ABSTRACT

BAILEY, DIANE LISA. Invisible Warriors: In Search of Better Counseling Services for Women who Serve in the Military. (Under the direction of Dr. Stanley Baker.)

The present study examines the development of women who serve in the United States military and suggests that these women, because of their sex, may progress through various stages as warriors while also processing the issues and dilemmas that women face in our civilian society.

The research goal of this present study was to explore whether or not there was an identity development process for military women. Using grounded theory and qualitative analysis, the developmental stages of military women were examined through semi-structured interviews and data analysis.

The findings suggested that it appears there is an identity development process for military women. These findings provide a baseline for future research in the area of identity development of military women while also offering clinicians insight into the multifaceted dimensions of military women, their experiences and development in an effort to provide appropriate mental health services.
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INVISIBLE WARIOIRS: IN SEARCH OF BETTER COUNSELING SERVICES FOR WOMEN WHO SERVE IN THE MILITARY

by

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To the women who have served before me and were never acknowledged, I devote this to you and will strive to right the wrongs society has done you. To the women who served with me, I love you and I praise you as we continued the legacy of our fore-sisters with vigor and passion. To the women who currently serve, I salute you as you brave the wars with courage and fortitude yet remain faceless. To those who will serve in the future, I hail you as you will continue to carry the banner for all of us. We may be invisible warriors to most but with honor, pride, resilience and integrity we are all sisters-in-arms. To all of my sisters-in-arms, I dedicate this to you.
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To my long time friend, Margret Shaloka who believed in me since my teenage years. She stood by me, had faith in me and always treated me with dignity and respect. Our friendship had made us family and for that I am thankful.

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Chapter I

Introduction

“Let the generations know that, the women in uniform also guaranteed their freedom.”

-Anne S. Brehm
1LT, USA NC, World War II
Women In Military Service for America
Memorial dedication, 1997

Brehm’s statement is a sentiment that is shared by many women who wear the uniform, yet the generations do not know of their contributions to the nation’s freedom. Past and present generations know very little about the service of American military women. Women have lived as patriots, struggled for freedom and died defending this country for centuries, from Revolutionary times to present day Iraq and Afghanistan.

Most Americans are not aware that women have served in the military of the United States of America since the Revolutionary War. Small (1998) states, “By [Revolutionary] war’s end in 1783, more than 20,000 women had provided support, sustenance or active service for the military (p.101).” Heroic women from the Revolutionary War, such as Molly Hays and Margaret Corbin are relatively unknown heroines. In the Civil War, Dr. Mary Walker received the Congressional Medal of Honor for her service as a field surgeon and the hardships she endured as a prisoner of war. She was the first and only woman to date, to receive this honor (Congressional Medal of Honor Society, 2005).

The library shelves of the Veterans’ Administration (VA) are packed with data about women’s service in the United States military. The VA (2002) records indicate that
approximately 1500 nurses served during the Spanish-American War; 33,000 women served in World War I among which were 400 nurses who died in the line of duty; and over 400,000 women served in World War II of which 88 were POWs. Yet, praise of their service and heroism is muted. The VA (2002) also reports that over 7000 women were deployed during the Vietnam War, and eight of those heroes’ names are etched on the Vietnam War Memorial. Nearly, 41,000 women served in the Persian Gulf War Theater. Thirteen of them were killed and two were taken as prisoners of war. About 14% of the U.S. Forces currently serving in Afghanistan and Iraq are women and over 80 women have given their lives. Unfortunately, these women, our mothers, daughters, nieces and cousins, are invisible to much of our society. We often hear and see phrases such as, “Support our boys,” “daddy died in combat”, or “the poor widows lost their husbands.” Our daughters, mothers and wives die also. Their deaths are barely noticed. Their lives seem to be obscure.

Historically, the government, the military and society have appeared to overlook the ongoing presence, significance, and contributions of women in the military. Morris (1997) states, “The presence of women as full members of the fighting forces would be inconsistent with a military culture in which women are viewed as the other, primarily as sexual targets, and in which aggression is viewed as a sign of masculinity (p.117).” Women are the invisible warriors. Their voices are silent. Their service is transparent. Women have been participants in military games, war, combat and killing for centuries, yet there are little data on the women who have served and their development as warriors.
Need for the Study

The previous section shows an absence of women warriors from hero status and everyday conversation yet there is a greater impact on these women that is deeper and even more insidious. Due to their lack of visibility they are viewed as the other which can impact their psychosocial development, the way they are viewed and treated within their environment and the manner in which they view themselves.

Military women are not acknowledged for their courage nor do they receive the same accolades as their male comrades in war. Solano (2004) speaks to the title of “Lioness” some women earn in combat units. Their specific function is to be attached to combat units and to interact with the Iraqi people during combat missions. All these women volunteer for these jobs. As Solano puts it, “the lionesses are doing the job, but don’t get the same pay, benefits or recognition as their male counterparts. And they’re invisible to the elite who have the most to gain from their service.” This invisible shroud blankets all of the female troops as sanctioned by Congress. U.S. Law prohibits women from serving in front line support units. Due to the shortage of troops, the U.S. is now “attaching” women to combat units instead of “assigning” them to combat units, hence complying with all laws and regulations (Grassi, 2005, p. 1). When women troops arrived in Arab countries at the beginning of the war on terror, the U. S. Government conducted its own form of “symbolic apartheid (Vojdik, 2002, p.3).” The female warriors were required to wear abayas off base, were not allowed to drive vehicles off base and had to sit in the back seat of vehicles driven by men, and had to comply with traditional Muslim gender norms. Vojdik (2002) states the regulations thus constructed and reinforced the
identity of the institution as masculine and male, illustrating powerful, yet often invisible, ways in which the military continues to police boundaries of gender to exclude women.

It is not only acknowledgment, pay and benefits in which women warriors remain invisible. There are also studies that indicate that military women suffer from the same physical and mental illness as their male counterparts yet receive little or no care for their illnesses. Women are also affected by sexualization, sexual harassment and assault which continue to be a non-issue in most respects by the military.

Pereira (2002) reported that men and women exposed to the same level of stress in a combat situation were equally likely to have combat-related PTSD, yet men are diagnosed at a higher rate. His results found that women are under diagnosed with combat-related PTSD. Butterfield, Forneris, Feldman and Beckham (2000) found a higher level of hostility and lower health status functioning in women veterans with PTSD and hostility was significantly correlated with poor health functioning.

Nelson (2002) states that “sexual assault and harassment are deeply rooted in the military, and the military has refused to address the issue effectively.” Davis and Wood (1999) indicate that there is a higher incidence of substance abuse among women veterans who report being victims of sexual trauma. Young women attending West Point according to Stiehm (1996) may be faced with the harsh reality that the academy is a “model for understanding male fear of military women and female desire for sexualized military power” and moreover, that it is a place of competition for the phallus where women challenge the easy association of phallus to soldier.

In an effort to acknowledge their service, to end the violence against them, to stop the sexualization and to provide better services, American women warriors need
to be made visible. The need for this specific study is to make our female warriors more visible in an effort to provide better mental health care services for them.

Purpose and Scope of Study

The purpose of the present study is to examine the psychosocial development of military women, developmental stages of these women and the effects on these women in each stage in an effort to provide better counseling services.

Several psychosocial developmental models examine the development of various groups of people yet none have focused on women in the military. Components of the different models can be applied to military women but none embody the specific issues and demands of our women in uniform.

Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development (OTAID), (Myers et al.1991) addresses identity development of oppressed groups and can be applied to military women because of the negative impact of being viewed as inferior by those whose ideations and perceptions dominate our society. The Feminist Identity Development Model for women (Downing & Roush, 1985) describes the stages of women as they develop a positive feminist identity. This model is based on the concept that women in our western society must recognize, struggle with and continuously work through their feelings about the discrimination they experience because of their sex in order to realize a positive feminist identity. Cass’ (1979) model of homosexual identity development can be applicable to military women if they ask “who am I?” if they have a state of Identity Confusion or if some type of Identity Comparison causes the women to examine what they are sacrificing by becoming military women. Yet, Cass’ model focuses on homosexual persons not military women. Elements of the Key model of white male
identity development (2001) can also be applicable to women in uniform. It provides a way of examining white male identity growth and how military women are indoctrinated into the white male society of the military. This model still does not envelope the military woman’s uniqueness.

For the purpose of this study, the author is suggesting the following framework based on the work of Myers et al. (1991) and Downing and Roush (1985) in an effort to examine the development of women warriors.

A Proposed Developmental Framework for Female Military Personnel

Five stages are suggested. They represent a linear process beginning with a naïveté stage and progressing toward a warrior identity stage. Progress from one stage to the next depends upon successfully incorporating the challenges each developmental stage presents to the developing female warrior.

Stage 1: Civilian Identity

At this stage these women are naïve and unaware of the demands or expectations of military service; they may be unaware of the sexism and double standards associated with military life.

Their emotions in this stage are influenced by naïveté and a sense of adventure. While seriously contemplating military service, they see only the advantages and excitement of service. They are being challenged to “become someone” and may not perceive other career options at this time. In this stage, women may decide to enter or not enter the military.
**Stage 2: Inductee Identity**

Personal discord occurs during basic training. These women begin to acknowledge personal and military conflict and cannot ignore conflict between contrasting societal and military roles. They are broken down psychologically by trainers in order to be renewed according to military ideology. Dyer (1985) states “Basic training is a feat of extreme psychological manipulation. Basic training involves an intense period of indoctrination whose purpose is not really to teach the recruits basic military skills, but rather to change their values and their loyalties” (p12).

These women experience cognitive dissonance over dealing with loss of their perceived roles as women and individuals in society. They are unsure about the decision to enter military service. They sometimes have difficulty following orders or behaving according to military decorum. If unable to comply with military regimen, they are disciplined or discharged. This stage is a test of their commitment to the military life. As these women prepare to move into the next developmental stage, they are facing an additional challenge. They are being masculinized, something that is innate to most men but not to most women.

**Stage 3: Masculinization/Militarization Identity**

The women are immersed in the military culture, and they develop a military mind-set. That is, they develop a traditional male view of the military, combat and war. Dissonance continues between society’s view of women’s roles and a warrior’s role, with the warrior role becoming more dominant due to the continuous exposure to military values and lifestyle. They develop strong ties with other military women. As such, they
are united as “sisters-in-arms”, associating with women and some men who espouse the same military ideation.

Their psychosocial identities are challenged because they are unsure if it is appropriate to assume a more masculine identity. Relationships with male troops may become more competitive. Relationships with women outside the military may change. They may view very feminine women in uniform as incompetent and become immersed in the “maleness” of the military. These women may not be totally accepted by traditional military personnel and may also face the societal distain associated with military women stereotypes.

This stage may begin during advanced training and progress through the first assignment. Women, who do not succeed in this stage may initiate cause for an early discharge or struggle through their commitment period and then leave military service.

*Stage 4: Synthesis*

At this stage, the prospective warriors develop equilibrium among personal, civilian, feminine and military values. They understand that femininity is devalued by the military system, and it is only their sex which limits the occupations they may choose. Yet, they still integrate the various desired values and roles into their own identity.

This is a stage of status quo. Women in this stage are comfortable with their daily military duties. They accept their role as female troops within the context of the masculine military. Dissonance from the previous stages diminishes.

Many women remain in this stage for the duration of their service. As it is a status quo stage, they are generally not unhappy. They are comfortable with the decision they made to join the military. They may be reaching an end of their tour of service and must
choose to remain in or leave the military. At this point, if they choose to stay, they may find a deeper sense of commitment to the military and move into Stage 5. It is possible that military men may also develop some type of stage 4 in which they achieve a level of status quo and make a decision to remain in the military or leave when their tour in completed.

