



We Who Have Borne the Battle: Women Combat Veterans Post 9/11

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Abstract

This thesis set out to explore the experiences of American women veterans of the recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars. In this way the aim was to further an understanding of how war impacts women's lives, not just during a conflict but how gendered reverberations shape women's lives once they return home. This project adopts a critical feminist approach to international relations, one that rejects the primacy of the state as the unit of analysis by insisting that to theorize global politics requires a gender lens. A feminist standpoint epistemology was used as a framework for the research design and guided by a feminist research ethic. This resulted in collecting detailed and in-depth qualitative data from in person interviews with three women combat veterans. The experiences and stories provide a view into a relatively unexplored aspect of the post-war, the lives of women combat veterans. This is a particularly acute absence in light of the recent and long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that have produced a new generation of women combat veterans for the first time ever. It also brings to light the contradiction between the US military's policy banning women from combat, and the practice in the war zones where women soldiers have routinely been exposed to combat. The stories reveal the complexity and durability of gender in their everyday lives. They also reveal their own actions, voices, and empowered determination that challenge the gender order at times and maintain it at other times. All of the women demonstrate an awareness of the gender paradox of women soldiers, claim their identity as combat veterans, and work to expand that awareness by extending recognition other women veterans. It is recommended that additional research be conducted into the gendered dimensions and impact of military policies regarding family issues.

Introduction

In April, 2013, a combat veteran and former Army Staff Sergeant explained to me what she thought the public should know about women serving in the military,

For people to just acknowledge that men and women are still doing this. Men and women. Nobody wants to put women on a pedestal, in any way, shape, or form. We are experiencing the same things. We are losing our limbs, we are losing our lives, just like our male counterparts. We want to be understood. We don't want any more acknowledgement but dammit, we just want acknowledgement. (Andrea, 2013: 474-478)

In 1959, the United States Veterans Administration (VA) adopted the motto still used today,

To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan.
(U.S Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.)

The motto, adopted from US President Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, seems to refer to the war veteran as male, and women (and children) as an extension of *him*. The quote contains somewhat archaic language; however, one might ask if the implicit idea, of who is impacted by war (and in what way), has changed?

According to the VA,

President Lincoln's words have stood the test of time, and stand today as a solemn reminder of VA's commitment to care for those injured in our nation's defense and the families of those killed in its service. (U.S Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.)

It brings to mind the often used quote from noted international relations scholar, Cynthia Enloe, "Where are the women?" in reference to questions of war and peace. Enloe argues that wars cannot be fully understood without considering the role of gender. Furthermore, that war is not a defined event, rather it is a phased continuum that is highly gendered throughout each phase. (Enloe, 2004)

Women have always participated in wars; as nurses, spies, prostitutes, combatants, and soldiers. During the US Civil War that was ongoing at the time of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address,

women served as nurses and doctors on the battlefield and even as soldiers when they were able to disguise their identity (Women in Military Service for America Foundation, n.d.).

The number of women in the US military has increased steadily, especially after the most recent draft ended (military conscription for males) in 1973. The US maintains the most powerful military in the world and more women serving in its armed forces in a war zone, in combat; and has engaged in two of the longest wars in its history, Iraq and Afghanistan¹, simultaneously.

Following the events on September 11, 2001 the US (and willing allies) engaged in two of the longest wars in its history in Iraq and Afghanistan, conflicts which have brought women into direct combat situations. One example, as told in the documentary film, *Lioness* (2008), tells the story of special female support units first created in 2003 in Iraq to accompany Marine infantry units (combat-at-arms) during house to house searches. As the film documents, women soldiers were engaged in combat in practice, if not policy (*Lioness*, 2008). In fact, the US Department of Defense announced only on January 24, 2013, that it would end the combat exclusion policy that prevented women from (officially) serving in direct combat roles (Department of Defense, 2013).

This project seeks to explore the experiences of American women veterans of the recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars. In this way the aim is to further an understanding of how war impacts women's lives, not just during a conflict but how gendered reverberations shape women's lives once they return home.

This leads to the research question,

What are the post-war experiences of US women veterans of the recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars, are those experiences gendered, and in what ways?

¹ Throughout this paper, references to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan refer specifically to conflicts initiated after September 11, 2001; officially named Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and Operation Enduring Freedom. Any references to the first American war in Iraq will be referred to as the Gulf War to minimize any confusion.

Structure of the Thesis

The format of this thesis begins with the presentation of the methodology on the basis that the epistemological approach is an explicit and foundational element which drives the entire project. The methodology elucidates the rationale behind the choice of feminist standpoint epistemology and the research approach.

The following section on theory orients the research within the field of international relations broadly and specifically within a critical feminist approach to the field. In addition, the choice of feminist standpoint theory and use of gender are defined; as are the analytical concepts of agency, voice, empowerment, and recognition.

The section on methods explains the rationale for the research topic, the research design, and the specific choices and elements which link back to feminist standpoint epistemology. In keeping with a feminist research ethic, the methods section reflects on the role of gatekeepers and relationships on the research process.

The first part of the analysis provides contextual background information on the topic of women in the US military, and the presence and role of veteran's services in the post-war period. Next, there are three individual narratives followed by thematic categories of analysis.

In conclusion, the findings are presented for each thematic category as well as in general terms. Also, there are recommendations for additional research on gender and the military, and support for the use of narrative interviews in research.

Methodology

This section on methodology is developed through a feminist approach to research which links a critical approach to international relations (IR) and feminism. The methodology informs and frames the entire project from the specific choice of feminist standpoint epistemology.

Feminism and International Relations

Feminism is dually driven; it is an active pursuit which seeks the emancipation of women, and a scholarly pursuit which seeks to understand and examine the ways in which gender shapes our lives (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2011). Detraz (2012) defines the change orientation of feminism as seeking to address not only gender inequality, but the intersections of gender and other forms of social inequality. Feminist inquiry itself is critical, working to pry open those spaces that are/have been considered neutral/ungendered and are unexplored, in particular, those spaces that have been considered a masculine domain. Feminist scholars of international relations (IR) have been critical of the neglect of gender in the wider scholarship and have sought to bring a gender perspective to the discipline. This has been particularly so in security studies, which Prugl refers to as the masculinist core of traditional IR (Prügl, 2011).

In ontological terms, this project adopts a critical feminist approach to international relations, one that rejects the primacy of the state as the unit of analysis by insisting that to theorize global politics requires a gender lens. Furthermore, the specific lens that is used here views gender as socially constructed masculinities and femininities which are linked to biological sex bodies (Hansen, 2010).

Drawing from the critical feminist approach to IR, this project adopts a feminist standpoint epistemology. Specifically, my understanding of a feminist standpoint is that it comes from a post-positivist perspective, one that rejects a positivist notion of “value free” science while acknowledging physical bodies and events. Furthermore, the view is that locating knowledge is complicated and messy, it requires self-reflection and a critical lens. It is experiential. That it conceives that there are multiple ways of knowing. According to Hansen, there is a wide range of feminist approaches to ontology, epistemology, and methodology that borrow from others and cross boundaries, so long as they maintain coherence. To the point, Kristen Intemann argues for combining feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint theory to form a new approach, “feminist standpoint empiricism” (Intemann, 2010). From another perspective, Hansen maintains that feminist standpoint and post-structuralism easily traverse the borders between them (Hansen, 2010).

Feminist Research Ethic

In Ackerly and True's book, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science* (2010), they argue for a feminist research ethic to guide all feminist scholarship, regardless of the variety of possible approaches to epistemology, methodology, and research design. Feminism arose from an awareness of, and challenge to, the power relations embedded in patriarchy. Over time, feminism and feminist scholarship has developed more nuanced and wide ranging perspectives and engagement with additional forms of power (both within scholarship and within society) (Hesse- Biber, 2007). This attentiveness to power, according to Ackerly and True (2010), is what constitutes a feminist research ethic by maintaining an awareness and reflexivity throughout the research process. Accordingly, there are four main categories for the researcher to consider and engage with throughout the research process; epistemology, boundaries, relationships, and the situatedness of the researcher. (Ackerly & True, 2010)

Epistemology

As described by Ackerly and True (2010), epistemology is a set of beliefs about what counts as knowledge (as opposed to belief), and that the feminist researcher must engage with and reflect upon her own epistemology in order to address questions of power and knowledge.

This project will utilize a standpoint epistemology which privileges the experiences of those individuals and groups who are systematically oppressed or marginalized. Lived experience is seen as situated knowledge, knowledge which is seen as "better" because the marginalized individuals/groups must understand and be able to negotiate within the dominant structure, while occupying a social position which is outside of it (Ackerly & True, 2010; Hesse- Biber, 2007; Harding, 2007; Intemann, 2010).

As with a feminist approach generally, a feminist standpoint epistemology has evolved over time to engage in a more nuanced view of whose standpoint is legitimated, this ongoing refinement is made possible by actively engaging the feminist research ethic (Harding, 2007).

Feminist standpoint epistemology fits well with the choice to focus on the experiences of women veterans; as members of the US military, they are positioned in one of the most powerful

institutions in the world, yet as women, they are marginalized within the structure of the US military.

Boundaries

While Ackerly and True (2010) stress the importance of attentiveness to the power of epistemology, especially in relation to the other categories (such as the situatedness of the researcher), they claim that awareness to boundaries is a way to negotiate the research process. A feminist ethic necessitates awareness in order to reduce the power of boundaries to reproduce oppression, silence, and marginalization. This includes attention to boundaries between the researcher and the researched, between disciplines in scholarship, and between those involved in and impacted by the research. Boundaries are of particular importance in this project and will require exploring insider/outsider dynamics, fluid identities, and the role of gatekeepers. (Ackerly and True, 2010)

Relationships

The importance of attentiveness to the relationships which take place through the research is central to a feminist ethic. Like boundaries, relationships can be a location to promote the aims of feminism or reproduce forms of oppression and marginalization. The term research “subject” is rejected here due to the hierarchical nature of the term; in its place the term research “participant” is chosen to reflect both a partnership between the researcher and the participant, as well as locating the knowledge production as deriving from *all* those involved. Furthermore, this project seeks to be aware of, and sensitive to, the ways others are impacted by the research, such as, the time others contribute, the impact of personal interactions with those involved, and the ultimate usefulness (or not) or lasting impact of the research itself. (Ackerly and True, 2010)

Situatedness of the Researcher

This category of the feminist research ethic gathers all the previous ones and insists on the researcher reflecting on her own location within each of these categories, and how it influences each and the whole (Ackerly and True, 2010). While this project is influenced from a number of directions, the genesis of it, and the manner in which it is ultimately conducted, rests upon my own experiences and social location. This requires that I maintain an awareness of social factors

such as age, race, gender, and any other dynamic social constellations that arise. The topic choice of US women veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars is also a political choice for me and has been influenced by a range of personal factors and experiences; as a woman, as the daughter of a veteran (Vietnam), as a peace activist opposed to the wars, and as an American citizen.

Theory

In this section I will briefly introduce feminist international relations as a field of scholarship, discuss gender as an analytical tool within feminist standpoint theory. In addition, I will define the use of a trio of concepts; agency, voice, and empowerment within a feminist standpoint approach, and describe the use of the concept of recognition.

Feminism and International Relations

A feminist approach to international relations (IR) is still a relatively recent area of inquiry. Feminist international relations emerged in the 1980's as a counterpoint to traditional IR by bringing new theoretical perspectives and empirical inquiry (Prügl, 2011). Traditional, or mainstream IR relies on a worldview that sees the state as a given, as the "natural" unit of analysis, just as gender is often seen as "natural". This point of departure in traditional IR leaves gender unexamined. IR feminists see gender as embedded in global politics; world politics are understood, practiced, and recreated in gendered terms (Shepherd, 2010). The well-known feminist expression, "the personal is political" underlines this connection of gendered everyday practices to matters of the state and beyond (Enloe, 2011). One example of this lies in the very intimate decisions around sex, as the state is deeply involved in those decisions, sanctioning or prohibiting sex and reproduction. Examples of this in the US military abound, such as the recently repealed prohibition of gays and lesbians in the military, policies against fraternization, and restrictions on women soldiers' access to abortion.

The sometimes uncomfortable relationship between traditional IR and feminist IR come from different ontological and epistemological understandings (Tickner, 2005). Feminist IR continues to struggle for recognition and legitimacy, ironically (or unsurprisingly) for the very reasons that they see at work in the political world, the privileging of the masculine over the feminine. One

fundamental reason for this is that contrary to mainstream IR, feminist IR does not view theory as value free or neutral (Zalewski in Shepherd, 2010). Rather, feminist theory is seen as a practice, one that is active in understanding the world and affecting social change and also part of that condition, not separate from it (Ackerly & True, 2008). The value of this approach is that it gives us greater insight into the ways in which social hierarchies produce and reproduce social inequality. In this way feminism involves thinking, and rethinking about the political space, about power relations, and about security for whom, in more complex ways (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2011).

Within the field of IR generally, there are three main categories; international political economy, institutions, and security. Of these, security has been a fruitful area of feminist inquiry, arguably because of the highly gendered nature of this field; Elizabeth Prügl refers to the field of security studies as the traditional “core” of IR, and as a ‘masculinist knowledge enterprise’ (Prügl, 2011, p. 112). If examined through a feminist lens, the central concepts of war and power reveal highly gendered contours. As institutions of the state tasked with wielding power through force, militaries are important sites to explore gender.

According to Mathers (2013), militaries rely on women and they also rely on gender. Militaries have always relied on women’s contributions and efforts, both paid and unpaid, to sustain them. Militaries also rely on gender in order to maintain and sustain themselves, they construct and reconstruct gender and require the cooperation of both men and women to make it work. The ultimate definition of a man is the soldier. The soldier is strong, brave, heroic, even stoic. Although the image of the soldier has morphed over time, it has always symbolized manliness (Belkin, 2012). While the military itself is (still) the realm of men, it has always relied on complimentary representations of women, women as the bearers of nation, they sacrifice sons for battle, care for the wounded, and sometimes fight alongside the men (Yuval-Davis, 1993).

State security, or national security, has been seen as the default definition when discussing security. However, that singular notion has been reconsidered in recent years and today there is a much more expansive view that security may mean something entirely different, depending on a range of factors. In her explanation of this shift, Detraz (2012, p. 7) refers to Krause and Williams, who see a *broadening* and *deepening* scholarship on security emerge. One that incorporates a wider range of potential security issues, such as climate change or economic

insecurity, and taking place on many more levels, from global security to individual human security.

Among these approaches to understanding security, which challenge and problematize the dominant paradigm are; critical security studies, the Copenhagen school, and feminist security studies. Detraz (2012) points to four main feminist approaches to security studies;

1. Both men and women are impacted by war/conflict but often in different ways. One of the more troubling and, unfortunately common, examples is that of war time rape. Another example provided by Cynthia Enloe (2012) is that of a war wounded soldier (usually male). Enloe extends this example to consider who is providing care for the wounded veteran, most likely a wife or mother (Enloe, 2012).
2. Feminists see a tension between the interpretations of security/threats/vulnerabilities, as perceived by institutions of the state on one hand, and as perceived by individuals or certain groups on the other. An example of this is the threat of international terrorism to the state, a threat which the US military responded to with force. From the perspective of women in the military, the threat of sexual assault means their notion of security is not only different from that of the state, the threat also derives from the state institution in which they serve and whose purpose is security, the military.
3. Many feminist scholars reject an essentialist view of women as victims/peacemakers and men as protectors/war-makers. Stereotypes about men and women are particularly potent around issues of war and violence. When women traverse those boundaries, narratives are conjured that explain this behavior as exceptional. Jennifer Lobasz (2008) describes two of these narratives in her work on representations of female soldiers in Iraq. The story of Pfc. Jessica Lynch, told as the “woman in peril”; a young, blond, pretty woman captured by the evil (male) Iraqi’s and in need of rescue by American (male) soldiers. The other archetype of the “ruined woman”, was told about the woman (but not the men) implicated in the Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal, Pfc. Lynndie England, explained away as sexually deviant and morally bankrupt (Lobasz, 2008). While these representations appear exceptional, the gendered paradox about women warriors is central to this project.

4. A war/conflict is gendered through each phase, leading up to the conflict, during, and post-conflict. Enloe (2004) claims that the way a war is constructed in the post-war informs what comes after, a future peace or conflict. Of particular interest here is the time after war because this is seen as a phase when gender roles not only return to pre-war norms, but commonly undergo a kind of hardening, or re-masculinization (Enloe, 2004). In fact, it may be a site of violence, exclusion, and punishment for women who resist this return to social norms. According to Cynthia Cockburn, the (misnamed) post war results in gendered relations that are more *'hierarchical, undemocratic, and divisive...'* (Cockburn in Shepherd, 2010, p. 110) For Enloe, the way of remembering war also constructs ideas and ideals about masculinity and femininity, attributing the "correct" roles to each. This has particular consequences and meanings for women soldiers since there is an expectation that women will return to their "normal" roles, that their participation in the war was an "exceptional" event (Enloe, 2004).

These four points challenge a state centered approach to security issues by insinuating gender into all levels and phases. This relates back to the point that the definition of security has expanded and a critical feminist approach is an appropriate avenue for investigating the links between gender and war in the lives of women veterans.

Gender

IR Feminists use gender analysis as a tool to understand the ways in which constructions of gender shape the world, in large ways and small. Gender analysis can be, and is, conducted from a range of perspectives, meaning that gender analysis itself is not necessarily a feminist project. The difference between feminism and other approaches to gender lies in the methodology; one might count women and men without questioning the gendered power structure.

Within feminist IR, there are different understandings of gender as well. Liberal IR feminists seek women's emancipation through reform measures for equality within the existing system. Critical feminists view the gendered nature of the existing power structure (patriarchy) as the locus of social inequality and therefore, seek to reshape the social order itself.

This project will lean heavily on feminist standpoint theory using a social constructivist approach to gender. A feminist standpoint differs from an essentialist/empiricist view of gender which holds that a person's biological sex determines gender attributes, that they are one in the

same (Shepherd, 2010). Poststructuralism and feminist standpoint theory share the notion that masculinities and femininities (the plural form denotes that there are multiple expressions of masculinity or femininity) are fluid identities which can be expressed by both men and women, however, they part ways in their approach to biological sex. The postmodern/poststructural understanding of gender is that it is performative. Shepherd uses Judith Butlers work as a basis for positioning gender as a fluid identity that is performed and is a discursive representation of the sex body (Shepherd, 2010).

The feminist standpoint view of social constructivism used here holds that biological sex is a given condition, one is born a certain sex, whereas, gender is the result of socially constructed meanings and practices where certain traits are deemed masculine or feminine (Shepherd, 2010). These masculine/feminine characteristics are usually attributed to biological sex, male/female, however, they are not the same as biological sex even though they are often considered “natural”. Some caution that the connection between the sex body and social constructions of masculinity and femininity is not irrelevant. *‘We look at the body as a system that simultaneously produces and is produced by social meanings.’* (Fausto-Sterling in Tickner & Sjoberg, 2011, p. 5) This understanding of gender as socially constructed, while linked to sex bodies, is an appropriate choice for the purpose of examining the lives of women veterans as their membership in a highly masculinized institution is nonetheless pertinent to their sex.

There is more than one expression of masculinity and femininity. Gender is a system of hierarchical categorization in which people are positioned according to a range of masculinities and femininities. Masculinities and femininities are the behaviors, stereotypes, roles, and expectations that society expects of men and women. According to Sjoberg and Via, the privileging of masculine over feminine has been a stubborn feature even as the specific rules and norms have morphed over time. (Sjoberg & Via, 2010)

Gender is not the only way in which people are privileged or disempowered. There are additional categories in which people are organized according to power hierarchies, including race, sexual orientation, age, class, and other categories of difference. Any, or many, of these categories may be at play and intersect with one another, as well as gender (Hancock, 2007). Furthermore, context matters, there is a cultural basis for which masculinities and femininities are available in different cultures, groups, and settings.

According to Cynthia Cockburn (2012), gender is about structured power relations (see also, Enloe, 2004; Shepherd, 2010; Tickner & Sjoberg, 2011; and others). These power relations are based on social constructions of what is considered to be masculine and feminine, such as strong/weak or stoic/emotional. These masculinities/femininities are constructed in a situated social context, where they are privileged when masculine, and deemed inferior when feminine (Hansen, 2010). Cockburn defines gender in terms of power relations, of “*asymmetry, inequality, and domination*” (2010, p. 108). According to Cockburn, the privileging of the masculine over the feminine, men over women, and the public over the private, has been extremely durable over time (Cockburn, 2010). Sjoberg and Via (2010) find that while the specific context may differ, gendered experiences happen across space, time, and culture. The structure that organizes this function of privileging characteristics associated with masculinity, over those associated with femininity, is termed patriarchy. As many feminists have observed, the word itself can be controversial (Detraz, 2012; Enloe, 2004), too political, too strident; that the act of naming patriarchy is itself radical.

