And they were like, "What do you think you're going to a spa, this isn't relaxing Jackson!" They are just yelling at you and you get in, they get you in the bus and they get you there. And they're yelling at you to get out, and you line up and just right away, from one station to the next, to the next, for signing in and doing all, they sit down, they don't ever talk to you, they are yelling at you all the time!

Right away, Carrie is ridiculed for bringing what she thought she needed to basic training. She goes on to talk about the first few weeks of basic as being a time where mostly everyone is getting yelled at and learning the expectations of basic training. This is a hard time

for Carrie and for several of the other soldiers due to this new way of being treated. Brooklyn reflects on similar experiences of being yelled at but, as she describes below, along with her bunkmates she would plot ways to get out of the military. They felt it was so miserable the first few weeks and wanted a way to be discharged which included plotting ways to break bones or hurt themselves drastically.

Brooklyn: But when I got there, I had no idea what [standing at] attention was, I didn't know how to salute. I didn't know anything. My recruiter didn't show me jack crap like I absolutely had no idea. Which is almost better because I didn't pick up any stupid habits but yah, I just I was so lost and so tired and like confused why everybody was yelling at me all the time? And I mean I know I cried a lot in the beginning and I think all the girls did, we basically would just sit in our bay and bawl all night, like how can we get out the military. Like I'll push you down the stairs, I'll push you out of the bunk so we can go home with broken bones. But wouldn't have worked because they just hold you back and start you again so I'm glad I didn't try. But, I don't know, like I guess I can't really think of any other specific things they did to me in particular. But um I think I eventually learned I didn't want to stand out because I was like really good at anything but I didn't want to be really bad at anything. You just wanted to blend in, be somewhere in the middle so I just tried to stay there as much as I could.

Brooklyn quickly learns blending in is her best option. She didn't want to be the worst at PT or other standards because those who are the worst at standards got ridiculed. These stories are similar throughout my research. The women of this sample did not want to be ridiculed or yelled at so they quickly learned to comply, do as they are told, and blend into the other soldiers as much as possible. Brooklyn also reports the women arriving at basic training who were "obviously lesbian" took extra ridicule because they didn't look like your typical woman. She describes feeling bad for one soldier who came with a shaved head because a drill sergeant was screaming at her in front of hundreds of other soldiers about asking if she wanted to be a man.

Again, not all soldiers can handle the grueling nature of basic training; some leave, some quit, some get kicked out, and some take their lives. Andie describes a few suicides during her initial weeks of basic training. She didn't remember details but said people did not know how to handle the expectations the military put upon them, "They just couldn't handle it

and they were like slitting their wrists with credit cards. Apparently, if you're desperate it works. Like, I had heard people were committing suicide, it's just like they're yelling at you, you can't even look this way" [she holds her head straight forward and demonstrates the inability to look in different angles for fear of retaliation by drill sergeants]. Natalie also reports on two suicides during this time. She had the unfortunate experience of finding one of the girls in the shower after she had already committed suicide. This is a horrible experience for anyone and she just had to let it go and move on; she compartmentalized and ignored her feelings about this and reports by the end of basic training she had forgotten about it. Natalie describes how the suicide affected her. She also explains what a suicide watch is and it's affects on that person and the other soldiers. She describes it as a negative experience and something she wants to avoid.

Natalie: Yah. Yah, I think it was one of the first times I was like holy shit, this is serious. And I didn't want them putting me on suicide watch if I acted strange about it. Suicide watch is awful, you sleep in the same room as the drill sergeants are working on computers while everybody is out doing stuff, on a cot where they can see you. It was bad enough I felt like I was being watched anyway, we all did, I'll be damned if I was in a drill sergeant, or walking around without shoe laces so everyone can pick on me. I'll be damned. I minimized what I had seen. I wasn't going to tell a drill sergeant anything.

I suggest the women of this sample do not believe they are able to express themselves and their feelings about their military performance and career. As Natalie describes, she is not comfortable expressing her feelings for fear it would have consequences. My interviewees saw what happened when you are pushed to your breaking point. The respondents report some women were kicked out, some leave, and unfortunately, a few women found no other way out and committed suicide. The military institution tries to prevent this and several of the soldiers talk about a softer military. According to several of the women, during basic training now there are stress cards so if a soldier is feeling picked on they have a way out of that situation. They play their stress card and the drill sergeant has to leave them alone. The military is trying other

tactics but these soldiers all spoke about ways they were yelled at, screamed at, and learned to conform to the military through being broken down and built back up. Once they are a part of the “group think” and successfully broken down they are conforming to military standards.

Conforming to Military Standards

I find the women of this sample were stripped of their prior lives, made to learn the military way, and then became soldiers. I suggest their sense of self shifts from being just teenagers to becoming upstanding soldiers and this starts during basic training. Similar to Waskul's (1998) camp counselors, women in the military found themselves in a new social context characterized by retreat from their previous lives and interactions with others—this sharp transition and isolation from their normal environment facilitated change within themselves. However, unlike the camp environment, women did not have the opportunity to reflect on themselves or their lifestyles; they were plunged into rigorous training with little agency about their day to day situations. Right away in basic training the women are forced into a structured environment where the only thing they have to focus on is what they are told. This sample describes basic training as a grueling experience where they do a lot of physical training and classroom learning. The history, customs, and courtesies of being in the military are taught along with an intense physical fitness regimen. The interviewees report a difficult learning environment due to the complexity of the information since each branch has different traditions and histories. As Brooklyn states, “We had these smart books, really thick books that tell you everything you need to know about the military and we read them from cover to cover and we would practice the soldier creed and the army song. That is what we did for an entire week.” The military taught the women to understand the history to be able to build off of the history and their job-specific training to become soldiers. Often, the women report basic

training is much more of a mental game than the physical one due to the intensity of the psychological training that went with the physical training.

The intensity and structure of their initial boot camp experience is the foundation for the shaping and shifting of their sense of self as a part of the military. The women report the goal of basic was to break you down individually and bring you back up as a team; to make you take part in “group think.” Every soldier discusses stories from basic training where drill sergeants make their soldier group perform physical punishment until they are able to correct the action they are in trouble for. The physical punishment helps the soldiers coordinate with each other and work together so they do not have the punishment happen again for that action. Below, Sarah describes her experience with this physical punishment and her ability to handle the mental portion of basic training. She discusses the team building aspect; they are taught to take care of their buddies by looking out for them or get into trouble or being put on the rag if they do not. Being put on the rag or being smoked as some refer to it is the extensive and grueling physical exercise punishment superiors did as I note above.

Sarah: Well, they would rag you, so you're always doing pushing, pushups, sit-ups or overhead claps. You're getting in trouble for something always because someone's boots are untied or something. So everyone gets punished for it because you didn't square them away. It's all for a cause because you need to take care of your buddy. But, I guess physically it was challenging and I would say if you had the mindset already and you knew what they are going to do. You would know they are going to tear you down to build you up. For some people it was over their heads; I think they struggled more mentally because the physical part is nothing to sneeze at but the mental part, I think plays a bigger role.

Sarah discusses the mindset she had to go into to make it through these difficult mental and physical rag sessions during basic training. She states they “tear you down to build you up” which I suggest is the first process of an identity shift that Turner (1978) discusses in his research on the role person merge. Similar to this, Carrie explains her experiences learning the ropes of basic training. To note, prior to getting to basic training, soldiers go to a station

where they receive their uniforms, complete a mini PT test and then once you pass you can go onto basic training. Her experiences of being broken down are described below; she has never been yelled at and describes the first few weeks of basic training going from pre-basic to basic training.

Carrie: You know, you could be in pretty tough shape to get to the just pass the initial thing and then from there is once you pass all , then you got brought over to your basic training. Where we, your classes are going to be, they get you in a line, they grab all your gear and the stuff you brought yourself and you put your head down. You're in a school bus and your head's down. [Drill sergeant says] Don't you look, don't you look, if I see one head up, you're going to regret that decision. You know they are yelling at you the whole time, it felt like forever, it felt like an hour drive, it was probably a mile! Ha ha! It just felt like forever, they [drill sergeants] are yelling at you to get off of the bus, go go go! You go there, you there, and they are yelling at you and you're scared to death! Anyway, they put you in your platoon, your section, and that's where you are at the rest of the time. Most of basic is a mind game; they bring you down so hard. [Drill sergeant saying] You're just a maggot on the wall, you're worse than a maggot on the wall! They put you down, they make you feel like crap and then they bring you up, and after a couple of weeks, they bring you up. [Drill sergeant saying] Yes, you're starting to be a soldier, they start building you up but they build you up the way they want to be brought up. Throughout all of this, they are teaching you the army values, integrity, loyalty, leadership, and you're learning the soldiers creed, everything you know, the rank structure, learning how the march, how to use your weapon and then the fun gas chamber everybody has to go through and so it wasn't bad, it's not a great experience, nothing I want to do again that's for sure!

Carrie describes learning to act the way the drill sergeants want her to based on their yelling and screaming. I suggest these women did not want to be yelled at or punished so they quickly conformed to the standards and expectations to avoid being yelled at in the future. The breaking down piece was more difficult than the physical training part of basic training for all of the respondents. Not many soldiers in this sample were used to being yelled at or belittled prior to becoming a soldier. These women did expect some of this based on other's stories of basic but most report they were ill prepared to handle the intensity of their experiences. They each learned quickly what they needed to do to make it through this grueling time in their lives to become a soldier.

The process of becoming a soldier didn't just happen the day they enlisted. I described the tactics used to break these women down the first weeks of basic training to get them to act and think like a soldier and a member of a team. This did not happen automatically or right away. Once these women were a few weeks into basic, they started feeling more comfortable with themselves. I see a pattern that suggests a shift into the next stage of a role person merge (Turner 1978; Waskul 1998) at this point. The women of this sample began to see themselves and felt like soldiers. Many of the women referred to this time as their basic training graduation but here, Mary describes her process of becoming a soldier prior to this. This day for Mary was a proud one. Mary describes the endurance needed to pass basic training. They had trained and were running a several mile long run and after this run they completed an obstacle course. Her superiors consider the completion of this obstacle course as the passing of the guard; this is where they went from boys and girls to soldiers in the military.

Mary: Yah, we started off at the beginning of basic doing training runs. We did [runs of] three [miles], a five, and ten training runs. The last one was a 15 [mile] at the end of basic. We camped all week and then you went out and did this crazy stuff. Then they made you march this 15 [mile run], can't remember what they called it, but that's when you became a soldier. You had to do these obstacle courses; like doing an army crawl under these wires while they are shooting over your head. That was actually in March because they day we became soldiers was the day we attacked Iraq. So, that was kind of intense, to know this was real, this is really going to happen.