Stage 5: Duty Identity

In this stage, service women take the various components of their new identity and apply them to their job as a warrior. They take orders without question. A new identity as a military person emerges with duty, honor, and country being the primary personal philosophy.

There is a loss of individuality. An all for one and one for all dedication takes precedence. In this stage, women may experience conflict over reporting rape, harassment, stalking, and other forms of personal violence because doing so will cause conflict within the ranks. For the good of the mission, conflict within the ranks must be minimized. If they deviate from this identity and report their fellow comrades for illegal activities, they can be ostracized, at the very least. Falling out of favor with their fellow troops can lead to emotional damage for women in this stage because they are so ingrained with being part of a team.

Not all military women reach stage 5 and some become comfortable in stage 4. Women in stage 4 are more apt to see the military as an acceptable career choice but do not subscribe to the discipline and commitment required of the stage 5. These women may perceive a 20 year career in the military as an opportunity to retire at a young age and start their lives again after retirement.
Research Goal

To determine if military women do, in fact, develop into invisible warriors through the above suggested stages, the following general research question has been established: Is there an identity development process for military women?
Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Women in the military dream no small dreams.

-Women in Military Service for America Memorial
Dedication 1997

This chapter will discuss the women in the military and provide reviews of research on women in the military, research on both military women and men and psychological issues effecting both sexes, and pros and cons of several identity development theories and how they do or do not reflect the psychosocial development of women warriors.

Research on Women in the Military

The Veterans Administration (2002) and the US Census Bureau (2003) reported that the United States has 1,600,000 living women veterans and over 200,000 women currently serving in all branches of the US military. Unfortunately, there is little research addressing the issues these warriors face. Some limited attention has been given in recent years to women with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and to women who endured sexual trauma in the military (Fontana, Schwartz & Rosenheck, 1997).

PTSD

PTSD has been a diagnosis generally reserved for male veterans, even though many military women and women veterans were exposed to the same atrocities of combat and war as their male counterparts. Pereira (2002) reported that men and women exposed to the same level of stress in a combat situation were equally likely to have combat-related PTSD, yet men are diagnosed at a higher rate. Pereira’s study examines whether or not PTSD is under diagnosed in female veterans. The study, administered to
110 veterans, measured combat exposure, PTSD symptomology, life stress and current distress. Participants’ records were reviewed to ascertain their diagnoses. Researchers compared variables by gender using logistical regression, chi square tests, \( t \) tests and descriptive statistics. The results were an affirmation that women veterans are under diagnosed with combat-related PTSD.

Butterfield, Forneris, Feldman and Beckham (2000) found a higher level of hostility and lower health status functioning in women veterans with PTSD and hostility was significantly correlated with poor health functioning. Their study consisted of 90 women from a VA women’s health clinic. This study utilized the Trauma Questionnaire (TQ), Civilian Mississippi Scale for PTSD (C-Miss), Davidson Trauma Scale (DTS), Cook-Medley Scale, Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), SF-36 Health Inventory.

**Sexual Trauma**

Sexual trauma is another area that needs further investigation because sexual assault and rape are often overlooked. Nelson (2002) states that “sexual assault and harassment are deeply rooted in the military, and the military has refused to address the issue effectively” (p.48). Furthermore, an investigation by Ewers and Stein (2003) revealed that rapes and sexual assaults at the military academies were generally due to a failure in leadership. The military leaders’ tolerance of the violence and harassment facing military women perpetuates their position as *the other*. According to the most recent sexual harassment survey released by the Department of Defense (2004), sexual assault in the military is experienced by 3% of female service members. An earlier study indicated that 6% of female respondents and 1% of male respondents were victims of actual or attempted rape (Department of Defense, 2004).
A national study of 558 women veterans conducted by Sadler, Booth, Cook and Doebbeling (2003) who utilized structured telephone interviews, found 30% of female veterans reported rape or attempted rape during active duty, and 37% of women who reported a rape or attempted rape had been raped more than once. Fourteen percent of the victims reported having been gang raped. Three fourths of the female veterans who were raped did not report the incident to a ranking officer. One third did not know how to report, and one fifth believed that rape was to be expected in the military. These data reflect the military leadership’s neglect of abuse within their ranks of women. This study also demonstrates that military environmental factors are strongly associated with a woman’s risk of rape during her military service.

**Secondary Effects**

In addition to the primary influences, military women have been re-victimized by secondary issues caused by the sexual trauma. For instance, research by Davis and Wood (1999) indicates that there is a higher incidence of substance abuse among women veterans who report being victims of sexual trauma. The Butterfield et al. (2000) study previously mentioned reported lower health status functioning in women veterans with PTSD. Sadler, Booth, and Doebbeling (2005) found women who experienced repeated rapes or gang rape during their military service had significant impairment of physical and emotional health compared with women who experienced one rape or who had no such experiences. Even with the revelation of sexual assaults on military women and the effects on veterans, women are still lacking a voice; they are still overlooked and forgotten. Little more is known about women in the military, and this paucity of information highlights their invisibility.
Research on Men in the Military

It is important to include a component on research on men to compare to the amount of research on women. The following research is only a small segment of research available yet it provides information on an array of studies which are available on this topic.

Several studies about the influence of PTSD and the long term effects of war violence in male combat veterans have been conducted. These studies are limited to the generalization of treatment strategies to male veterans.

Elhai, Frueh, Davis, Jacobs and Hamner (2003) examined the symptom patterns of 126 male combat veterans diagnosed with PTSD in an effort to determine appropriate clinical practices and treatments. Their research identified four subtypes of PTSD utilizing the MMPI-2 and validated with self-report measures but provided no treatment use or outcome data. World War II combat veterans were studied by Hyer and Stranger (1999) to examine the interaction of PTSD and depression among older veterans. Their results showed that depression influenced health status and social support. Hoge, Castro, Messer, McGurk, Cotting and Koffman (2004) studied the mental health of male military members who participated in combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan in order to develop policy with regard to providing optimal delivery of mental health services to this population of veterans. Their study identified various barriers in providing appropriate mental health services to military men. Learning and memory issues with combat veterans with PTSD were investigated by Yehuda and Keefe (1995) to determine if there is a link between PTSD and specific deficits in the regulation of memory. This research suggested that individuals with PTSD may have specific deficits in the monitoring and
regulation of memory and information. Cosgrove (2003) investigated and reported a higher rate of sexual dysfunction in combat veterans with PTSD than those without PTSD.

There have been research studies conducted involving both military men and women. These findings lend support to the lack of visibility of women warriors. As mentioned earlier, Pereira’s 2002 study reported that men and women exposed to the same level of stress in a combat situation were equally likely to have combat-related PTSD, yet men are diagnosed at a higher rate. Murdoch (2003) conducted a study to determine if there were gender discrepancies in rates of service connection disability compensation for PTSD. Using a sample of 3337 veterans with a response rate of 68% and adjusting for combat exposure, her study found evidence of a combat advantage that disproportionately favored men. When providing medical and mental health services to military personnel and veterans, men remain the patient base due to the number of military personnel past and present who are male. Yet, in a study conducted by Kressin et al. (1999) concerning patient satisfaction of 1319 male and female patients with Department of Veterans Affairs health care only one in five women felt comfortable seeking VA health care services even though they are entitled to the same services as men. Even though women are entitled to the same benefits as their male counterparts they are underrepresented in treatment and are uncomfortable in accessing appropriate treatment.

Studies utilizing both male and female military personnel and veterans are limited as data on military women are limited. The military and Veteran’s Administration are
recently acknowledging the presence of women within the ranks thus research involving women is a new frontier in many aspects.

Review of Current Developmental Theories

Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development

The first theory to be addressed is the Optimal Theory Applied to Identity Development (OTAID) (Myers, Speight, Highlen, Cox, Reynolds, Adams & Hanley, 1991). The developmental stages will be described, and a summary of this theory will be provided followed by applications to military women.

Theory phases. This theory consists of the following seven phases (Phase 0 - Phase 6). Phase 0 is labeled Absence of Conscious Awareness. In this phase, individuals are lacking awareness of being. They cannot separate themselves from their environment. This lack of awareness is generally associated with infancy. The next phase, Phase 1, is Individuation. In this phase, they lack awareness of self other than that to which they have been introduced (i.e., families assigning great importance to the male child or society assigning importance to skin color). As some aspects of identity are reinforced by society, some people may not wish to move from this phase.

Phase 2 is when they begin to struggle as they are wondering who they are. During this stage of Dissonance, they begin to explore the parts of themselves that are and have been devalued by others (i.e., women veterans are insignificant). They may have a sense of anger, confusion and/or isolation throughout this stage.

Immersion is Phase 3. They immerse their energies into the devalued culture and to other people “like” themselves (i.e., a gay person focusing all their time and energy on gay causes and only associating with gay people).
Phase 4 is Internalization when they integrate their salient parts of self into the whole of their being. They understand that there are many parts necessary to define their individual self-identity. People in this phase are comfortable with the many components of who they are (i.e., a young Native American women who has dealt with the stigmas, obstacles and stereotypes of “Indians and cowboys” and is proud of her Native American heritage and knows that her heritage is only one component of who she is as an individual).

In Phase 5, Integration, individuals are comfortable with who they are and have developed a deeper sense of security and inner peace. Their connectedness to people is based on “deeper” criteria then appearance (i.e., the woman veteran who has difficulty associating with other women veterans because she has realized that they do not share her social commitment, political views or even common interests. She realized that she had them as friends just because they were women veterans and knew this had to change because there were other groups that were also oppressed and seen as insignificant in society who shared her values and interests).

The final phase, Phase 6 is Transformation. In this phase, individuals understand themselves in a sense of personhood. They feel their connectedness to all of life, that which came before them and to the generations not yet born. They understand their relationship to nature, community and society and interdependence with all things. In this phase, they see negativity as a part of existence and understand the role it plays in personal growth (i.e., the middle-aged woman, abused as a child, develops an understanding of the cycle of abuse, lets go of her anger toward her abuser because she understands that he lacks self-awareness, and sees her negative experiences as a child as
an opportunity to do nothing with her life or do something very positive because of it. She chooses the positive route).

**Summary of OTAID.** Myers et al. (1991) assert that positive self-identity is not easily attainable in our western culture due to the comprehensive number of our societal “-isms” (i.e., racism, sexism, etc.) and the negative impact on those defined as inferior by those whose ideations and perceptions dominate our society. Myers et al. state “examination of the conceptual system that predisposes people to these “-isms” concludes that (a) it is the nature of the conceptual system that is inherently oppressive and (b) all who adhere to this conceptual system have a difficult time developing and maintaining a positive identity.(p. 54)” Hence, in our western culture, the dominant-class’ defined categories of –isms, allow us to oppress and those who are classified by “-isms” are the oppressed and have difficulty developing or maintaining a positive self-identity. OTAID is used to describe the identity development process of those persons placed in oppressed categories and defined by the –isms of our society.

Because our western culture’s is a faulty conceptual system, this type of system according to Myers et al. is self-alienating and those who hold onto this faulty conceptual system develop an identity that is segmented or fractured.

Myers et al. believe the western cultures’ worldview is segmented in respect to two essential aspects of being – spirit and matter, and when this happens, oppression is the natural consequence. If individuals are oppressed, they become socialized into a suboptimal worldview. This oppression leads to a fragmented sense of self which transcends the individual’s racial or ethnic group membership. Individual’s who live with
this suboptimal worldview are vulnerable and insecure because their self-worth is based on external validation.