Standpoint feminism is critical of the state itself, it sees it as a patriarchal structure with ongoing practices that continue the subordination of women. This structure is rooted in patriarchy’s division of the public (for men) and private realm (for women). A feminist standpoint orients itself to a view from the subjugated or oppressed position, that of the marginalized (Cockburn, 2012; Intemann, 2010). This relocates the focus from state to gender as the unit of analysis and from structures to individual experiences. It is active in that it seeks to bring attention to those groups and experiences which have been ignored as part of the overall structure. The experience of marginalized individuals, it argues, is the source of another kind of knowledge that has been unexamined, and if known, contributes to a fuller understanding of how global politics shapes the social world (Hansen, 2010).

Agency, Voice, and Empowerment

The concepts of agency, voice, and empowerment are linked to the process and practice of conscientization², or becoming aware of and challenging one’s marginal place in the social order.

² The term conscientization is attributed to Paolo Freire and refers to the critical consciousness where one becomes aware of and resists oppression. See Freire (2000).

This awareness, or critical consciousness, is a central feature of feminist standpoint theory. According to Kronsell (2005), it is this awareness of one's membership in a marginalized group that constitutes the experience embodied knowledge that feminist standpoint theory seeks to privilege.

Thus, it is not only what women experience as they go through life, but the insight or consciousness they can gain from their activities and interactions in a gendered world, that produces knowledge. Through these interactions women can discover the structures and oppressive relationships of which they are a part. This critical perception of one's social location can be called a feminist standpoint. It is feminist because it is not an automatic function of one's identity, but emerges out of a conscious struggle with dominant practices, which produces knowledge about the structure and meaning of those practices. (Kronsell, 2005, p. 290)

Conscientization is referred to here as a process, rather than a state of being. Furthermore, this process may be seen as uneven, incomplete, or complex, people occupy a range of identities and positions in the social order, of which gender is only one. For instance, one may identify as a member of a marginalized group, such as women veterans, but be unaware of class standing or race, or to recognize gendered power relations in the military but not in the home.

The concepts, agency, voice, and empowerment are combined to reflect their linked nature, together they are a dynamic package of resistance to oppression. Although these concepts are linked, each one has a particular meaning (and opposite) as defined here.

Agency refers to the actions and choices, both large and small, exercised by individuals and groups as a form of resistance to structural constraints, such as the gender order. For example, a woman's decision to join the military may be seen as an expression of agency in that she is resisting social rules that define soldiers as men.

Voice refers to acts or articulations that bring attention to forms of social inequality. While silence is usually considered the opposite of voice³, feminists have pointed to the importance of "listening" to the silences as a way to investigate and understand the workings of gender and social inequality (See Enloe, 2004; Kronsell, 2005; and others). For instance, one might ask why there is a certain silence in terms of the research about women combat veterans. On the other

³ Parpart complicates this voice/silence duality by arguing that choosing silence may be a form of resistance. (Parpart & Kabeer, 2010)

hand, producing a documentary film about military sexual trauma could be seen as an expression of voice.

Empowerment is the culmination and the catalyst for expressions of agency and voice; and ultimately from the notion of conscientization. Here I rely on the perspective of Naila Kabeer,

What is at the heart of empowerment for me is a critical consciousness, the ability to recognize oppression and injustice. It is also about the willingness and ability to protest injustice where the protest can take the form of speech or action, may be hidden or open, individual or collective, incremental or radical. (Parpart and Kabeer, 2010, p. 19)

As articulated by Kabeer, the actions (agency) and speech (voice), in concert with critical consciousness, cover a wide spectrum. Jane Parpart argues that despite the sometimes fuzzy meaning around the term, a consensus has formed around a basic definition that include the ability to make choices, to act, to speak out, and to challenge social inequality or hierarchies. (Parpart and Kabeer, 2010)

The concepts of agency, voice, and empowerment form useful analytical tools to better understand women veteran's experiences, in particular, the process of conscientization.

Recognition

Naturally, one might ask how the process of conscientization takes root, never materializes, or does so in uneven or unpredictable ways. While there are indeterminable factors to becoming aware of and identifying oneself in a certain way, there is no denying the importance of the social milieu in terms of influence.

The concept of recognition has been used as a tool to help explain some of the dynamics present in the experiences of women veterans. I rely on Charles Taylor's work on recognition and identity formation. Taylor defines identity as '*[...] a person's understanding of who they are, of their defining characteristics as a human being.*' (Taylor, 1994, p. 25)

Taylor describes the process of identity formation as a "dialogical" process (1994, p. 32) that is an ongoing combination of our internal understanding of ourselves and through our interactions with others. Furthermore, Taylor (1994) argues that the lack of recognition can have a detrimental effect on both an individual and collective identity.

“...our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *misrecognition* of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a conflicting or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.” (Taylor, 1994, p. 25. emphasis in original)

Furthermore, Taylor (1994) links identity (as influenced by recognition), both individual and for women into the military, Snyder relies on a civic based perspective that “as democratic citizens, women are the civil equals of men” (2003, p. 186) and thus should share the responsibilities of national defense through military service.

[...] like most democracies, the United States has historically seen a conceptual linkage between military service and first class citizenship, a connection embodied in the “citizen-soldier” ideal of civic republicanism. (Snyder, 2003, p. 186)

This is a salient notion for this project when considering the tensions surrounding representations of the soldier as the quintessential citizen and the soldier as the ultimate representation of masculinity.

When soldiers return from the war zone, the process of recognition takes place. For the soldier, it might be a process where their experiences are validated and their identity as the ultimate citizen is conferred. There are two examples that come to mind, one is the valorized citizen soldier returning from World War Two (WWII). The other is of the soldiers returning from the Vietnam War who were widely derided and publicly shamed/despised as a public expression of how unpopular that war was.

Another example comes from a 2009 Associated Press article titled “*Women warriors feel like outsiders when they return home*”, where author Kimberly Hefling (2009) describes a variety of challenges that some women veterans have faced when they returned home, subtle forms of discrimination, dismissal, and hostility toward them for being soldiers. One woman said that eventually she didn’t tell anyone of her service because she felt ashamed by the way people responded to her. Another woman began to doubt her own experience because so many others did.

The identity shaping power of recognition, or misrecognition, has the potential to significantly impact the way the women veterans experience the post-war.

Methods

The methods used in this project are informed from a feminist standpoint perspective. According to Lene Hansen (2010), even though standpoint feminism rejects essentialized notions of men and women, it holds that women should be the subject of the analysis as they are, as a social category, marginalized at all levels of the global system. This necessitates documenting women's experiences through narrative, ethnography, and other forms of contextualized and in depth research as required for this approach, allowing for the perspective of the research informant/participant to tell her own story on her own terms. Furthermore, the researcher is seen as part of the process of knowledge production and as such, it requires reflection on the relationship and the interaction between the researcher and the participant. (Hansen, 2010)

The section below discusses and explains the rationale behind the topic selection and the specific choices related to the research question, stated again here:

What are the post-war experiences of US women veterans of the recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars, are those experiences gendered, and in what ways?

War and war studies (security studies) is highly gendered, both in theory and practice. As mentioned previously, this field of IR is the most masculinist and is the heart of IR (Prügl, 2011). Similarly, war is classically seen as the ultimate masculine endeavor and is conducted (primarily) by men. Security studies has been a fruitful area of research for feminist IR scholars who have sought to elucidate the role of gender in both conflict and peace, as well as problematize essentialized associations of women and peace/men and war (Cockburn, 2010; Enloe, 2004). This leads directly to the specific political choice of security studies for this project, as well as the selection of women soldiers from a state military. Furthermore it informs the choice of a feminist standpoint which privileges women's experiences over a state-centric approach to IR.

War is highly gendered, and it is also cyclical, according to Cynthia Enloe (Enloe, 2012). She argues that we can better understand the causes and consequences of war, if we pay attention to the role of gender dynamics in each phase of war. Enloe (2012) argues that the post-war/conflict sets the stage for what comes next. Feminist scholars have theorized that during times of war/conflict, gender roles become flexible, however, the post-war/conflict period is most often

marked by a return to and reinforcement of traditional gender roles and stereotypes (Enloe, 2004). This project then is interested in the post-war experiences of women veterans, while being mindful that it is part of a larger experience. In practice, this means interviewing women veterans about their post war experiences and the process of a return to “normalcy”.

Women are often characterized as the victims of war, a claim which is accurate but not complete; women also participate in war and conflict and are members of state militaries and non-state entities. While acknowledging that there are many other cases to choose from, this project will focus on the women veterans of a single state military, the United States (US) Military, for the following reasons:

The US has the most powerful military in the world and remains the singular global military superpower. The US has the most women serving in its armed forces in a war zone, in combat; and has engaged in two of the longest wars in its history (Iraq and Afghanistan), simultaneously.

Even though women were historically banned from combat roles in the US military, the nature of the most recent wars has meant that women have been serving in “combat like” roles on a greater scale and for a longer period of time than any other in history.

The US military has resorted to more inclusive recruitment practices for a combination of social factors and practical considerations; social progress in the US has pushed the military to be more inclusive of women⁴. As is the case with other all volunteer militaries, the US military would be unable to fill their ranks if it did not recruit these groups. (Burelli, 2013)

This project uses a single case. According to Ackerly and True (2010), a single case is an appropriate choice where there is relatively little existing data, which is the case for the research question I explore in this thesis.

Data Collection and Production

Another factor behind the topic of this project is the dearth of material on this subject. While there is a body of research on the topic of women in militaries, and data available (mainly quantitative) on US veterans generally, there is a gap concerning women veterans. The research

on women in militaries supports a view that women and men have different (gendered) experiences in the military (Enloe, 2012). It then follows that the experiences of men and women veterans might be gendered as well.

This lack of existing literature and data on the topic necessitates primary data collection. In line with a feminist standpoint approach, this project utilized qualitative data by conducting interviews with women veterans of recent US wars (Iraq and Afghanistan). Research participants were recruited from civil society veteran's service organization(s) in the US (where possible) and utilized the knowledge and role of gatekeepers to facilitate appropriate and contextualized data collection and knowledge co-production.

The interview format consisted of two parts; a biographical narrative and semi-structured interview. The biographical narrative provides for a historical understanding, for the opportunity to ask about women's experiences over a particular time; before, during, and after the war. This unstructured format is intended to be more participant driven and to allow for more emergent themes. The semi-structured segment consisted of a series of open ended questions to allow for consistency of themes discussed between participants and also allowed for participants to interpret or characterize experiences in their own way.

In order to attend to a feminist ethic throughout the data collection and production, the interview process itself was conducted in an honest and open manner. This included verbal and written discussion of the purpose and use of the research, a confidentiality/consent agreement, interview transcript verification, and sharing the research findings. Transcript verification was done by sending the transcripts to the participants for the purpose of providing them an opportunity to review, comment on, change, or add anything to their own story. In addition, the research is made available to the participants and the cooperating organization for use in any efforts that promote the interests of women veterans. See appendix for research format, questions, consent forms, and transcripts.

Presenting the Sample and Its Limitations

There are a range of factors which may influence or impact the validity of the sample and require attention throughout the research process. This project uses a sample that is illustrative rather than representative. This choice is an appropriate one on the basis that this project seeks to provide insight or illuminate a phenomenon rather than prove something. This is consistent with a post-positivist feminist epistemological approach. (Ackerly and True, 2010) In addition, this project employs an adaptive approach to research design and method choice, as described by Layder (2013). This approach is intended to provide the flexibility to fit within the methodological framework of this project while also applying a suitable framework for the research methods.

The use of narrative/semi-structured interviews and practical considerations, such as time and additional resources, informed the sample size. The original goal was to conduct a range of five to seven, one hour long interviews, however, the result was three lengthier interviews (over five hours of interview in total). While the sample size was smaller than expected, the aim of gathering rich and descriptive data through interviews was accomplished. In addition, documentary film was used as supplementary material to further support the findings.

The interviews were partially transcribed to include those parts deemed relevant to the research. Thematic coding was used to evaluate and select material from the interviews. The coding was developed using the adaptive approach as laid out by Layder (2013) and further refined with strategies presented by Gibbs (Gibbs, 2011).

Initially, I assigned general thematic categories. These categories provided the overall framework as a guide to develop the themes. Next, I thoroughly reviewed the text and assigned it to the appropriate category (or categories). Drawing on the text from each of these categories, I looked for emergent themes. This process underwent several revisions and refinements and resulted in the categories listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Thematic categories and description for analysis.

Thematic Category	Description
Combat Policies and Practice	Contradictions between the stated policy and combat experience of women veterans.
PTSD & MST	Personal experiences or otherwise impacted by PTSD and/or MST in the post-war period.
Transitions to Civilian Life	Struggles with re-adjusting to civilian life were a factor for all those interviewed.
Education and Employment	These were locations where experiences as a woman veteran took place in different ways.
Relationships with Fellow Veterans	All the women interviewed maintained connections to other veterans, relevant to identity.
Attitudes of Family Members	The relationships with family and their attitudes toward the women veterans were discussed as relevant by the women interviewed.
Public Attitudes	The interactions with others in public settings and public attitudes towards women veterans in general terms.
Media Representation	Media sources and representations of women veterans.

(Mansfield, 2013)

Initially, three veteran's service organizations were chosen and contacted, these organizations were selected on the basis of specifically addressing women veteran's issues in some manner (see table below). This was a practical choice, in that these organizations would potentially offer access to their membership. It is relevant to consider which veterans would join these organizations and why, as well as who would not. Also, different organizations may attract different types of veterans depending on their orientation, for example, a women's veterans group may appeal to veterans who self-identify by gender and this may create a bias in the sampling. Conversely, as Intemann has argued, consciousness of one's membership in a marginalized group is an important feature of a feminist standpoint perspective (Intemann, 2010). Of the organizations that were approached, Swords to Plowshares agreed to participate in the research and actively assisted to recruit potential participants/interviewees.

Table 2. List of contacted veterans service organizations.

Organization	Profile	Women veterans
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA)	Largest nonprofit for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. Advocacy and service organization. National presence.	Women veterans is an issue and research area.
American Women Veterans	Advocacy organization. National presence	Specifically women veterans, advocacy and awareness raising campaigns.
Swords to Plowshares	Advocacy and service organization. Local/regional presence Greater SF Bay Area	Dedicated women veterans program.

(Mansfield, 2013)

It is worth considering why the other organizations did not agree to participate. This is left unclear from the communication with these organizations, however, it is possible to surmise that the smaller, locally oriented organization presented fewer barriers to access. In this instance, I was able to have direct contact with the director of the women veterans program; this accessibility made it possible to work through and address issues of research purpose and ethics directly. The issue of gatekeepers and research ethics will be discussed in more detail to come.

The veteran's organization, Swords to Plowshares, contacted women veterans about participating in the research through interviews. Of those who were contacted by the organization, three contacted me in turn, and agreed to be interviewed. In terms of selecting the sample, the process was somewhat opaque due to the challenges associated with access to this population. The organization contacted members about the interview request, and then those who chose to participate were asked to contact the researcher directly. Due to the importance of developing relationships and building trust with the targeted community, time constraints restricted access to a larger sample.

The interviews were conducted in the San Francisco Bay Area in April, 2013. Each person interviewed received the interview format and questions prior to the interview. Informed consent

was sought and obtained prior to each interview and all were recorded. See appendix for interview documents.

Profile of interview participants;

Andrea is a US Army Veteran who served for 12 years from 1995 to 2007 and was deployed to Iraq twice. During her service, Andrea worked in human resources and civilian affairs. Andrea currently works in an advocacy role for women veterans. The interview was conducted in San Francisco, California on April 3, 2013 and lasted over two and a half hours.

Bea is a Lieutenant Colonel in the US Army (Ret.) she served for 33 years, from 1979 to 2012 and was deployed 5 times during her career, including once to Iraq. During her military career, Bea worked as a military police officer and in civilian affairs. Today, Bea is retired from the US Army and currently works as a writer. The interview was conducted in the greater SF Bay Area on April 5, 2013 and lasted over two hours.

Candace is a US Army Veteran who served from 2000 to 2005 and was deployed to Iraq. Candace worked as a military police officer during her time in the service and currently is an outreach worker for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. The interview was conducted in San Francisco on April 9, 2013 and was approximately 1 hour in duration.

Initially, there was a concern that by selecting a certain geographic area, there would be a risk that there would be variations in experiences if individuals were selected from different locations. Not only nationally, but locally; communities which are located near a military base or installation may have a different understanding, and response to women veterans. On the other hand, veterans are often quite mobile so that sampling from one area may have the effect of providing geographic diversity. That was the case here, the interview participants all migrated to the area from elsewhere in the country.

On the other hand, there was a lack of diversity in terms of military branch and somewhat in terms of job functions in the military. As it was, the women who participated in interviews were all from the same branch of the military, the Army. This may be because more women, in absolute terms, are in the Army than the other branches of the military (see table). It is worth considering whether women veterans from the other branches of the military would have similar

of different experiences. Also, two of the women worked as military police officers and two worked in civilian affairs (two had more than one job during their military career).

Figure 1. shows how many women are serving in the different branches of the military. It reveals that there are more women in the Army than any other military branch.

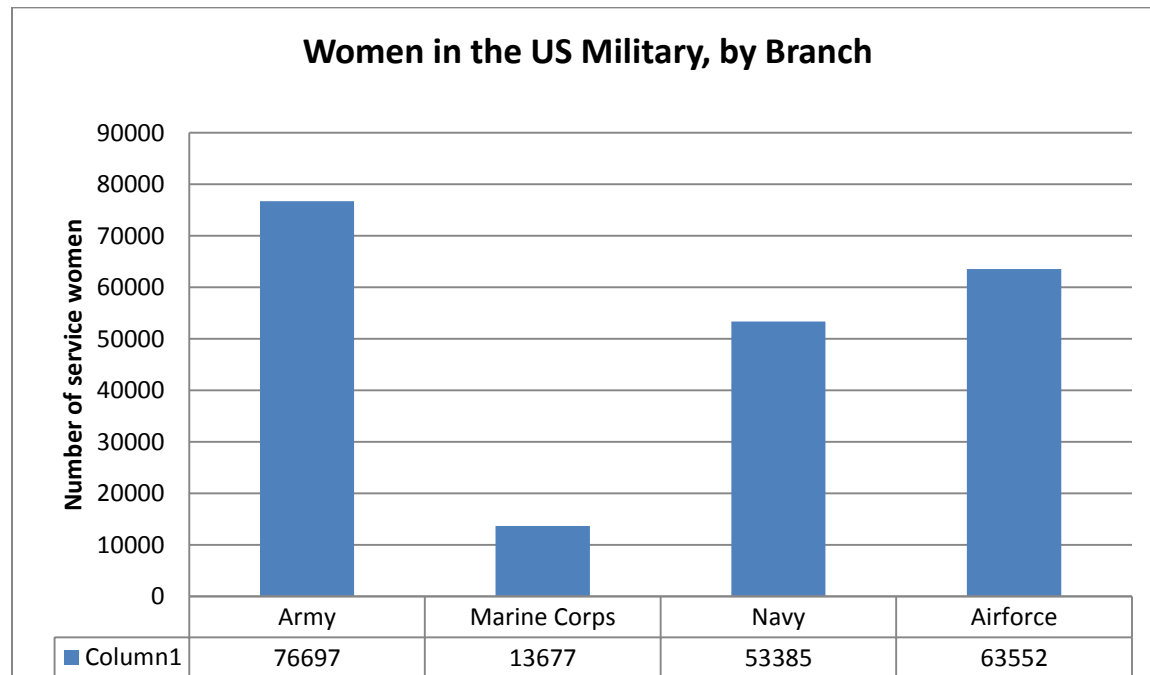


Figure 1. Number of women in the US military, by branch.

(Mansfield, 2013, adapted from Women's Memorial, 2011)

As mentioned previously, this project supplemented the data from interviews with documentary film, specifically, *Lioness* (2008). All the supplementary materials that were reviewed (as described here) have salient information, experiences, and perspectives. These documentary sources were recommended by the women veterans that were interviewed. This is one of the ways that these women have participated in and contributed to the production of knowledge in this project.

Lioness, 2008

This award winning documentary film chronicles the combat and post-war experiences of five women who served in the first all-female unit to be attached to a combat unit, the so-called, *Lioness* program (*Lioness*, 2008).

Veterans Administration video shorts

This is a series of video clips of veterans describing their experiences after leaving the military. It was produced by the Veterans Administration (VA) and encourages veterans to seek help from the VA when needed. Its purpose is outreach, and while many of the video clips support some of the themes in the project, upon reviewing this material, I have come to the conclusion that it is too narrowly focused on outreach for this project. (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013)

Poster Girl, 2011

The documentary film, *Poster Girl*, chronicles the journey of one woman from her military experience through a very difficult transition to civilian life, as she copes with the impact of PTSD. Because this film focuses on one woman's experience, it was not chosen as supplementary material (*Poster Girl*, 2011).