Mary discusses the reality of her experience and it demonstrates she did not just become a soldier the day she enlisted. The United States attacked Iraq during her basic training; this is what made her experience real and put a purpose behind what and why she was becoming a soldier. She pushed herself to complete a 15 mile training run and then completed obstacle courses as a test of her abilities. Basic training is a process of learning the traditions, meeting physical requirements, and testing to advance to the next level. Each woman talks about herself not as an individual, but a part of a team. They are shaped from teenagers to soldiers and I suggest this is the first part of a role person merge (Turner 1978;

Waskul 1998). All of these women learn to be a part of a team. They learn the role of soldiering, perfect this by advancing through the phases of basic training and then become a soldier.

Shifting ideas and Building Confidence about Yourself

The women interviewed discuss becoming soldiers during basic but not necessarily having the utmost confidence in their abilities. I suggest the next stage of their role person merge is these women beginning to see themselves as military personnel and have confidence in their abilities. The women describe ideas about themselves as changing throughout their career. Many interviewees describe being squeamish about their abilities at first but they then became more comfortable in their abilities to do the job of soldiering over time. Their expectations are underestimated at the beginning of their military careers. I suggest this changes as their ideas about themselves are shaped by their interactions with others and by learning the soldiering way.

With that said, the women interviewed report growing during their careers. They describe themselves as quite different from their enlistment to reintegration as a civilian after their military career. Many of the women credit the military directly with helping them grow into an adult or helping them grow into a respectable person. I find they strive for the role of the confident soldier and this helps them become a confident and respected woman. After they are broken down and built back up as a team, the women spoke about starting to grow as a person to become more confident in themselves all around. Brooklyn discusses this process and her experience of becoming a confident soldier and woman. She directly credits her military, especially her time in basic training with helping her gain confidence in herself and abilities.

Brooklyn: I guess it's really changed over time. Um, I feel like I'm actually a lot more confident, I feel like they broke you down a lot when you were at basic, but they build you up like the way they want you; to be like confident in yourself not cocky but confident. Like I'm still self-conscious about a lot of things but I feel they helped a lot. As weird as it is, because like I said, they said some horrible things and made me cry but overall, I felt really proud of myself for accomplishing something like that.

Brooklyn found a sense of pride in her abilities, the process she endured to become a soldier, and for what she was able to accomplish during her military career.

Not only did these women build confidence in themselves, many of the women grew into leadership roles and positions. Going into the military, these women report they weren't necessarily leaders but during deployments or tours of duty this shifted into leadership feelings or roles of leadership based on their increased level of confidence. Below, Sarah also talks about how she grew as a person and learns many new things while becoming a respected soldier. She too feels like she became a leader during her career and her leadership abilities play a part in who she is. She talks about the changes in herself while becoming a leader from not knowing anything about her military job to becoming a respected and good generator mechanic. She also discusses the progression through her career and her transition from soldiering to leading others adding more responsibility to her.

Sarah: like, I am capable of more than I think I am and even though I'm a pretty confident person, I'm not very self confident. And I didn't think I sold myself short, but I learned several times over I mean, um, I can do a lot of things. I'm very able and um, just by being challenged mentally, physically, you know and um, with being a generator mechanic and not knowing anything to becoming a good generator mechanic and um I mean, to the point, where you can find anything in my company who would say anything different. From being OK at PT [physical training] to rocking PT [physical training] and from you know, kind of having a shitty time to being ok with whatever happens, you know? So. I think that all came into play too is I became a leader, because it's a different dynamic, you're everyone's buddy and then you're in charge of people and you got to keep them in check. [I have to] make sure they mind their P and Qs [manners] and uphold the standard [of the military]; even though it's not going to be what they [soldiers under her] want to hear.

Her transition from a private to a sergeant leader allows her to grow and become a better team member and soldier. I suggest this transition is a pattern of how roles and abilities

shift in these women as they become confident soldiers. I suggest these women come into the military as teens and leave as confident women. Wendy says she “grew a lot as a person” and the “military bettered my life.” She credits the military with allowing her to grow as a person and as a member of society. Carrie also acknowledges the benefits of the military on her identity and states, “I think I really grew as a person. I was able to kind of re-gain my confidence, I lost 30 pounds, so that really helped and I was able to get the take charge attitude back in my life.” Carrie has similar experiences to the other women. All the women of this sample credit the military with helping them change their viewpoint of themselves. Most are quite surprised at the tasks they are able to perform and the things they can endure. I suggest as these women gain self-confidence, they also gain a take charge attitude which helps them move throughout their military career successfully. They become comfortable with themselves and therefore, are able to be comfortable with soldiering.

I suggest a role person merge (Turner 1978; Waskul 1998) has occurred at this point. My findings suggest the women sampled learn the role of a soldier and conform to this during their basic training; although, they are not perfect at the role right away, there is a period where they become more confident in their abilities. They also start to view themselves differently; the military changed the way these women are. They have taken on a new role, become the role and perfected the role by becoming self-confident and leaders in this new role. Often, I saw the interviewees wanting to go above and beyond the normal call of duty to show the advancement in their abilities. They see themselves as being able to do these difficult tasks and perform difficult jobs. These ideas about themselves shift into something new. They are soldiers and they are confident women in the military.

Military Role Becomes You

I find as the women sampled move throughout their military career they began to identify themselves as the roles they are performing. They are confident in themselves as soldiers but this now shifts into other aspects of their lives. The transition from person to soldier follows a pattern throughout the respondents. Here, Jane discusses being a Marine first in her life. She thinks being a Marine was instilled in her and she learns to be a Marine first and her other roles are secondary to this.

Jane: I mean, like in the Marine Corp, they teach you and I probably fully subscribe to this, like you're a marine first and then everything else. Like you're a Marine regardless of your personal needs. I didn't have like a husband at home or kids or anything else; like the Marine Corp was number one [to me]. But after I got out of the unit, the qualities they instilled in me I didn't have before, I carried with me.

Jane continues her discussion on how the qualities of being a Marine are instilled in her and even so after she left the Marine Corp. Her military role became a part of who she is. I find each woman interviewed began to feel the same way throughout their military career. Each has a point where they found themselves identifying who they are through their roles of the military. Carrie too believes the military has become a part of who she is. She goes to work now both on drill weekends and her current civilian position dressed to army standards; she performs tasks up to army standards and really tries to maintain her soldier role on a quite regular basis.

Carrie: Um, well, the army is all about image, you know, you need to have your hair a certain way, you need to wear your clothes a certain way, so in a way I think it does affect everything. Even when I go to work now, I want to make sure my uniform is not wrinkly; I know you match, and I never just throw my hair in a ponytail. I feel it's an image thing and I think that's kind of really been brought into me because of the military. You know, you need to look a certain way and have a certain standard. And it helps me to stay fit and so, you know the image, the fitness level, not only do I want to be fit for me, but I know I need to be fit for the army to stay in and be in compliance with the army.

Her goal is to remain in compliance with the army standards so she can continue to be a respected soldier. Her role as an army reservist has spilled and mixed into her role as a regular civilian. I suggest these women have a point where their military role becomes a part of their sense of self and thus completing a role person merge. They define themselves both inside and outside of the military by the standards, expectations, and viewpoints of their military roles.

The role person merge (Turner 1978; Waskul 1998) carries into other aspects of their military roles. I demonstrate the women of this sample set aside their prior lives to shift into the military role for the better of their team. Gretchen has to set aside personal viewpoints and expectations for the better of the group on a convoy mission. The following incident happened on her combat zone deployment. Gretchen had to use the bathroom on a convoy mission but the team was unsure if there were any danger threats in this area. She chose to use a wide mouth PowerAde bottle and went while the convoy was moving rather than risk the lives of the team and stopping. Her ability to set aside her personal feelings for the better of the team demonstrates her role as a soldier is primary to her role as a human. These instances become normal and an everyday part of her life during her combat missions. When asked how she feels, she speaks about it being uncomfortable but non-problematic; something she just has to do to get by. Instances like this became a normal part of her soldiering; she regularly set aside her personal feelings for the safety and betterment of the team she led.

I find these types of activity became a part of daily life in the combat deployed interviewees; their military roles are primary to their personal needs while on combat missions. I also find the military often doesn't have ways to accommodate women's needs during missions. There aren't humvies with bathrooms in them or other contraptions to make women feel more comfortable using a restroom while on a combat mission since there aren't restrooms for either gender but it is assumed that men are more comfortable going outside than women.

Instead, these women learn to adapt and put their position as a soldier and team member above their personal needs.

I suggest women in the military who have deployed to combat zones identify higher with the credentials of a role person merge (Turner 1978; Waskul 1998) as noted above; more so than women who have not deployed to combat zones. Some respondents did not completely demonstrate their military career becoming a part of who they were. In certain non-combat cases, the women felt their military career was more of a job than a lifestyle. As Wendy notes, "If I was I was actually out doing something compared to what I'm doing now [safe zone deployment in Kuwait], I might define myself as a soldier but for what I'm doing, it's just a damn job, besides I'm carrying a weapon I'll never use and carrying all my body armor which I will never use." Although Wendy is on a deployment it is not to a combat zone; she feels she is wasting time by not doing anything beneficial for the Army. I see a pattern in the non-combat zones respondents believing their military job is just a job not a lifestyle shift. They go to the base or hospital as scheduled but then would end their shift or workday and come home. They had set schedules. Brooklyn describes herself as a weekend warrior and she doesn't feel the military defines who she is now. She does describe a time frame when it did, after coming home from a short humanitarian mission to Belize.

Brooklyn: Well, I guess I don't know, I work full time so I guess I'm more, I don't really define myself as a soldier just because I'm a weekend warrior and you know, I don't feel like I've really fulfilled [military career expectations] now, I'm not really fulfilling anything, I'm about to get out so I guess I don't really define myself as [a soldier] anymore.

Q: Did you ever define yourself that way?

Brooklyn: I think so, when I first got back [from basic and AIT] and when I came back from Belize. Like hell yah, I'm in the military, I do shit! I don't know but that kind of died. I feel like it was a really good experience to be in but I wish I could have gotten to do more, like I feel like it was almost, not a waste of time but I feel like I wasted the army 's time by not actually going out and doing anything.

Brooklyn feels she let the military down and is wasting it's time because she was not on more deployments or combat deployments. Often, I find the women who have not deployed to combat zones have similar feelings. Natalie even describes her desire and excitement to be deployed so she can "piss in the pissing match." The pissing match to her was the soldiers who had been deployed to combat zones. Several of the women discuss their feelings about not being deployed in a negative way as if a deployment validated their status as a soldier.

Each respondent did speak about a time when they felt their military role was a part of them but it was more prominent in the women had been deployed to combat zones. I suggest this pattern is due to the time on active duty in a stressful and dangerous situation. I find similar instances in the combat soldiers and I believe this is due to the constant pressure of deployments in combat zones. The respondents have to use skills learned from pre-combat deployment training on a daily basis; thus perfecting their performance as soldiers and the role of an active duty combat soldier. This transition shapes who the combat soldiers are; their military role is practiced on a daily basis and becomes a more prominent part of their sense of self compared to non-combat soldiers.