*Applicability to military women.* Military women have always served in the shadow of male soldiers and received treatment secondary to the needs of men. Fontana, Schwartz and Rosenheck (1997) state that historically women in the military have been treated unequally relative to men. They have been affected by various –isms found in a society dominated by one group; in this case the white male military. Hence, they become classified as the “other” and face oppression outside and within their ranks. As stated above, per Myers et. al., if individuals are oppressed; they become socialized into a suboptimal worldview. This oppression leads to a fragmented sense of self which transcends the individual’s racial or ethnic group membership. Individual’s who live with this suboptimal worldview are vulnerable and insecure because their self-worth is based on external validation. Based on personal experiences, many military women experience a sense of fragmented self, and they do feel insecure and vulnerable because their feelings of worth and their identity development often is based on the external forces established, implemented and carried out by the white male military. OTAID can be applicable to women in the military when considering the basic premises of the theory. It is western. It deals with oppression and sub-optimal worldview. It addresses a fragmented sense of self. These are issues military women face in the dominant male culture of military service. This theory could be useful to clinicians working with women who feel displaced and fragmented because of their military service.
Feminist Identity Development Model for Women

Theory stages. The model of Feminist Identity Development for Women (Downing & Roush, 1985) consists of the following 5 stages. Stage 1 is Passive Acceptance. In this stage, the woman is unaware of or in denial about the individual, institutional and cultural discrimination and prejudice against her. She accepts the white male system of dominance and traditional gender roles. This woman avoids contact with any experience that may upset her equilibrium as a woman.

In Stage 2, Revelation, the woman faces crises or contradictions that she can no longer deny or ignore which cause her to question herself and gender roles. Events that may create this point of crisis may include exposure to a consciousness raising group, divorce or ending of a relationship, denial of a job in a male oriented occupational field, and the like. Women in this stage often feel anger, guilt and/or betrayal by society. When in this stage, women usually restrict their contacts to a small number of women who are accepting of their intense feelings. An example of stage 2 would be a woman who just divorced an over-bearing, controlling husband and now must take control of her life and finances while also finding employment in a male-dominated world.

Stage 3 is a stage of Embeddedness-Emanation. In the stage of Embeddedness, a woman undergoes a development of gender consciousness. It is a time of discovery of sisterhood and women often develop close emotional connections with other women in this stage. This connectedness provides affirmation and strength in their new identity. In the Emanation phase, the later part of this stage, women are willing to grieve the loss of self as defined by traditional sex roles while also opening up to alternative viewpoints. Women in this stage typically interact cautiously with men.
Stage 4, Synthesis, is a time when women increasingly value the positive aspects of being female and integrate their personal attributes into a positive self-concept. Women in this stage transcend traditional sex-roles. This is a stage of celebration for women, because they are able to channel their energies productively while also responding to discrimination and oppression appropriately; hence, they live life with authenticity.

Stage 5 is Active Commitment. In this stage, women develop a deep commitment to social change. Women in this stage carefully select issues on which to stand based on their talents, strengths and the possibility of effecting social change. Downing and Roush, (1985) state that very few women actually evolve to this stage and that most women who work for issues such as women’s rights, children’s rights, and the like, are actually functioning out of needs from earlier stages.

Summary of Feminist Identity Development Model. This theory is partially based on Cross’ (1971) theory of Black Identity Development and is based on the concept that women who live in our contemporary western society must acknowledge, struggle with and constantly work through their feelings about the prejudice and discrimination they experience as women in order to achieve a real and positive feminist identity. Women can recycle through the different stages at various times in their lives, especially when facing new dilemmas because of their sex. Not all women achieve the self-actualization of active commitments of stage 5, but most women, even though not in stage 5, continue to work for social issues and social justices.

Applicability to military women. Since this is a feminist Identity development model and focuses on women’s development only, it can easily apply to women in the
military. It addresses oppression, male dominance, integration and commitment which is similar to issues with which military women are forced to cope. Though there are ways in which this model can be used with women in the military, clinicians should not assume that military women are also feminists.

Homosexual Identity Formation

Theory stages. Cass’ (1979) Homosexual Identity Formation: A Theoretical Model addresses the developmental process of recognizing, accepting, expressing and sharing one’s sexual orientation with oneself and others. Cass’ theory consists of six stages.

Stage 1, Identity Confusion presents individuals becoming aware that their feelings and thoughts may be considered gay. This awareness may cause confusion and distress because the individuals are aware of the importance society places on heterosexuality. As they deal with their societal and internal conflict, they continue considering the possibility that they may be homosexual. This leads into the next stage of development, Identity Comparison. In this second stage, individuals begin to accept that they may be homosexual. It is important to stress that at this stage they accept the homosexual behavior not the homosexual identity. This stage can be very painful because individual can feel they are “the only one in the world like this,” (Cass, p.225). They develop new guidelines for their life because the old ones (i.e., traditional relationships, behaviors, ideals, life based on heterosexual identity) no longer apply.

As individuals address the changes in their lives in Stage 2, they are also becoming more tolerant of their sexuality, giving rise to Stage 3, Identity Tolerance. In this stage, individuals, though increasing their gay-awareness and activities still remain
only tolerant of their gay identity. They associate with gay people and participate in gay related activities yet remain heterosexual to the larger society and prefer to “pass” as straight. As they continue and increase their activities in the gay community, they develop a stronger identity with the gay community which helps them proceed to Stage 4, Identity Acceptance.

Identity Acceptance provides a level of comfort for individuals who struggled through the other stages and now accept who they are. In Stage 4, individuals accept themselves as there are. They do, however, develop issues with the anti-gay world that surrounds them. They have not resolved the anti-gayism in which they live. Proud of whom they have become and willing to take a stand on gay adoptions, gay priests, gay marriages, and gays in the white house, they boldly march into Stage 5, Identity Pride.

In Stage 5, individuals see the world in two views, gay versus anti-gay. There is total immersion into the gay subculture with little interaction with heterosexuals. Individuals confront heterosexual society with anger and on many occasions are met with anger and disgust. This in turn creates more hostilities between the gays and anti-gays. If this anger continues, these individuals will not progress to the final stage. Yet, if the individual anger toward the heterosexual society is met with a positive response, then there can be movement toward Stage 6, Identity Synthesis. This stage is the ultimate of Cass’ model. It is the integration of one’s sexual identity with all parts of one’s self. Identity synthesis is a stage of wholeness.

It is important to mention at this point that another stage of this model is Identity Foreclosure. This stage is not provided a specific number, and it could take place during any of the above numbered stages. Identity Foreclosure happens any time during the
developmental process when an individual chooses for whatever reason not to pursue further development in that specific stage.

**Summary of the Model.** Cass (1979) identifies homosexual identity as a developmental process which is motivated by the need of individuals to work through their sexual orientation/identity crisis and how or when they will come out of the closet. Hence, its developmental stages consist of personal action then interaction. The six stages promote self-exploration, intro and intra–pection, and community. Cass assumes that change and stability in individual behavior is due in the interaction between self and society.

**Applicability to military women.** Though Cass’ model focuses on homosexual identity components of this identity development can apply to women in uniform. Not that military women are developing a gay identity but they may ask themselves “who am I?” Or they may question what they are willing to sacrifice as a member of the military. For instance, in Cass’ Identity Pride stage, individuals are willing to be open about their sexuality; they place their privacy, dignity, integrity and civil rights on the line to stand up for what they believe only to be treated as half a person. In the military, women stand up to defend their country, putting their lives on the line, only to be treated as half a person. Both groups must ask, what am I willing to sacrifice? Also, Cass’ stage of Identity Acceptance might also be applicable to military women in the sense that when women in uniform accept themselves and the choice they made and realize that it is not the most acceptable choice in society, they associate mostly with each other or persons with the same ideology.
White Male Identity Model

Model types. The Key white male identity development model (2001) consists of types as opposed to stages as types describe a set of attitudes that can be modified by experiences (Rowe et al. 1994).

The Key model (2001) begins with Type 1, Noncontact Type, which describes individuals with little or no contact with persons outside their own race. The ethnically isolated white male may choose not to deal with race or gender issues, believes in the superiority of the white male and prefers to maintain that superiority and the current roles of women and non-whites in his world. He is a man who is “king of his castle” and rules with an iron fist even if it ends in violence. As society has changed and this white male is exposed to different people and different experiences, he becomes Type 2: The Claustrophobic Type. He sees his castle crumbling and blames it on the women and non-white persons. He feels that equal opportunity is just another way to give women and minority persons an unfair advantage over white males and that these “outside” groups who don’t deserve these advantages are closing in on the white male privilege. If an individual does not evolve from this type, he becomes stagnant and may remain a Type 2. Hopefully, a life changing event will take place and the white male will develop into Type 3: Conscious Identity Type. In this type, the individual is faced with a situation that contradicts his belief patterns and his consciousness level is raised to a new level of enlightenment. An example of this would be the white male sexist, bigot living in the farming border town in California who needed a bone marrow treatment in order to live. The only excellent match was one of his Mexican farmhands whom he had treated as chattel for years. Yet the farmhand was willing to give his marrow. And, the only person
able to perform the lifesaving treatment was a young Mexican, female doctor who worked in the fields to help the migrants. This farmer during his Type 3 development also gained a new family.

Once understanding the benefits of the unearned privilege of being a white male and that –isms really do exist, the white male evolves into Type 4: Empirical Type. He is developing an understanding of his displaced anger and blaming of women and non-whites for discrimination and equal opportunity practices. His painful growth leaves him begging for answers to questions about his own privilege, his racism and sexism, and his reality of a man’s world. If he continues to develop and is brave enough to continue challenging his egocentric beliefs, he becomes a Type 5: Optimal Type. This white male now has an understanding of how we must function as “one” to make things work, to survive. He understands that it is our diversity and reliance on each others’ different strengths that gives us the advantages. He is not the white man who goes into the black neighborhood to clean up a playground on a weekend because he feels bad for those little black boys. He is the white male who goes to his exclusive all-white-male club and talks to the members about exclusivity, racism and oppression. His goal is to eliminate oppression and to make the American Dream every American’s Dream.

Summary of the Key Model. The Key Model (2001) presents a way of understanding the development of white males in America. It provides insight into the knowledge of their unearned privilege on the development of white men and how that effects their development and ability to evolve to higher types. It seems that it is how this white male views or deals with his privilege that effects his success in development or stagnation in a specific type. Of course, this is a development model for the ultimate
white male. There are some ultimate white males in our society, albeit very few. Unfortunately, we still live in a white male driven society.

Applicability to military women. The Key model (2001) is not directly applicable to women in the military in the sense that any of the “types” can be derived and applied to the development of women in uniform. The reason why this model is discussed in this paper is due to the white masculine culture that women become a part of when joining the military. It is important to understand not only the theories or models that may be applicable to the women in this study but also the culture that impacts their development.

Conclusion

How does the invisible warrior become a warrior? Theories and models discussed in this chapter provide insight into the identity development of others yet how does a women soldier become a soldier? Still missing is a link to provide insight into the development of the women warriors’ identity.

In chapter 1, the general research question for this dissertation was established: Is there an identity development process for military women? Using Grounded Theory, this question will be explored. During this research invisible warriors, active, retired and veterans will be given their voice. Their own stories will be brought to life. The patterns and themes of their lives as military women will weave the beginnings of the search for an identity development of military women. An effort will be made to understand their growth, their loss, their sorrow, their success, their inner most pains and joys.
Chapter III

Method

“Women are warriors the same as men are warriors, and what this country owes them, if 'owe' is the word, is the same as we give any warrior.” Liz Allen, RVN, 67-68

In chapters 1 and 2, military women were often referred to as invisible warriors. To accomplish the goal of this research, a grounded theory approach was used which captured the voice of the invisible warriors who participated in this study in an effort to make them visible. Grounded theory is an inductive, theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data (Glaser & Strauss, 1965). Grounded theory eliminates stereotypes and myths and also provides a new perspective where other empirical studies have not gone before. It not only lifts the shroud of invisibility from these women by giving them voice but also provides insight and understanding into their world and lives as protectors of America’s freedom.