The Invisible War, 2012

This film has won film awards and accolades of veterans groups and supporters for raising the issue of military sexual trauma⁵ (MST). This film makes a very important contribution to understanding the experience of veterans who experience MST. Because the focus of the film is specifically MST, it was not chosen for this project which seeks to investigate a wide range of experiences (*The Invisible War*, 2012).

The film that was chosen, *Lioness*, was selected because it addressed a wide range of issues, including several which were raised in the interviews. In addition, in her review of media resources about women veterans, Lisa Schreibersdorf argues that *Lioness* is '*the most powerful and the most complex investigation into US women's experience of combat.*' (2011, p. 22). In conclusion, the empirical data used in this project is over five hours of recorded interview with three women combat veterans and a documentary film. The interviews were partially transcribed to include those sections deemed relevant to the project. The purpose of the film was to supplement the interviews, thus, only the aspects of the film that were relevant to the interview themes have been used.

⁵ An explanation and discussion of MST will follow in the analysis. Also see glossary of terms.

Gatekeepers

What follows in this final discussion of the data collection methods, are the ways in which the issue of gatekeeping became relevant to this project. Gatekeeper is defined here as a person (or persons) who controls the entry point into a research field (Sanghera & Thapar-Björkert, 2008). The gatekeeper referred to here was the coordinator of the Women Veterans Program at Swords to Plowshares, Starlyn Lara.

In their work on gatekeepers, Sanghera & Thapar-Björkert (2008) argue that the issue of gatekeepers is not only a methodological concern, but that it has a direct and substantial impact on the research findings themselves. Furthermore, they contend that gatekeepers present a complicated combination of practical and ethical dilemmas for researchers.

One of the issues identified by Sanghera and Thapar-Björkert (2008), that of gatekeepers providing or restricting access to the field, was present in this project. Initially, the response that I received from the coordinator to my research request was fairly explicit in terms of her gatekeeper role;

When it comes to doing outreach on behalf of a third party, I need to know that the questions and subject matter are sensitive to the needs and experiences of women who have served in the US Armed Forces. When you have the content, I will act as the test subject [...]
(S. Lara 2013, pers. comm. 20 February)

Not only did the coordinator place conditions (her approval) on the content of the interview questions, she also placed further conditions on access that would presumably be subject to her impression of me as an interviewer. This potentially raises the interesting, if complicated, question of positionality; how did my status/privilege as a white woman, an American, and a daughter of a veteran, locate me as an insider to some degree, or otherwise confer trustworthiness? What (if any) are the obligations of interpretation for researchers who gain access through their insider position or status?

While these issues were present, the interactions and experience that I had with the coordinator were very positive and strengthened the project overall. The coordinator accepted the proposed interview format and questions, without any qualifications. In addition, after I “field tested” the questions with her and gained her approval, she worked actively to recruit participants. For

instance, when I received only one response from her first email to potential interview participants, she sent additional emails and made phone calls to try to arrange more interviews for me. In addition, she provided a great deal of background information and recommended additional sources of information.

Interestingly, a similar dynamic took place during (and after) the interviews. Once the interviews had proceeded a certain amount, the interview participants recommended additional resources and even provided more contacts. This is in line with findings by Sanghera and Thapar-Björkert (2008) who also found that respondents themselves are sometimes gatekeepers.

On reflection, this aspect of the project demonstrates what Cambell, et al. (2006) refer to as the “humanness” of the research field, which they describe as being intertwined with the spectrum of human interactions such as; feelings of obligation to the research informants, manipulating personal identity to gain access, and ethical questions with representing others views. In essence, the centrality of human relationships, has a widespread affect; on the researcher, research participants, and how the research is formulated, carried out, analyzed, and presented (Campbell, et al., 2006). The importance of relationships has been present throughout this project, however, building trust and rapport with the women who contributed their stories has been vital.

Analysis

Women in the Military

The purpose of this section is to contextualize the narrative in the analysis by providing brief background information about the history of women in the US military, about the structure of the military, and about policies concerning women in combat.

Just as women’s place in society has changed over time, so have women’s roles in the military. This has been reflected in changes to policy that have often coincided with wartime. For instance, during World War Two (WWII), all the military branches created auxiliary corps or reserves for women, such as the Women’s Army Corp (WACs) and the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES). In all, more than 400,000 women served in or with the US military during WWII. By 1948, Congress had enacted the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 which granted full status to women in the military even though it limited

the number of enlisted women to two percent and officers to ten percent of the overall force, a limit that was repealed in 1967. The number of women joining the military jumped after the draft ended in 1973 and today there are over 400,000 women in the US Armed forces. (Burelli, 2013)

According to a report by the Congressional Research Office, confusion within the military and ambiguous legislation on women in combat led the Department of Defense (DOD) to adopt the so called, “risk rule” (a subjective formula used to gauge whether women soldiers were permitted to serve in certain units). The risk rule resulted in banning women from about half of the jobs in the military and was repealed by Congress in 1994, after Desert Storm⁶. As part of an agreement with Congress, the DOD replaced the risk rule with an administrative rule that banned women from combat. On January 24, 2013, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the DOD issued a joint memorandum announcing the end to the combat exclusion policy (Department of Defense, 2013). In a statement announcing the decision, then Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta said,

One of my priorities as Secretary of Defense has been to remove as many barriers as possible for talented and qualified people to be able to serve this country in uniform. Our nation was built on the premise of the citizen-soldier. In our democracy, I believe it is the responsibility of every citizen to protect the nation. And every citizen who can meet the qualifications of service should have that opportunity. [...]

General Dempsey and I are pleased to announce that we are eliminating the direct ground combat exclusion rule for women and we are moving forward with a plan to eliminate all unnecessary gender-based barriers to service. (Panetta, 2013)

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq made the combat exclusion policy largely irrelevant in practice, even as it remained the policy. The ‘non-linear battlefields’ (Burelli, 2013, p. 5) of the conflict zones and the Army’s re-design of combat brigades meant that the policy was unworkable if women were going to serve in those war zones (Burelli, 2013). At one point during the Iraq War (Operation Iraqi Freedom) questions about women in combat (and how to enforce the policy) were raised in congressional hearings but were quickly buried when it came to light that all women soldiers would have to be pulled from those deployments in order to comply with the policy. This was seen as an unacceptable option as it would risk the entire operations and potentially the outcome of the war. (Lioness, 2008)

⁶ Desert Storm was the Gulf War, or first American war in Iraq.

The nearly 300,000 (Burelli, 2013) women who were deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan after September 2001, have been subject to the combat exclusion policy (even though the DOD announced that it would end the policy, each branch of the military is to draft a plan as to how they will implement the policy change; these measures have yet to take effect).

Critics of the combat exclusion policy have noted that combat experience is an important factor in promotions and women are less likely to move up the ranks without it. Another serious concern is the lack of combat and/or specialized training that women receive (also men in support roles). Women have not been permitted to receive the level of training needed for those who encounter or engage in combat. This has resulted in soldiers being placed in dangerous situations that they were unprepared to handle. (Lioness, 2008)

Those who support a restriction on women in combat rely heavily on arguments of physical difference between the sexes; that women are not as physically strong as men, that women can get pregnant and therefore undermine troop levels, and that women's presence disrupts unit "cohesion". (Burelli, 2013)

The U.S. Military falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense (DOD)⁷ and is comprised of five branches; the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, and their respective National Guard and Reserve units. Each branch has an active force and National Guard and/or Reserves. For active duty personnel, the military is their full time job; they may live on base, and can be deployed at any time. Those in the Reserve or National Guard are not full-time, active duty military personnel; they train on a part-time basis while maintaining their civilian lives, however, they can be called up for active duty should the need arise (Veterans Health Administration, n.d.).

As a result of relying on an all-volunteer force, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have resulted in the longest and largest Reserve and National Guard deployments ever. The result has been multiple deployments for these service members and, according to the VA, Guard and Reservists face additional challenges, such as increased risk of PTSD. (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2011)

⁷ The Coast Guard is under the Department of Homeland Security during peacetime and to the DOD (by way of the Navy) during wartime.

Table 3 shows the distribution, by service branch, of women in the military. The table reveals that some branches of the military have much higher ratios of women than others. In terms of active duty forces, the Air Force has the highest percentage (19.1%) of women serving, while the Marines have the lowest percentage (6.8%). The Army, which has the largest force overall, is just below the average for all branches (Women in Military Service for America Foundation, 2011).

The other factor that the table shows is that women comprise even larger ratios in the National Guard and the Reserves than those in active duty. The highest ratio is women in the Air Force Reserve (26.6 %) and the next highest is the Army Reserve (21.6%). That there are many more women in the Guard and Reserves is significant in light of the additional burdens and risks it poses.

Table 3. Number and percentage of women serving in active duty, the Reserves, and National Guard.

Women Serving in the US Armed Forces			
Military Branch	Women	Total Force	Women as a percentage of the total
Women serving in Active Duty			
Army	76,694	565,463	13.6 %
Marine Corps	13,677	201,157	6.8 %
Navy	53,385	325,123	16.4 %
Air Force	63,552	333,370	19.1 %
Coast Guard	6,790	43,251	15.7 %
Total	214,098	1,468,364	14.6 %
Women serving in the Reserves			
Army Reserve	62,473	288,686	21.6 %
Marines Reserve	5,704	100,543	5.7 %
Navy Reserve	20,549	103,015	19.9 %
Air Force Reserve	28,463	106,814	26.6 %
Coast Guard Reserve	1,592	9,526	16.7 %
Total Reserve	118,781	608,494	19.5 %
Women serving in the National Guard			
Army National Guard	53,290	365,166	14.6 %
Air Force National Guard	19,500	105,685	18.5 %
Total National Guard	72,790	470,851	15.5 %
Combined Total All Forces	405,669	2,547,709	15.9 %

(Mansfield 2013, adapted from, Women in Military Service for America Foundation, 2011))

Veterans Services

When military service ends, the institutional apparatus that manages soldiers, transfers responsibility from the US Department of Defense (DOD) to the Veterans Administration (VA). The VA is responsible for providing a range of services and benefits to military veterans, such as health care, benefits, and memorials.

In addition to the VA, there are hundreds of veterans service organizations (VSOs) ranging from smaller associations such as the *Bowlers to Veterans Link* to the largest veterans group, *The American Legion*. This project benefited from the cooperation of one of these VSOs, Swords to Plowshares.

Swords to Plowshares was established in 1974 as an independent, not for profit, veterans service organization and is one of thirty-six VSO's recognized by the VA as a congressionally chartered organization which is able to assist veterans with VA claims (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). Swords to Plowshares receive funding from corporate and foundation sponsors; on their website they list 3 corporate sponsors (JP Morgan Chase, Walmart, and Prudential) and numerous local and national foundations.

Swords to Plowshares is a community-based, not-for-profit veteran service organization that provides wrap-around care to more than 2,000 veterans in the San Francisco Bay Area each year. We are committed to helping veterans break through the cultural, educational, psychological and economic barriers they often face in their transition to the civilian world. (Swords to Plowshares, 2013)

Swords to Plowshares has seven program areas; employment and training, legal services, housing, health and social services, advocacy and policy, combat to community (cultural competency training for community service providers who work with veterans), and the women veterans project. The Women Veterans Project provides resource and referral services to women veterans and conducts community outreach and awareness raising campaigns. The coordinator of the Women Veterans Project, Starlyn Lara, was the contact person at Swords to Plowshares for this project and recruited interview participants on my behalf.

While it is beyond the scope of this project to examine VSO practices, it raises an interesting question; if, how, and to what extent, VSOs address the needs or interests of women veterans. All of the women interviewed spoke of the importance of being able to seek out the support of

other veterans or to access services through VSOs. It should also be noted that the women all spoke highly of Swords to Plowshares specifically; however, it is not intended to compare this organization to any others in light of the fact that the interview participants were all recruited through this organization and no other organizations were evaluated in any way.

In the analysis that follows, the format is similar to that of the interviews. The first part is a narrative of each of the three women interviewed with focus on individual stories. The second part of the analysis is based specifically on post-war experiences of the women interviewed with supporting material from the film *Lioness*, where relevant. The thematic categories are combat policies and practice, PTSD and MST, transitions, education and employment, relationships with fellow veterans, attitudes of family members, public attitudes, and media representation. Emphasis is placed on the women's own words, thus direct quotes are used where ever reasonable.

Individual stories

Andrea

Andrea joined the military right out of high school, she was just 18 years old and went from her family home and small town, to boot camp and then on to her first assignment in Korea. According to her own account, Andrea loved being in the military and thrived in that environment.

When she left the military 12 years later and was looking for her next steps, one of the things she decided was to become an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), this seemed like a logical step since she already had medic training from her time in the military. Although she did not anticipate it, she discovered that what that meant in practice was attending to many elderly patients. She said that she was unprepared for the different social skills required to assist a frightened elderly patient. She explained that she had no experience with elderly people, the people in the army are mostly young, certainly not frail and elderly.

While the conversation about soldiers adjusting to civilian life often focuses on the difficulties they experience that result from the physical or psychological impacts of the war experience, this

example raises some interesting, if subtle issues. What is the impact of being socialized in the military have for the transition to civilian life?

Andrea joined the military just out of high school so that she went directly from her family home to the military. What does it mean to become an adult in a world without children or old people? What does it mean to become socialized as an adult in a world where there are very few (other) women? What does it mean if that world is built upon certain ideas about masculinities and femininities and the value that is placed on notions associated with each gender?

Ultimately, Andrea left that job after it became untenable for another reason, as she described it, she could not carry the emotional burden that resulted from witnessing the effects of violence carried out against children. She said that she had witnessed children as the victims of war when she served in Iraq but it was possible to manage that through the process of “othering”, in her words;

That’s those people, you know, there was this moral barrier, it was just, that was those people, anyway, but to see American kids injured due to the mistreatment from a parent, I just, it was just something that I could not carry on that emotional burden. (about working as an EMT) (Andrea: lines 262-264)

It is interesting to consider what Andrea did next and how she explains it. She said that she walked into a beauty supply store to purchase shampoo and walked out with a job as a clerk. She explained that she considered it therapy, it was something so inconsequential compared to the experiences of war or even as an EMT and that space gave her some respite from those emotionally difficult experiences and places.

[...] what do I do to balance that in my life? So I did the... I walked into a beauty supply store one day to buy some shampoo. I asked to see if they were hiring and I started working the next day. (Andrea: lines 268-270)

The other aspect of this that Andrea described as useful was the space and opportunity to observe and practice social interaction. This was a laboratory of sorts where she could experiment with different responses- facial expressions, body language, tone of voice- to understand the different ways that others would respond to her. This demonstration of agency, the awareness and motivation to overcome what she saw as her limited social skills, is remarkable.

It is also interesting in that she describes her own lack of subjective knowledge of the certain common forms of femininity and that the beauty supply store is a location where she can familiarize herself with this.

I just wanted something that was superficial, I wanted something that was... I was realizing that my problems were my socialization skills. The socialization skills that I developed fit that environment, I didn't have the socialization skills needed to deal with the older people, which, being an EMT, I realized [...] I realized what my weaknesses were and so it was just on a whim that I just needed this [...] and so I started selling people over priced shampoo. But the opportunities for dialog were limitless, so it's one thing to try to learn that a smile goes a long way, but to learn that my tone and my pitch and how people respond to that, it was like I was just experimenting every day, every single day. To realize how many things I'd missed, those expectations of what femininity is, how I can alter what I'm doing now so that in the future...
(Andrea: lines 272- 281)

This relates back to the question of socialization in the military and which masculinities and which femininities are acceptable and which are not. For Andrea, an important part of the process of re-entering civilian life, now as an adult, was to develop a new set of social skills. The meanings behind constructions of masculinities and femininities typically operate at subconscious level, making them seem "natural". Andrea's efforts to learn these demonstrate agency on her part and perhaps a level of conscientization by becoming aware of (at least certain) gender constructions.

Bea

Bea retired from the Army in December of 2012, after thirty-three years of service. Through a long career in the Reserves, which included being called for active duty five times, and being deployed abroad three times, Bea went through the transition from military to civilian life, and back again, numerous times. During her long career, Bea took part in, and experienced, the changing composition of the US military. Her experience also reflects the durability of gender discrimination that Enloe (2004) and others have observed (Kronsell & Svedberg, 2012).

1974 was a historically significant turning point for the US military; the war in Vietnam was just winding down and the military shifted to the All-Volunteer Force, as the draft ended at the close of 1973. The unpopularity of the draft and the war made it difficult for the military to recruit enough men. That, coupled with the women's movement that called for equal rights, led (and pushed) the military to recruit more women in order to fill its ranks. That historical turn was the

beginning of what became a long and sustained increase of women joining the military. (Burelli, 2013)

When Bea joined the Army in 1979, she was one of the path breakers. Bea knew by the time she was twelve years old that she wanted to be in the military. For her, a sense of citizenship and of service, were what motivated her decision. For Bea to imagine herself as both a citizen soldier, and a woman, could be seen as an expression of agency, one that challenged conventional associations of soldiers as men.

I joined because I thought that every citizen has a responsibility to give back and I chose to do that through service. I joined initially in college but I knew I wanted to when I was 12. That was when I had that awareness of citizenship. I joined for patriotic reasons. (Bea: lines 3-6)

When she tried to join just out of high school, she met resistance from her mother who refused to give parental permission, a requirement since Bea was not yet eighteen years old. While attending college, Bea enrolled in the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC)⁸ and would end up retiring from the military thirty three years later. That Bea not only chose to join the military in spite of family resistance, she also chose a leadership career track (officer training), offers another example of agency, one that rejects the stereotype that soldiers, and leaders, are men.

Bea experienced and was part of this change taking place within the military, this expansion of opportunities for women. *'The year I went to basic training was the first year that women were allowed to go to ROTC basic training.'* (Bea: line 77) For Bea, these changes that were taking place were marked by very different experiences from one setting to another. While in college, Bea was both in the ROTC program and in an Army Reserve unit. As she described it, even though the ROTC program had only just begun to include women, the atmosphere was gender neutral and included women in leadership positions.

[...] up until that year the only women in ROTC were nursing students. Now, the year before they had opened ROTC completely to women, and that year there was actually a woman who was the cadet commander of the entire cadet corp. She was probably one of the first women cadets ever to hold that high of a cadet position. In my ROTC program, gender was not an issue at all, which is surprising, given the time, but the program cadre really maintained an attitude about your performance and gender didn't have anything to do with it. (Bea: lines 80-87)

⁸ ROTC trains and commissions officers through a college based program.

In other places, she experienced an attitude toward women that was nothing short of hostile. While in the Army Reserve program (simultaneous to the ROTC program), she and the other women were arbitrarily excluded from any field training.

My reserve unit that I was in at the same time was the opposite, women can't go in the field, but in my ROTC unit, women did everything. At the same time I experienced that. (Bea: lines 303-305)

While Bea did have experiences where gender was not an issue, similar to that first one in the ROTC, gender discrimination was the rule rather than the exception, even over time. From that initial experience of being excluded from field training early on in her career, to being passed over for missions during her deployment in Iraq decades later, gender discrimination held sway.

I volunteered to be convoy commander and I was told no, because I was female. I was the most qualified. As a military police officer, I had more tactical training and more tactical experience, and was one of the only officers who had been in the Army during the Gulf War, where I'd been an area security tactical leader. I had more experience than anyone else of the officers who were eligible to do this. I volunteered and I was told no because I was a girl. (Bea: lines 310-315)

That's in 2005, so misogyny is still there. I ran eighteen convoys while I was there [...] (Bea: line 323)

Even though Bea experienced discrimination throughout her career, she also exhibited agency in her determination to push back against it, such as when she volunteered to be convoy commander. Even though her initial request was rejected, Bea did become convoy commander, in large part due to her persistence.

Bea suffered from another type of discrimination throughout her military career, one that had a deep and lasting impact on both her experiences in the military, as well as her personal life. In order to join and stay in the military, Bea had to keep her sexual orientation a closely held secret. Almost her entire career took place in an environment that required her to hide her sexual identity. On September 20, 2011, Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT), the policy banning military service based on sexual orientation was repealed (Under Secretary of Defense, 2011).

When not serving in active duty, Bea was involved in ongoing training and associated work assignments as a member of the Reserves. This required balancing a civilian life and military commitments while keeping her private life a secret. In order to accomplish that, Bea would

travel across the country, keeping her military life and civilian life literally thousands of miles apart.

Almost all of my assignments were away from where I lived because of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. I needed to be where I would not inadvertently run into people. If that was not in place, I would have spent my entire career out here. It created a huge logistical and financial hardship on my family. Fortunately that's gone now. (Bea: lines 181-185)

This imperative for leading a split life, in tandem with repeated deployments followed by reintegration, fostered a very isolated post-war experience.

[...] because of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy where I had to subjugate my identity and compartmentalize my relationships, I developed, in part, my own sense of self or personality is one of isolation. I had very few relationships. And, because the last ten years I was called up three times and I would have to come back and reintegrate, and reintegration to me is a pretty much isolating. (Bea: lines 650-655)

Even those areas that could have been an outlet for expression, and mitigated the isolation Bea experienced, were off limits to her.