The Military Stays with Them

I suggest after their discharge from the military they still take some sort of the traditions, standards, and expectations of the military with them back into the civilian world thus completing a full and permanent role person merge (Turner 1978). I demonstrate their soldiering roles becoming a part of who they are while they are in the military. The day to day routines, combat action, and non combat action become normal for them during their time in the military. I then find these routines, traditions, and expectations become a part of who they are when they return back to the civilian world.

As the women of this sample transition out of the military and return home they found themselves still holding on to some of the traditions, routines, and aspects of their military role. Lola still follows military time, writes the date like they do in the military and still sheds a tear when the “Star Spangled Banner” is played. Jane continues to work in a field with veterans and feels she is able to talk daily about her experiences. She also thinks she is drawn to fellow soldiers and soldering type people in her social circle so she can continue to listen and be updated about military practices. Sarah is able to watch and understand war movies now and enjoys them; something she didn’t want anything to do with prior to enlistment. Other respondents like Gretchen, Heidi, Andie, Natalie, Carrie, and Brooklyn all describe the relationships they have due to the military and feel their level of discipline and level of physical fitness is directly related to their experiences as a soldier. Heidi directly relates her current career choice stemming from her time in the military. She thought she wanted to be a nurse but had an experience watching a fellow soldier die and didn’t want to follow that career path. She was in leadership role in the military and supervised soldiers. This experience made her realize she wants to teach and she pursued her education for this. Every day she teaches and she feels a part of her military career comes out in her organization and preparation for her students.

Carrie, Wendy, and Brooklyn are finishing up the end of their careers in the military. All are looking to get out at the end of their contracts. All three have careers outside the military since they are in the National Guards or Army Reserves and their only requirements are one weekend a month, two weeks a year. Although they still have to shift into military role on a regular basis, all talk about ways the military has stayed with them outside of these weekend commitments. Brooklyn is the youngest respondent and is in the last few months of her enlistment. Brooklyn describes her viewpoints on what she has taken away from the military and how it is still with her.

Brooklyn: Yah, I guess there is like phrases and stuff like I've taken from it. Definitely the discipline I've taken from it. I guess the giving respect to get respect is something I definitely learned from the military because it's something I feel is discussed a lot. And I feel like that's something I use in my management skills now. That is what my major was after I did the dental stuff. But, I don't know, I think my leadership skills I've learned through the military will always be a part of me now. I don't know, now I feel like Physical fitness is a lot more important than I did before.

Brooklyn credits the military for making her a better manager and learning tasks such as giving respect to receive respect. She also credits the military's physical fitness standards for her desire to hold herself to better physical fitness. She hopes to continue these tasks and learned practices into her career. Carrie is also still enlisted and is trying to get out due to some family problems. Her status as a single parent makes it difficult to handle the uncertainty of the military. Here, she describes her upcoming transition out of the military and what aspects of the military she will take with her because of this.

Carrie: I'm still in as of right now, I'm trying to get out due to family circumstances and stuff like that, and I don't want to go through another deployment and leave my kids. It was just too hard on them. The military is always going to be with me. My experience is going to be with me, my training is going to be with me. Obviously, I'm an x-ray tech and I know I got training through the military and I appreciate that because I never had any college debt or anything like that. I got paid to go to school and not a lot of people can say that.

Carrie has a greater appreciation for the military and the opportunities it brought her. She will always remember her experiences and training. This has become a part of who she is for the rest of her life.

Wendy was the only respondent interviewed who is still currently on deployment. She spoke about integrating her military experiences into her conception of self. Currently, she feels she will not keep the traditions and standards of the military but she does feel her love of weaponry comes from the military. She reports, "Ok, take it back, my weapons, I never was into weapons before, never, and now I'm a damn armorer. I have no problem taking weapons apart and putting them back together, I have, like this stupid little 22 [pistol], I would have never

been interested in before and now I want it.” Andie also credits the military with her desire for structure. Here, she talks about how the military is still with her in the daily life by keeping busy and as she sets up her travel plans. The plans are structured, researched, and fun and she feels this is due to the military structure.

Andie: Um, that is, I was just going to say the structure, like I think that is my base. Like, I have to be doing something like all the time, just like our trips. I mean I line them up, I do research, create a nice itinerary. I think came from the military. It’s kind of hard to think about but overall I think the way I like to be structured and prompt comes from that [military].

Andie describes tactics she still incorporates into her daily life due to the military.

Mary shows the military is still with her in her ability to relate to other veterans. She now enjoys meeting other veterans and telling war stories. Every respondent spoke about how they are proud of their service and how this will always be with them for the rest of their lives. I find that some portion of their training, experiences, or lifestyle shift stays with them outside of their career. While many discussed physical benefits and strengthening of character, not everything that stays with them is positive. Natalie struggles with her military identity and tries to wash some of this out; although she does describe her expectations of others and herself and credits these expectations to her time in the military.

Natalie: The attitude of expecting people to pay attention to detail, expecting people to be respectful, expecting people to move with a purpose and that is still in me. I find myself getting very irritated, [saying to others] do not drive like an asshole, do not drive slow, do not walk slow, do not all these things.

Natalie describes some of her frustrations with other people once she returned home. I also find often these women struggle to handle civilians right after returning from combat zones and some even just returning from training. They were in an environment which was very structured, hierarchical, and demanding and once back into the civilian world they didn’t know or have the patience to handle others, especially civilians. I find many struggled during their employment because they held their coworkers to military standards and would get upset when

coworkers couldn't measure up. Below, I explain Gretchen's (a combat area soldier) experiences returning home and going back to work. She found civilians did not respond to her the same way the soldiers she led did. Her job stateside was for a corporate department store. Her position is in management and she talks about needing empathy and learning this since the military does not teach it. She had to learn how to work with civilians again because she her hard-nose approach did not work with civilians.

Gretchen: So, I managed a team there [Corporate Department store] and I was like I got this management thing down, I'm good; totally different! You have to have empathy which is not something you need to have in the military. Like, I give you an order, carry it out. It's not like that in the real world; you have to relate well to others so that was really hard for me too.

This demonstrates the military role was still with her, so much so she had to learn a new emotion, empathy to be able to transition into a civilian role again. Carrie, along with several other interviewees, has high expectations for the people she works with. . Carrie reports she follows her chain of command and expects others do the same. She is frustrated by coworkers who do not do this or expect to have special privileges before there are earned. She expects to be respected because she has earned her special privileges due to her 12 years on the job.

I find a pattern suggesting these soldiers merge their military identity with their lives outside of the military once they return home. I demonstrate above the military stays with these women after their military career has ended. Each woman describes her process and transition from civilian to soldier and perfecting this role, back to civilian, and their realization that soldiering is still with them even after they have left their military posts. In this paper, I suggest these women go through a transition from young adults, to soldiers, and then suggest a part of their soldiering stays with them. These women start this merge in basic training where they are broken down and stripped of their previous beliefs and attitudes; they are then built back up as soldiers. Their experiences while becoming soldiers allowed them to gain

confidence in themselves as soldiers and as women of the military. This role is carried through to deployments and tours of duty. The combat deployed women feel a stronger connection to the military than non combat women. Regardless of combat status, these women started feeling like soldiers and gained self confidence in their abilities as soldiers, so much so that soldiering merges with their sense of self. Their military roles become who they are and this stays with them after their discharge from the military. Each person took something away from the military; whether it was keeping military time, having high expectations of others or their free time activities, each person's role merged and reshaped these women's sense of self. I suggest this cycle and transition through stages has the qualities of Turner (1978) and Waskul's (1998) role person merge and should be labeled as such. I do suggest a difference as it appears the combat deployed and the non combat deployed women of this sample have a permanent role person merge and state the desire to continue this merge for the rest of their lives. This is different than Waskul's (1998) study of camp counselors and their temporary role person merge.

Chapter Six

Emotion Management

In this chapter, I explain the coping mechanisms these soldiers implement during their time in the military. Starting the first day of basic training, they learn to use coping skills to get through the performance expectations of the military. I suggest they compartmentalize and suppress their feelings and discuss the top ways they manage their emotions. These are: using their family, turning to other soldiers, physical fitness, letting feelings out, religion, isolation, and not dealing with or “stuffing” their feelings. I demonstrate these coping skills developing and how they are used throughout their military careers.

Often the women spoke about wanting to stay under the radar, to not be noticed. As Natalie puts it, “It was constantly the thought, just fly under the radar, prove yourself and don’t let yourself be under the spotlight.” Not just Natalie but several of the women did not want to be noticed, they wanted to just get by. The women I interviewed make it through difficult times by implementing some forms of coping so they could just get by. They see horrific things and are put through mentally and physically exhaustive days. In this research, I explored the tactics they apply to their situation to make it through difficult times and what that means. I suggest each woman had several different ways to cope with the situations they faced.

I demonstrate in an earlier chapter the women are stripped of their prior life identity which is quite emotional. They must find ways to show they are capable soldiers and managing emotions is at the forefront. Each soldier describes specific ways they were able to cope with their emotions during the breaking down phase or at various points throughout their military

careers. I now explain the coping mechanisms most popular for these women to implement and then I give a few combat stories to show their emotion management skills at work.

Emotion Management Strategies: Physical Fitness

Many of my respondents mentioned that when they were stressed or overwhelmed they would go to the gym or do some sort of physical exercise. Deployed soldiers implemented a little different of type of coping skills than other soldiers. It appears they often use physical fitness as a coping mechanisms and something to do to pass the time. Each deployed soldier said they spent time in the gym on their base daily, above and beyond their normal PT routine. When you are away from your family and friends in Iraq or Afghanistan, it can become lonely. These soldiers report going to the gym on the base as a way to get away from their stress. Many of these women discuss their physical body shape being in the best condition on deployment because they spent hours in the gym. As Sarah notes, her daily routine not only includes morning PT with the group and then working, but then she would still go to the gym again later in the day. "We'd have PT in morning, get ready for day, go to motor pool, do whatever I had to do, and uh, get back and go to the gym." Other respondents like Heidi, Andie, and Mary all speak of similar routines. Although Andie was not deployed during her career, she did speak about how she would pass the time on drill weekends by working out. The deployed to combat zone soldiers all participated in some sort of team sports activity as well. Many participated in volleyball, basketball, and other team sports so they were always finding ways to do some sort of physical fitness. As Mary states, "We played basketball and we had a softball league over there. We had a little volleyball court in front of our building. A couple of us started a basketball league so that's what we would do in our free time." She shows the importance of physical fitness to pass the time and staying active was a large part of why she was able to make it through her deployment. Gretchen talks below how she would

help Natalie during their deployment together work out because it was something they could do together and it passed the time.

Gretchen: [I did] Lots of physical fitness, one things the army is good for, is you're going to have multiple gyms on each base, so, my friend, Natalie, she was a little heavier set and really just wanted to get her PT scores up, so we worked together because I was really into stuff. So we worked together, we just really PT'd all the time, we would get up in the morning and run, and after the work day, the gym was right next to the building we worked in so we would go work out then, literally, it was 6 days a week, we were like hitting it really hard, there wasn't a whole lot else to do.