Grounded theory focuses on social interaction and relies heavily on data from interviews and observations to build theory grounded in the data rather than to test theory or simply describe empirical phenomena (Darkenwald, 1980, p.65). Grounded theory requires analysis to begin with the first interviews. Once the interview is transcribed, the data provided is fractured by open coding and then, by comparing the information from each interview, called constant comparison, ideas begin to emerge (Glaser, 1978,p.62). Open coding is a process in which the investigator engages in exploration of the data
without making any prior assumptions about what might be discovered and constant comparison involves comparing like with like to look for emerging patterns and themes.

Participants

The participants were active, retired and veteran military women. The Primary Investigator (PI) placed an ad in the official Ft. Bragg newspaper, \textit{Paraglide}, to recruit participants for this study. With a circulation of 25,000 individuals, this paper is available to all current and retired military personal utilizing Ft. Bragg and Pope Air Force Base. This ad recruited female volunteers (i.e., active, retirees and veterans) to participate in the present study and listed the investigator’s contact number. The demographics of the participants represented some of the diversity of military women.

\textit{Age}. The ages of the participants ranged from 23 to 50 years old.

\textit{Ethnicity}. The participants were European-American for the purposes of the present study. The reason for this limitation was that this is the first study of this topic and it was important to control as many variables as possible that might affect the experiences of the military women.

\textit{Rank}. The participants were enlisted personnel and commissioned officers.

\textit{Number of participants}. From the prospective participants, six women were selected to participate in the study. The women were stratified and selected randomly from the following groups: 2 retirees/veterans, 2 active military with $>10$ years of service and 2 active with $<10$ years of service. This purposeful sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) ensured diverse military backgrounds for participants in the study. It seems important to encompass various life cycles and stages when studying a population’s psychosocial development. Purposeful sampling is strategically selecting a limited
number of participants, who will give optimal insight into an issue in which little is known. It was used in this present study because there was limited data on the group being studied and also used to reduce variation.

Individual profiles. Misty was forty-one years old, widowed and a mother of one child. She entered the Army at age thirty. She spent nine years in the Army as an Operating Room Technician.

Entering the Army as a Private (E-1), she ended her tour of service and was medically discharged as a Specialist 4 (E-4). During her time in service she spent a tour in Korea and was in service during the current Iraq and Afghanistan wars though did not serve “in theater” in Iraq nor Afghanistan.

Lynn was 35 years old and currently stationed at Ft. Bragg, NC. She was 18 when entering the Army as an enlisted person, Private (E-1). As a wheeled vehicle mechanic, she did one 3 year tour of service at which time she was honorably discharged at the rank of Specialist 4 (E-4). She used her GI Educational benefits to attend college where she entered a ROTC program. Upon graduation, she received a commission of second lieutenant. Lynn was immediately activated, stationed at Ft. Bragg, and assigned to an engineering company. She currently holds the rank of captain and has over 11 years of combined military experience. Lynn has also served two tours in Iraq. She initially entered the army for educational benefits, liked the discipline, health benefits, job options and the ability to travel.

Jennifer was 23 years old and currently stationed at Ft. Bragg, NC. She was a Specialist 4 (E-4) and worked as a health care specialist also known as a medic. Jennifer has been in the Army for 3.5 years and has served one tour in Iraq. She has 2.5 years
remaining on her enlistment. She joined the army a year after high school graduation for job security, medical benefits, and educational benefits, and to serve her country.

_**Dorothy**_ was a 50 year old veteran of the Army who entered at age 28. She worked in Military Intelligence (MI) during her eight year career in the Army. During her service in MI she frequently was assigned to the CIA. She entered during the Vietnam War because she felt she needed to change her personal life. She was patriotic and did not like the way the veterans of the war were being treated when they returned home from Vietnam. She also was not sure how she felt about the war and thought she should find out about it herself. She was “in theater” in Vietnam but stated it was for a short time only.

_**Molly**_ was a 33 year old light wheeled vehicle mechanic in the Army. She entered the Army at age 20, had currently served 13 years, and was a Staff Sergeant (E-6). During her years of service she was stationed in Korea and Iraq. She entered the military on a dare by her friends. Not knowing anything about the military but having no plans for their future, a group of four friends, including her, dared each other to enlist in the Army. Three of the four enlisted. Molly stated that none of them had any idea of what they were getting into when they enlisted and never took the time to think it through. “A dare is a dare.”

_**Maxine**_ was 27 years old who entered the military at 18 years old. She was currently a Staff Sergeant (E-6) with 9 years in the US Army. Temporarily stationed at Ft. Bragg, NC, she was a Psychological Operations Specialist (PSYOP) who conducted planning, advising and education for psychological operations. Maxine entered the military for the medical and education benefits, travel, and patriotic duty. She stated that
when she entered the Army she did not know what to anticipate. Because she had no
direction in life she felt “why not join the Army?”

*Ethical treatment of participants.* The study was approved by the NC State
University’s IRB. All guidelines were followed for working with human subjects outlined
in the study and as required by the University.

*Investigator/Interviewer*

The investigator/interviewer of this research was not only a student who is
completing this study as a part of their doctoral degree requirements but she was also an
insider in regard to the group she was researching as she served in the armed forces. She
served in the Army and was an honorably discharged veteran. These insights and
experiences offered many benefits when obtaining access to military personnel and
understanding of military customs, courtesies, protocols and procedures. Unfortunately,
the negative side of this familiarity was the potential biases of the
investigator/interviewer. She was aware of these biases and how they may have effected
how the questions are posed, responses given and even the fundamental nature of the
interview itself.

In an effort to keep these biases in check, the investigator/interviewer made notes
of feelings and also comments and behaviors that were emotionally motivated. These
notes were maintained in a journal. They were “checked” shortly after the interview by
the auditor to obtain feedback regarding these feelings, comments and behaviors.
Checking is the process conducted by the auditor to assist the investigator in decreasing
or eliminating personal bias during the data collection and analysis process. Due to the
personal biases the investigator may convey as an insider while conducting this research,
it was necessary to utilize the auditor to review any issues that may create bias during the study. After reviewing the journal and discussion with the investigator/interviewer, the auditor indicated that it appeared that the investigator/interviewer showed no bias during the interview process. This process of reflexivity is important in qualitative research because it challenges the investigator/interviewer to be self-aware of their feelings, issues, knowledge, biases and/or limitations about the population being researched and can help to eliminate subjective bias of the investigator/interviewer during the research process.

*External Coder*

As the primary investigator, the researcher also coded all the interviews. For the sake of objectivity, an external coder was provided a list of codes based on research questions and themes which emerged. The external coder used in this present study was a 35 year old, European-American woman with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology. She had no research or military experience nor any vested interest in the outcome of this present study.

The external coder was instructed to read coding instructions established by the investigator to become acquainted with the coding scheme. The coder was asked to assign codes to specific themes. The coder did not have access to the investigator’s codes at this point. When the coder completed this task, the researcher’s original coding was supplied, and the coder discussed any differences with the investigator so the coder’s responses and the investigator’s codes could be compared. Using open coding, themes were created by the research questions and terms used by the participants during the interview process. The investigators and coders responses were then compared.
Initially the investigator developed twelve codes based on the research questions and the themes that emerged during the interviews. The final code list included the original codes based on the research questions, the emerging themes and sub-codes. Codes with similar properties or characteristics were grouped together due to either their interchangeability or similarity in dimensions. The final resulting list consisted of nine codes.

*Auditor*

An auditor provided secondary analysis of the data to insure the interpretations of the investigator were convincing and to verify the consistency of agreement among data research methods, interpretations and conclusions. Qualitative analysis employs the skills of the auditor for ensuring the validity of the data as opposed to quantitative analysis which might use intercoder/interrater agreement coefficients or other reliability estimates.

The auditor verified the steps the investigator went through to arrive at the particular analysis/interpretations, verified the logic of the investigator's chronology of the research process and verified that a systematic process was undertaken by the investigator.

The auditor selected for this study was independent of the investigator and had no investment in the outcome of this study. The auditor, a 42 year old, European-American woman, had a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics and Business Administration with experience in economic development. She was referred to the investigator due to her background in statistics, economics and interest in the subject matter of the study.
**Instrument**

The goal of this semi-structured interview instrument (See Appendix A) was to assess if there was an identity development process for military women. The semi-structured interview in the present study consisted of the following components: military background information; limited personal information; definition of self and military self; descriptions of difference and sameness in relationship to male counterparts; and reflections of feelings and events.

The semi-structured interview provided the interviewer with a standard set of questions yet maintained a flexible format so that additional questions could be generated from the initial question without losing the focus of the main question.

The interview instrument for the present study, the Military Women’s Questionnaire (MWQ), was created by the researcher with the assistance of Dr. Pamela Martin at North Carolina State University because there was no current literature on this topic and no known related studies.

In developing the interview instrument it was necessary to establish content validity. Assessing content validity is considered one of the most critical first steps in instrument development (Beck & Gable, 2001, p.203). Content validity concerns how well the questions or items correspond to the concept being measured (Saw & Ng, 2001, p.132) or adequately represent the domain of content (Beck & Gable). In order to establish content validity the following steps were taken.

*Steps in developing the MWQ.* The steps in developing this instrument were as follows: (a) the researcher created a pool of items based on experience and literature review; (b) the researcher then consulted with Dr. Pamela Martin, an experienced
qualitative researcher to review the information and assist in development of the instrument; and (c) six active duty military women, one retired military woman and two women veterans evaluated the item pool.

The 6 active duty military women were recruited by a medical doctor at the rank of major who was serving in Iraq as Chief Psychiatrist of her unit from March 2006 to September 2006. The retired military woman and the two veterans were recruited by the investigator. The investigator obtained knowledge of these women through friends and was not acquainted with them prior to initial contact to discuss questionnaire. None of the women had prior knowledge of any information on the questionnaire.

Instructions. The women were provided with the following directions by the Major and the investigator: “Read the survey handed to you and complete the survey. Upon completion please answer the following questions: Did you understand the questions? Did all of the questions make sense to you? If not, which ones did not? Why? Did you think that the questions were applicable to yourself as a military woman? If not, which ones did not? Why? Do you think these questions are applicable to military women in general? Are there any questions you would delete or change? Which ones? Why? And how would you change them? Do you think other women of your rank/class/status would understand the questions on this survey? Do you have any other comments about this survey?”

The criteria the investigator had in developing these particular questions was to obtain basic background information, acquire an understanding of their experiences and development and to provide the women with a platform to be heard and giving their experiences a voice.
All responses were recorded on paper by both the Major and the investigator. Adjustments were made via negotiating. Upon completion of the evaluation of the item pool, addendums were made to three questions for better clarity. No items were deleted.

Addendums were made to the following questions for clarification purposes:

6. Describe individuals that have helped shape who you are.

(Added) - (Prior to military and/or civilian personnel is okay)

8. Do/Did you feel “different” as a military person as it relates/related to male military personnel?

(Added) - (Different is how you describe different, not who others describe it.)