I was constrained from my writing career while I was active in the military because you write what you know, I couldn't write what I knew. I couldn't even write fiction about what I knew for fear of exposure, so that aspect of my life was on hold. When 9/11 happened, everything in my life was put on hold. My life would have been very different, I think. (Bea: 661-666)

The stress and disruption of being in a Reserve force, for Bea, who served over a long period of time and had multiple deployments, meant going through the reintegration process over and over. This difficulty was compounded by having to live a separate and secret life. Bea embodied some of the most significant challenges and changes that took place in the military over the course of her career; as a woman, a lesbian, a soldier, and a combat veteran.

Candace

When Candace joined the Army National Guard in 2000, she joined a unit near her home town, her family, and where she planned to go to college; she could not have known that she would be called up for active duty within a year or be on the battlefield a couple of years after that. Those events changed the course of her life,

When I joined, I didn't really imagine going to war, especially being National Guard. (Candace: lines 268-269)

On September 11, on the morning of the attacks, my unit called me and said 'get here', basically. There were no orders, we didn't know what was going on so we just- I packed up my things and left. Left my job, it was the last day I ever worked at my job; left my house, it was the last day I actually lived at home. It kind of changed my whole course of what I was going to do. (Candace: lines 7-11)

After being called up for active duty after September 11, 2001 and serving in the US, Candace was released from active duty in 2002 and started working in a civilian job at the Pentagon, but only for the short term. By early 2003 Candace had orders to deploy to Iraq.

It took me a long time. I got off active duty in 2004, although I got home in late December and it took me until 2011 to go get counseling. I think that's pretty normal. I didn't want anything to do with vets, with the military, after the Pentagon, I was done. (Candace: lines 113-115)

As Candace explained, there were a couple incidents that took place in Iraq that affected her long after, even though she was unaware of their significance. In fact, part of the process was to acknowledge the legitimacy of her experiences. Shortly after Candace deployed, she was faced with a situation that stayed with her for long after;

One of the things that I'll never forget, and still kind of haunts me to this day- my first week or two there I had to go on a convoy to take a prisoner to the hospital. This was before I really knew about the dangers of the IED⁹s. [...] My platoon sergeant comes up to me and he kind of taps my chest and he feels that there is nothing- there's something missing there.¹⁰ He says, 'let me see your weapon.' I give him my 9mm, which was my service weapon, He looks at it, cocks it back, puts it on fire, and put's it back in my holster. He says, 'If he makes one wrong move, I want you to shoot him in the head.' (Candace: lines 65-71)

In my head, and almost every day, I'm thinking, what was a wrong move? Luckily he didn't move- he was just as scared as I was. I think he could see the fear in my eyes. [...] I think back, what if he would have gone into his pocket and grabbed something? Would that have been the wrong move? What if he had made a run for it? Could I have shot him? What if he was in his pocket getting Chap Stick or something and I shoot him. I run through that scenario almost every day. (Candace: lines 72-78)

In this story, the focus ends up being on how it was processed later. Candace mentioned that this happened before there was very much awareness (at least on her part) of the very real dangers

⁹ IED is the acronym for Improvised Explosive Device, essentially a homemade bomb. They were used extensively by insurgents in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

¹⁰ Candace is referring to "plates" or body armor. There were significant shortages of equipment, particularly body armor and armored vehicles in the early part of the Iraq war.

that were present in Iraq. Part of the process that she went through was a process of acknowledging the events and how they impacted her.

I blocked it out for the first couple of years and then I went to see the Hurt Locker¹¹ when it came out in 2010, 2011? It became abundantly clear that I could have died out there and that I was not okay. [...] there were two scenes that really hit me hard. One was when the captain was walking and he just stepped on something and blew up. I was like, 'it was really that easy to do that.'
(Candace: lines 79-84)

The role of recognition is present here and could be seen as an example of the process of consciousness raising. The role of social communication, in this case a film, brought forth a latent experience and legitimized it, or recognized it. The film featured a male actor and so the connection for Candace was likely linked to the combat experience, with gender mute.

On the other hand, Candace did have experiences while serving in Iraq that were clearly related to gender. These experiences of sexual harassment and abuse were also internalized, not until later, long after the war, did Candace connect them to similar experiences of other women (and men). In this example, Candace describes the embarrassment, humiliation, and fear that resulted from two events. She also describes the way she minimized and took responsibility for what happened.

They did comment on my looks and I was fine with that. Whatever, I'm not going to let that bother me, but there were two occasions that I blocked out for a long time. It was a hot day in 2002. It might have even been today because it was right around my birthday, a couple of days before. It was a hot day, an unusually hot day and I was wearing a white wife beater and a pair of capris. I was on crutches because my ankle. I said, 'It's really hot today' and someone came up from behind and poured a bucket of water over my head and yelled, 'wet t-shirt contest! Not so hot now, are you.' All the guys were cracking up, they were laughing. I was embarrassed but I didn't want to be seen as that woman who couldn't take a joke so I just laughed it off, I was like, 'you guys, that's crazy, you're silly.' (Candace: lines 147-155)

It is interesting to consider the implications of her desire to not be seen by the others as 'that woman who couldn't take a joke'. These actions of sexual harassment are expressions of power which reinforce and reaffirm masculine "dominance" over feminine "weakness". What would have been the consequences had she responded differently? Would she have been challenging their masculinity by forcefully objecting to the behavior? In doing so, would she have put herself

¹¹ The Hurt Locker was a film about the Iraq War

at greater risk for future abuse? Would she have been rejected by her peers and lost (tenuous) status as one-of-the-boys?

In the second instance, Candace relates how she narrowly escaped what might have been much more violent event, even as she blames herself for it. While it is difficult to divine from the story, it is also interesting to ponder the dynamic between the men that were present.

There was another situation right after my birthday; this was all in the same week. Three of the guys that were there, I was actually friends with one of them. We were out drinking and my friend was saying something kind of close to my ear and the other guys got upset. I don't remember how it all transpired but I remember I was standing up and said, 'hey guys, don't do that.', or something. One of the guys grabbed my crutches and pushed me down and pinned me down. My friend who I was talking to, he ran and kind of tackled the guy who was on top of me. He got beat up so I could get away. I have no idea what he would have done if he hadn't done that. I never admitted to that either because I thought, I should have never been out drinking with those guys. I blamed myself. (Candace: lines 156-164)

While it is very common for victims of sexual harassment and abuse to feel they are responsible for what happened, the process of shifting the blame from victim to perpetrator can bring some measure of empowerment.

I took me until last year to actually admit to that, to say, 'that happened.' For a long time I thought, that's just guys being stupid in the military. They were like, no, that's military sexual trauma. So one of the biggest things I'm working on now is letting people know, MST isn't just rape. A lot of people think that's all it is. In some ways, the repeated sexual- having people pour water over your head and do all these things to embarrass you. The psychological impacts of having some man embarrass you, because you're a woman. (Candace: lines 164-169)

For Candace, having someone name it, give it recognition, helped her identify herself as a victim of Military Sexual Trauma (MST) and use agency and voice to advocate on behalf of herself and others. She also identifies what she saw as the purpose behind the harassment, to embarrass or humiliate her because she is a woman.

There are women, they think it's so minor, it's no big deal. If it's something that affects you, you can't be afraid to report it. You don't have to put yourself out there like a lot of us are, but you don't have to suffer in silence or alone. Letting people know that it's not just rape. That guy touching your ass every day or that guy calling you "big canons" all the time, that stuff affects you and you get sick of it. I try to tell people it's not just these things. You don't have to accept-

A lot of women get discharged on personality disorders. If they do report MST- a lot of them victim blame, they instill that. That is why I blamed myself for having my crutches grabbed. The victim blaming, it still happens. (Candace: lines 361-369)

While Candace was in Iraq, she was dating someone and then they became engaged after they returned home. Even though most of the duration of their relationship took place after Iraq, the war resonated through it long after. Candace related that her fiancé had problems with anger after they came home, that he was bitter about going to war while so many did not go, or even seem to notice. The expressions of concern and protection that her then boyfriend exhibited in Iraq, later became expressions of distrust and control.

We got engaged after Iraq and then we broke up in 2007. I think for him- he was protective of me when we were in Iraq because of the situation. I think he was protective of me because I didn't have those plates and he was worried about me. From there, his protection became controlling until it hit a critical mass. He just didn't trust me. If I came home late from work, ten minutes late, he would call me. If I went out with my girlfriends, he would text me or call me every hour. I came home late from a party and he accused me of cheating on him. Finally, I was like, I'm done. I couldn't take it anymore. (Candace: lines 178-184)

Many veterans say that it can be difficult to talk about and process war experiences with people who have not been to war. For veterans whose partner is a fellow veteran, this may provide solace, a sense that you are understood. On the other hand, if one or both suffer from war trauma in ways that are not managed, it may be what unbalances a relationship. Candace had not known how unhappy she had become until after she left the relationship,

Actually, the whole saga of us breaking up, the everyday of it is inadvertently in photos. I was doing a self-portrait project at the same time and people could tell that something was not right. People would say, 'You're not smiling like you used to.' So they saw it before I did. I moved out of the house at the exact half way point. I didn't mean for that to happen, it just did. (Candace : lines 202-205)

After Candace ended the relationship with her fiancé, she packed up and moved across the country to California. Those changes were accompanied by other changes as well, she began to seek help from the VA for counseling services and later became an outspoken advocate for combat veterans generally and women combat veterans in particular. In the excerpt below, Candace explains her rationale behind sharing her story with others,

There's going to be a lot of women who are defensive about their experience. I am guilty of it sometimes too. But you also have to understand that a lot of people don't get to see it from our side. Just recently, people didn't realize that women served in the military in the scope that we did. I try not to get defensive. I try to say, 'well, we did this, try to see it from my side.' I understand that it's kind of hard to grasp these women going out and doing these things. Especially for the older generation it's, 'what in the hell?' Understanding that is a very big part of telling your story. If you get defensive, no one is going to want to talk to you. (Candace: lines 379-386)

For Candace, those experiences in Iraq became central to her journey as a veteran; from rejecting any connection to the military to embracing her identity as a woman combat veteran and becoming an outspoken advocate for veterans. This journey demonstrates the process of conscientization that she went through, from victim (internalizing/self-blaming/subconscious level) to expressions of agency and voice and empowerment. The role of recognition was an important part of the reshaping and claiming her identity.

Themes

Combat policies and practice

Understanding the circumstances and attitudes around women in combat is of significant importance for understanding the experiences of women combat veterans. All of the women interviewed, and the women in the film, *Lioness*, served under the combat exclusion policy. In addition, they all served in a war zone with no discernible battle lines. In terms of the perception of the US public, it was widely understood that women were not allowed in combat roles, so the public was under this impression even though the reality has been quite different. Policy aside, in practice women have been exposed to combat throughout the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

According to Captain Lori Manning (Ret.), the *Lioness* units '*would be the first women to serve in offensive ground combat operations in this country's history.*' (*Lioness*, 2008), in spite of the formal ban on women serving in the infantry, in special forces, or in heavy artillery roles.

This double speak may explain some of the lack of public recognition of women as soldiers, and as war veterans, however, it is not likely the only explanation. The recent lifting of the combat exclusion policy exposes some underlying tension around questions of women and violence.

In *Lioness*, Captain Lori Manning (Ret.) characterizes the public awareness of women serving in combat roles in the following way;

I think a lot of the general public certainly know women are over there, and knows some women have been killed, probably has no sense at all of the kind of things we have had women like the Lionesses doing. In Iraq and Afghanistan, the Lionesses did what had to be done even though they were sent there with other occupations and skills. (Lioness, 2008,)

When Cpt. Manning refers to the public as not knowing in what way women soldiers are taking part in war, it leaves open the question of how the public might respond. Indeed, the issue of women serving in combat has been the subject of debate. In her remarks, Bea discusses this question of whether women should serve in combat in-depth, and she states explicitly that she is conflicted about it. On the one hand, she clearly acknowledges that women have been serving in combat roles.

So women, regardless of the position they are in, they are subject to being in a combat environment and are subject to having to respond to a combat engagement. (Bea: lines 223-225)

On the other hand, Bea puts forward the argument that biology, men are physically stronger than women, is “non-negotiable” and thus (most) women are not as capable. At the same time she contends that women should have the option.

There is another issue about infantry. The sole purpose of infantry is to identify, enclose, and destroy the enemy. It is the most physically demanding of any job in the army. While yes, women should be able to have access, the small percentage of women who would physiologically be able to do the job, may not provide enough value to counterbalance what women in the job, because of non-negotiable factors, like strength, how that would impact the unit’s capability. (Bea: lines 268-273)

Bea also articulates a point about culturally assigned gender roles that I think is present, but typically unspoken in the debate.

I think there is another cultural issue about... I think there’s something to be said for one gender having to be that violent, and another gender not having to be. I’m not sure we want to create an indistinguishable warrior class, for either gender, like that. (Bea: lines 274-277)

These remarks transmit essentialized associations of women with peace, and men with violence. It is a testament to the durability of these notions for them to be expressed by a woman who has been a soldier herself. Interestingly, Bea also makes the case against women in combat because it disempowers men.

It takes something away from the male rite of passage, that we have very few rites of passage for men in our society anymore and one of the only few we have are things like, you join the

military, but you don't just join the military, you join the infantry. Now if we take those last rites of passage away, what do we have left for them? (Bea: lines 286-290)

According to this logic, the notion of women as soldiers undermines the gender hierarchy, no longer is the soldier the ultimate representation of masculinity and the exclusive purview of men.

Even though the US military has ostensibly opened combat roles to women soldiers, the social dislocation and discomfort over this inherent conflict will continue as long as the notion of the soldier is the ultimate expression of masculinity, and essentialized associations, of women and peace, and men and violence persist.

PTSD & MST

All of the women talked about the challenges of addressing the hidden injuries of war, namely posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and military sexual trauma (MST). The film, *Lioness*, featured the story of Shannon's struggle with PTSD, however, the film was silent on the issue of MST.

The VA defines PTSD as an anxiety disorder resulting from a traumatic event, the onset of which can happen at any time, from shortly after the event to years later (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013). On average, about twenty percent of veterans of the war in Iraq have PTSD and, according to the National Institutes of Health, women are at higher risk for developing PTSD than men (NIH Medline Plus, 2009).

Military sexual trauma (MST) is defined by the VA as rape, sexual assault, or sexual harassment that occurred while serving in the military (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013).

Compared to civilian women, women soldiers are twice as likely to be the victims of sexual assault. As many men are impacted by MST overall, however, women are the victims at a much higher rate (Stalsburg, n.d.). All of the women interviewed spoke of experiencing sexual harassment and/or assault. It is interesting to note that *Lioness* did not raise the issue of MST at all, even as it featured PTSD.

Bea spoke about her own journey with PTSD and described her recovery as aided by her educational level and therapeutic background, advantages that many others do not have. In addition, Bea described the challenges of soldiers returning home as unprecedented in that the

recent wars are much more intense than has been experienced by soldiers in recent history (she compares the insurgent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to the American Indian Wars) and that these soldiers are returning to a society that is more stressful and fast paced than ever.

But that stress is still there and how you learn to respond and adapt to that is you either gain skills and do it well and adequately or you don't, and if you don't, you develop post-traumatic stress disorder based on the trauma that you were exposed to. I had post-traumatic stress from the first Gulf War and it took many, many years to learn how to manage it and to recognize when the PTSD was responding as opposed to me who was responding. Even now, twenty-eight years later, it still comes up, and that impacts my ability to interact now. The combat experience of the last ten years is so much more intense, and the soldiers that are coming back that are experiencing post-traumatic stress are doing so at such a higher level in a more demanding, more pressure ridden society than twenty-eight years ago. (Bea: lines 544-554)

There is an interesting contradiction in the way that Bea talks about who is impacted by PTSD, a contradiction that seems to reflect the ambiguity of how women soldiers are seen. On the one hand, Bea presents a very detailed analysis of how it is the men at arms, the infantry men, who are exposed to true combat and that there are very few women who are subject to similar experiences.

Well, the level of exposure is different, there's a small minority of women who are exposed to any combat operations, although many women are on bases and the bases get shelled, they get exposed to mortars. There's a finite group of women who are on convoy a lot, they get exposed to IED and the problems associated with that, but as a whole, the men, who are in the combat arms, who are in direct combat roles, are more... they've had more exposure to trauma than the women who are in less combat roles, with the exception of military police and civil affairs, who are outside the wire more often, and drivers, who are outside the wire more often, and the medical side, male and female, because they're dealing with the aftermath, but the people who are just staying on the base [...] (Bea: lines 561- 570)

This view upholds the popular notion that women in the military are not really experiencing and participating in war, that the real soldier, the ideal type soldier is a man. For women soldiers to suffer from PTSD as a result of war, is problematic in that it contradicts stereotypes and roles regarding the ideal soldier type, thus potentially causing no recognition or misrecognition.

On the other hand, it is this position (that women are not really experiencing war) that all of the women, including Bea, counter. Bea went on to explain why it is important to realize that women (and men) might experience PTSD, even if they are not in a direct combat role, and that many women are, in fact, exposed to situations that could lead to PTSD.

I'm not going to degrade women's experience, those that have exposure, have issues when they come back. And there are women that don't have exposure and men that don't have exposure at all and they have issues when they come back. Just the act of being in a combat environment, even if no one ever shoots at you, will affect you, and it will change you. You will still have lived with fear every day you were there. If someone says they didn't, they're lying, or like me they've been there so many times they're numb to that emotion. (Bea: lines 587-593)

Now, how women respond, is part because of our conditioning and other things, we're supposed to be quiet and we're not supposed to be disruptive. (Bea: lines 610-612)

This last sentence raises an interesting perspective on the social factors that influence the way women may differ from men in their transition to civilian life and how others may respond to them. This notion speaks directly to socially constructed associations of femininity with silence. This issue was raised by all the respondents in different ways, but all address the social unacceptability of women being loud, or asking for something; recognition, support, or equal treatment.

The lack of recognition may cause some women to hesitate to seek help as they may not see themselves, or think that others will see them, as having been in combat. In turn, what are the consequences for women who do speak up? Candace explained why she and other women veterans may not seek help for PTSD (or other mental health issues), for fear of being labeled "crazy". There are many stereotypes that associate women with mental instability (crazy, hysterical, unbalanced, too emotional). That combined with the notion that women are not really serving in combat could result in what Taylor (1994) refers to as misrecognition; that women veterans are not suffering from PTSD, they are just crazy.

Women veterans, we are hard to reach, a lot of us don't want to come out and get therapy. All too often it's 'that crazy woman'. If it's a woman that's having issues, she's crazy; if it's a man, he has issues, or he has a problem, or he has PTSD. When it's a woman they don't automatically think, 'Woman veteran. Oh, she might have had something happen to her. She might have been in combat, or she might have been raped. They don't think about that. You have that 'crazy woman' stigma, on top of all these other things. And that's another reason why I didn't... I don't want to be that crazy woman. [...] we avoid it for a long time, I think. (Candace: lines 322-330)

It is interesting to note that there has been something of a trend reported (some suggest conspiracy) to diagnose service women with personality disorder when they report sexual assault or apply for veterans benefits due to MST. According to report by CNN (Martin, 2012), women service members are much more likely than their male counterparts to be diagnosed with

personality disorders. It is impossible to compare the data with that of the Veterans Administration since they do not collect gender disaggregated data on personality disorder diagnosis.

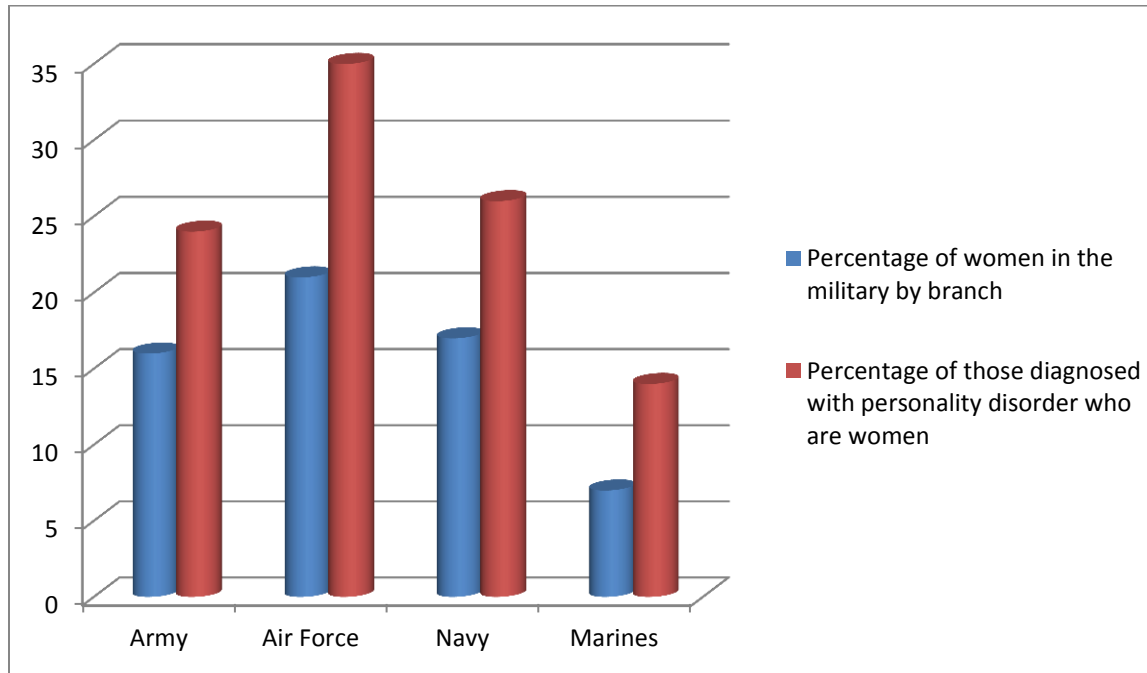


Figure 2. Incidence of personality disorder diagnosis for women in the military.