As these respondents show, being away from family and friends in the middle of a desert left limited opportunities for activities. They tried to make the best of the situation by exercising. Often, the women spoke about having long days or bad days and using the gym as a means to work out their frustrations and anger. Heidi states, "After a long day I would go work out, it helped get my stress out." Andie even credits her military career for the reasons she is in such good shape now; she uses exercise as a de-stressor, both now and back when she was enlisted. However, some women on deployments started feeling unsafe and would avoid the gym after a period of time. Wendy and Natalie no longer go to the gym at the ends of their deployments because of unsafe feelings. Natalie was being sexually harassed and Wendy is suffering from some deployment depression and doesn't feel up to going to the gym any longer.

My findings suggest several women, not just those on deployment, use physical fitness as a coping mechanism for military stress and loneliness. It was much more prominent in those women deployed to combat zones, but several other women talk about using the gym as a means to de-stress and pass the time.

Emotion Management Strategies: Turning to Family, Friends, and Home Life

I find another way respondents manage their emotions is to turn to their family, friends, or home life during difficult or stressful times would crave family or friend contact. They would

call, write, Skype, or go through pictures of family and friends to get themselves through stressful times. Regardless of deployment status, these soldiers relied on the comforts of family. Every soldier interviewed turned to her family and home life to help them through difficult times and for support at some point in her military career. Below Jane talks about how she turned to her family when she was in boot camp and stationed in California to make it through stressful times.

Jane: Well, I talked to my family, once I got a cell phone I talked to my family quite a bit. But even before cell phone, I had a phone in my barracks, I would talk to my mom and grandma quite a bit, and you know my grandpa and they would give me good advice on how to like handle the stress, like, I'm doing a stressful job and there's no getting out of it, you know, you can suck it up and go through it, but I relied pretty heavily on them.

Thankfully, technology caught up with Jane and she was able to contact her family in Wisconsin regularly when she was stationed in California. She states she relied pretty heavily on family to make it through the stress of her military career. Several women without the luxury of a cell phone while stationed discuss the struggle to have enough time during the 15 minute phone call at basic training to call home. Often phone cards would take 5 minutes to load and they would only end up having a few minutes, if the person answered to talk at all. This could be very emotional for these women; Sarah, Lola, and Brooklyn discuss instances where no one answered at home and their feelings of devastation when they couldn't have familial contact. My findings suggest having home sickness or missing family and friends was quite prominent in basic training and deployments. As Brooklyn describes her home sickness, she discusses how having reminders of home, family, and friends allowed her to push through her feelings. Brooklyn's friend sent her pictures of friends back home holding message boards and how this was very helpful in coping during her time in basic and AIT.

Brooklyn: My friend Shelly from high school, I gave her my camera and she took pictures and developed them and sent them to me so I could see everybody, so it was really nice. So I don't know, definitely helped a lot, to be able to see people, you know, they'd like, she would have people hold signs saying a message to me and was really sweet so I knew they were legit thinking of me. She wasn't just taking pictures at a

party and sending my way, like people were actually thinking about me. That was awesome, definitely helpful.

Brooklyn demonstrates having familiar home life support was important to her. The first few weeks of basic training are quite difficult as these women adjust to being broken down. These women are often faced with new challenges they need to fight through. Family has been a big part of this. As Gretchen describes the grueling experience of basic training but being able to turn to her brother and also a military person she was able to persevere through difficult times.

Gretchen: I remember thinking before I realized, before I probably called home crying to my brother, it was just horrible all the time, I thought, I signed up for this for six, no eight years. Like, this is going to suck like this all the time, I was super naïve. My brother was like, ok, it's just a game, so I think once he kind of told me, I was like, ok, it wasn't such a culture shock.

Like Gretchen and Brooklyn, several of the women turn to family and friends to get them through the struggles of basic training, being broken down, and being away from family. Lola discusses the ease she feels in leaving and going away from Minnesota, to Las Vegas, Nevada because her sister in law is already stationed there with her nephew. Lola finds comfort in this and also in the fact her husband will be joining her and they will see each other for the first time in years. Here she talks about moving down to Las Vegas and that the location change is much easier for her because she will have family there.

Lola: It was I think it was ok because my sister in law and nephews were down there at the time. Yah, so I wasn't as nervous to move down there because I didn't know anybody or the area but luckily they were there to kind of, because we stayed there for like a good year before we got our own house. Luckily they were there to kind of acclimate us to the area.

She finds comfort in family here and her anxiety about going down to a new area is lessened as she stayed with family and had family to support her as she hasn't seen her husband much and is preparing to move to a new area and live with her spouse for the first time. As Lola states, "I think it gets easy if you have family and friends around." The women

of this sample show their family support as strengths; they find the comforts of home and family life are what allow them to feel security when they are away from home. Most of the women involved are single during the time of basic training and do not have any dependents. Four of these women got married through their military career. Having dependents brought in new challenges and changes for a few of the women as their military career expands. Wendy was a parent prior to enlisting in the military and Carrie became a parent during her military career. Having children and being in the military is completely different for them. Carrie explained when women get pregnant they have the opportunity to leave the military, no questions asked. They can also chose to stay in, but this choice requires them to fill out a packet of information on dependent care giving. Each and every soldier can be deployed, regardless of children at home.

Carrie faced an even more difficult time. She got orders to deploy when her husband was deployed. They would have to implement their packet and find other caregivers for their two children. I suggest deploying with children is the most difficult thing for the two women of this sample who have children. Wendy is currently deployed to Kuwait and has left behind her daughter. Our interview took place when she was home on 15 day leave and she had been gone for six months. She discusses leaving her daughter during basic and needing to see a chaplain to get special permission to talk to her daughter; this was how she coped with basic training. Wendy explains, "I broke down and I wanted to go talk to the chaplain so I could take the time because you never knew how long you had or where she was. I wanted to talk to the Chaplain and I explained it to my drill sergeant and he let me sit down and talk to Jessie [her daughter] for the time I needed." She also describes what it has been like on her deployment and now her 15 day leave. Wendy has a difficult time leaving her daughter behind to be raised by Jessie's father; Jessie has grown and Wendy feels like she has missed out on so much of her life. I asked her about leaving her daughter and what she is doing to get through this time

away from her. She describes her daughter as the coping skill during this deployment and how her perspectives have changed so she doesn't miss out on things in the future.

Wendy: I think about her all the time. It keeps me going knowing that it's one day less that I get to see her. But, I know I'm missing so much. At the same time, it kind of scares me, with my mom dying at 7, I grew up fast and I don't want her to do the same thing and that's another reason why I'm not doing this again, I'm not going to make her do this again. And I see that too, and it scares me already.

Wendy describes her daughter as a coping mechanism to make the wait to come home easier. She looks forward and counts down the days until she is back home with her fiancé and daughter. Wendy values her family much more than she ever did prior to this deployment. She is in a safe zone and has limited worries about being attacked by enemy forces but still realizes she cannot put her family and child through another deployment. She is looking to leave the military as soon as she can so she can get back to normal life.

A nice part of this coping mechanism is technological developments that have allowed many men and women to keep in touch with their family in recent years. Wendy Skypes with her fiancée every day to keep in touch with him; they are planning their wedding together through this video contact. Carrie also discusses using technology as a way to keep in touch with family. She mentioned that a fellow soldier got to see the birth of his child when home on leave and everyone has been watching this child grow up on Skype. She too feels the most difficult part of her combat deployments was missing her family and being away from them while they grow up. She also states this is what got her through; she would turn to her family using technology to keep in touch.

Carrie: It's like the whole world should work like I think [Skype, email, and social networking] and um, but you know, the hardest part is being away from the family, you know, um, having to deal with not seeing your kids, you know, missing this, missing . And 's for everybody, we had one guy during our four day leave um, he went up, they induced his wife, he got to see his son be born, and he left the next day. Yah, so poor little guy, we are all watching Chris grow up on Skype to include him [her fellow soldier, the dad]. So, that was just unfortunately a part of it, at least they were able to induce so

he could see his little guy being born but there are a lot of them over there didn't get to see the birth of their child and he went home right after .

As Carrie points out this soldier was lucky to see his son being born; often many soldiers miss out on the birth of their children due to deployments. Her children were born prior to deployment and she felt leaving her children behind was hard but looking forward to seeing them again was what made it easier to cope. Many of the soldiers who had deployed in recent years discussed the technology of Skype and how this was beneficial in keeping touch with family, friends, and loved ones.

The women who went through basic earlier or were deployed earlier did not have use of this technology. As Heidi pointed out, email was just coming about when she was enlisting, and although she had an email address she didn't use it and still wrote home. Every woman spoke about writing home during basic and deployments as a way to cope. Some women now laugh at the letters they wrote, as Brooklyn points out, "All my letters were like please get me out of here like please call my recruiter and tell him I need to leave and do whatever you can... you don't know the kind of crap they are doing to me like get me out, do whatever you can to pull strings!"

Mary had similar stories of writing home. She reports being embarrassed by what she wrote due to her exhaustion this created poor grammar and she couldn't write within the lines. She now looks back and laughs at the letters she wrote. However, she did use letter writing during her deployments as a coping skill. She wrote home about some of the scary and dangerous incidents just to be able to process through them. I find that all of my deployed respondents who were stationed in in combat zones utilized writing as way for them to process what they were seeing. They described dangerous situations, scary situations, or simply wrote about what they were feeling. Sometimes they would mail these letters to family, sometimes

they would write about them in a private journal. Natalie wrote poems as a way to get her feelings on paper about her deployment and the sexual harassment she faced.

Overall, each soldier interviewed turned to their family for support. Some of these women faced very difficult situations. One of the most prominent ways these women coped was to turn to their home life, their family and friends. They would call, write, Skype, or email family and friends back home to keep in touch and keep their wits about them. The women who have children turned to their children and other parents, like Carrie did, to help them cope with the devastation of being away from their home. The children became their motivation, their tool implemented to keep them going while they were on deployment. My findings demonstrate family is a powerful tool and technology has helped soldiers stay connected with family so they can cope with the stressors of military life.

Emotion Management Strategies: Trying to Detach, Compartmentalize, or Ignore

Feelings

I find the women in this sample not only believe they have to exceed their best and demonstrate to the men they can pull their weight but they need to suppress their emotions during this process. Each interviewee reports that showing emotions like crying is a sign of weakness in the military and thus something they wanted to avoid in front of superiors and male soldiers. I find there is also an expectation that women need to “man up” their emotions just like they “man up” for the military. These women were taunted for crying or showing any sign of weakness. I report above that masculinity was associated with the idea of a model soldier. Not only did these women need to show they are capable soldiers by holding themselves to higher standards but they needed to conduct themselves in ways men would to be viewed favorably and as real or model soldiers. Gretchen describes how she didn't take

“bullshit” from anyone, set high standards for herself and others, and did not give other soldiers reason to think she was an emotional soldier or “shit bag” soldier.