10. What have been some of your greatest challenges as a military woman?

(Added) This only pertains to challenges that are/were a direct result of military duty. i.e. the challenge of an abusive husband would not be a response for this answer unless it deals directly with your military duty.

Procedure

Data Collection

Interviews. Individual interviews were conducted to assess the participants’ perceptions of their military experiences. Data were collected using an audio recording device and note-taking. The interviewer suggested settings which were quiet, conducive to interviewing and recording the participant’s responses. The participants selected the most appropriate and comfortable setting to conduct the interviews. These settings included personal offices, a barrack room, and a club. Each participant and the principal investigator negotiated the time for the interviews, (i.e., initial, follow-up and final). All follow-up interviews were conducted in person.
Initial interview. The initial contact with potential participants was conducted by phone and letter. In the letter, they were provided with the outlined goals, methodology, and duration of their involvement in the study. The letter also emphasized their voluntary participation and their ability to withdraw at any time. They were also informed that the interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed using direct quotes as data.

Following the initial letter, phone calls were made to arrange interviews with those who were interested to set a time and place for an interview. Once participants agreed to be involved in the study, they were sent follow-up letters confirming their participation, addressing the general areas that were to be discussed with them during the interview, reminded that the interview was to be recorded but confidential, and a consent form was enclosed for them to bring to the first interview.

The participants were provided with additional forms, when necessary and the process of the interview was explained. The investigator reviewed all paperwork and ensured that the participants understood the procedures, goals, duration, and the like (i.e., all aspects of study which impact them). The recording equipment was tested prior to each interview and when preparing to initiate interviews. The investigator explained the structure and process of the semi-structured interviews. The investigator adapted and added questions per participants’ focus during the interviews. At the close of the interviews, the investigator provided each participant the opportunity to include any information not addressed during the interview. Each initial interview was anticipated to be two to three hours in duration depending on the participant’s time frame and availability.
**Follow-up interviews.** The follow-up interviews were conducted within two weeks of the initial interview. The follow-up interviews were in person and were used for the participant to review the transcript of their initial interview in order to ensure its accuracy. No additional interviews were necessary.

**Data Analysis**

Data for the present study were analyzed by utilizing fieldnotes, participant checks, research reflexivity, external coders, an auditor and ATLAS, ti.

**Fieldnotes.** These notes were the observational notes that are descriptive and captured verbal and non-verbal expressions, situations and all variables of the interview. They were used to obtain the raw data for coding and categorizing.

**Validity checks.** Validity of this study was established by utilizing different validity checks. These checks were the participant checks, to ensure the accuracy of the data; research reflexivity, to eliminate personal bias of the researcher; and the use of an auditor who provided secondary analysis of the data and verified the consistency of agreement among data research methods, interpretations and conclusions.

**Participant checks.** In the follow-up interviews, participants reviewed the cleaned data collected from the first interview to ensure accuracy. The focus of this interview was accuracy of the data. Participant checks, also known as member checks, are used to establish validity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe that member checks are “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p.314) in a study.

**Research reflexivity.** This is another technique for establishing validity. Reflexivity means sensitivity to the ways in which the researcher and the research process have shaped the collected data, including the role of prior assumptions and experience,
which can influence even the most avowedly inductive inquiries. Personal and intellectual biases need to be made plain at the outset of all research reports to enhance the credibility of the findings (Mays & Pope, 2000, p. 4). Reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research. (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 228).

In the present study, the researcher used reflexivity by self-disclosing all biases and beliefs prior to the start of the research project. The auditor, through reviews of the journal and discussions with the auditor, found no biases that would effect this study.

Data analysis. After each interview, the tapes were transcribed verbatim using a transcription machine. All non-words such as tone and pitch of voice, pauses, background sounds, and the like were also noted. The transcription was then reviewed while listening to tapes to check for accuracy.

Using ATLAS.ti, the data from the transcriptions was coded according to grounded theory, noting themes and concepts that emerged during the interviews. While analyzing the data, notes were made of all data that could be potentially interesting to the study. Then the investigator identified and defined the common patterns and themes, noted if some data related to one or more categories and identified and differentiated between major and minor categories.
Chapter IV

Results

A circle portrayed by individual snapshots in time of a past which ultimately bonds forever we who served, the caring, brave and sometimes fragile women of war.

The Women’s Vietnam War Memorial, 1999

Individual Profiles

Each woman’s interview data are presented in an individual profile that summarizes events that influenced their development as military women.

Misty

Initial interview. The interview was conducted in her private office per her request. It was after office hours and there were no interruptions. The interview lasted for one and half hours. She was relaxed about the interview and excited about the opportunity to talk about her experiences in the military.

She indicated that her reasons for entering the military were because it was a safe place, provided health insurance, she was patriotic and she admired the first women who served in the military.

Misty stated that people would describe her as reserved, eccentric and hard to get to know. Her father who spent 16 years in the military had a forceful personality and ran the house in a military fashion. Her mother was weak and wishy-washy which frustrated Misty. Her mother was not a good role-model for her.
As a military woman, Misty describes herself as proficient, knowledgeable, and knowing when to ask questions. She stated that the military improved her social and organizational skills, and her logical and computer skills. She also acquired leadership and networking skills. Her greatest positive influences in the military were two male sergeants who did not treat her differently because of her sex while a negative influence was a sergeant who refused to promote any women in his command.

When asked if she felt different as a military person in relation to male military personnel, Misty laughed as she recalled her bi-annual physical training test. She explained that due to her large breast size it was necessary to use two different bras during the duration of the test due to the different activities required in the tests. The male military personnel would harass her, make fun of her breast size and jeer at her while she was changing her bra in a semi-secluded area.

Two additional incidents which occurred that also not only made her feel different but she stated clearly “defined” her as different in relation to male military personnel were an attempted rape and a completed rape. Both incidents occurred on military installations, by military personnel whom she identified. Both incidents were handled administratively, non-criminally. Misty was provided with no mental health treatment and, due to the fact that no criminal charges were filed against her assailants, she was forced to face them on a regular basis. She was ridiculed by other personnel and dealt with her pain in silence.

Asked about her greatest challenge as a military woman, she responded “being treated as a military wife instead of an active duty military person.” She stated that people viewed her as a woman and automatically assumed she must be a dependent spouse.
They even asked you your husband’s unit number. “Being a woman in the military is the greatest challenge as a military woman.”

Another issue that Misty addressed that affected her as a woman was choice of assignments. She stated that there were various assignments she requested, and they were male only or male preferred assignments even though they were not combat assignments. Hence there were limitations on some choice assignments.

When discussing her experiences from enlistment until discharge, she stated she went through many changes and had many positive and negative experiences. Misty stated that among the reasons she entered the military were that she felt it was safe and offered benefits. During her time in the military she bought a house, gave birth to a son, and developed personally. She, also, dealt with a rape, an attempted rape, the death of her husband, and was medically discharged due to ongoing issues she preferred not to discuss during this interview.

*Participant check.* A second interview was conducted with Misty to review the information collected from the initial interview in order to insure accuracy. She stated the information was accurate from what she could remember. There were no additions or deletions to the data.

*Lynn*

*Initial interview.* Lynn was interviewed at her off-post residence per her request. Her interview lasted 1.5 hours. There were no interruptions with the exception of a phone call which Lynn left to the answering machine. She was comfortable and relaxed. When asked if she understood the purpose of the interview and sign the consent form, she stated yes and that she was very happy to contribute to the study.
Lynn stated that her identity as a child and a young woman was formed by her mother who she described as a feminist. Her mother taught her to be strong and self-sufficient. Her parents divorced when she was 10 years old at which time her mother became the head of the household. She was the oldest of three children and assumed a great deal of responsibility for her siblings after the divorce. She stated that people would describe her as strong willed, serious, disciplined, and a leader.

Upon entering the military, she did not find basic training difficult, but during her advanced training (mechanic school) she realized that it was not exactly what she wanted. Knowing she had a commitment, she decided to apply herself, complete her commitment, and then use her educational benefits to attend college. She had no intention of continuing a career in the military at that time. Lynn stated that after her discharge, she entered college, but by then the Army was in her blood. She joined the ROTC and was commissioned as a second lieutenant. She stated that she feels she has found her niche and is happy with her decision to choose a career as an officer in the US Army. She stated she is planning to remain in the Army for at least 20 years or “as long as they let me stay.”

When asked if she ever felt different from her male counterparts because she was a woman, she stated that as an enlisted person she often felt different. Lynn stated that respect was distributed differently and that harassment was allowed and expected. As an officer, it was a bit different only because she was an officer. She states there is a different level of respect for officers, but even within the ranks of officers she still is treated differently sometimes. She stated that she does not face the blatant disrespect she
did as an enlisted person, but there is clearly an underlying current of difference within the ranks because of sex.

Also, Lynn stated that she is viewed as a woman first and a soldier second. She is dedicated to her troops and would lead them into battle, but the military places limitations on her because she is a woman. She stated she has the same training as the men, has the same dedication as the men, is as strong as a lot of the men, is as good a leader if not better than most of the men, yet the military discriminates against her because she is a woman.

Lynn did talk about some incidents when she felt the same as male military personnel. She stated that IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices) and insurgents do not discriminate based on sex. She said “dead is dead” and that combat levels the playing field between the sexes. She continued by saying that even though women are not supposed to be in combat, it cannot be avoided in many cases so there you are with the men, being shot at; now that make you very equal. She also felt the same when they mourned the injured and the dead: “There is no discrimination there.”

When discussing her greatest challenges as a military woman, Lynn stated “not being able to be all that I can be.” She stated that the Army had a logo that was “Join the Army and be all that you can be.” She said that it does not apply to women because there are limitations as to what they can be. Lynn wants to be assigned to combat units in Iraq yet she cannot because of her sex. She stated she cannot not use all of her abilities, apply her soldier and leadership skills, or prove her commitment because she is a woman.

Another area in which Lynn felt that as a woman she was faced with challenges was in her experiencing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). She stated that PTSD is
still associated with male soldiers in combat, and she had difficulty attempting to talk to other people about it and trying to seek professional assistance about her PTSD. Lynn felt that her PTSD symptoms were not taken as serious as the men were because she was a woman and women “just don’t get PTSD like soldiers do.” She stated that many women she served with felt that their problems with PTSD were trivialized because they were women.

When asked to describe growth enhancing experiences from when she entered the military to the current time in her life she offered a number of scenarios. She stated that her entrance into the army as an enlisted person was a milestone because it was the first time she had ever lived away from home and it was a totally different environment. Then when she left the Army to return to college, she surprised herself by joining ROTC and returning to active duty as a commissioned officer. She stated that becoming an officer and leading troops provided her with a different mindset. Lynn noted that “when you are in charge of peoples’ lives in a possible life or death situation, you take leadership seriously.” She stated that her positions as an officer caused her to grow personally, emotionally and spiritually. Her tours in Iraq have had the biggest impact on her growth because they have scarred her emotionally while solidifying her unity with the members of her unit. She states she is very tight with her fellow soldiers because they have been through hell, but she still has a hard time being alone at night and closing her eyes.

**Participant check.** Lynn reviewed the information from the first interview to insure the accuracy. No changes were made from the initial interview notes.
Jennifer

*Initial interview.* Jennifer was interviewed in her barrack per her request. The interview lasted two hours. She stated she understood the purpose of the study and was eager to share her stories.

When asked how others would describe her, she stated probably quiet, kind and always wanting to help other people. She said she had always been a “helper” which probably came from her parents. Her mother is a nurse and her father is a middle-school math teacher. Jennifer was always good in math and science and believed that due to her parent’s commitment to human services, she followed suit. She stated that they were wonderful role-models who influenced her values and morals in a very positive way.