(Mansfield, 2013, adapted from Martin, 2012)

This very intriguing data reveals two possibilities, either women with personality disorders join the military at a very high rate (a rather absurd idea) or women are much more likely (than men) to be characterized as crazy; in both scenarios the underlying message is that women who are dysfunctional join the military. This larger issue of “a crazy woman” fits with the narrative that there is something wrong with a woman who behaves or makes choices in a way that is counter to cultural standards of femininity, such as participate in war.

In terms of the incidence of sexual assault in the military and the lasting impacts, all the women who took part in the interviews talked about having personally suffered from MST and/or knowing others who had. Interestingly, they all pointed out that just as many men suffer from MST¹² as do women, even though there is smaller proportion of women in the military overall.

¹² For an in-depth discussion of male sexual assault in the military, see *Bring Me Men* by Aaron Belkin (2012).

This emphasis on MST being a problem that is experienced by both (all) sexes may reflect a political strategy to mute those who claim that women do not belong in the military. This strategy may take the emphasis off the victim and shift it toward a problem within the military structure or culture itself where sexual assault is endemic. In discussing her role as a female veteran outreach worker, Candace talked about being a resource for women who may feel hesitant to discuss MST with a man.

I'm okay with it because I understand it and some women, even though MST does affect the same amount of men, I don't think they would feel as comfortable speaking to a male about that.
(Candace: lines 315-317)

This advocacy work can be seen as an example of a dynamic combination of agency, voice, (culminating in empowerment), and recognition; the advocacy work that Candace performs is seen as agency, within that role she uses voice to articulate the issues faced by (women) veterans, and by conferring recognition on other veterans.

Transitions

Beyond the ongoing impact and recovery from psychological trauma, the women all spoke at length of the challenges of reintegrating into civilian life. They raised issues such as feeling at loose ends without the highly structured military setting, about being overwhelmed by the range and triviality of choices, and not belonging. These readjustment issues are presumably experienced by many veterans, regardless of gender, although social attitudes about the roles of men and women certainly might influence this journey.

Candace described identifying with a scene from a movie (The Hurt Locker, 2008) that showed a returning veteran walk into a grocery store cereal aisle and appear bewildered by the vast selection. She related this to her own experience on her return,

I only went to Iraq once because the way the National Guard deploys, I couldn't deploy for another two years after that. By then I had hardware in my foot and I couldn't go. When I got back in December of 2003, it was right around Christmas, I didn't know that... I thought things would just be normal again and I went to a mall. It was a small, L-shaped mall, probably half a city block; it was really a small mall. I went looking for a pair of shoes. I probably spent two and a half hours in that mall until finally, it's funny now because it's so ridiculous, I went to a Lady Footlocker and was crying and told the woman to pick out a pair of shoes for me. I said, 'can you please, I can't make choices.' I felt really bad. I didn't tell anyone about that; it was so embarrassing that I couldn't pick out a pair of shoes. (Candace: lines 90-98)

Bea described her version of this after returning from the Gulf War,

So you have choices here where you didn't have them there. When we came back from the Gulf War, the first thing we did was we all ran to Burger King because we didn't have Burger King and Baskin Robbins back then like we do now. So the first thing we did was we got off the bus, we got released, we went to Burger King. There are forty of us standing in the line at Burger King and we can't order. We can't order because we don't know what to do with choices. (Bea: lines 498-503)

Bea went on to convey the confusion that arises from the very stark contrast between the intensity of war and the mundane details of the everyday.

It is very confusing to come from an environment where your decisions impact whether someone lives or dies. And they literally have the weight of living or dying on them and you come back here and, 'do you want fries with that?' is the kind of questions you get asked. (Bea: lines 494-497)

For Andrea, this contrast was felt in the relative anonymity of the college environment that she entered right out of the military.

To go to college and have absolutely nothing, to have so many expectations and so many responsibilities one day, the next day, nobody cared whether I was alive, participating, coming to class. I could have crashed my car and nobody would have known. (Andrea: lines 187-190)

The issues related to being overwhelmed by the range of choices that one faces as they re-enter the civilian world is connected to the changes in perspective that arise from being in combat.

Your priority of what is important is vastly different after a war. You know, what you're going to do with your life should become clearer, or for many, it becomes very confusing. (Bea: lines 452-455)

This confusion about the direction forward as one re-enters civilian life is highlighted in the excerpt below where Andrea expressed feelings of disempowerment and dislocation as she entered civilian life.

I was really frustrated when I was trying to figure out what was going to be my next step. What was I going to do, return home? After twelve years making a great life for myself and return home with nothing? I was having a really hard time trying to comprehend my life without all that. (Andrea: lines 134-136) I honestly think that I fell into such a horrible depression of self-worth, my self-esteem plummeted. (Andrea: lines 190-191)

In contrast, there appeared to be a similar thread running throughout the narratives that despite some of the challenges and struggles, the women expressed feelings of personal empowerment

that derived from their military experience. It may be that the military structure and concomitant masculinities provided (some) space for these women to transcend cultural gender roles.

In the following remarks, Andrea described an intense interaction with a close friend and former comrade, after which she had an epiphany of sorts;

I realized that I wasn't the only one like me; she also thrived in the military but not because of the military, because of who she was. And that the military allowed for certain attributes to be, one, explored; and two, harness those skills that make you successful. (Andrea 223-225) I realized that who I was, was what the military allowed me to become, but it wasn't the army that made me that person. No, I'm an assertive person. Did the army make me aggressive? No, did they allow me to be? Yes. So, did they encourage it when I was? Yes. (Andrea: lines 230-234)

This epiphany could have been part of the process of conscientization in that it may have led to awareness of the personal traits which are given masculine and feminine attributes. In Andrea's case, becoming aware of social norms and rules was part of her process of reintegrating into the civilian world and also part of her process of becoming aware of how those social norms and rules worked against her and other women veterans.

Education and Employment

While all of the women had different experiences in the military in terms of time served and each made different choices after leaving the military, they all talked about having difficulties with the transition to work and/or school. In some instances the difficulty had to do with individual struggles with adjusting to civilian life or the lingering effects of trauma, in other instances there were problems with the way others responded to them as women veterans.

Andrea's experiences are significantly different in that she served in active duty the whole time that she was in the military, whereas Bea and Candace served in the Reserves and so transitioned between active duty and civilian life during the time they served. Candace did not discuss any issues with school or work directly but did speak of transition issues generally. Bea received advanced education while she was in the Reserves but did not speak directly to any issues during her time in school but did speak about work. In Lioness, the only woman to speak about work or school issues directly was Shannon. Eventually, she hoped to attend nursing school but was encouraged to wait until she had further recovered from PTSD.

When Andrea left the military she enrolled in college right away. She had never been to college and after twelve years in the military, it was a huge culture shock.

I had a really hard time understanding how to not be someone who was in the military. So college wasn't really a good way to figure all of that out, to ride those waves. And so instead, I just did twice as much to try to get out of there as quickly as possible. (Andrea: lines 180-182)

This environment was challenging for her socially as well,

Nineteen year old kids, college kids, are different from kids who are in the army; really, really different. Their life experiences were so petty, so petty to me and what they valued, what they focused on in their conversations, and God forbid, when they found out about my military experience. At that point it was so far beyond what they could comprehend and I was socially ostracized. It was the weirdest thing trying to take entry level courses being thirty years old. This was my first time going to college. (Andrea: lines 151-156)

This experience of not fitting in and being, as quoted above, "socially ostracized" by other students was compounded by social hierarchies and what Andrea described as judgment by the professors.

I don't see that I would have really had any opportunities to do anything besides that, and those relationships with professors were so off base, I just felt this polarization between the educators, who I thought I would be able to relate more to, but I wasn't educated. Then there's these kids and our life experiences are the same as far as this social whirlwind and we are doing the same with our lives right now, we are in the same place but we have nothing to relate to each other [...] (Andrea: lines 172-176)

Andrea talked about having her motives for joining the military questioned when she was in college, she was particularly unsettled by what felt to her like judgment coming from her professors. While there was nothing in her remarks that mention gender, it is worth considering possible underlying gender dynamics. Would professors similarly challenge the choices of a male (veteran) student? The combination of being acculturated to a hierarchical military structure in tandem with hierarchies of class and potentially gender present a potent form of silencing.

I had a difficult time having an opinion about things that I realized were things that I didn't have any business having an opinion about [...] I developed this respect for these barriers and boundaries that were areas that were not my area of subject matter expertise. I am not going to have kids so I am not going to voice my opinion about how to raise kids. Why would you voice your opinion on what it means that someone would serve in the military? (Andrea: lines 158-163)

The comments above reflect awareness of the potency/legitimacy of hierarchical structures while using the same logic as an expression of agency. There is a contradiction between the notion that the only opinions that are legitimate are those rooted in lived experience, and hierarchical structures that maintain themselves through enforcing social norms that delegitimize the experiences of those who are marginal.

As mentioned previously, there were significant differences in some aspects of the post war reintegration experiences of Andrea, who served in active duty, and Bea and Candace, who served in the Reserves and National Guard. These differences were present in the work environment and the challenges of finding employment. Both Bea and Candace worked in between the times that they were deployed or activated for duty. Candace did not speak directly to any employment issues. Bea described gaining a kind of clarity during one of her deployments that posed problems later in the civilian workplace.

When I came back from the First Gulf War, I was a financial aid officer at the University of Florida, and one of my jobs was processing scholarship applications. So, I would process applications and it would go to the person that funds it and the student would get their money, but I had all these students coming to me saying I'm not going to get my money. I would go back and I would say, why didn't you process these? Why didn't you fund them? And they would say, well, you didn't write their social security number in the right place on the form. So it had to be written in the top right hand corner. I thought, well, if it's anywhere on this side of the paper its good, but the person who funded was like no, it had to be right there. So, before I went to war, I might have been that person. When I came back from war, I was like, this is bullshit. It doesn't matter where it is, what matters is the student gets their money so they can go to school and pay their bills. Your priority of what is important vastly different after a war. (Bea: lines 440-453)

Bea explained that over time, the back and forth nature of being in the military, then civilian life, then military, and so on, led to the accumulation of experiences that made working in a normal work environment a significant challenge.

Bea: My ability to integrate into a normal civilian work environment is significantly impacted. I can integrate fine in a military environment but I could last about six months in a civilian job.

Larissa: Is it because in a military environment, you know what to expect?

Bea: Partly, but in some jobs you should know what to expect but I think it's more finite in terms of what's expected and the standards that are applied. What my job was, it was unique, military police and civilian affairs are both unique. They are both highly cognitive [...]. So, even my roles in the military were different than the average experience as a result, coming back into a civilian

environment, I often had issues with authority. More now though because I was used to being the one with authority. (Bea: lines 525-536)

While Andrea was in college she also held down a job, first as an EMT, and later as a clerk in a beauty supply store. It was after she finished college and was looking for a professional level job that she encountered problems.

[...] as soon as I graduated there was this idea that I had in my head that there were going to be so many corporations waiving money at me, asking me to come work for them because they understood my life experiences and how many skills I brought to the table. (Andrea: lines 306-308) Month, after month, after month; every moment that I had I was looking at job boards and tweaking my resume, I didn't understand why people weren't calling me back. (Andrea: lines 318-320)

Finally I got an interview and I was so excited. It was a small money management firm of some sort and I'm in there and I'm a little over zealous and the guy was really taken aback by me. I could tell that my presence was really big, that my energy was so big. As soon as I was out of there I was knew, that was my practice run. I was able to answer his questions, I was really excited, I was trying to do this give and take. I had prepared how my experience was going to benefit a money industry but, I could tell I was just so overbearing. So I just assumed that the reason I never got a call back was because of that. (Andrea: lines 320-327)

The interaction described above is characterized by personality traits that are associated with certain masculinities; assertiveness, confidence, even aggressiveness. Evidently Andrea felt that these attributes had disqualified her as demonstrated by her strategy during another interview in which she attempted to display traits associated with certain femininities; submissiveness, quiet reserve, cooperation, passivity.

My second interview was... I had practiced, I had toned down. I had made myself a little bit more passive in my gestures, in my tone. I tried to encourage the conversation so I didn't seem like this really aggressive person. During the dialog, I am really cautious, I am intending to slouch, I've got my hands folded, I'm trying to do all the things I am able find online about what you're not supposed to do. The things that they want you to do is to stand up really strong, I don't want to seem like that person, I want to be a little bit more passive. (Andrea: lines 327-334)

The outcome of that interview highlights another double bind for women veterans. On the one hand, women veterans are generally not recognized for their service, women are not seen as soldiers by society. Conversely, when they are recognized as veterans they receive the negative associations of the disturbed or unstable veteran. This may reflect durable gender ideologies that

attribute some kind of dysfunction to women who break the rules by engaging in masculine behaviors such as soldiering.

I was really grateful because at the interview, she said, ‘You know, I’m just really sorry but can I be blunt with you?’ and I said, ‘Yes, please, just talk to me, If I didn’t get this job, help me to understand what I need to do to take this experience and utilize it in a positive way, I’m not going to be upset about this.’ She said, ‘Well, you don’t have anywhere on here that you are suffering from post-traumatic stress,’ she said, ‘I can’t ask you. I’m not going to ask you, but, the likelihood-that you spent two years in Iraq and twelve years in the Army, it’s probably pretty likely that you have post-traumatic stress. It is going to end up being a burden on this company.’ (Andrea: lines 334-341)

That’s when I knew I was in trouble. I appreciated what she said but I didn’t think there would be any of those employment barriers. The only employment barrier that I saw was the world understanding that I was available, how do I tell the world, what do I do, how do I make myself glow? (Andrea: lines 355-358)

This one exchange articulated what is likely a common occurrence. Andrea explained that she became frustrated by the silence, by the lack of response in her job search and how she discovered that her military experience was an impediment.

So, how did I get those two interviews? I lied on my resume. I said that I had served, that I had been working for the federal government, for a contractor for the United States Army. [...] I was just desperate, I wasn’t getting any calls, I wasn’t getting any interviews, and my friend said, ‘it’s because there’s this idea- you can’t come into a company, entry level, with your education, and then throw your background on top of that. So you need to be able to tweak your last twelve years to where it won’t be so scary. So we tweaked absolutely everything, thinking, I want this to sound like I worked for the federal government. I figured that during the interview I could be honest. There would be an opportunity to genuinely talk about my experience. I was trying anything and everything. There were places that were called me back on my federal government resume even though I had submitted two and the other one said that I had been active duty. (Andrea: lines 343-355)

The struggle that Andrea faced in terms of finding a job reflects the ambiguity that the public feels towards women veterans and how it can operate below the surface. The challenge to find a job, a new career, was resolved for Andrea after she sought the help of a veterans service organization and eventually found a job in veterans advocacy. Candace works in an advocacy and outreach role for and with veterans. Bea is both retired and working independently on a writing career.

Relationships with Fellow Veterans

All the women spoke about the difficulty that veterans often have relating to people who had never served in the military. For this reason, many veterans rely on the friendships that were formed with comrades while in the military. This issue is well summed up in Lioness during a conversation between Shannon and Wilma Vaught at the Women's Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. Wilma says,

The interesting thing I've found, and I'm sure you have too. You know, when you are overseas, and particularly in a time of conflict, you think about the things that you'll tell people when you get back, and then when you get back, you can't do it. [...] And a part of that is because unless you've served in a situation like that, you just can't understand. (Lioness: 1.14.00)

Andrea talked about the importance of a friend and fellow veteran in helping her adjust and find her way after she left the military.

She lived here in the East Bay and she said, 'get out, it's time'. She had already gotten out before September 11th and she was like 'Come on, just get out. You can live with me, don't worry about rent. Just go to school and we'll figure it out as we cross different bridges.' (Andrea: lines 143-145)

For Bea, not having the support of ongoing friendships with fellow veterans was a source of further isolation as she described one of the consequences of DADT.

My experience was also affected by the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. So I did not have the experience of forming strong bonds with other military service people. I wasn't able to because of the fear of exposure, so I don't have those war buddies to go back to. Many veterans come back and they still have their Army buddy they can still call, they can talk to. I don't have those buddies because most of my career was spent under the specter of, 'I can't get close to anybody'. (Bea: lines 513-519)

Despite not having ongoing friendships from her time in the military, Bea has sought the camaraderie of fellow veterans through veterans groups. Those efforts to connect with other veterans were not always positive experiences. In one instance she describes talking to a fellow female veteran and then of her own experience.

[...] I was talking to her and I said, ‘why don’t you go to the VFW¹³?’ and she said, ‘Well, I went to the VFW when I first got back and I had a horrible experience because they didn’t want women.’ (Bea: lines 634-636)

However, there are lots of posts that aren’t like that, the VFW post here is very welcoming to me, very friendly. They nominated me for elected position. I’ve only been with them for a year. I brought some other women in because they want people, they want us to participate. I walked in to an American Legion¹⁴ post once and I got looks like, ‘You don’t belong here, why are you here?’ (Bea: lines 641-646)

When asked why, Bea explained it this way;

[...] all those old guys who didn’t like women in the military? Now they’re old guys in a community organization that don’t want women in their club. (Bea: lines 638-640)

To the extent that VSOs reflect some combination of military culture and civil society, any issues surrounding women in the military are bound to arise. It may be an opportunity for women veterans to gain the support and camaraderie of fellow veterans or it may be site of discrimination and exclusion. In spite of negative experiences, all the women interviewed talked of the importance of VSOs in their own lives.

Attitudes of Family Members

It was not only public attitudes generally that seemed to silence women veterans, two of the women, Andrea and Candace, both talked about family members not seeing them as veterans. In the excerpt below, Andrea tells of the different response that she received from her family, compared to the way her soldier-boyfriend was regarded.

Women just do not get the same... and it’s from everyone, my family is just as bad. I went home one Christmas. My boyfriend just got out of the Army, he was in for 10 years and he was combat infantryman, combat arms, so he is the guy out doing some really hard shit. His experiences dwarf mine, I just look like I had pompons in comparison to his three tours. He was part of the initial invasion so our experiences were so different. I go home and my family is in awe of his stories. They are prying the stories from him, they want to talk to him, they want to know. I’ve never told a single story to my family. They’ve never seen me as a combat veteran. They’ve never seen me as a veteran. (Andrea: lines 422-429)

¹³ The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is a veteran’s service organization with chapters throughout the US.

¹⁴ The American Legion is the largest veterans service organization in the US

This story reflects the way that gender stereotypes are transmitted not just in generalized public spaces, but also in the most intimate spaces. That Andrea would not be recognized as a veteran by her own family is a powerful example of that.

Another version of this comes in the form of disbelief; where friends, family members or even oneself are disoriented by the identity of a woman as a soldier, then veteran. When Candace remarks that she is ‘not the person you would think would join the military’, it raises the question, how often does one think of a girl or woman and assume that they would join the military? Both Andrea’s family and Bea’s family expressed doubt in their suitability for the military when they joined.

[...] even in my hometown they are like, ‘We still don’t really believe you did that.’ Even my own father, on Veterans Day I called him and I was like, ‘Hey Dad, did you forget to tell me something?’ He said, ‘Yeah, but I still can’t believe you did that.’ In their defense, I wouldn’t believe it either. I am not the person you would think would join the military. (Candace: lines 333-337)

In Lioness, there are examples of both disbelief and strong family support. In the case of Shannon Morgan, her parents appear to provide ongoing support and care for her as she deals with the effects of PTSD. In addition, her uncle, also a veteran (Vietnam), was shown as a source of emotional support and as someone she was able to relate to. On the other hand, family members of Rebecca Nava express similar sentiments to those of Candace’s father; that they still could not “believe” that she was in the military. This disbelief may reflect the cultural unease with the gendered paradox of women warriors.

Public Attitudes

As revealed in the section about work and education, there are a range of responses to their status as veterans, from people that the women came in contact with. The everyday social interactions that women veterans encounter can be a location for recognition, or the absence of it. It can also be a location where expectations of certain masculinities and femininities are enforced. The following subsection will include instances of generalized social attitudes and experiences as described by the women interviewed.