Gretchen: Just really high standards for myself and others, um you know, I really tried to act out what I always wanted and thought the military should be, um, you know I was respected because of it, You know, I really didn't take bullshit, I worked really hard and I never, ever gave anybody a reason to think I was full of kind of emotion bagged soldier or kind of a shit bag soldier.

She describes her implementation of what she thought the military should be and how a soldier should act and this meant limiting her emotion displays. Gretchen and several others show pushing themselves, acting and using masculine language, and suppressing their emotions defines them as a good soldier.

I find that the women of this sample try to detach, compartmentalize, or ignore/set aside feelings to move through their military career and especially during combat deployments. They shift their feelings to the back of their mind to not show signs of weakness or being distraught. Showing no emotion became an expectation for these women; they needed to show they were strong to gain respect from others. I find a pattern in all women of this sample illustrating stuffing or blocking emotion is the only way to be successful and respected in their military career. I show earlier women who do not perform to the same performance expectations of men are considered weak so these women do whatever they can to not show emotions. Sarah describes how she prepared for basic training; she knew she would be yelled at but she found humor in the way drill sergeants reacted to young recruits. Her task was to stuff her emotions and try not to laugh or smile at the drill sergeants yelling at them.

Sarah: Like my feelings didn't get hurt because you go to basic training, you're going to get yelled at, you're going to get screamed at. They're [drill sergeants] going to get in your face at a certain time and for me my struggle was not to smile or laugh. It seemed like they [drill sergeants] were mentally unstable people who just got pissed in a drop of a hat for no reason and it was kind of, it got comical after a while, you get thicker skin and it doesn't really matter.

Sarah describes how she got “thicker skin” because she acclimated to being yelled at. In this instance, her feelings were not hurt because she was able to put up the wall of thicker skin and get on with her training. Several of the women describe getting thicker skin or having a “suck it up” mentality. Another example of learning to compartmentalize emotions is explained by Mary’s story. Right away at basic training, Mary is yelled and screamed at by a female drill sergeant and told relying on a man is not the way to go in the military. Mary believes she needs to be self-sufficient, powerful, and domineering to get any respect in the military. She talks below about her first few days in boot camp and what she is taught about relying on men in the military to get by. She also talks about stuffing her feelings so she doesn’t show a different sign of weakness.

Mary: So we dumped it all out and inventory it, and they told us to button back up and I could not get it, so after we get it, we got it all in there and I’m sure they made us to pushups and stuff too, and you don’t have any idea, you know a few people and um, I just remember the guy next to me was helping me, he was squeezing my bag so I could hook it, and this black female drill sergeant came up to me and said, what the fuck do you think you’re doing private, do you think you have to have a man help you in this world. And I’m like oh my gosh! And she was like, I hope you’re not in my platoon and I’m trying not to cry.

Mary quickly learns relying on men and showing emotions was not acceptable for a woman in the military. Both Gretchen and Mary learn to suppress their emotions, or do what Hochschild (1979) would call “surface acting” which entails painting on an emotion on the surface to eliminate showing their true emotion underneath so they can focus on being a good soldier. I find similar instances in the other women which suggest conforming to the military standards is also conforming to the ways men would act in the military. There are several more instances of the women in this sample needing to “surface act” in order to make in through their days as soldiers.

I find that if they want to avoid being reprimanded they learn quickly to set aside their feelings to meet the social norms of emotion display and try to feel the way the social norms tell

them to feel, Hochschild (1979) calls this display and feeling rules. I believe in my interviewees this carried throughout military careers. Many women talked about their ability to brush things off easily as it became the socially acceptable way to do things. Below, Jane describes the process where she learned to set aside feelings based on the social norms of her military career. She is able to compartmentalize her feelings and keep going onto the next task. She acknowledges things are difficult but notes the expectation to cope and if you cannot, it is that person's responsibility to go and find help in the coping process.

Jane: oh, yah, I mean, I don't remember what it was like before [her time in the military] but like, you know, having spent time in the military kind of gives you the suck it up mentality. Not for all things, but you know, some things are difficult; there's no getting around it but you just have to keep going. Like, I don't know if I can describe how that happened or came about but you know, you have to cope with [incident], and if you can't, then you need to go find someone who can help you cope with it.

Jane describes a pattern similar in several of women in this sample; patterns where they block emotions, compartmentalize, or detach from their emotions. Like Jane, Andie learns to block things out. She is describing her struggles with emotions during basic training. She would cry in her bunk at night because she missed home, but during the day "I don't know. I mean, I blocked it out, I blocked it out then." Here we see again showing an emotion in front of others during day hours is not looked upon as respectable.

Another time where showing emotions was not acceptable was during combat missions. These women feel it is not appropriate for women during combat missions to be crying and so the women deployed, who are obviously scared due to the circumstances, are not allowed to let their feelings out. Some stuff these feelings inside, some joke about the circumstances, and some used other ways to get through. Mary has dangerous combat experiences. She spoke about danger on each mission driving convoys, and often about IED's blowing up prematurely, or hitting a truck close by, or killing her fellow soldiers. This is obviously something horrific and stressful. She was in a high alert mode daily for most of her

deployment. Below she talks about the beginning of her deployment and how they faced enemies in the area and how she was very scared.

Mary: So, we're like, ok. So, we get in the truck and there are three of us and I'm manning a saw [assault rifle] out the window, like it's an automated weapon. So like it's a 249, they call it so it just like feeds it, so if you hold it [trigger], it will just like shoot and shoots and shoots. So I'm holding it out the window and I'm thinking if anything moves I'm going to shoot it because I'm so trigger happy. We called it the pucker factor, like where you get scared and your butthole puckers, that's what it was known as.

Mary calls her bodies' response to danger "the pucker factor" in a joking manner. Here, she can't let her feelings out, she is on high alert and ready to shoot anything that moves, but she can't show her emotions as it would show her as inept and unable to do the job of a soldier. Her body responds to her heightened sense of fear, but she is not able to do anything about it.

Also, during Mary's deployment in Iraq, she was on a convoy delivering items to a town several kilometers away. During the trip, a sniper fired at their vehicle and hit right at her eye level in an armored vehicle. She was not hit as the armor saved her life. She talks about how she deals with this situation in a much calmer way than an average person does.

Mary: I don't know, we didn't really say anything, I don't think we told anybody, like oh my God, that had to have been a sniper but there was nothing we could do and we were going 55 [mph] and through the town and we didn't see him so we wouldn't have done anything so, it was just kind of like hmm, whatever.

She closes this statement with a "whatever," showing this incident was minimal for her. Yes, she is thankful to be alive but living in danger is a part of her job and this became normal for her. This demonstrates she has learned throughout her career difficult situations arise and you can't over-react to them. Since there was nothing that could be done about it, they just went on with their mission and she compartmentalized her feelings and did not tell anyone afterwards.

Sarah also discusses combat and the mortar bombs hitting her base. At the beginning of her deployment, she would take cover during every bombing, but by the end of her deployment, she was able to name the type of bomb and would just keep walking to her destination. Warfare, bombings and sniper shootings became normal to them. Explosions happened all the time; these women acclimated to combat zones quickly. Below, she discusses the combat which happened on her base. She too had gotten used to being bombed and mortared and sometimes wouldn't hit the deck or take cover anymore. The soldiers she remembers did not take cover when the alarms went off and lost their lives in the line of duty.

Sarah: You, and but the people on patrol, and stuff, they're the ones came into contact with small arms fire, being shot at it, having at RPG, rocket propelled grenade. But I personally never experienced, but my last tour, we lost three guys and they're all under the age of 30, one was 27, one 23, on 19. Um, July, 16, I believe it was. One had just gotten back from leave and they didn't uh, they didn't hit the dirt when the alarms went off. And the rest is history.

I find it interesting that Sarah and Mary are able to compartmentalize their feelings about the danger of their situations. Several of the combat deployed soldiers report mortar attacks becoming normal to them and many would just go about their day without following the response guidelines. And as Sarah points out, these men did that exact same thing, but they were not lucky enough to walk away from this attack.

Since my respondents do not feel they are able to display their emotions in front of other soldiers, they must compartmentalize them. Heidi has an experience where she walks into a hospital during the beginning of her deployment and watches a soldier take his last breaths after a road side bomb blew up and severely injured him. She describes this incident affecting her but she does not want to show emotions in front of the other soldiers watching. She actually is reminded by another it would be acceptable to show emotion; she declines to do so in front of these soldiers. Heidi was able to detach from her feelings in this incident.

Natalie also has a similar experience with witnessing a death. The suicide she walked in on really did affect her but as she describes, she does not want to let others know it affected her. She is able to detach from her feelings and let these instances go from the front of her mind. She fears showing emotion about the incident in front of superiors for fear it would place her on suicide watch or being recycled which meant she would have to complete basic over the following year.

Natalie: They offered for us to talk to us but this is probably my first experience with detaching, but if I got held back from starting basic much more than a week or 2 longer, I wouldn't be able to be back in time for high school. Which meant they would send me back and I would have to do it again next year and I would be damned if that was going to happen! Like I would not go back to my high school and say like hi, I ended freaking out from a suicide and didn't complete [basic training]! No, that was absolutely not an option no, I was fine.

Q: So you like brushed it off and kept going?

Natalie: Yep, and by the end of the summer, to be honest, I had forgotten it had happened. I was just glad it wasn't me.

Natalie describes her detachment from her feelings and her ability to stuff, block, and shift of her feelings to be able to move forward through her basic training. She later goes on to describe how the military affected her coping skills throughout her military career. She learned to cope exactly how the military wanted her to. Like above, she was able to shut off and stuff her feelings for the right amount of time needed. She didn't want to let feelings out so she withdrew to deal with things on her own. Natalie reveals she cannot trust others with her feelings and only felt she could be the one to deal with her feelings.

Natalie: God, I think it taught me how to cope exactly how the military needed me to for exactly the amount of time and it combusted right at the end of my contract. So, I shut off and withdrew and dealt with everything myself unless I absolutely had to because of someone else's wellbeing to go outside of myself for help and that has not served me well. Many of my friendships have fallen apart in the last four years because I won't be vulnerable.

Natalie describes her distrust with others and the process she went through to deal with emotions. She would help others if she had to but this left her as she would be “vulnerable.” This vulnerability she believes will label her as weak. I find patterns in which women do not want to be seen as vulnerable; they want to be seen as strong and respectable. They do this by compartmentalizing their feelings and shifting into a different mode, I suggest it is going into a military mode where they act and behave in a way their military partners would expect and not display emotions. Scannell-Desch and Doherty (2009) also find this to be the case in military nurses. Nurses are able to shift into a job mode so they can deal with difficult, horrific, and stressful situations. They are also able to transition into a job mode. This transition into a military mode allows these women to perform the tasks of the military and their job. They are able to set aside their personal feelings at that time so they can still maintain some sort of self-respect and persevere through the difficult moment.