When entering the Army, basic training was more rigid that Jennifer would have liked but said she kept her goal in sight and made it through. She developed friendships with a couple other young women, and they supported each other through basic training. Jennifer said that the support of others going through the same training is important, and if a person does not have that camaraderie they can easily fail. Jennifer then went to train as an Army medic. She was familiar with much of the medical terminology because of her mother. The formal training was not difficult. She did state that during her training she had a first sergeant who had experienced a great deal of time in combat. She asked him how he handled the injuries and deaths in combat for so many years. He told her that he always has a lump in his throat and that if that lump ever goes away, he knows it is time for him to leave the medical corps and retire. She stated that those became words for her to live by.
When asked if she ever felt different as it related to male military personnel, Jennifer replied, “Yes and no.” She continued by saying that there are times when you feel different, but in the medical field it is not as great a difference as in other MOSs (Military Occupational Specialty). She stated that she believed that because women have been in the medical field for so long they are not seen as infringing on the “boys” territory, so there is more acceptance. On the other hand, she continued, when in a combat situation like Iraq, women are seen as less competent. She provided an example of a injured soldier during heavy fire. It is more likely that a male medic is sent to help the wounded soldier than a female. She stated that we (women) just are not seen as being able to handle the roughest stuff. Jennifer said she can save a life as well as she can shoot a gun. She also stated that she did not “feel” different as much as people and policy “made” her different.

Jennifer stated that about her greatest challenge as a military woman was being stationed in Iraq. She started by saying “It is a senseless war, but I must do my job.” She stated that she is always a soldier first; she enlisted, knew there was a war and was ordered to Iraq. She feels though that it is “man-made” and that through the eyes of a woman it is insane. She stated that she feels that women are peacekeepers, teachers, healers, negotiators and ambassadors and not people who support or encourage wars. Jennifer felt that there was too much testosterone involved in this war and, as a soldier putting duty first, she felt there were much better ways to serve and protect her country than being at war in Iraq. She did want to make it very clear that her feelings did not diminish her ability to function as a soldier. She also pointed out that she does not want her views to be viewed as making women appear weak or less able to handle combat. She
closed this segment of the interview by saying: “As a military woman, Iraq has been my
greatest challenge because it makes no sense and I believe that if military women were
running the show, we would not be in this mess.”

When asked if she ever felt discounted or negated, Jennifer stated that she
personally never really felt discounted. She stated again that it was probably because of
her chosen field in the medical service corps. Overall, though, she stated, as a group she
felt women in the Army are not given their full credit and not treated as being as
important as men.

Jennifer discussed various events which impacted her life since she entered the
military. She stated that she understands people better and has seen a different world of
pain and suffering. She has a greater insight into herself and knows that she wants to
continue to work with people but is unsure if it will be in the medical field. Jennifer said
that Iraq had a great impact on her and how she views life nowadays. She stated that
emotionally she feels that she has aged many years beyond the 3.5 years she has been in
the Army. After a tour in Iraq, she cannot support the “craziness” of the war but stands by
her obligation to duty and country. She has nightmares and does not want to return to Iraq
but states she will go where her country calls her. She also stated that she knows if she
does not go when called then someone else will go in her place and that, to her, is
desertion.

*Participant check.* After having a bit of difficulty meeting with Jennifer again, she
did have the opportunity to review the initial interview and confirmed that all information
was accurate.
Dorothy

Initial interview. For the initial interview, Dorothy requested that we meet at her favorite restaurant in Smithfield, NC. A more private place was suggested and she stated that she had nothing private to say about her experiences as she was proud of all of them. She started talking about her life as a WAC (Women’s Army Corps) as she was signing the consent forms. She stated that she always enjoys talking about her experiences and was excited to participate in this study. This interview lasted two hours.

When asked how others would describe her, Dorothy said they would say she was outspoken, says what is on her mind, honest and to the point. She stated that she had to be outspoken in a family of 13 children or she would never have gotten anything or anywhere growing up. Even though her family was very close knit, it was still difficult to be heard in that size of group. Her family had the greatest impact on her life growing up and her remaining siblings continue to influence her life positively.

Her experiences as a military women were a lot different than her childhood. The first thing she learned in the military was that “women get no respect.” She stated that women are treated like dirt, and the men are under the impression that the women are there to comfort and service them.

Dorothy provided a number of scenarios describing her experiences in which she was treated differently, negated, discounted and made to feel invisible. She stated that in one instance a male Sergeant Major approached her and said that the only women in the army are either lesbians or whores and asked her which she was. She replied neither and then asked him which he was. Another situation arose when her Master Sergeant, who was always patting the women on the buttock, grabbed her buttock one day. She smacked
him and told him to never touch her again or she would break his neck. As Dorothy worked her way up through the ranks, she had a male corporal administrative assistant assigned to work for her. At this point, she was a Staff Sergeant (E-6). The Corporal (E-4) entered her office and advised her that he would not ever work for a woman. He stated he would refuse all orders and would not report to work. She then listed him as AWOL (absent without leave). There were also many other occasions when male military personnel told her that they did not have to obey her orders because her sergeant stripes were not “real” since she was a woman and women did have “real” rank.

The most frustrating and discounting situations though involved her position in Military Intelligence and the regular White House briefings. During these briefings, the male military and civilian officials were less likely to listen to her intelligence information because she was a woman even though the intelligence was all gathered from the same places. When she was providing her information and data, the officials doubted her accuracy while accepting the information from her male counterparts without question.

Dorothy stated that despite the sexism, disrespect and ignorance, she did enjoy of her experiences in the Army. She had fun with the other WACs, she traveled to various countries while working for military intelligence and assigned to the CIA, and most importantly she met her husband, a marine, and after eight years of service decided that civilian life would suite her marriage better. She has no regrets about her decisions and relishes all of her experiences.
Participant check. Our second meeting was at the same restaurant in Smithfield, NC. Dorothy reviewed the information from the initial interview and agreed with all the contents. No information was added or deleted.

**Molly**

*Initial Interview.* Molly requested that the interview be conducted at a club on the Ft. Bragg, NC reservation. She stated that she was comfortable there and she would have no problems discussing any personal issues. A quieter place was suggested but she insisted on this location. At the time we met the club was not busy and a table was where we had privacy. Molly signed her consent form and agreed to participate in the interview. The interview with Molly lasted 2.5 hours.

When asked about people who influenced her and how people would describe her, she stated that her family and best friends had the greatest influence on her. Her family has always been close, and she still speaks to her mother regularly. Molly stated that her mother in particular, more so than her father, influenced her by teaching her personal strength and responsibility. She said people would describe her as loyal, dependable, reliable, responsible and sometimes gullible but overall a good, strong person.

When describing some of her military experiences, Molly said she wanted to start with her first exposure to sexism and harassment. She stated that prior to the military she did not know what sexual harassment was or that it even existed, and in fact, when she was first harassed, she did not even know it was harassment. She just felt dirty. When Molly was in advanced training for mechanic school one of her male peers constantly made comments to her about her breasts, buttock and overall body. He even progressed to the point of telling her what he would like to do to her body parts in a sexual manner. She
finally spoke to her drill sergeant about the situation. He told her that it appeared to be sexual harassment, and if she wanted to pursue her claim, the alleged perpetrator would have to be present while she was making her statement. She advised her drill sergeant she just wanted it stopped, and he told her he could not do anything without her filing a complaint against the perpetrator. She decided it was not worth it.

Another incident occurred when she was first stationed at Ft. Bragg. Her platoon leader focused his eyes on her breasts every time he spoke to her and continuously made comments to her about her breasts. Feeling she had little or no recourse, she contacted the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) at Ft. Bragg. Through that interaction, she was appointed the EEO contact for her company to whom all harassment complaints would be addressed. The EEOC sent her to training at which time, she stated, she became an expert in the area of sexual harassment and abuse. She stated that during these periods of harassment was when she felt different from the male military personnel. They made her feel second class and set apart because she was a woman.

When asked if she ever felt the same as her male military counterparts, she stated most of the time. Molly said she realized that the military was a male domain and to make rank and get ahead one must think like the men. She excelled in physical training and was an all-star at Ft. Bragg. She then decided to attend parachute jump school and become an Airborne soldier. Once an Airborne soldier, Molly said she was equal to the men and very superior to the women. Her Airborne wings gave her privilege and a lot of attitude. She offered an example of her privilege when speaking about “going to church” with the Sergeant Major and his guys. Her Sergeant Major invited her to go to church one Friday evening with his troops (all male) because he believed she had proven herself. He
told her that he and his troops always go to church together on Friday nights. She agreed and even thought it was great that they all prayed together. One of the men picked her up, and they drove to the Green Beret Club on Ft. Bragg. Everyone was assembled inside drinking beer. She thought it odd to be drinking before church but joined in with the men. When asking about church, the Sergeant Major advised her she was at church and that this was his select group of soldiers who met there every Friday night. The group was exclusive and did not include women until that night. From that Friday forward, Molly attended “church” weekly and believes she has became even more superior to the women with whom she serves.

Molly stated that, due to her physical fitness abilities and her Airborne status, she is accepted among the male troops, is not negated nor discounted by her command(s), and works harmoniously with all the men even when in supervisor capacities. She has little association with women, actually feels that they are beneath her abilities, and do not warrant relationships with her.

Molly also became extremely competitive with her male counterparts. She wanted to have the best scores in physical fitness tests compared to men not women. Molly felt “popping silk” (parachuting) maintained her competitive edge with the men. Whether it was physical fitness, popping silk, going to church or her routine duties as a mechanic, Molly stated her competitive spirit with the men became obsessive.

Molly’s greatest challenge as a military woman is dealing with her post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She developed PTSD while serving in Iraq and states that she has frequent “meltdowns” because of the disorder. She is currently prescribed medication but states it does not work and is receiving no mental health services because it will
reflect on her service record and effect future promotions and assignments. She breaks down and weeps when she hears the National Anthem and Lee Greenwood’s “God Bless the USA.” In fact, during the interview, “God Bless the USA” played in the background and she began to cry while explaining her love for her country, her dedication to the USA, and how her tour in Iraq made her a better American. She does not like the war and stated the hatred of Americans in Iraq was overpowering. Molly said “we are just doing our job and everyone hates us.” She continued by describing the people, the way they live, and the experiencing of seeing dead bodies. She said “they are poor people and we are trying to make them better.” Americans, my friends, are dying trying to make them better and yet they hate us. “It has made me so proud to be an American.” She said she is thankful that her daughter and family are American and she is willing to defend and die for America.

Molly is hopeful that eventually she will be able to obtain mental health assistance for her PSTD. She stated that she is always on edge, has difficulty sleeping, and “just wants it to go away.” When first told she had PTSD, she went into denial because she felt she was too strong to get PTSD. “Only the weak get PTSD, and I was one of the guys, I could not have PTSD.” She now talks about it more with her male comrades. They support each other and share their stories. She will continue obtaining support from her brothers-in-arms until she can acquire secure and safe assistance from the mental health system that will not negatively impact her future.

When discussing other major events that have occurred during her time in service, Molly stated she had gotten married, had a child (daughter), been divorced, and remarried. She served tours in Korea, Iraq and Guantanamo Bay with most of her time in
service at Ft. Bragg, NC. Molly reported seeing “the good, the bad and the ugly” during her years in service. She stated that once someone enters the military, they are never the same again. She continued by saying the military changes you forever. It changes your mind and your soul, and you are never the same again. She closed by saying the greatest event during her time in service is just being in the service because she knows she will never be the same again.