Many businesses promote special offers for veterans as an advertising gimmick and to present an image of being patriotic. In the excerpt below, Andrea is referring to promotional offers commonly geared toward women veterans.

I don't want to be treated like a princess, don't offer to give me a facial, or a manicure. Yes, I enjoy those things. Just because I am a girl who went to combat, that must be your only way to help bring me back because I obviously need help with my femininity. It's crazy. (Andrea: lines 478-481)

Andrea characterizes this phenomenon of offering beauty services to women veterans as an attempt to re-feminize them. This correlates to Enloe's (2012) point that the post war is characterized by a return to gender norms. Interestingly, the manner in which Andrea identifies and analyses this is a demonstration of voice.

Candace had a similar perspective as described in this exchange,

Through my work we have outreach swag things that we give out. I honestly hate them. They are little promotional things, like bracelets and stuff. I had someone come up to me and say, 'I have these outreach materials for women vets, do you want them?' and I said 'Sure, what are they?' He gives me this compact and it's pink and it has a mirror that says, "Woman Veteran" and I said, 'Are you fucking kidding me? This is what you use to reach out to women veterans? If I weren't working and I saw that, I would come up to your table and tell you, you were sexist and throw it in your fucking face.' Someone else said, 'I would put out lipstick if I thought it would get women to our table, and I said, 'No.' So they do outreach to women in a very terrible way [...]. (Candace: lines 269-307)

This is another example of the process of reasserting the "correct" gender norms in the post war by re-feminizing women veterans. Similar to Andrea's response, Candace firmly rejects those efforts in an expression of voice and agency where she argues that it is blatantly sexist.

Bea provides this explanation of the lack of public acknowledgement of women veterans.

So you come back, and you encounter people who don't see you as a veteran. If they know you're a veteran, they don't see you as a war veteran. They don't know, they think you were in an administrative job. Much of the public has no concept of what women do in the military or what the military does. (Bea: lines 616-619)

In this explanation, Bea attributes the lack of public acknowledgement largely to the ignorance of the public; they are unaware of the role of women in the military, and then role of the military itself. This may be an accurate premise, the military has relied on an all-volunteer force for the

last decade of war which means that only a small fraction the population has served in that time. Conversely, it is not likely the only explanation. In the excerpt below, Candace describes common occurrences where her status as a veteran is frequently questioned.

I've noticed this a lot, I'm going to the VA hospital, they assume that I'm married, that my husband was in, and I'm not the veteran. Or they think my dad was in, or they assume that I was a cook or supply or admin, I tell them military police and they are like 'Oh! Really' I get that a lot. And a lot of women don't identify as veterans because for a long time, women like the WACS and WAVES, they really weren't identified as veterans. There are a lot of people who don't understand that unlike Vietnam and World War Two, and Grenada and Korea, we are fighting a very different kind of war and they still can't get it through their heads that women are there. A lot of us are there. The treatment we get back here is kind of** I work for the VA and I do outreach to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans to let them know about their benefits. I do a lot of speaking engagements. When I am at an event or I am tabling, when I am with the males, they ask them 'Where did you serve?' and they ask me, 'Did you serve?' I tell them, 'Yeah, I probably saw more combat than any of these guys.' So it's still taking a lot of people, a lot of time to realize that we did these same things, if not more dangerous things. (Candace: lines 281-294)

One of the things that this story reveals is that nonrecognition and misrecognition of women veterans is not something that takes places only in the civilian circles. In this case, Candace is describing situations within the veterans system. It diminishes the idea that women veterans are often not recognized as such because the public does not know that they are in fact serving in combat. This may be true but then it is only one part, one component that leads to the lack of recognition. That fellow veterans, and those working within the veteran community, would also express disbelief that a woman is a veteran signifies another explanation than ignorance. This may be explained by the durable nature of the idealized soldier; soldiers are thought of as men, not women.

Media Representation

The media was mentioned specifically in terms of contributing to public (mis)recognition of women soldiers and women veterans. Conversely, media was presented as an avenue to promote a better understanding of the issues women veterans face. All of the interview participants talked about media representations of veterans and women veterans, in fact, media representation is one of the scenes in the film, *Lioness*, which was recommended to me by Andrea.

Bea provides her own analysis as she describes the issue of gender stereotypes transmitted through media representations of women in military; that women are portrayed in feminine roles

as caregivers and/or sex objects, but not in masculine roles as soldiers bonding together in the face of adversity. Furthermore, she assigns the media responsibility with constructing a more accurate view, that women are combat soldiers too.

Our movies don't show women in the military except as nurses and love interests. We have no movies where it's a 'Band of Sisters'¹⁵. Until that media representation is more realistic, the American public will continue to think that the quarter to half of a percent that's in the military is something that it's not. (Bea: lines 619-623)

Andrea discussed the double edged sword of media attention on the specific issue of MST. Generating more public awareness around the problem of MST could be seen as a positive step; one that could lead to not only public awareness and recognition, but also political pressure to address those elements of the military structure that have led to this phenomenon. Furthermore, media attention could open more space for the victims to find voice. Conversely, it could lead to reinforcing negative stereotypes of women as defenseless victims of male sexual aggression, in turn silencing women veterans on this and other issues.

Just because I'm a girl doesn't mean I was sexually assaulted, just because I'm a girl doesn't mean that I wasn't. That's irrelevant to my overall service. It's a good thing that there's media attention around military sexual trauma. The movies, *Service: When Women Come Marching Home*, and *Lioness*, being nominated for an academy award. Now there's this, 'so you were assaulted, you were raped in the military'. No, I just said I served in the military, why would you make that assumption? Just because there are others who are okay talking about their experiences, you can't assume that everyone will. (Andrea: lines 440-446)

In her comments above, Andrea raises the possibility of people (the public) conflating all women in the military with the problem of sexual assault in the military, a potential that could result in misrecognition. Andrea also brings up the matter of speaking out, or of voice, by stating that not everyone is willing to do so.

One scene in the film, *Lioness*, shows the unit coming together for a reunion. Together they watch a History Channel documentary about a fierce battle in Ramadi, Iraq; a battle in which the *Lioness* unit was engaged. During the film, the narrator of the History Channel documentary says, '*Witness real life and death combat told for the first time by the men who were there, house by house, block to block.*' (*Lioness*, 2008), the explicit reference is to men, not a gender neutral term

¹⁵ Band of Sisters is a word play on "Band of Brothers" which is a film miniseries from 2001 based on a book by Stephen Ambrose (same title) which tells the story of the heroics of a group of soldiers from World War II.

such as ‘soldier’. Later in the film, this explicit reference to the men is repeated. *‘Ramadi, the tide is finally turning for the weary men of the 2/4 Marines. It’s been a day of grinding combat.’* (Lioness, 2008). For the women of Lioness who were there also, this must have felt like a powerful slight.

As they watch the film, they recognize all the key elements of the battle story but remark that they are not mentioned at all. *One of the women says, of the film, “it’s basically early April, when we were on the line with the Marines, but we’re not mentioned at all.”* (Lioness, 2008). One of the women says, *‘In that video, it’s almost like they went out of their way not to mention us because all the events that took place in those videos, we were there.’* (Lioness, 2008). It is interesting to consider why the documentary film makers did not mention or include the women in the film. Was it that they did not realize that women soldiers were there, or that they were engaged in the battle? Was it that when the story was told to the filmmakers, it left out the fact that women were there? Perhaps it was a political choice, showing women in combat would reveal the discrepancy between the combat exclusion policy and the actual practice.

This story represents one of the most powerful ways that the media can rob women veterans of their experience, through non recognition. Non-recognition then becomes a potent means to reinforce the notion that the quintessential soldier is a man. This has the further effect of silencing women veterans.

Discussion and Conclusion

Here again is the research question;

What are the post-war experiences of US women veterans of the recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars, are those experiences gendered, and in what ways?

The experiences and stories that have been discussed here provide a view into a relatively unexplored aspect of the post-war, the lives of women combat veterans. The stories reveal the complexity and durability of gender in their everyday lives. They also revealed their own actions, voices, and empowered determination that challenged the gender order at times, and maintained it at other times. All of the women demonstrated an awareness of the gender paradox of women soldiers, claimed their identity as combat veterans, and worked to expand that awareness by extending recognition other women veterans.

All of the women interviewed served in a combat zone and were subject to combat experiences. They also did so under a policy of combat exclusion that banned women from serving in combat. When they joined the military and while they served, this policy was in place. Their own understanding of what their role and experiences in the military would be, were out of step with what took place in the war zones they were sent to. This contradiction between policy and practice, and the common understanding in the public sphere was that women were not serving in combat, contributed to the lack of recognition of women combat veterans for their service. In addition, ambiguity about women as soldiers contributed to misrecognition at times.

All of the women were affected by the psychological impact of war, and two spoke of their struggle with PTSD. While any soldier may suffer from PTSD regardless of sex, women may face additional challenges that are linked to gender stereotypes, particularly related to mental health. In addition, there exists a conundrum, since women soldiers do not officially serve in combat, how could they be exposed to the horrors of war which can result in PTSD.

All of the women were victims of sexual harassment and/or assault, in other words, MST. At this time, sexual assault is an epidemic in the military. While this problem does not impact women exclusively, it does so disproportionately. There is an additional concern that focus on the issue is

a double edged sword, increased attention could bring recognition to victims on the one hand, and reinforce gender stereotypes of women as sexualized victims on the other.

All of the women experienced difficulty making the transition from the structure of the military and clarity of war, to the complexity and banality of civilian life. These reintegration challenges do not appear to be related to gender exclusively, however, differences in which masculinities and femininities are acceptable for women in the military, and which were acceptable in the civilian world contributed to problems readjusting. There were also differences in the transition to civilian life that seemed to be related to whether one was in active duty or the Reserve/Guard, but unrelated to gender.

There was a marked difference in the experience between the formerly active duty soldier Andrea, and the other women who had been in the Reserve/Guard, in terms of seeking further education and employment after military service. Both pursuing college, and a new career were very challenging for Andrea and she faced a host of obstacles. This may have been related to her efforts to re-socialize into the civilian world and to the differences in how others responded to her as a soldier. The others, Bea and Candace, were in the civilian environment at different times during their military career.

All the women were connected to other veterans and veteran's organizations, reflecting their claim to their identity as veterans, seeking camaraderie, and working to promote and engage with veterans interests. Gender was present in these interactions, however, the women were aware of, and challenged gender stereotypes at times. This demonstrates the combination that Parpart (2010) described as empowerment, the sum of agency, voice, and the ability to exercise choice.

In relationships with family members, the women sometimes faced a lack of recognition or variations of disbelief that may have resulted from the gender paradox of the women soldier.

In very general terms, public attitudes toward women combat veterans tended to be characterized by a lack of recognition or by misrecognition. This has been attributed in part to the contradiction between the combat exclusion policy and the combat experience of women soldiers, in other words, the result of an uninformed public. This appears not to be the only explanation however; there were several stories which provided examples of initiatives to re-

feminize women veterans and other examples which revealed a dislocation between the reality of women soldiers and associations of soldiering with masculinity.

The role of the media and the way that women soldiers and veterans are represented, or not, revealed the media as a site that mirrors the public unawareness or lack of recognition on one hand, and provides a platform for creating a new narrative on the other.

The importance of silence and (whose) voice has been raised throughout this project and it is my conclusion that the relative lack of research involving women veterans is too quiet a place. The data collected for this project provided rich insight into this research area. While the material from the film was useful for support, it was too restricted and narrowly focused to reveal the depth present in the interviews. Together, this recommends the use of interviews over media sources for research purposes as interviews can provide an opportunity to dig deeper, to gain fuller, and more comprehensive information.

In addition to recommending further research concerning women veterans generally, there are a few specific areas that warrant further investigation. To wit, the gendered dimensions and impact of military policies regarding family issues; such as maternity/paternity leave, child custody issues for deployed parents, and motherhood/fatherhood in the military.

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Appendix A. Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full name
DADT	“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”
DOD	US Department of Defense
EMT	Emergency Medical Technician
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
MST	Military Sexual Trauma
PTSD	Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Corps
VFW	Veterans of Foreign Wars
VA	US Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Administration
WACS	Women’s Army Corp
WAVES	Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service
WWII	World War Two

Appendix B. Interview consent form

Interview Consent Form

Thank you for contributing to this project on women veterans. After the interviews are completed, I will have your responses transcribed. If you choose, I will send you the transcription for your review and comment. In addition, I will send you a copy of the final report if you would like to receive one. I should stress that I do not plan to publish interview transcripts. However, I do hope to be able to use quotes to illustrate points about my findings. At present I have no plans for publication, but it will be important for me to be able to present findings to my thesis supervisor.

Would you like to receive a copy of the transcription? Yes ☐ No ☐

Would you like to receive a copy of the final report? Yes ☐ No ☐

What is the best way of communicating this information with you?

Would you like me to refer to your insights and words

1) anonymously only, as

(rank, service, etc)

OR

2) by name, as

I agree to be interviewed and to have my words and insights used by Larissa Mansfield according to my preferences indicated above.

Sign

Dated

About the Interview

My name is Larissa Mansfield and I am conducting research as part of my master's thesis. The theme of the research is gender and security (women and war) and I am interested in learning about the post-war experiences of female US veterans of the recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

The research findings will be available to Swords to Plowshares and the organization is welcome to use any of the information to advance the work it does on behalf of veterans in keeping with any confidentiality issues and attributed to the author.

Time: Please plan about an hour for the interview.

Location: The decision of where the interview will be held is up to you. So that we can get good results, please consider a location that is relatively quiet and free from distraction.

Interview: The interview will consist of 2 parts; your story (biographical narrative) and a few open ended questions.

Part A: I will ask you to tell a little bit about your own history; when you decided to join the military, how long you served, and about when you returned home. In particular I am interested in how, or how not, being a woman shaped those experiences.

Part B: I will ask several of open ended questions to generate discussion, specifically about issues related to gender and I will ask follow-up questions to clarify or ask for more detail.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the details below. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me.

Larissa Mansfield

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(206) 383-6611 (in the US)

You are also welcome to contact my supervisor:

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Appendix C. Interview format and questions

March 11, 2013

Aalborg University, Denmark
School of Culture and Global Studies
Development & International Relations
Researcher: Larissa Mansfield

For Swords to Plowshares:

I am conducting research as part of my master's thesis. The theme of the research is gender and security (women and war) and I am interested in learning about the post-war experiences of female US veterans of the recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The interviews are intended to provide the empirical data for the thesis.

The research findings will be available to Swords to Plowshares and the organization is welcome to use any of the information to advance the work it does on behalf of veterans, in keeping with any confidentiality issues and attributed to the author.

Interview Questions, Format & Procedures

Location: The decision of where the interview will be held is left to the decision of the interview participant; it could be in the home of the interviewee, a public location like a library, or the hosting organization.

Who will be present: Researcher, interview participant, and whomever else the interviewee would like to have present for personal or practical reasons (such as family members or a close friend).

Time: Participants will be asked to plan about an hour for the interview.

Follow-up: Participants will be provided with contact information and the option to receive a transcript of the interview to comment upon if they so choose, and also a copy of the final report.

Disclosure & Confidentiality Statement: The researcher will explain the purpose of the interview and provide participants with both oral and written information about confidentiality and how the information they share will be used, shared and stored. Interview participants will be guaranteed anonymity if they choose. The researcher will ask permission to record the interview.

Communication & interview style: The interview will be conducted in an informal, conversational style and the researcher will be respectful of sensitive to the participants' comfort level.

The interview will consist of 2 parts; a biographical narrative and a series of open ended questions.

Introductions: Introductions and business items (disclosure and confidentiality statements). The researcher will ask permission to record the interview. Mention how long the interview should take and what the format will be. Ask if there are any questions.

Part A: The researcher will ask the interviewee to tell a little bit about their own history; when they decided to join the military, how long they served, and about when they returned home. The researcher will ask follow up questions with focus on whether and how being a woman is perceived relevant to the military experiences of the interviewee. Interviewees will be asked to share whatever information they deem relevant or to withhold any information that they do not wish to discuss.

Part B: The researcher will ask several of open ended questions to generate discussion, specifically about issues related to gender. The researcher will ask follow-up questions to clarify a response or elaborate further. Examples of these include:

- What do you think of the debate over women serving in combat roles?
- What do you think your male colleagues think about women in the military, about serving in combat?
- Do you think that women's experiences in the military are different from men's?
- If a woman you know was considering joining the military, what advice would you give her?
- Do you think women's experiences when they return home are different from the men's?
- Do you think that women veterans are treated differently than male veterans when they return home?
- Do you think that people respond differently to you now as a veteran than they might have before you were in the military?
- What advice would you give to other women soldiers who are transitioning to civilian life?

In closing:

The interviewee will be thanked for their contribution to the project and reminded that they will have the opportunity to review and comment on the interview transcription as well as receive a copy of the report if they choose.

Appendix D. Interview with Andrea

Interviewee: Andrea

Interviewer: Larissa Mansfield

Date: 3 April, 2013

Place: San Francisco, CA USA

1 **Larissa:**

2 I wonder if we could start out, if you would just tell me about how it was that you came to join
3 the service and a little bit about the early part of when you joined and just a little bit about your
4 background at first as far as that goes.

5 **Andrea:**

6 Alright, yeah sure. I joined the United States Army in 1995 and I think that I joined for the same
7 reasons many people join. I lived in a small town, I didn't have a whole lot of economic
8 resources from my family, I wasn't very good in school, I didn't see an opportunity for college,
9 there's a very tiny community college so I was working at Burger King, on a fast track to
10 becoming manager, with great aspirations. I didn't really see where I was going to be in the
11 future.

12 As soon as graduation hit it was going to be the end of life, like what happens next. My parents
13 were really eager to get me the hell out of the house. They didn't have any desire to continue to
14 support me, in any way. I was at work one day and one of my colleagues, who was also in many
15 of my classes, we hung out socially, said I just joined the Army, do you want to join the army. I
16 said of course not. That just sounds ridiculous, why would anyone do that? And he said well, but
17 if you do join, I will get a promotion. It's this buddy system. I was like, at least somebody will
18 benefit. I went back and I was only seventeen at the time. I went to the recruiter and I said this
19 sounds like a great idea, I don't know what else is going on, I don't really have any other big
20 plans. There wasn't going to be a great graduation party. I was looking for the next step. I went
21 home and immediately my family was not very supportive, assuming that I was too stubborn, I
22 was never going to make it, I was just a girl, that my place was there at home. I'm only going to
23 do what all the other girls do, which is just get pregnant really young, have all these children,
24 have broken relationships, and then just survive. I was really frustrated because this was the first
25 time I was having a conversation about anything past graduation. There was no support, just the
26 expectation that graduation was the best I was going to do. I went to the one person who was
27 eager to see me gone, which was my grandmother, and she very kindly signed me over.

28 Less than two months later, I was on my way to South Carolina, basic training. That was the best
29 decision that I could have made. Joining during peacetime, I went to basic training, Fort Jackson,
30 Carolina, we were only the 3rd integrated class. It seems really crazy to think back to a time

where there was this segregation between the genders. We heard lots of talk, it seemed so much better, it was more competitive when the genders were separate because the women could compete against each other. When it was integrated it wasn't as good because there wasn't the competition. Men and women are not equal. Even though you are in this training class together, the men are given an opportunity to be weaker and the women never meet their potential. That was kind of my first introduction to the fact that men and women were different in the military.

In high school, boys and girls sat next to each other, they had boys basketball and girls basketball, but there's not this sense that one is better or worse than the other. High school football is more popular than high school soccer, regardless in which one you participated in.

It was the first time I started to look at myself as a girl, that there was this difference. Joining during peacetime, that was the biggest thing that I had to deal with. At the same time to be so overwhelmed by this experience that is going to propel me through space and time, be all you can be. I will have limitless employment opportunities, I'm going to fall in love and go to beautiful countries, and visit the world, and come out after 4 years of active duty and have this great life. It's not necessarily what happened but that was my foresight at the time. It was this very juvenile, naive, eighteen year old mind. I think that most of us had those some thoughts. I think there're a few people who join because they want to be full of valor and honor and just be a warrior, but I've never met any of those people. I'm sure they're out there.

Larissa: You said that you were in a class that was a third integrated?

Andrea: The basic training class I was in was the third class to be integrated.

Larissa: I see.

Andrea: There were two cycles before our class so it was very recent.

Larissa: I see, it was a really new thing. Once you joined, what was it like in terms of the choice that were available to you and also in terms of the choices that you made, your career path?