Emotion Management Strategy: Letting Your Feelings Out

At some point in each of the interviewee’s military careers they reached some sort of a breaking point and had to let their feelings out. I find there comes a point where the women interviewed could not compartmentalize, detach, ignore, or stuff their feelings any longer. They are able to perform when needed to but eventually, my interviewees had to let their feelings out and this was an emotion management strategy for them. Many of the women sampled report feeling better after letting their feelings out. Some of the struggle was due to homesickness; some of this was due to dangerous and scary situations, and some just being stressed out from the pressure of conforming to military standards. These women often struggle to deal with their emotions. They are forced to conform to military standards where showing emotions is a sign of weakness. Above, I discuss how these women stuff or ignore their emotions. I also find a pattern demonstrating these women can only stuff feelings for so

long or try to use other coping mechanisms but at some point and each soldier reaches a point where feelings just have to come out.

The soldiers of this sample would still try to stuff their feelings as they were not the ones who were having crying breakdowns in front of everyone. These soldiers would cry themselves to sleep at times or cry in private areas. Showing emotion in front of other soldiers, again, labels you as weak. These women exhaust all other possibilities and then let their feelings out in a private area. I find they all fear embarrassment in front of peers and superiors if they break down in a public setting. Lola describes her first few weeks of basic training and how she cried on the phone to her family member; phone areas are private and away from superiors. She was stressed and couldn't get in touch with her mother to give her the current address of basic training.

Lola: I remember when, I think the second week I was there they let you call home to give them your address there and I remember calling my mom and she didn't answer the phone and I told her [before she left], if you get an unknown number you need to pick it up because it's probably me and she didn't answer so I had to call Chase's [her now husband] mom and I was like, can you please? And I was crying and I was like can you please call my mom and give her my address so [she can write me]?

Lola's expression of emotion is in a private setting and she specifically was letting out her frustrations and fear about not being able to connect with her family. Mary also describes calling home during basic training and "bawling" to her family to let her feelings out. She was regretting her decision to join and was scared about the expectations she faced. She chose to contact family and cry during these times and did not cry in front of superiors or male soldiers. I find these women calculate when the time was right to let themselves show emotion. Each had specific criteria before their crying spells to justify their acts. Often during boot camp it was being homesick or being yelled at too much by a drill sergeant.

Sometimes these women had other emotional break downs. Wendy describes her break downs on Skype to her fiancé Sean but she still feels the need to hold emotions inside

and is now using medication to help manage her emotions. Her tasks in Kuwait included sitting in a guard tower by herself for long hours. She also is a loner and is not able to reach out to others so she was spending her days by herself and began to feel alone, scared, and was having severe anxiety due to this. She felt like she was going crazy sitting in these towers thinking about the “what if’s” and “what next’s”. She describes her experiences with letting her emotions out and what caused her to finally break down.

Wendy: I’m in my little cave by myself. I mean I’ve broken down a couple times to Sean over Skype but otherwise, that’s it. It’s hurting me in the long run; they put me on Prozac now, because I started having panic attacks in the towers.

Q: What made you break down finally?

Wendy: Six days straight sitting in the tower staring at sand by yourself. That would make anybody go nuts. It got really bad the fifth day, I was sitting in the tower, and I freaked out. I couldn’t sit in tower anymore, I had to literally leave the tower, I couldn’t do it anymore, I felt claustrophobic. Everything about my uniform bothered me, it was too tight, everything was wrong and I couldn’t do it anymore. Its eight hours to think of anything you want in the world. You get off of work, you can go workout at the gym or go to the movie tent, but half the time its shitty movies and really, you’re depressed, why do you want to go to the gym? So it’s another how many hours to think before you finally fall asleep and start it all over again.

Wendy was no longer able to cope; she had to actually leave the tower due to panic attacks. Panic attacks are extremely difficult to work through and extremely scary for the person. With help from medications, Wendy is able to push through her emotions and cope with the solitude of guard duty. The military has also made changes so soldiers are now on duty with another soldier and rotate more frequently. Again, she did not let her feelings go until she was in a private setting. She was by herself, alone to her own devices and this is when her panic attacks happen. Thankfully, she was able to obtain the help she needed to manage her body’s response to her military mission and job.

Sometimes our body responds to danger in ways we don’t expect. Carrie shifts into her military job mode to deal with the danger of her combat missions. She was also apt to

manage her emotions using her religion and praying. This instance describes her inability to control her body's response to danger and what she does with it. She is able to manage her outward emotions and not break down, but describes being scared. Her job as a medic means others often protect her because if the medic is injured then no one can be treated. Carrie describes a day in Iraq on a convoy and her fear performing the tasks of her combat training.

Carrie: I remember there were times I went outside and we had our vehicle break down and it started on fire in the middle of Tampa [Iraq]. Tampa is like Interstate 90 or Interstate 35 and it runs throughout all of Iraq, all throughout the country, from top to bottom. And our Mrap, [one of the vehicles] its full fire, it's full of smoke and we had to run out and all of the other Mraps just like we are trained to do, they pull up, we have the box system [to block the vehicle in] but we still have to guard [the convoy]. So we're all outside and there's vehicles flying by us, in Iraq they don't care what side of the road they are on, they go which ever direction they want, so here I am covering and there is people driving by. And in Iraq each family can carry and AK 47. Yep, very common, they can have weapons on them at any time. So if they wanted and my back is kind of facing traffic in the way, I tried to have my vehicle blocking me any way they can and I was thinking if anyone wants to take a shot, I'm gone. Because I'm out of my vehicle, they are trying to get it all hooked up, trying to get it all ready to tow, we had our tow truck with us, we didn't have to wait for that thank goodness. So here I am, crouched down, hiding behind the vehicles, still out of the ordinary and I'm praying, please God watch over us, don't let anyone be stupid and throw a bomb at us because we were totally vulnerable, totally vulnerable at that time! I remember, we were done, and they get our vehicle hooked up for towing and we go around to the other one and I remember sitting and I started breathing and I just started shaking, my whole body just kind of went in to Oh shit! The adrenaline completely went down and I'm like wow! That was an 'oh shit factor' it made everything pucker! And so, we were very lucky. We got to our destination, it was only supposed to a 45 minute trip from our base to Calsu, and it took over all day. It was just one of those days, when we all got done it was like where is my cot? I don't care where it is, I'm going to sleep on it!

Carrie describes a terrifying day for her on a convoy mission. It was quite eye opening to hear Iraqi people carry AK 47's on their daily drive. This had to be a stressful time for them. Carrie also says, "No matter what, every time you went outside the wire, you put your oh shit pants on because you never know what's going to happen. We did over 100 missions and twice, we had convoys get attacked by IED. One time, a person got a concussion, the second, a laceration on his hand." Her explanation of being ready and prepared for danger by putting

on her “oh shit” pants demonstrates training that emphasized being ready for anything. Carrie describes this day as emotionally exhausting, so much so that she just wanted to go right to sleep when she returned. This was her way to let her emotions out about her dangerous day; she just wanted to sleep it away in her private bedroom.

Lucky for this convoy, there were no injuries or deaths. Most of these women report attending a soldier’s funeral. Some have been killed in the line of duty, some through suicide, and a few other freak accidents. There are instances where letting feelings out is appropriate in public places and a soldier’s funeral is one of them. Soldiers are dying at high rates since our involvement in the Iraq/Afghanistan war. It is an honor to be a part of a memorial service for a fallen soldier. Sarah participated in an Honor Guard memorial where she was the only female on this guard. Sarah describes an emotion management breakdown and everyone is just letting their sorrow out, regardless of who is watching. There was no holding back, it was too difficult of a time and regardless if you were a man or woman, everyone was letting their feelings out during this funeral.

Sarah: I didn’t, you know, let them buck [feelings], you know. Just stand in there at present arms, just, we’re all just have tears rolling down their eyes, actually, I was the only the female in squad.

Q: How did that make you feel?

Sarah: It was an honor, big time and everyone came up to us and was like, you guys did a phenomenal job; we were all crying like babies at that point.

As Sarah shows, this is an acceptable time to show emotion as everyone is also showing emotion with her. I find a similar pattern suggesting these women have to use all other forms of coping first and then they as a last resort will let emotions show but only after something tragic happens or it is in a private setting they deem appropriate. The feeling rules deemed by Hochschild (1979) demonstrate that one must meet the social standards of emotion management in a social context. Basically, my respondents were able to meet the social

standards but in private were not able to do this and would only break down outside the socially acceptable area.

Memorial services were not the only times that brought difficulties in managing emotions for my respondents. Also, returning home brought many new challenges to their emotion management strategies. The changing emotions from being in a combat zone to a civilian lifestyle are quite overwhelming. Mary talks about how she didn't quite know how to manage her feelings upon reintegration from her combat deployment and "if someone would look at me funny, I would just lose it and cry." Instances like this could explain the struggles the women face coming home. I find after several months of constant danger or being in military mode these combat deployed women lack the ability to shift back into their normal emotion management pattern. Several talk about struggling with emotions when they return, getting angry or short with others, and drinking or carousing. Some of the women not deployed had similar feelings right after they came back from basic and AIT. Several of the women stated their relationship with God improved or they reminded themselves of what they have in order to shift aside their emotions and move through difficult times. Others had different ways like putting others down and being short or rude to others. Several women note their patience level changed during their military career and making them impatient and annoyed with civilians. All of these ways they let their emotions out demonstrates these women come to some sort point where they can't compartmentalize, ignore or stuff their emotions any longer.

There are several other ways women coped throughout their military career but I want to shift my focus onto ways the women coped when they returned home. I discuss my findings next on these women turning and connecting to fellow soldiers, past and present to work through the emotions of coming home, reintegrating after combat deployments, and their soldiering experience.

Emotion Management Strategy: Turning to other Military Personnel

I find these women relate to other women soldiers and connect with them in order to cope with difficult times. All of my respondents described handling their emotions as being easier during boot camp, deployments, and reintegration by leaning on or going to other military personnel. These are difficult times as they are stressed, they are exhausted, and then they come home to their families trying to figure out their emotions. I suggest these women believe that only a soldier can understand them; no one else can realize the difficulties they face unless it's a fellow military person.

The women built great relationships during their military careers. Lola met people while stationed in South Dakota and felt they became her family away from her family. This group became so close they would even carpool home on long weekends. Andie created a similar small group of friends she turned to and still turns to. She discusses how they consoled each other and turned to each other because they were there for the same reasons.

Andie: Yah, for sure, basic I couldn't trust anyone but in AIT, I really did go to them [fellow soldiers] for support. But these people are not like anyone else. You are there for the same thing, and you're just so close. I still talk to them. Yah, like thank god for FB, I looked up my battle buddies. It's insane, they all have kids or are divorced but it's just weird compared to high school. I mean, we consoled each other then and now.