Participant check. I met with Molly at the same club on Ft. Bragg where the initial interview took place. Molly reviewed the information and agreed to its accuracy. Nothing was added or deleted.

Maxine

Initial interview. The initial interview which lasted for 1.5 hours was conducted in Maxine’s office on the Ft. Bragg reservation. It was quiet, and there were no interruptions. Maxine signed the consent form and agreed to participate in the study.

Maxine grew up with her parents and 3 brothers. Both parents worked and the family was a good solid, “all-American family.” Due to having no sisters, she did not do typical girl things. She stated that she grew up riding bikes, climbing trees, tying knots and built a club house with her brothers. Growing up, being the only girl influenced her the most. She did not know how girls were supposed to act nor what they were supposed to do. She said she was just one of the boys. She claimed that she never needed her brothers to protect her because she was always able to protect herself. Maxine said her family would probably describe her as independent, strong, straight forward, honest, and loyal.
In describing her military experiences, Maxine stated overall they have been great. She loves her job, enjoys traveling, and the military has provided her with an excellent career, and making her a stronger woman and leader. She stated that there are also negative sides to military life. Maxine talked about sexual harassment when she was at the lower ranks. She reported a situation when she was a PFC and her First Sergeant grabbed her breast and just laughed. She was shocked but able to tell him that if he did that again she would grab him in the crotch and he would no longer be laughing. She stated that, even though he was her First Sergeant, he got the message, and there were no more problems.

Maxine said she knew early in her career that this was a “man’s army” and that she was an outsider as a woman and had to make her own way. She was fortunate enough to have some women non-commissioned officers and officers as role models though very few. She had opportunities to work with them and discuss some issues. She stated that topics such as harassment or sexual assault were never discussed. For some reason, she continued, it was taboo, like we were afraid to talk about these issues even though we knew we were all affected by them.

As she rose through the ranks, Maxine said she did not feel different from the male military personnel. She stated that at the lower ranks there is little or no respect for women. Women always have to prove themselves but men do not have to prove themselves as much because they are men. When advancing in rank, she became accepted “more” as a soldier. She commented that she had to pay her dues to become “more” accepted, dues that men never have to pay just because of their sex. Even at her current rank, Maxine states she must still try to prove herself. Maxine stated her greatest
challenge in being a military woman is the constant “proving” and fighting to show her worth as a soldier.

She stated that she has two jobs in the Army, first as a soldier and second her job in PSYOP. She continued by saying that, when she spends energy proving her worth as a soldier because of her sex and also has her job to do, it becomes frustrating and overwhelming at times. Even though she does not have to prove herself as much any more there is still the underlying issue of her being a female and not totally accepted.

When asked if she ever felt negated, discounted or invisible, she stated that it occurred earlier in her career and not so much now but that as a woman she still cannot be assigned the same jobs and duty assignments as her male counterparts. She stated that at this point in her career she has gotten accustomed to the idea, and it does not bother her as much as it used to although it is still an issue.

Maxine stated the major outcomes during her career in the army are that she has grown personally and professionally. She has traveled to places she would not have seen if not in the military. She has been to Germany, Iraq, Afghanistan and various installations stateside. Maxine said she has great benefits and will have a comfortable retirement. She does not know if she will retire at 20 years or stay longer at this point. She said as long as she is enjoying her job she will probably put in 30 years. Maxine has never married and has not regretted it, relating that military life is too difficult for married life. Maxine ended the interview by stating that entering and staying in the Army was the best decision she ever made in her life.
Participant check. I met with Maxine at her office to review interview information from first interview for accuracy. She agreed that the information was accurate. Nothing was added or deleted.

Specific Themes

At the conclusion of the interviews, all the interviews were coded utilizing Atlas.ti. For the sake of objectivity, an external coder was provided a list of codes based on the research questions and themes that emerged. The external coder checked the reliability and validity of the themes and codes during the data analysis process by identifying essentially the same themes identified by the investigator. Initially the investigator established separate codes for obligation and duty and coded themes separately. The external coder and the investigator both coded these themes as either obligation or duty but differed on which was obligation and which was duty. After discussing the issue, the investigator and external checker decided that due to closeness or even interchangeability of meanings, obligation and duty would be combined as one theme.

Investigator and external coder were looking for common threads among the participants. During this data analysis process the following themes emerged:

Entrance into Military

Benefits. Four of the six participants, Misty, Lynn, Jennifer and Maxine stated that one of the reasons they entered the military was for medical and/or educational benefits. Misty entered because she felt the military was a safe place and it provided heath insurance benefits. Lynn stated one of the reasons she joined the military was for medical
and educational benefits. Jennifer joined for job security and medical and educational benefits. Maxine stated she joined for medical and educational benefits.

This theme appears to be one of self-preservation.

*Patriotism.* Misty, Jennifer, Dorothy and Maxine stated that another reason for entering the military was patriotism.

Misty stated she was patriotic and admired the first women who served in the military. Jennifer wanted to serve her country. Dorothy stated she was patriotic and did not like the way veterans were being treated when they returned from Vietnam. Maxine believed that military service was her patriotic duty.

Patriotism appears to be an altruistic theme.

*Role Models/Influences*

All participants stated family members were their greatest influences and role models in their lives. Social modeling appears to have been important in their decision making in major life decisions.

*Harassment*

All the women addressed harassment issues with the exception of Jennifer. Jennifer serves in the Medical Service Corps and felt that it is less of an issue because it is a traditional female field. This theme indicates that harassment is common and predictable.

*Discrimination*

All participants addressed some type of discrimination issues. Misty discussed a Sergeant who would not promote her because of her sex. Lynn addressed limitations placed on her because of her sex. Jennifer stated that women are seen as less competent.
then men. Dorothy talked about her stripes not being real because she was a woman and how women received no respect. Molly stated she learned about sexism in advanced training and Maxine talked about always needing to prove herself as a soldier because of her sex.

*Negation*

Five of the participants addressed situations where they were negated or discounted. Misty talked about people looking at her as a dependent spouse and not an active military person because she was a woman. Lynn stated that respect is distributed differently between men and women and that harassment is allowed and expected. Jennifer claimed that women overall are not given full credit. Dorothy felt discounted at the White House briefings in which officials were less likely to listen to her because she was a woman. Maxine talked about being an outsider as a woman and being negated by the limitations on assignments due to her sex.

*Obligation/Duty*

Three of the participants specifically discussed their obligation and duty to either their country or the troops in their command. Lynn addressed dedication to her troops and her unity with members of the unit in her command. Jennifer stated as a soldier she puts duty first and has an obligation to duty and country. Molly explained her love for her country and willingness to defend and die for America.

Misty, Dorothy and Maxine all stated that one of the reasons they joined the military was because of patriotism. Patriotism may or may not be considered a sense of obligation or duty. There may be persons who are patriotic without having a sense of
obligation to enter military serve. Hence, for this study these women do not meet the criteria for this theme.

**Masculinization/Militarization**

Four of the six participants expressed some degree of masculinization and/or militarization. These degrees varied from slight to very ingrained.

Misty improved her organizational, logic and computer skills, acquired leadership and networking skill and learned when to ask questions. Lynn was dedicated to her troops and is willing to lead them into battle. Jennifer stated she could save a life as well as she could shoot a gun. She also stated hat she is willing to go where her country calls her because if she does not, someone else will go in her place and, to her, that is desertion.

Dorothy and Maxine did not indicate any specific masculinization/militarization ideation.

**Job Comfort Level**

Dorothy, Molly and Maxine were comfortable in their jobs despite the negative situations that occurred. Misty, Jennifer and Lynn made no comments regarding enjoying their jobs or comfort levels.

**Emotional Impact**

Four of the participants reported specific emotional effects the military has had on their lives.

Misty reported personal growth. Lynn stated she had grown personally, spiritually, emotionally and is also scarred emotionally. Jennifer said she had aged emotionally. Molly stated that since she has entered the military she will never be the same again.
Common Themes

The most significant common themes that all participants addressed were issues concerning harassment, discrimination and negation. The participants all made comments regarding sexism and the treatment of women. They indicated they were all affected and or impacted in their careers by the discrimination. They all also stated that their families were the greatest influences in their lives and choices. Some stated that their families still have some degree of influence in their lives. Other themes observed such as obligation/duty, patriotism, benefits, masculinization/militarization and job comfort level were reported, and at least 50% of the participants responded in these areas.

Application of Thematic Analysis to Female Military Identity Development

Comparing the common themes that emerged and utilizing the five stages of the Developmental Framework for Female Military Personnel proposed in chapter 1, the participants were integrated into the developmental stages. Not all participants were categorized in each stage based on the themes that emerged.

Stage 1: Civilian Identity

This identity was determined based on responses to the question as to why the participants entered the military. The interviews elicited similar responses from the participants.

All participants displayed a civilian identity. They shared the importance of benefits, travel, and patriotism, changing their lives or having no direction. None stated that that they had any sense of the demands of military commitment prior to enlistment.
Stage 2: Inductee Identity

It appears that no participants in this study displayed any identity development in this stage. There are a number of possible reasons that there was no evidence of characteristics in this stage. One possibility is that there is no development in this stage and that the stage does not exist, hence the researcher must reevaluate the stages. Another possibility is that the questionnaire did not contain specific or clear questions that might address issues involving this developmental stage. Yet, another issue may have been that the interviewer was not clear in asking the questions. Either way, it is a situation which must be reevaluated by the researcher.

Stage 3: Masculinization/Militarization Identity

This identity was determined based on responses to the question as to their feelings of difference or sameness as it related to male military personnel. The interviews elicited the following responses from the participants.

*Misty.* Misty displayed some degree of militarization by her discipline in “knowing when to ask questions.” She also stated that she had acquired leadership skills which are a respected skill in the military.

*Lynn.* Lynn talked about being a military leader and being dedicated to her troops in combat in Iraq. Military leadership and dedication to the troops in your command indicates military allegiance.

*Jennifer.* Jennifer stated that that she is always a soldier first.

*Molly.* Molly had a strong identification with military men and the military. She felt superior to women and became the ultimate soldier by earning her Airborne wings.

Dorothy and Maxine did not identify any characteristics in this stage.
Stage 4: Synthesis

This identity was determined based on responses to the questions regarding their description of their military service, their greatest challenges as a military woman and various events that occurred during their time in service. The following responses were elicited from the interviews.

Dorothy. Dorothy had fun and enjoyed her job despite the harassment and sexism.

Molly. Molly was very comfortable as a military woman as demonstrated in her interview.

Maxine. Maxine stated that she was comfortable in her job and is making a career of the military.

Neither Misty, Lynn nor Jennifer identified any characteristics in this stage.

Stage 5: Duty Identity

This identity was determined based on responses to the questions regarding their description of their military service, their greatest challenges as a military woman and various events that occurred during their time in service. The following responses were elicited from the interviews.

Lynn. Lynn is dedicated to her troops and willing to lead her troops into battle.

Jennifer. She stated that she is a soldier first and is obligated to duty and country.

Molly. Molly has a strong obligation to country.

Misty, Dorothy and Maxine did not identify any characteristics of this stage.

Discussion

The thematic analysis seems to offer some evidence, that military women develop a military identity by experiencing circumstances similar to the stage-wise characteristics
posited in the *Developmental Framework for Female Military Personnel*. The participants, either consciously or subconsciously, appear to have experienced a process in which their identity developed via an effort to maintain, assimilate or possibly survive within the male military culture.

With the exception of the challenges associated with Stage 2, the overall findings in this present study suggest that there may be an identity development process that is peculiar to military women.
Chapter V

Discussion

I am an American Soldier. I will always place mission first.
I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never
leave a fallen comrade. I am an American soldier. I live by
this creed.