Andrea: When I was looking at the options that were available to me, after they give you this generalized testing, which happens before you join the military and gauges what your natural strengths are and what you have learned so far to that point in terms of your formalized education. The only area that I was excelling in, at all, was the administrative fields. The options that I had for a job were administrative, or human resources- which sounded amazing to me. A truck driver didn't sound amazing to me. A fuel handler, which didn't make any sense to me,

61 why they would have people who their primary job was to pump gas. That seems like a
62 minimum wage job that had been completely done away with by self-service in the civilian
63 world, so why is it that they still have this job field. I didn't understand, but those were the 3
64 positions that they pretty much offered me. I absolutely had no desire to pump gas, that just was
65 the most retarded thing. Then, a truck driver, I didn't even have my driver's license. I had never
66 driven a car, had never had an opportunity to drive a car so that scared the living hell out of me. I
67 just assumed that I wouldn't be any good at it since I didn't have any experience at it. The last
68 thing I wanted to do was to put myself in a position where I am not going to excel. Through the
69 process of elimination, I took the human resources job. At that time I didn't understand the
70 thousands and thousands of other job opportunities that the military has. I wish that they would
71 have given me a better perspective, their tier system or the way that individual positions are
72 filtered out from the gate.

73 They give you this long test, you're there all day, you're doing physical tests, you're doing all
74 these evaluations for baseline, the bare minimum, the bottom of the barrel. These are the people
75 they will allow in. They talked to me about those three jobs, they didn't discuss other jobs with
76 me at the time. In hindsight, I think I chose a field that naturally complemented my personality
77 and I thrived. A couple of years later, after having more experiences, I thought, this could have
78 been a little more interesting, it could have been a little more risky, and maybe I would have had
79 some different experiences.

80 [Break]

81 I have the back of a tent, because I'm a girl. I had a choice whether to be with these women that I
82 didn't know at all, and they just put us all together in this weird place. They just thought that
83 putting all the women together was the best scenario. I was like, these are my comrade, these are
84 the people I have spent every waking hour, for the last five months. It's so much easier for me to
85 take advantage of that security than to have to walk to and from this giant compound that we had
86 just built, in order to do what I needed to do over here. It was a fantastic group of guys. I helped
87 them shower, they helped me shower, on many occasions. They helped me wash my hair, for
88 crying out loud. It's hard to do all of that and not really have any water. Everything we did
89 together. Then we started to push outside the compound to get our logistics set up. Just getting
90 toilet paper and things we needed.

91 That's when I realized the United States Army are complete idiots. I am a girl. So, in these six
92 years that I had been in the military to this point, I had some hurdles to try to be considered one
93 of the guys. To be competing for promotions with the guys. Here was my moment when I was
94 going to shine. There were so few of the thousands of us in my job field that were deployed,
95 there were so few that were doing this. This was 2004. We hadn't been there very long but we
96 had been there long enough to receive these classes and training on the fact that women and men
97 consider women and men differently in their religion based on thousands and thousands of years.
98 They gave us the background on how to interact with women and how to interact with men.
99 Well, then they put a girl in a position where she cannot do her job. I could not interact with
100 men. They would not interact with me. If I'm going to a business because I had driven down
101 these streets trying to figure out where all the businesses are, by trial and error, and our convoys
102 are getting shot at all the time, just to find you and then I find you and you won't talk to me.
103 Instead, you and your family want to shoot me because I'm a girl. The army had spent all this
104 time and energy trying to help me learn how to negotiate with them so I could fund the things in
105 the economy that would rebuild the economy. There's this whole governmental perspective. I
106 had to use my driver, who was an E-2 to do the negotiations for me while I sat in the truck. I
107 couldn't even go inside any of these negotiations. The remainder of my time was spent infuriated
108 because I couldn't do what I needed to do. I couldn't do what I was charged to do. We were
109 barely making our quotas. Once, we were going to order a bunch of printers, which then the
110 Iraqi's ordered from America, but whatever. They would charge us like four hundred dollars and
111 I would pay eight hundred. Because I had to get rid of the money, there's no bringing the money
112 back, we had to spend it. But because there was no way that someone who was 19-20 years old,
113 he didn't have the experience to negotiate what I was trained to negotiate. At the end of this, I
114 am one of the few that didn't really meet the mission goals. There was no way I could have, I
115 just barely scrapped by. All of the other women were in the same exact pile of shit that I was. I
116 was infuriated because what could have been a very good opportunity for me, turned out to be a
117 failure, and a recognized failure that went on my professional records.

118 If I had gone in my regular job, I would never had left the camp. Instead, every four days, I am
119 doing these major convoys into communities, we're getting shot at, we're being ambushed, we
120 are losing people, we are not meeting our mission, we are not improving the lives of the Iraqi
121 communities that can directly benefit from our compound, from my base. That was my job.

122 When we were finally relinquishing our talk to the people who were coming in after us, I was
123 really relieved that some of our feedback finally made it back to those who were making
124 decisions on the receiving end. They sent two guys to replace me because I had failed so badly,
125 they figured they needed people to do the job. It wasn't because I was that bad, it was
126 impression. They did bring men. It was a continuous struggle to try to figure out how I was going
127 to manipulate the situation. I tried wearing burkas, I tried figuring out any way- I didn't think I
128 looked like a girl but apparently even with the Kevlar, the helmets, they can tell your gender.

129 There was never a sense of relaxation the year. Kuwait was awesome. We slept all day, we
130 perched out on top of our trucks and get tan. It was pretty awesome, they fed us fantastic. To go
131 from that quality of life to just shit. Everything was shit. It was almost two months before we had
132 hot food, everything was these packaged meals.

133 [Break]

134 I was really frustrated when I was trying to figure out what was going to be my next step. What
135 was I going to do, return home? After 12 years making a great life for myself and return home
136 with nothing? I was having a really hard time trying to comprehend my life without all that. Then
137 I just started reaching out to my friends and I had one friend who, we had remained friends after
138 we deployed together to Bosnia. It was a nine month peace keeping mission. We had a great
139 time, she got married over a weekend abroad, it was a great- I don't even consider it a
140 deployment, it was a nine month vacation. So, we had deployed to Bosnia together and we really
141 formalized our relationship over hygiene, our restrooms were so foul, so foul.

142 [Break]

143 She lived here in the East Bay and she said, 'get out, it's time'. She had already gotten out before
144 September 11th and she was like 'Come on, just get out. You can live with me, don't worry about
145 rent. Just go to school and we'll figure it out as we cross different bridges.' I moved out here
146 with- she actually flew to Maryland and the two of us jumped in my tiny itty bitty sports car and
147 drove across country to California and 3 days later I started at Cal State.

148 I had already enrolled and lived with her for nearly six months while I was working my way
149 through the VA system getting education benefits, compensation benefits, and then I got my own

150 place less than a block from away from her and completed my degree, graduated, had a really
151 difficult time in school. Nineteen year old kids, college kids, are different from kids who are in
152 the army. Really, really different. Their life experiences were so petty, so petty to me and what
153 they valued, what they focused on in their conversations, and god forbid, when they found out
154 about my military experience to that point was so far beyond what they could comprehend and I
155 was socially ostracized. It was the weirdest thing trying to take entry level courses being 30 years
156 old. This is my first time going to college. How do I do all of these things with this bunch of
157 kids?

158 I had a difficult time having an opinion about things that were things that I realized were things
159 that I didn't have any business having an opinion about because I felt that those who didn't have
160 the right to have an opinion in other areas. I developed this respect for these barriers and areas
161 that were not my area of expertise. I am not going to have kids so I am not going to voice my
162 opinion about how to raise kids. Why would you voice your opinion on what it means that
163 someone would serve in the military? Those conversations were most frustrating with professors;
164 they had good lives, they didn't really understand what it meant to be a 17 year old kid and join
165 the military. No, I didn't know what that meant, I had no idea what that meant. I had no idea
166 what experiences were to follow. Hindsight, just go all the way back, would I do the same
167 things? Absolutely. I look at my siblings who are doing exactly the same thing that I was doing
168 at 17. My parents are doing exactly the same thing that they were doing when I was 17.
169 Everyone- it just seems like time has stood still except their children have gotten older, they've
170 had more kids, and they have physically gotten older but everything else about their economic
171 lives are the same.

172 I don't see that I would have really had any opportunities to do anything besides that, and those
173 relationships with professors were so off base, I just felt this polarization between the educators,
174 who I thought I would be able to relate more to, but I wasn't educated. Then there's these kids
175 and our life experiences are the same as far as this social whirlwind and we are doing the same
176 with our lives right now, we are in the same place but we have nothing to relate to each other so
177 having to do groups projects and trying to get kids to focus and to meet deadlines, deadlines that
178 I imposed on them, deadlines that I thought were important, deadlines that I thought needed to be
179 met, for them to do things on my agenda because, dammit, I am a natural leader.

180 I had a really hard time understanding how to not be someone who was in the military. So
181 college wasn't really a good way to figure all of that out, to ride those waves. And so instead, I
182 just did twice as much to try to get out of there as quickly as possible. Because I had gone from
183 an area where these mythical creatures, that were the people who delegated promotions, people
184 who I didn't know who they were, people who didn't have a face to them, I just knew they were
185 there somewhere and they were making decisions that impacted me and my life, but my direct
186 leadership, those who worked directly with me, gave me accolades all the time. I had great
187 response and respect for them. To go to college and have absolutely nothing, to have so many
188 expectations and so many responsibilities one day, the next day, nobody cared whether I was
189 alive, participating, coming to class. I could have crashed my car and nobody would have
190 known. If it wasn't for my friend, I honestly think that I fell into such a horrible depression of
191 self-worth, my self-esteem plummeted, my need to be a part of something that was progressive-
192 not necessarily involved in- when I first got out I thought, I'm going to get married, I'm going to
193 settle down, I'm going to have all the things I thought I was going to have way earlier in my life.
194 And I couldn't relate at all to men, my own age, who didn't have the military experience.

195 Everyone said, she's overly aggressive, she's just intense, loud, and very dictatorial. Which up to
196 that point were qualities that were all encouraged and were helped to develop, things that they
197 instilled in me which created an opportunity for me to thrive. So then you take all that,
198 opportunities for thriving, and those intense energies are no longer socially acceptable. I was just
199 having, running into all these barriers that I didn't anticipate.

200 [Break]

201 Not taking into consideration working the bureaucratic system at the VA, with the schools, just
202 trying to figure how to get a degree, what that meant. Who decides what classes you should take,
203 and for them to take into consideration military experience and what that meant, for no one to
204 really understand.

205 To have conversations about, 'Oh, there're girls in the military?' Yeah.

206 **Larissa:** Did that happen to you very often?

207 **Andrea:** So many times, I still get it, still now, 'so now that women are allowed in combat, did
208 you kill anyone?' That just happened yesterday right, they just created this law that says women

209 can serve in combat so any woman who ever served in the military had one day to go over there
210 and kill anyone they wanted. Did you not? It's a filter, just think about things a little before you
211 speak.

212 I graduated as quickly as possible but the whole time, my friend was my structure, she was my
213 backbone, enough to tell me how stupid I was when I was stupid, enough to tell me when how
214 stupid I was when I was angry and frustrated. My emotions were so intense because there were
215 so many layers I was trying to process and she was like, 'you're making too much out of this.
216 You just need to get over it. You can't change those kids, you can't change those professors,
217 where are they going to be when you are out of school? Who cares, you're not even going to
218 know them anymore.' And she just put things into perspective in a very aggressive way. One day
219 we both had too much to drink and we just were talking and we kept getting louder and louder
220 because I had something I needed her to hear and she had something she needed me to hear and
221 before you know it, we are just angry and yelling at each other and her husband comes out and
222 he's like, 'you two are like third graders, what's wrong with you?'

223 I realized that I wasn't the only one like me, she also thrived in the military but not because of
224 the military, because of who she was. And that the military allowed for certain attributes to be,
225 one, explored and two, harness those skills that make you successful. Those same things were
226 with me when I worked at Burger King but Burger King didn't develop or exploit those skills or
227 it would have made Burger King a better franchise. The military did, they recognized which
228 leadership traits would make you better in surviving combat, having better skills and resiliency
229 to make it out of things not only alive but stronger. Not everyone has those but some of us do
230 and it wasn't until that argument with her that I realized that who I was, was what the military
231 allowed me to become but it wasn't the army that made me that person, no, I'm an assertive
232 person.

233 Did the army make me aggressive? No, did they allow me to be? Yes. So, did they encourage it
234 when I was? Yes. So now I have to unlearn some of those traits that were acceptable in that
235 environment. Some will continue to set me apart from my peers but then there are some that I
236 have to make sure I understand that there is a time and a place of those behaviors, such as driving
237 around in a vehicle at an excessive rate of speed, was acceptable, not so much now. There are
238 just some things that took me a while to understand. I needed to find employment, so my first job

239 was, what can I do that will be as demanding, easy turn around, and will give me an opportunity
240 to go anywhere? So I became an EMT. Which, I'm thinking, I'm a combat medic, so thank
241 goodness I didn't have to use any of the skills but I already know how to do an IV, all of these
242 other things, I already know what all the equipment is used for, I understand what the overall
243 concept is because, you know, saving somebodies life is the same regardless. You know, combat
244 injuries, and one of the things I just wasn't really thinking about, even after going through the
245 EMT course, was how many elderly people EMTs deal with.

246 The military is mostly people of, between the ages of 18 and 45. Those were the only ones, so I
247 found it really difficult to have to give assistance, to evaluate, to try to reassure, and comfort and
248 to be a very nurturing person to old people. A whole part of my life, I assume that most people
249 kind of have a bigger interaction with senior citizens. My grandmother wasn't a senior citizen
250 when I left. She was a senior citizen when I returned but she wasn't when I left. But I didn't live
251 there so I didn't really have that experience.

252 Understand what it really meant to become an EMT, you know, we often learn seem to be a good
253 option at the time, the same reason that I joined the army, but then I realized, holy crap, it's
254 really hard to give an IV to an old, skinny, frail person and those IVs, I did it for a couple of
255 years and it wasn't until I got this job that I stopped, there was probably a year that they
256 overlapped and I was doing the EMT thing in the evenings and I, it was just the final straw that
257 broke the camel's back. Most of the time I was working evenings but I wasn't working in the
258 weekends, which was great because I had another job, but I didn't often have to deal with the
259 children cases, the juvenile cases, so the first call that I had to respond to, it was just way more
260 human nature than I could deal with. I... no, it's one thing to deal with adults hurting and killing
261 other adults and to be in a war zone and to see children that have been...

262 That's those people, you know, there was this moral barrier, it was just, that was those people,
263 anyway, but to see American kids injured due to the mistreatment from a parent, I just, it was
264 just something that I could not carry on that emotional burden, so realizing where my strengths
265 and my obvious weaknesses, that I wasn't prepared to handle and so I would rather deal with a
266 hundred senior citizens and elderly people who were just in the slow process of dying, than to
267 see one child, it was just too... you hear about it on TV, but you don't see their faces, or hear
268 their names and it's another thing to see the child and it was just... So, I was like, what do I do to

269 balance that in my life? So I walked into a beauty supply store one day to buy some shampoo,
270 and I asked to see if they were hiring and I started working the next day.

271 **Larissa:** That is very different.

272 **Andrea:** Very different, I just wanted something that was superficial, I wanted something that
273 was, I was realizing that my problems were my socialization skills. The socialization skills that I
274 developed fit that environment, I didn't have the socialization skills needed to deal with the older
275 people, which, being an EMT, I realized. So I started volunteering at one of the vet homes to see
276 if I... I realized what my weaknesses were and so it was just on a whim that I just needed this.
277 For one, I had too much time on my hands and so I started selling people over priced shampoo.
278 But the opportunities for dialog were limitless, so it's one thing to try to learn that a smile goes a
279 long way, but to learn that my tone and my pitch and how people respond to that, it was like I
280 was just experimenting every day, every single day. Realize how many things I'd missed, those
281 expectations of what femininity is, how I can alter what I'm doing now so that in the future.
282 And I still do it, even though I work here, I still work there.

283 **Larissa:** Oh, do you really?

284 **Andrea:** Uh huh, all these years later. I started working there in 2008. You know, I consider it
285 therapy because there is a lot of heavy stuff that happens here and when I go there I just...
286 There's this one woman's hairspray and let's say I'm out, it didn't seem like it was that big of a
287 deal, but to her, it is a life ending event. The amount of fury and energy and raw madness that
288 comes when you run out of somebody's hair product.

289 **Larissa:** That's hilarious.

290 **Andrea:** If this is as bad as their lives, because this is an affluent community, if this is as bad as
291 it gets for them then this is a damn good day for everybody else. You know, for them to come in
292 one day and be so happy and cheerful and to cope in another day and to be rushed and to be in a
293 bad mood another day when they are just having a bad day and to see them go through those
294 cycles, those energies and to think, I don't have anything to do with this, I am just a spectator in
295 this sport.

296 [Break]

297 I couldn't not go, I couldn't stop, so just finish it. Quickly. From becoming an EMT to working
298 in a beauty supply store to graduating. So I'm doing both of those jobs while I'm going to school

299 because I knew that when I don't have the college money, what am I going to do? How am I
300 going to pay for my rent, how am I going to live, and finding that, holy crap, so the only way to
301 make it happen was to have one full time job but neither job was able to give me full time hours.
302 I just manipulated both jobs, had both jobs at the same time, and then I was like, this is what you
303 do while you're going to college, this is not your career, not the rest of your life. So at that point
304 I was really struggling, first, so I had gotten through highs and lows of struggles, I started doing
305 resume, after resume, after resume, I started out, how to get a job when as soon as I graduated
306 there was this idea that I had in my head that there were going to be so many corporations
307 waiving money at me, asking me to come work for them because they understood my life
308 experiences and how many skills I brought to the table. I knew that just serving in the military
309 wasn't going to be enough, that I needed a degree. So I thought, this business management
310 degree compliments my work history so I did an emphasis on organizational communication.

311 I had so many skills to offer and it seemed like a really good idea and instead there was silence. I
312 was frustrated because I was like, I'm out, please, let me come work for you, let me make your
313 company better. You know you need me so just give me a shot. And that didn't happen and I
314 didn't understand why and looking at my resume and seeing my experiences as nearly twelve
315 years active duty and then there's this weird hodge-podge, you can tell there's an overlap
316 between school and being an EMT and beauty supply school but I never had a break in
317 employment history and I really thought they were complimentary towards, the fact that I'm an
318 awesome, friggin' person. And month, after month, after month, every moment that I had I was
319 looking at job boards and tweaking my resume and I didn't understand why people weren't
320 calling me back, I didn't understand. So, finally I got an interview and I was so excited, so
321 excited. It was a small money management firm of some sort and I'm in there and I'm a little
322 over zealous and the guy was, really taken aback by me and I could tell that my presence was
323 really big, that my energy was so big. As soon as I was out of there I knew that was my practice
324 run. I knew, there was no doubt in my mind, I was able to answer his questions, I was really
325 excited, I was trying to do this give and take, you know, I had prepared how my experience was
326 going to benefit a money industry, but I could tell I was just so overbearing, so overbearing. So I
327 just assumed that the reason I never got a call back was because of that. My second interview
328 was, I had practiced, you know, I had toned down, I had made myself a little bit more passive in
329 my gestures, in my tone, I tried to encourage the conversation so I didn't seem like this really

330 aggressive person, so during the dialog, I am really cautious, I am intending to slouch, I've got
331 my hands folded, I'm trying to do all the things I am able find online about what you're
332 supposed to do.

333 The things that they want you to do is to stand up really strong, I don't want to seem like that
334 person, I want to be a little bit more passive and after, I was really grateful because at the
335 interview, she said, you know, I'm just really sorry but can I be blunt with you and I said, yes,
336 please, just talk to me, and if I didn't get this job, help me to understand what I need to do to
337 take this experience and utilize it in a positive way, I'm not going to be upset about this. She
338 said, well, you don't have anywhere on here that you are suffering from post-traumatic stress,
339 she said, I can't ask you. I'm not going to ask you, but, the likelihood, that you spent two years
340 in Iraq, and twelve years in the Army, it's probably pretty likely that you have post-traumatic
341 stress. It is going to end up being a burden on this company' and the fact that there was no one
342 else who had served in the military.

343 So, how did I get those two interviews? I lied on my resume.

344 **Larissa:** Really?

345 **Andrea:** I said that I had served, that I had been working for the federal government, for a
346 contractor for the United States Army. And then I figured, because I was just desperate, I wasn't
347 getting any calls, I wasn't getting any interviews, and, you know, my friend was like, it's
348 because there's this idea, you can't come into a company, entry level, with your education, and
349 then throw your background on top of that. So you need to be able to tweak your last 12 years to
350 where it won't be so scary. So we tweaked absolutely everything, thinking, I want this to sound
351 like I worked for the federal government. I figured that during the interview I could be honest.
352 There would be an opportunity to genuinely talk about my experience. I was trying anything and
353 everything.

354 There were places that were called me back on my federal government resume even though I had
355 submitted two and the other one said that I had been active duty. That's when I know I was in
356 trouble. I appreciated what she said but I didn't think there would be any of those employment
357 barriers. The only employment barrier that I saw was the world understanding that I was
358 available. How do I tell the world, what do I do, how do I make myself glow? Is there a t-shirt?