Andie also notifies us technology has helped her keep in touch with soldiers and the women who she turned to for support and comfort. Several of these women discuss how they maintain and focus on relationships built during their military career. I suggest these are lifelong friendships because of the similarities and commonalities of backgrounds of military careers. Only a small population can make it through the grueling aspect of basic training, AIT, and have successful military careers. Due to this factor, I suggest the women are more likely to maintain friendships long term as they have all been through the same training and have similar experiences.

During combat deployment, many talked about group activities conversing with fellow soldiers as ways to make it through daily routines and difficult situations. These women felt they could turn to other soldiers because the other soldiers understood what they were going through and where they had come from. Wendy reports, "My biggest coping skill is talking to Sean, because he's been there, he was a Marine." Often, I find that women felt comfort in turning to other male soldiers or their loved ones who were also soldiers. They had a strong brotherhood/sisterhood with their fellow soldiers and enjoyed fitting in with the men of their units.

Unfortunately, there are times when the women did not feel comfortable turning to male soldiers for help. Sometimes these women were dealing with not only combat and the danger of the area they were deployed in, but they were dealing with the men they were deployed with which could be equally as dangerous. I describe Natalie's instance of an almost sexual assault. Instances like this discredit to women soldier's ability to turn to their teammates for assistance. Natalie and Wendy are the only ones who report being sexually harassed. Others discuss it but report it didn't happen to them, didn't affect them, or it didn't happen at all. Natalie reports not being able to turn to others for a long time after this instance. I call it an assault even though there was not contact. This man still made her feel like a victim, without even having to touch her. She's talking about a base she is on and the only other woman is out on a combat mission.

Natalie: But over the course of a year like I was out in Candahar [Iraq] for one and a half months and like one day, super hot out, I was, they have like dorms out there in Special Forces camp, I was one of two women so it was even worse over there. They [men] didn't have much to look at and there were two of us and one was on a mission so I was there alone. So it was even worse. Anyway, it was hot; I left my door open, on second floor passed out for nap with my door open with a breeze. And I woke up to someone standing over me servicing himself, he freaked out, I did too, he ran out and I was absolutely panicking. Like there was a dick in my face! I mean he was sitting and there were two beds and he was like leaned over, I was sleeping on this bed and the adjacent bed he was like facing me. And I freaked out, and he ran and I still, I have no

idea, I couldn't pick him in a line up, all I know is he was white. I was devastated, I don't know.

Just because Natalie was alone, another man felt he could take advantage of the situation. Natalie has strong feelings about the men in the world and she felt like prey. It is instances like these promote these feelings and allow her to feel this way. I am sickened by the instances of sexual assault and misconduct which these women report happen in the military. Apparently, the sexual harassment briefings do nothing in the face of actual assaults. I strongly suggest the military research these instances and develop new ways to manage the problems of sexual assault in our United States Military. After being sexually harassed, Natalie felt she could not trust men soldiers. She found comfort in a few women soldiers and eventually worked up enough trust in one male soldier. She reports, "There is a guy I started hanging out with because I felt safe being around someone, then we went to the gym together and then I would sit up late at night with him on his porch playing guitar and listening to music." Primarily, she turned to her battle buddies and the women of her unit but she, like Wendy, was able to find peace and comfort in talking to a man who also was a soldier.

Some women felt very close with other women and especially close with their battle buddies. Carrie discusses her closeness with her battle buddy and the other soldiers she was deployed with. She felt she could talk it out with them and go over her feelings of the deployment with military friends and was her main coping skill while deployed.

Carrie: Just talking with the battle buddies, my battle buddy and I so close and we still are, I think we always still be. We lived in an 8x10 little room and we never got in one fight, not even an argument. We were both medics, the only time we were away from each other was when either was on a mission. Otherwise, we woke up, went to work together, ate together, worked out together, and hung out together for that whole year. And the only time, it was just talking about our feelings with everybody, you know you had other friends, couple of the other guys and stuff like that, you just sit and talk and stuff like that.

Carrie found it easier to discuss things with her battle buddy or a few of the other people she deployed with. I suggest each woman has a small group of friends they really turn to while they are away from home and thus creating a pseudo-family while away from their real family. The reasons behind this are simple, the camaraderie and the ease of the conversation. Often, it was just easier to talk to someone who understood the military acronyms explanation wasn't necessary and the flow of conversation was easier. A brother or sisterhood is created in the military and no one else can understand or that is what they assume. Here, Gretchen describes her relationships with military people and how she prefers to maintain these relationships because they have also been there and understand where people are coming from.

Gretchen: So, I'm still sad I got off Facebook, because of my friends, my military friends. I still talk to some of my best friends, they are military friends, and I love the state of Pennsylvania, because I have like six military friends who live there. I just had one staying at my house over the summer, just really, really good friends. You definitely talk about the military because it's hard to talk about it with other people, like you don't have to explain acronyms, not it's any trouble but the flow of the conversation is better, you understand, like if you were or weren't in combat, you kind of understand where anybody is coming from.

Gretchen talks about her military friends making it easier for her so she doesn't have to explain things, she feels like explaining her military lingo is an inconvenience and it's just more convenient to talk to fellow soldiers. My findings suggest the support of fellow soldiers are a huge benefit; coming together as a team or not, is still easier and beneficial when you are dealing with someone who has similar experiences as yourself.

All combat deployed soldiers talk about a time period before they felt normal and back into the swing of things. Heidi, Mary, Sarah, Gretchen, and Natalie all say it took several months, even up to a year or more. Carrie was faced with different circumstances as coming back from deployment as a single parent so she believes she was thrown back into a normal life immediately. The combat deployed women, excluding Carrie, felt left out from their lives

prior and felt most comfortable turning to the soldier's served with. Heidi's family went through a military support program and was quite prepared for her homecoming but she was not. She describes being upset and frustrated as she was trying to get ready to go out with women she deployed with.

Heidi: Like, I was back [from deployment] in my room crying and I had my whole wardrobe spread out and I couldn't figure out what to wear. For the last year, the only clothing choice I had was a uniform and now I had all these choices. My mom came in and asked what was wrong and I lost it on her. I couldn't figure out what to wear to go out with the girls.

Something as simple as getting dressed was difficult for Heidi and similar stories were reported by others. I suggest the women do not fully understand the reintegration process after being in a combat zone so they turn to fellow soldiers to work through emotions like these. No one else, except soldiers can understand feelings like this and is a reason these women turn to other soldiers to make it through.

My findings also show frustrations with civilians and reintegration. The women feel civilians cannot understand what she has gone through and therefore turn to fellow soldiers. Even seeking help after reintegration is not an option for many because the therapists the military uses are not combat deployed soldiers themselves. I find this relates to the brotherhood which has been talked about. These women stick together; they have similar experiences and trust each other with those experiences. A normal civilian doesn't fit in unless they have been deployed or shown other ways to gain respect. You must conform to the military expectations to be respected, helpful, and to be a true soldier. Mary discusses the reasons why she did not pursue help in return and how she coped.

Mary: Mmm, I don't know, when you said before, you had talked to people and they said don't think the Army is doing much post deployment and I think they try. They tried hard when we came home but nobody wanted to talk about it with some civilian who didn't have any idea on what we went through. Anyways, so a lot of it was just like oh, no I'm fine. You would have to meet with them and it was like nope, I'm fine, leave me alone, I don't want to talk to you; you have no idea what I went through. They tried to

get to us like right away and we're like leave us alone, we have a life to get back to, you know, don't. So, you know they have counselors there at guards but nobody would talk to them because I think people, like even if they did have a problem, they didn't want anyone else to know about it, so was, I don't know, I think they tried, just didn't go about it the right way.

Mary talks about her process of reintegration and how she turned to fellow soldiers to get through this difficult time instead of going to counselors. I suggest this also shows there is too small of a time span from deployment to home without real services help these women. These soldiers kept scary situation to themselves. Mary says they need other military people and time, "Like when I would hang out with the people I had deployed with, otherwise it was just time, once you got integrated back in and apart of life, civilian life again, it made it easier." She later discusses other side effects of this integration; she was short with her family, didn't feel comfortable with friends, and struggled through a yearlong reintegration process. Sarah also refused help upon return, "Well, I kind of, there was a few people lived in Mankato who were on the same deployment and we would just kind of talked about stuff and hashed it out, they offered counseling and stuff like but I said no thanks, I'll deal with it." She too felt like she couldn't pursue counseling; she thought turning to other soldiers and hashing it out was the best way for her to successfully reintegrate.

These soldiers talk about team building and I suggest the military also teaches them to only lean on fellow soldiers. One could suggest team building would carry over into civilian life but it doesn't look like it does with these women until much later, after successful reintegration back to civilian life. My findings suggest their primary coping skill immediately upon return is turning to other military people to, as Sarah says, "hash it out" and work through their feelings.

I suggest the military teaches a sister/brotherhood of soldiering which holds true from basic training back into reintegration from combat. The women conformed to military standards with their emotions and used appropriate coping mechanisms were to be respected. This then forms a brother/sisterhood of soldiers to keep them leaning on each other rather than leaning

on outsiders. The military is often to have broken soldiers down in basic training and built them back up. I suggest this break down is also the breakdown of their sense of self and their emotion management skills. It looks like they are broken down and built back up as a soldier and taught the appropriate ways to cope, the appropriate ways to handle themselves and the appropriate ways to perform, both under pressure and not. I suggest their management of feelings is based on their ability to perform to the right standards; poor management of feelings is said to be a weak and an ineffective soldier and vice versa. Women manage their feelings appropriately and use coping skills are acceptable to fellow soldiers are then considered respected and effective in their job duties of soldering.

Chapter Seven

Closing and Discussion

This paper explores femininity, identity, and emotion management of women in the military. The face of the military changed in recent history. Even just 25 years ago, as Williams (1991) identifies, women are trained differently and segregated from men. Women mandated to take classes on femininity per military standards. My interviews with eleven women respondents demonstrate a transition in the approach used by branches of the armed forces in handling women soldiers. I'm unsure if this is due to the changes in women's roles in the past 25 years from a push to enter an occupation or if the military no longer finds value in training femininity. Much more research is needed to be able to identify the cause of this change. Now the military wants everyone to be neutral or masculine. The military strips women of their feminine self, puts them in men's clothing, teaches them to act like men, pushes them to reach men's standards, and punishes them for displaying femininity.

Obviously, I am approaching these topics on a stereotypical viewpoint of being a woman. The women in this study have more feminine displays; I did not interview any women who chose not to show their gender to others. These women even discuss their uniforms in a fashion sense versus a utility sense. Despite their choice to "man up" these women still wanted to be in uniforms so others could tell they are women. Some did say they just wanted a uniform that fit but many discussed the inability to see their curves. I believe this goes back to a power factor. Women have been socialized to be feminine and the military has captured this power by demanding neutrality. The difficult part is that the neutrality is not neutral; it is quite masculine so these women chose to shift into something else just to be successful. This shift

further objectifies women; I believe that by not allowing women to display their preferences about gender they are suppressing women's ability to not be objects.