-A Warrior’s Ethos

Introduction

At the beginning of this study, the history of women in military service was
introduced. That provided a background of service, commitments, duty and silence,
which, in turn, supported a need for the present study.

It is important to give the military women voice, acknowledge their military
experience and provide them with an avenue to seek appropriate physical and mental
health assistance.

In attempting to understand the military women’s experiences, the investigator
suggested a Developmental Framework for Female Military Personnel and established
the research goal for this study: Is there an identity development process for military
women?

A review of the literature offered insight into the large number of women who
have served in the armed forces yet who failed to receive treatment equivalent to their
male counterparts. Research cited in the present study reported incidents of PTSD, sexual
trauma and secondary effects of sexual trauma in which women were under diagnosed or
treated as the *other*, lending support to the idea of invisibility of women in military service.

Current development theories were reviewed, and their applicability to military women was discussed. Though several segments of these theories could explain the development of military women none enveloped the developments specific to military women, neither identifying who they are as women and warriors nor identifying their needs as warriors.

Chapter 3 clarified the methods in which the research goal was to be accomplished. Using grounded theory, this current study captured the voices of the invisible warriors who participated in this study.

Participants were identified per the guidelines established, and the ethical treatment of participant protocols was followed. Grounded theory data collection procedures were established and followed with initial and follow-up interviews being conducted. The recorded interview material was analyzed, coded and categorized in the data analysis process. Participant checks, research reflexivity and the use of the auditor substantiated validity of data.

*Discussion of Findings*

In chapter 4, the individual profiles/interviews provided snapshots of the participant’s military experiences and development. This information provided data on specific themes and common threads. Ten themes were identified by the investigator and the coder. During the data analysis process, numerous common themes emerged among the participants. The most common themes identified were harassment, discrimination and negation. All of the participants were effected by these issues during their military
careers. The themes were then categorized which then made it possible to integrate the participants into the stages of the Developmental Framework for Female Military Personnel.

With the exception of Stage 2, all of the participants appeared to show an identity development in the various stages of the Developmental Framework for Female Military Personnel. Not all participants appeared to have development in each stage but all of the participants appeared to show some development throughout the stages.

This thematic analysis offered some evidence that military women appear to develop a military identity by experiencing circumstances similar to the stages suggested in the Developmental Framework for Female Military Personnel.

In conclusion, there is limited research in the area of the invisible warrior as indicated in this current study. There are also indications that there are needs of military women that are not being met by current service providers. This present study provides a conduit between these military women, needed services and future studies.

Limitations of Study

Generalizability. The study took place in the geographic area of Ft. Bragg/Pope Air Force, NC. This limited the study to a narrow band of participants.

Sample. The sample size consisted of six women which limited the present study. Though using six women in this study could limit the field of data obtained, it does provide a baseline for future studies.

Also, the sample only yielded one commissioned officer. Even though there were many common themes between the enlisted personnel and the commissioned officer, the
ideal situation would have been to have more officers to interview. Unfortunately, no other officers responded to the investigator’s advertisement.

This sample was also limited by the branch of military service of the participants. Even though recruitment was conducted in the Ft. Bragg military reservation and Pope Air Force Base area, all participants were members of the US Army. Future research should attempt to include all branches of military service.

Generalization is another issue to address in regard to this sample. As a qualitative study of six participants this study cannot be generalized across all military women. This study using a sample of 6 women was meant to give meaning and understanding to the possible identity development of military women and voice to the invisible warriors. The present study did suggest that it appears that there is an identity development process peculiar to military woman and it also provided military women with a sense of identity and the power of voice. It is not representative, though, of all women, in all service branches of the military.

Another point to make about the sample addressed in chapter 3 was that all of the participants were European-American. As stated in chapter 3, the reason for this limitation is that this is the first study of this topic and it was important to control as many variables, including ethnicity, as possible that might confound the data analysis.

*Military Women Questionnaire (MWQ)*. During the course of the interview process, the primary investigator determined that the instrument used was not sufficient to assess all the areas the researcher wanted to cover for the study. This questionnaire should be redesigned to encompass more specific areas of military life and environments and their impact on military women (i.e., experiences during basic training, advanced
training, etc., or specific experiences during the first six months, first year, second year, etc.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The research goal of this study was to explore whether or not there is an identity development process for military women. The findings suggested that it appears there is an identity development process for military women. The data suggests, yet, provides no concrete proof of this development process. This study created *meaning* for invisible warriors who had no voice. It is just a portion of what needs to be continued. It is a baseline for future research.

The *Developmental Framework for Female Military Personnel* has yet to be operationalized into a model. Models are not theories but are often used as heuristic guides during the beginning phases of theory development (Heinen, 1985). The present study could be the beginning phase of an identity development theory for military women.

At present, there is no additional empirical evidence or research to support the findings of this study. If a theory cannot be tested and validated through empirical research, then there is no way for other scientists to determine for themselves if the theory is useful (Reynolds, 1971). According to Tzeng and Jackson (1991), seven criteria must be met to meet the definition of a theory: (a) formalization and coherence, (b) integration and comprehensiveness, (c) parsimoniousness or simplicity, (d) falsifiability and testability, (e) applicability to empirical data, (f) fruitfulness, and (g) scientific self-regulation.
This formalization is needed and encouraged in future research about the invisible warriors. The operationalizing of this framework through empirical research and theory development may continue lifting the veil of invisibility and provide investigators with a more thorough understanding of the psychosocial development of women warriors. Through an understanding of the psychosocial development of these women, investigators may be able to provide support in understanding and meeting the mental health needs of this population.

Recommendations for Clinical Practice

In clinical practice, it is important to have an understanding of cultural mores, courtesies, and implications regarding the population being served. Military women are no exception. In a clinical environment, similar to other special populations, specific consideration will need to be given to their unique background experiences and stressors, especially when the clinician is unfamiliar with such events (i.e. deployment-related stressors, PTSD, sexual assault) (Wolfe, Mori & Krygeris, 1994).

There are 1,600,000 women veterans and over 200,000 women currently serving in all branches of the military service. Fourteen percent of the 200,000 troops (Department of Defense, 2007) currently stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan are women. With the number of women who have served and continue to serve in the military and who report mental health issues such as PTSD, sexual assault or harassment, it is necessary for mental health clinicians to understand the multi-faceted needs and development of these warriors.

This present study suggests that there may be an identity development process that is peculiar to military women. Clinicians can utilize these characteristics to guide
them in assessing the personalities, development and needs of the military women they serve.

In understanding that there may be a developmental process, clinicians can use this advantageously in providing services for military women. When a client presents in therapy as a victim of rape and PTSD due to the rape, a clinician having knowledge of their development as a warrior and an understanding of that process, they can provide more appropriate therapeutic services. If the client has recently begun her career in the military and is in the early stages of development when she is victimized by rape, she may more readily seek assistance and/or use her military chain of command for resolution. This woman may have less commitment to protecting fellow soldiers if they were the perpetrators. She has less invested in the military culture. Clinicians may approach a woman in this stage with traditional therapy such as cognitive behavioral therapies.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is suggested in this situation because it assists the patient in identifying specific distortions and biases in thinking and provides guidance on how to change this thinking. Cognitive Behavioral therapy helps clients learn effective self-help skills that are used in homework assignments that help them change the way they think, feel and behave now. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is action-oriented, practical, rational, and helps the clients gain independence and effectiveness in dealing with real-life issues.

As this client may not be ingrained in military ideology or coping with the varied issues of militarization, she may benefit from addressing the specific issues concerning
the rape and her PTSD and the thought processes involved with them. Cognitive Behavioral therapy may be the most appropriate course of therapy in this situation.

On the contrary, a woman later in her career who has been more militarized/masculinized and victimized by the same crime may be less likely to seek the same type of assistance. This woman may be more committed to the good of the company or the military. She may be less likely to use her chain of command or seek any resolution. If at some point she is required to seek professional therapy, she may be less likely to be cooperative and compliant. She may feel her primary commitment is to her “team” or the military instead of herself. She may be less likely to identify other military personnel as perpetrators as the accusations would impact the functioning of the “whole.” Clinicians may find this client more difficult and may have to be more creative in the therapeutic process as traditional methods may not be as effective. In situations such as these, clinicians may find feminist or existential therapies helpful.

Feminist therapy focuses on the role of gender in psychological distress. It recognizes that environmental pressures effect a woman’s identity and shapes women’s behaviors. Feminist therapy also seeks to empower women which can be also effective with those who feel invisible or who have no voice. Existential therapy’s goal is to enable individuals to become more truthful with themselves and to widen their personal perspectives and the world in which they live. Both of these therapies may be successful when used with military women who present a more embedded militarized/masculinized identity.

These same concepts could be applied to military women who have been affected by other issues such as sexual harassment, negation, discrimination or have a sense feel a
sense of oppression. It can also be applied to women who are struggling with their military identity or personal crises always keeping in perspective the identity development process which appears to be distinctive to military women. Clinicians should understand the process of this population’s identity development and be willing to evaluate and utilize both traditional and less traditional therapies.

Though this concept and framework is still in its infancy, clinicians can still use the basic premises to understand the unique experiences and development of military women in an effort to provide the most appropriate mental health services.

Clinicians have the opportunity to provide the invisible warriors with mental health services of which they have long been deprived. By understanding the military culture and the development and characteristic needs of military women, clinicians have a unique opportunity to provide the invisible warriors with a voice and to make them more visible.
References


http://www.defenselink.mil


*Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 31(1), 87-93.

Appendix A
Military Women Questionnaire

1. Current age
   Age when entering military

2. Reason for entering military service

3. Amount of time service
   Time period in service (peace time, war, conflict, etc)
   Time in current rank or military status (PVT, SP4, MAJ, vet, disabled vet, etc)

4. Ethnicity

5. Military Occupation
   Comparable civilian occupation

6. If someone had to describe you, what would they say?
   Describe individuals that have helped shape who you are. (Prior to Military or civilian personnel is okay)
   Important people who influenced you?
   What have been important events that influenced you?

7. As a military woman, describe your experiences in the military.
   (If no longer on active duty, define your military experiences when you were serving on active duty).
   How have these experiences shaped or influenced who you are today?
   Who were important people in the military who influenced you?
   Important events that influenced you?
8. Do/Did you feel “different” as a military person as it relates/related to male military personnel. (Different is how you describe different, not who others describe it.)

Has/Was there been a time when you felt more different or less different as it relates/related to male military personnel? When and how?

9. Do/Did you feel the “same” as a military person as it relates/related to male military personnel.

Has/Was there been a time when you felt more like the “same” or less like the “same” as it relates to male military personnel? When and how?

10. What have been some of your greatest challenges as a military woman?

This only pertains to challenges that are/were a direct result of military duty. i.e the challenge of an abusive husband would not be a response for this answer unless it deals directly with your military duty.

11. In the military have you/ did you ever felt/feel discounted, overlooked, negated or invisible because you were a woman?

Can you provide some scenarios?

12. Describe the chain of events, from what you can remember, from when you decided to enter military service until you either (a) ETS’d after 1st enlistment, (b) resigned your Commission, (c) chose not to reenlist after 2 or > enlistments, or (c) decided to make the military a career.

What prompted you to make these military decisions?
If you retired, the chain of events only needs to be from when you entered service to when you decided to make military a career or few years beyond that. It does not necessarily need to encompass 20 – 30 years.

What were your growthful life experiences during this time? Positive and negative. Just the highlights.

Can you put these experiences in the order of the occurrence?

Can you describe the outcomes of the experiences?

Which ones had the greatest impact? Why?