Based on these women, the military strives for neutrality or equality in men and women. Unfortunately, this cannot happen. Women, especially women deployed to combat zones, yearn for their feminine self. They desire to show their femininity and are frustrated in the ways the military takes this away from them. Yet, they set this aside and "man up" to the expectations and standards for men. Of the women I have interviewed, ten out of 11 strongly believe being a woman in the military requires a strong drive, a lot of self-respect, and a ton of perseverance to make it in such a male dominated world. These women wanted to stand up for themselves and prove to others they are good soldiers. The last soldier doesn't necessarily disagree with these ideas but she did not hold herself to higher standards nor did she try to prove herself to gain respect. She was not deployed and held an office job at the hospital on a military base. She never felt a desire to push herself to meet other standards; she was content with the standards she had.

Given the masculine domination of the military, it is no wonder women cannot show themselves or be themselves as women. They need to conform to this male dominated world and are objectified by the men of the military. The women are not respected until they earn respect; a concept much different for men since men are respected rather quickly in the enlistment process versus women having to prove themselves and then gain respect. And the concept of respect is quite different. Once women are respected, their perceptions are they are taken care of and defended by the men. I find this to be counter-active. If a man respects a woman, it would be assumed they would allow her to do it herself, but many of these women describe instances of having the men take care of things out of respect. This is an interesting perception. The women who are trying to fight against difference and proving themselves are allowing men to take care of them out of perceived respect.

Another interesting finding is that men are told they are women if they do not meet standards. If men are called feminine related names to degrade their masculinity, where does this leave women? It leaves women still as degraded objects. I suggest the face of the military has shifted in 25 years but the beliefs have not. Women still are seen as objects; not being equal to men but seen as lesser or deficient compared to men soldiers. If women are equal, they would be able to express themselves as women without being harassed or degraded because of it. These women attend sexual harassment briefings with the men of their unit but most of them still experienced or heard of others being sexually harassed. I believe this illustrates the military still values men as men which means they are more powerful and dominant and women as objects which leaves women below and secondary to men.

I also find the military careers of these women do affect the way they see themselves. The strong women of this sample have endured hours of training, physical fitness, and job training to become soldiers. I suggest the women interviewed do not role compartmentalize, they resist abandoning the role despite difficulties, and they take on the attitudes and beliefs of the role, and experience the role and put the role into action. This process takes them through a role person merge that Turner (1978) describes and they become soldiers. Waskul (1998) suggests in his research on camp counselors the merge is only temporary and after reintegration back to their prior lives, they shift out of counselor mode completely and it does not become a part of who they are. I find in this research that the role person merge is long term for women in the military. My research demonstrates that they go to basic training with little knowledge of what lies ahead; they learn the components of their role, practice the role, and become soldiers. From here, I see each woman describes ways the military became a part of who she is and an identity shift happens where they identify themselves and members of the military.

I do suggest a much stronger merge with the women here who have been in combat zones. These women identify much stronger as military personnel based on the danger of their experience and actually implementing the training they learned. I suggest they not only become soldiers and merge their soldiering identity with who they are during their military career but suggest their soldiering stays with them outside of this situation. Especially in the women deployed to combat zones, the military is still strong in who they are and their sense of self. Granted, I am not able to measure this on a long term scale but several of the women who have already left the military still find ways the military is still with them. I would recommend long term analysis to be able to measure this accurately. But at the end point of my research, several of the women reported they planned to keep a part of the military with them for the rest of their lives and identify themselves as women of the military.

I close with my discussion on emotion management. Like Greer (2002) and Hochschild (1979) find in their research on emotion suppression, these women also integrated coping mechanisms in private in order to display a “tough” front. The women chose to show emotions only in certain settings and they need to cope with their emotions in a way men and the military institution deem appropriate. These women learn to use coping skills to make it through their careers. They are not allowed to openly express themselves and if they do, they are labeled as weak and/or inept. These women become hard; or rather they learn to suppress emotions so they can be successful. I did find it interesting these women held their composure in front of other soldiers even when it would have been socially acceptable to display them. Two respondents saw death and refused to break down over these instances; they held their composure for fear of the consequences of their actions. I often wondered if there would be any differences if a man had come upon these instances, would it be acceptable if a man broke down after witnessing such an event? I do not know the answer to this but I do believe based on these women’s perceptions that it would be more socially acceptable for a man to break

down over a death than a woman in the same situation. As I've seen in this research, any display of emotion derogates a woman's character. I again suggest in a male dominated occupation women need to show they can perform emotionally at the same standards as men so they can gain respect.

Many of these women who were in combat discuss some mental health issues stemming from the violence, terror, and stress they experienced. Several of the combat deployed women had very supportive family members and were able to transition back to the civilian world without issue, but many of these women also discussed experiences with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) upon returning home. I suggest the military should find better ways to handle mental health services for those coming back from combat so these soldiers can all find the help they need and feel comfortable getting it.

Something else I suggest would be helpful for the military is to train soldiers post deployment to work with fellow soldiers. I suggest a push towards military soldiers going on for further training and working with fellow soldiers as they come back from deployments. I suggest the military could do so much more for soldiers who are struggling by implementing a soldier to soldier reintegration process. The military can learn from these women. They are talking about how they turned to fellow soldiers to work out their struggles post deployment. They use each other because there is a common ground. They feel comfortable sharing their battle scars and stories with these people. A lot of research has been done about therapy and it seems to be proven that talking about difficult things make the healing process quicker; the military needs to hear these women and make some changes so their struggles can be dealt with by professionals who happen to be soldiers too.

I started this project watching a good friend deploy for his fourth tour of duty and a cousin being stationed in Germany for three years.; I'm finishing up watching him prepare to

come home and my cousin continue to serve her country. Both will come home with new and different experiences. I look forward to hearing about the struggles and experiences of my female cousin and the struggles and experiences of our male friend as I am quite sure they will be different.

I close this project by showing a deep respect for and I applaud each one of these ladies for becoming soldiers. I am proud to know them and am proud to share their stories and experiences. I suggest women in the military are an exceptional group of people who deserve our respect and honor as they have pushed themselves to the highest levels defending our freedom. They demonstrate the dedication needed to prove to others they are capable; they demonstrate being strong women gets you ahead. It sure does make me proud to be a woman and have these women fighting for my freedom. I hope these experiences open eyes and viewpoints in the changing face of the military soldier.

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Appendix A

1. Tell me how you defined yourself before the military?
 - a. What did you do, if anything, for employment, for entertainment, for hobbies, or family life?
2. What kinds of things did you do with your friends before you entered the military?
 - a. How often would you go out with these friends? Who would you go out with most often?
 - b. Did your friend base change the first 6-12 months in the military? How so?
3. Describe your expectations of the military?
4. Tell me about your experiences in boot camp?
 - a. Were there any different expectations for women compared to men? Tell me about these?
Men run farther, more pushups?
 - b. Did you face discrimination compared to men and what was that like?
 - c. He's a sissy/pussy?
 - d. Other women/girls? Made friends? Did some get teased? What happened with that?
5. Can you describe your daily routine/job duties?
6. How, if at all, have your thoughts and feelings about the military changed since your enlistment?
 - a. In what ways did you cope with feelings? Were there other women with you?
7. Can you describe what it was like finding out and preparing for deployment?
 - a. What was your family/friends response to you deploying? How did you handle this?
8. Tell me about what it was like being a woman in military?
 - a. Are there any significant events that stand out in your mind?
9. How did the military affect your appearance? What things/routines, like wearing your uniform, did you have that were required and how did that make you feel?
 - a. Tell me about how you managed your feelings when you were away from home?
10. How were you addressed in your platoon? Your squad? How was your group addressed by superiors? How did this make you feel? How did you define yourself during this time?
11. Can you describe a typical night off or a night out with friends while you were deployed or away from home? What did you do to pass your time? Did you hang out with the guys? How'd they treat you? Examples, stories?
 - a. Did this change throughout your time in military?
12. What ways did you show yourself as a woman? What were your reasons behind this?
13. How did your military experience affect your sense of self, or who you think you are?
 - a. Your ideas about being a woman? Did anything change?
 - b. Would you consider yourself a leader or a follower??
14. How did your military experience affect your coping skills?
 - a. Your ability to handle life upon return?
15. Did you face any sexual harassment or did you know any other women who really did have harassment problems?
16. Can you describe a typical day back at home right after deployment? How long did it take for you to be comfortable back at home?
 - a. How did you manage feelings when you returned home?
17. Can you tell me about how, if at all, the military is still with you?
 - a. How do you define yourself now?
18. Is there anything else you think I should know about to understand your military career and how it affected you?

Appendix B

Informed Consent

You are invited to take part in “Through the Eyes of a Soldier: Looking at Women in the Military and their Sense of Self”, research on emotion management and sense of self throughout military careers being conducted by Dr. Emily Boyd and Kari Davis at Minnesota State University, Mankato. You are a potential participant because you are a woman in the military that were referred to the researchers.

You understand that you will be interviewed about your experiences by Kari Davis, who will keep responses confidential. You understand that nothing you say will be associated with your name or used in any way that will identify you, your position, or employer. You understand that you can refuse to meet with Ms. Davis. You also understand that this interview will be tape recorded, transcribed for research purposes only and the recording will be destroyed after transcription. This consent form will be kept on file in Dr. Boyd’s faculty office for 3 years and then destroyed.

You understand that you can withdraw from participation at any time by saying you wish to stop, withdraw, or refuse to answer a particular question.

You will be asked to answer questions that directly ask about your relationships, your military career, your deployment, and your feelings, how you managed your feelings throughout your military career, and potential discrimination faced. Although the risk is minimal, some of the questions may be personal and you may experience negative emotions or anxiety by discussing your service but you may benefit by coming to terms with this, by reflecting on your career pathway, and showing a sense of pride in your military service.

You also understand that your interviewer is a mandated reporter through her career as a County Agency Social Worker; which means that if allegations of abuse or maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult are reported during our interview, it is your researcher’s duty to report this to the County Human Services Agency. Given that the nature of the interview involves military service and not children or vulnerable adults, this is unlikely to be a topic of conversation.

You understand that if you have any questions, you can contact Kari Davis by phone at 507-382-8455 or by email at kari.davis@mnsu.edu. You can also contact Dr. Emily Boyd, her faculty advisor, by phone (507) 389-1375 or by email at emily.boyd@mnsu.edu. Kari Davis guarantees the foregoing conditions to you in exchange for your agreement to participate in the research. You acknowledge that you can refuse to sign this form if you prefer to give verbal but not written consent to participate in the research. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the treatment of human subjects, contact: Dean Barry Ries, IRB Administrator, at Minnesota State University, Mankato, Institutional Review Board, 115 Alumni Foundation, (507) 389-2321.

By checking the following categories, you indicate your willingness to participate in Dr. Emily Boyd and Kari Davis’ research.

_____ Agreement to be interviewed one-on-one

_____ Agreement for interview to be taped

Interviewee signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher signature: _____

Date: _____



Participant received a copy