359 I was thinking, there's got to be groups, organizations or groups of people who are veterans or
360 want to help veterans. We've been doing this whole military thing for decades so there must be
361 some groups out there that help people like me get jobs, so I found Swords to Plowshares.. I
362 found the American Legion, and they do claims, I found the VFW, they do claims, I found
363 employment development, they don't do anything. They have this exceptional funding that they
364 receive for veterans. They have a person on staff for veterans but all they do is help you to say,
365 'you need to post your resume where everybody else post's their resume. They have a dedicated
366 person to teach you how to download your resume. That's all they do, there's no resume
367 preparation, or guidance, or any of those things. I finally got an appointment at Swords and I
368 walked in to their 1060 location and I was like, this isn't right for me, this is not the place for me.
369 There're homeless people there.

370 It is our social services location. The job for those who work there is to serve the underserved,
371 the economically challenged, the homeless, and the population that is dealing with drug and
372 alcohol addiction. Perfect place for all that, not my situation at all.

373 I walked in and up to that point I didn't even realize that there were homeless veterans. They're
374 those people, not real people, not people I can relate to. Again, it's those people. I didn't know
375 what I was supposed to do. They took me up to the second floor, set me up with employment
376 development, asked me a shitload of questions that I didn't think were relevant, like about where
377 I slept last night. I said, I'm not homeless but I'm going to be if I can't find a career, if I can't
378 find a good job. I went through all of their questions. They took their time, they did some mock
379 interviews with me.

380 They looked at my resume and were dumbfounded that I would lie on my resume. That's not
381 what you do because someone does hire you with this expectation that you bring a certain set of
382 skills that you don't bring. I said, 'well, they're not talking to me the other way. I understand that
383 it's bad to lie but I'm not getting a whole lot of options here. Then a position opened up at this
384 veterans organization. My employment director called and he said, 'you need to apply for this
385 job, it's in the finance department doing accounts payable.' I said, 'I don't know how to do that'
386 and he said, just apply and do what we've been practicing, just do what you know to do. I went
387 to the interview, the director asked, what do you bring, how do we benefit by having you on

388 board? I said, I am a female combat veteran. This is a veterans service organization that doesn't
389 have any women who work here.

390 **Andrea:** Oh, there weren't any?

391 **Andrea:** No. He said, alright. So we started talking and I said, of course I can do that, of course
392 I can do that, well of course I can do that. He said, what about this accounts payable system? Of
393 course! Bless his heart because he really helped pull out some information that I didn't even
394 realize that I had. It was one of the things I had done for the ambulance company. I was working
395 in their office because I needed more things to do. I was just putting in people who had received
396 services who needed to pay their bill. He was like, here's an invoice, go put it in the system. The
397 he said, alright, so I'll see you tomorrow. I was just ecstatic. He gets me, he totally gets me.

398 [Break]

399 So I have been doing this for about 2 years. This is the one thing where all of my military
400 experience makes me 110 percent qualified. There is a social services part that is still something
401 that I have a difficult time dealing with, especially when there are women who have some of the
402 same experiences or much worse experiences, especially with other types of trauma. When they
403 are down on their luck they are struggling with things I haven't had to struggle with,
404 homelessness, addiction, and extreme poverty. It is hard for me to look at them and not want
405 better for them. To not take all of their life's burdens and carry them on my shoulders because I
406 want to help but I've learned that they have to be ready to help themselves, just by my being
407 there hopefully will help them in that direction. To see that there are women veterans who are
408 successful in life.

409 When you think about it, veterans are less than one percent of the population, you take that one,
410 in California, we are only 7 percent of that population, of that one percent. Most of the women I
411 interact with are doing great things, have nothing to do with the services arena, or they are like
412 me, they just sort of fell into it and it's a good fit.

413 [Break]

414 When people are like, so, what did you do in Iraq? I just use my body language and I become
415 very demeaning and belittling and then their tones change and they just assume that all women

416 are bitches who are in the military. That I would go there and there would be that stereotype,
417 yeah, women are serving in the military but they're not exposed to the same stressors that our
418 male veterans are exposed to. I think that as a nation we forget how many of us are still serving,
419 still dying and their lives are impacted in a negative way for the rest of their lives. We are
420 sending 19-20 year old kids into combat and every single day we're sending more and every
421 single day more are coming home.

422 Women just do not get the same ... and it's from everyone, my family is just as bad. I went home
423 one Christmas. My boyfriend just got out of the Army, he was in for 10 years and he was combat
424 infantryman, combat arms, so he is the guy out doing some really hard shit. His experiences dwarf
425 mine, I just look like I have pompons in comparison to his 3 tours. He was part of the initial
426 invasion so our experiences were so different. I go home and my family is in awe of his stories.
427 They are prying the stories from him, they want to talk to him, they want to know. I've never
428 told a single story to my family. They've never seen me as a combat veteran. They've never seen
429 me as a veteran.

430 I often do not focus on really hard details, primarily because they are really hard for me to say
431 and hard for me to reprocess every time I run myself through those memories. I focus on some of
432 the more humorous parts, the parts that are lighter, because it's easier for me. He doesn't have a
433 problem talking about how hard it was, the details. I use him as my example. We will go
434 somewhere, he will have his 101st Airborne Division hat on, and I will be there. People will
435 come up to him out of nowhere and he'll say this is my girlfriend, she served active duty for 12
436 years and she also did two tours. He will talk up, and I will say, very nice to meet you. (gestures
437 someone looking away from her to her boyfriend) So.

438 When people see the idea of women serving in the military- hopefully in the very far future when
439 women like me talk to their kids say, they're all the same, boys and girls are all the same. The
440 acknowledgment from our communities... Just because I'm a girl doesn't mean I was sexually
441 assaulted, just because I'm a girl doesn't mean that I wasn't. That's irrelevant to my overall
442 service. It's a good thing that there's media attention around military sexual trauma. The movies,
443 *Service: When Women Come Marching Home*, and *Lioness*, being nominated for an academy
444 award. Now there's this- so you were assaulted, you were raped in the military. No, I just said I
445 served in the military, why would you make that assumption? Just because there are others who

are okay taking about their experiences, you can't assume that everyone will. I get calls, emails, all the time. 'I'd like to set up this panel, so we're going to have'. The most recent was this women's senior citizens group, aka, book club. They wanted to have a luncheon for some women veterans, which I thought was a genuinely sweet idea. So they wanted to know if there were any combat veterans who were MST and they would be able to talk about what that experience was like. So I call her up and I was like, 'so, are there any of the women who are going to be attending who are rape survivors?' She was like, what? I said, 'well, I would like to come here rape survivors talk about rape. I'll bring all my MST and you bring all your rape and we'll have a pow-wow. She thought it was totally offensive and she will probably never call me back, and I'm okay with that. How do you have no cultural sensitivity. It's this double edged sword. We want people to acknowledge that women are serving in the military. We want people to acknowledge that our military force is still at war. We want people to acknowledge that just because you're serving in the military doesn't mean that you joined to go to war. Most people joined the military like I did. That's what we want people to think of. We also want people to understand that this experience makes you a very valuable asset to that organization. Those are the things we want people to think about. We need to change the policies of inequality, such as Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Then they think all the girls that served in the military are gay and lesbian. That one's kind of dwindling down because we're talking about a new topic. Women in combat, we're not all GI Joes, we're not all ranger Janes. The next topic is, oh, 'there're all these women's issues in the military, why should women be in the military, all they're doing is getting themselves raped'. There's a double edged sword. We want people to understand that there are so few of us doing this, our military is the reason why our country is free. Because our military is so strong, other countries are not trying to come here and take over our oilfields. It's because of how strong our military force is. Our military force may have all of this other shitload of things that are happening, but after September 11, its still small pennies compared to what it's like having your nation be completely overturned and occupied by another nation. We don't understand that.

[Break]

For people to just acknowledge that men and women are still doing this. Men and women. Nobody wants to put women on a pedestal, in any way, shape, or form. We are experiencing the

476 same things. We are losing our limbs, we are losing our lives, just like our male counterparts, we
477 want to be understood. We don't want any more acknowledgement but dammit, we just want
478 acknowledgement. I don't want to be treated like a princess, don't offer to give me a facial, or a
479 manicure. Yes, I enjoy those things. Just because I am a girl who went to combat, that must be
480 your only way to help bring me back because I obviously need help with my femininity. It's
481 crazy.

482 I think that when it comes to our experiences with combat, I think that the sheer number of
483 women that are deploying and multiple deployments, I think the one thing that we talk about but
484 we don't really talk about, especially with women and their families, we don't really talk about
485 some of the hard parts that the military imposes on single women, and single fathers, being a
486 single parent and having to deploy, what that means. Locally, especially with the National
487 Guard, it impacts their lives so much more than it does with the active duty folks. If I am serving
488 in the military, and I have to deploy and I have primary custody of my 2 year old child, I have to
489 give up custody of my 2 year old child to a family member, to a spouse, to the father, to someone
490 who will take care of my child while I am deployed. The simple fact that that is so taken
491 advantage of by the court system and that I have to give up my child, I have to make sure my
492 child is taken care of because I can't take the child with me. The military do not and have not-
493 they haven't figured out the best way to address the issue and it's just because nobody is
494 addressing the issue at all. Let's say I have my child in the custody of my mother while I am
495 deployed. In the meantime I am fighting a divorce battle with the child's father. The courts will
496 allow that father to come in and take formal custody of that child because she has already
497 abandoned that child. The father, who may or may not have wanted the child from the beginning,
498 now she is deployed and has to pay child support for the child, of course she would have been
499 taking care of the child through the grandmother, now is being forced to pay the father. She
500 comes home and now she doesn't have custody of the child.

501 Now, having to fight the divorce battle and having to relinquish custody becomes part of the
502 husbands case for custody. Where before that it's likely that there wouldn't have been any
503 question of whether she had custody or not. Most women get married while they are in the
504 military. Men do too but men aren't having children. The expectation is on the female to have to
505 give up her parenting rights and custodial control of her child because she is deploying. The

number of isolated cases continues to grow, especially in the National Guard community. For 3 years you could be a bank teller, working at Bank of America, and now you have to deploy, so now your life is uprooted and you have to adjust for all of those things. Your children's lives are uprooted as well, however you look at it. If you had a very stable situation here and you up and left, the caregiver burden is different when your mother leaves than when your father leaves, no one would debate that. The custodial issues are going to become a bigger issue and I think it's something that women don't expect to happen, when they join the military, with their children, or have children when they are in the military. The biggest thing they are thinking is whether to stay in the military or not. Not that they would risk losing their children because of a nasty divorce, or there have been times where the mother has determined, you've come back, you're a different person and you're not fit to be a mom because you're dealing with some of these other issues, so the grandma won't give the kid back.

I am hearing the stories more and more. The system isn't made to adjust and to help families with that transition back. They provide some counseling and some aggressive suicide prevention counseling but they don't help to reassemble families. Often times the families are in shambles. I can't imagine what I went through, both times, just to get my head back on and try to figure out how to compartmentalize my experiences, but then also to have to be a wife, and a lover, and then a mother. I can't imagine or think to add another layer on to that. The most recent one is in San Diego where the mother was a marine, she deployed, she was sexually assaulted, came back from her deployment and she is having a very difficult time. Because she was assaulted and she is struggling with post-traumatic stress, her mother has refused to give custody back over to her. Your support system just caved in on you. On some level, you probably need some time but it's not one of the layers of the onion that you remove to soothe the issue and help with reintegration. I think that's something that's maybe in the future going to get more attention. I'm sure that it's an issue for male veterans as well. There are many men who are the single parent, especially of their spouse was civilian and he had the stable income. That tell-tale story, you got the boy and the girl, that small town in Tennessee, he joins the military and then she goes to join him. They are two very young people and they have a baby right away, and it just doesn't work out. We're seeing more often that the guy will keep the child because he has the steady source of income. I can see that also being a very big problem, all of a sudden they deploy and they're dealing with a custody battle that wasn't a problem before.

Appendix E. Interview with Bea

Interviewee: Bea

Interviewer: Larissa Mansfield

Date: 5 April, 2013

Place: Greater San Francisco Bay Area

1 **Larissa:** To start, could you tell me a little bit about how it was that you came to join the
2 military, when it was, and why you joined.

3 **Bea:** I joined because I thought that every citizen has a responsibility to give back and I chose to
4 do that through service. I joined initially in college but I knew I wanted to when I was 12. That
5 was when I had that awareness of citizenship. I joined for patriotic reasons.

6 **Larissa:** How did the people in your life, how did your family respond?

7 **Bea:** Well, I wanted to join in high school but my mother wouldn't let me, she said I had to go to
8 college. I went to college on my 18th birthday but I tried to join my last year of high school and
9 since I was 17 and she wouldn't give her permission so I couldn't. So then I applied to college
10 and I went to college and in college I went to ROTC. She wasn't happy and told me she didn't
11 think it was a good fit, she thought I would have problems with authority. She was right, I do
12 have problems with authority which is why I became an officer, so I'd be the authority.

13 My mother was a Quaker, I didn't really know that, she didn't really talk to us about that. She
14 did think it would be a difficult community for me to be in. But I did okay.

15 **Larissa:** So you were in for 33 years?

16 **Bea:** Yeah, I just retired in December from the Reserves.

17 I had five mobilizations to active duty plus a small period of time that was just on active duty
18 and I deployed three times and I had two domestic call-ups.

19 **Larissa:** What is a domestic call-up?

20 **Bea:** It means you stay in the United States as opposed to going overseas.

21 **Larissa:** And what was your career progression?

22 **Bea:** I had five and a half years enlisted, and then the rest of the time was as an officer. I was a
23 military police soldier, that's what my primary occupation specialty and I also gained two others,
24 one civil affairs and one information operations.

25 **Larissa:** And when you retired, what was your last assignment?

26 **Bea:** My last assignment was a Battalion Commander for an Information Operations Battalion.

27 **Larissa:** And what rank or, I'm sorry, I'm not very familiar with the structure of the military.

28 **Bea:** That's a Lieutenant Colonel, that's an officer rank five.

29 [Break]

30 **Larissa:** Why did you choose the Army?

31 **Bea:** When I was trying to enlist, I went to all the services. Well, I didn't go to the Air Force
32 because I wore glasses then and I didn't imagine why you would go into the Air Force if you
33 couldn't fly a plane. I couldn't fly a plane because I couldn't see so I didn't go into the Air
34 Force.

35 So then I went to the Navy-Marine recruiter and I didn't even get in the door and the guy was
36 like, 'We don't have anything for women.' This was 1976-77 so I didn't inquire any further, and
37 then, so then that left the army and I hadn't even heard of the Coast Guard. And I was inclined to
38 the army anyway because I had played army as a kid and I wanted to be in the army but I thought
39 I'd give the others a look but it didn't work out too well. So then I was in college and it was
40 Army ROTC that got my attention. It could have easily been one of the other ROTC programs
41 but it was the Army one that recruited me.

42 **Larissa:** So then if you do an ROTC program then is it that, you said you were enlisted so how?

43 **Bea:** So that's kind of weird because I was in the ROTC, I was in a program that they started, a
44 program where you could be in ROTC and you could be in a Reserve unit. So I was one of the
45 very first people ever in this program. So then I had to leave school for a while and I left the
46 ROTC program. Because this was a new program, they didn't have any policies about what to do
47 what if that happens because that hadn't happened yet so they said, 'Well, you have to stay in the
48 Reserves.', so I stayed in the Reserves and that made me enlisted.

49 And then eventually the program matured and they had policies then they had a policy where if
50 you were in ROTC and you went into the reserves in this program simultaneous membership,
51 you would just go back to ROTC, but if you don't go back to ROTC but you leave the Army or
52 you leave school, you are discharged from the Reserves. That was not in place during the time I

53 was in that program so I was in the Reserves, enlisted after my time in the ROTC. Then I did my
54 time enlisted and then I went back into ROTC. I should have been commissioned in 1981 but I
55 was commissioned in 1984 because of that three years of being out of school. So then I went
56 back to school, finished my degree, finished ROTC and got my commission. And 28 years later,
57 I retired.

58 **Bea:** 1979 was when I got recruited, I took an ROTC class, I needed an elective and it just
59 looked like a fun elective. So I took this elective and it was fun and interesting and I went to
60 ROTC basic training, that was fun and interesting, so I contracted in October of 79, and a month
61 later they started this Reserve program, so I entered the Reserve.

62 **Larissa:** Were there any other women in the program at that point?

63 **Bea:** Actually, the ROTC program that I was in, at the University of Florida, it was one of the
64 largest programs in the country, it had almost 400 cadets, almost 300- 500 cadets. The year I
65 went to basic training was the first year that women were allowed to go to ROTC basic training.
66 It's just a couple years after the end of the Women's Army Corps.

67 That year at my school they had- up until that year the only women in ROTC were nursing
68 students. Now, the year before they had opened ROTC completely to women, and that year there
69 was actually a woman who was the cadet commander of the entire cadet corp. She was probably
70 one of the first women cadets ever hold that high of a cadet position. In my ROTC program,
71 gender was not an issue at all, which is surprising, given the time, but the program cadre really
72 maintained an attitude about your performance and gender didn't have anything to do with it.

73 So that's how I was introduced so, when I went to other places and I didn't encounter that, it was
74 odd, not consistent with how I had been founded. They were very- my peers were the same, we
75 had a very high caliber program, we won best ROTC program in the country and our
76 performance was just very high. My peers were- they didn't care.

77 In fact there was an incident where we were training one day. A bunch of us went to practice
78 repelling and we went to this quarry. We would repel from this quarry and that year we had some
79 cadets from another school and they had no women in their program and the guys were real
80 hostile to my being there. They made some comments about women shouldn't be in the Army,

81 and some other stuff, you can't lift us up if we're hurt, you can't carry us down the cliff. My
82 peers were like, 'You're full of crap, she can carry me down the cliff.' This was coming from
83 one of my classmates who was five foot six and sumo wrestler, he probably weighed two
84 hundred pounds. He was like, she can carry me down the cliff. Then it was a challenge, 'Oh
85 yeah, prove it.' So we go to the top of the cliff, and they put our rigs on and they tie him to me,
86 and I repel down a 50 meter cliff with this two hundred pound guy on me. He is so big that I
87 cannot- your arm is supposed to go all the way around the back, I can barely get my arm out
88 straight around him. It was a high anxiety moment but we did it and they shut up after that. That
89 was the environment that our instructors had created, that women could do the same things that
90 men could. My classmates, they bought into that, they spoke up, they didn't tolerate it when
91 someone from outside was giving one of our peers a hard time.

92 **Larissa:** Were there other places that were different from that?

93 When I came back to school, I came back to school at University of Central Florida and I was in
94 the ROTC program there. The military was introducing the laser equipment where you put this
95 thing on, it was like laser tag. Laser tag came out of this military tool that was developed. It was
96 the military forerunner of laser tag. A Marine reserve unit was trying it out and so they asked for
97 some cadets from my program to provide an opposing force for them for a day while they ran in
98 the woods wearing this laser tag stuff. So there's a dozen of us cadets, we are out there with
99 these Marine officers and this Colonel and all these senior NCO's to do crawl in the mud war
100 games with the Marines and we're the bad guys. The colonel is giving us our initial safety
101 briefing and he is looking around, looking at all the cadets and then he sees me and he figures out
102 that I am the only girl. He stops talking in the middle of this speech about safety and says, 'What
103 the fuck are you doing here?' I said, 'Well, I'm one of the cadets and I am here to provide your
104 opposing force.' He said, 'You should not be here, you're a fucking girl.' I'm said, 'Well, thank
105 you but I'm here, and I'm one of your opposing force.' If I leave, we are all leaving. The peer in
106 charge said, 'we're here, this is all you've got.' So we play our little war game all day and I'm
107 the only one that didn't die. I was the only one who- I completed two missions. I was the only
108 who completed a mission and didn't die, at all, the whole day. The Marines all died really fast.
109 The cadets went a little farther because we were all a little more cautious but I was the only who
110 completed the mission because I was the only one who did stuff sufficiently tactically inclined to

111 get myself through so they couldn't shoot me. I was the only one that didn't get shot that day. I
112 got wounded a couple of times, but I didn't get shot. He didn't say anything to me after that. I'm
113 sure the next time he encountered female soldiers, he might have had something different to
114 think about. That experience of going through a day of tactical problems and the only person that
115 completes a mission to the end and does not get shot, was the girl.

116 Did you have other experience like that where you set the example, where you were the only
117 woman and then to have represent what a woman soldier is

118 **Bea:** Happens all the time. I ran into my entire career and the higher you go, it just gets more
119 subtle and insidious and harder to deal with, or combat. It's still there.

120 **Larissa:** You said different, more subtle. Do you have some examples to explain the ways that
121 this happens?

122 **Bea:** Instead of someone actively opposing you, not letting you participate- When I was enlisted,
123 I was in a reserve unit where none of the women were allowed to go in the field. There was no
124 rule that said that, the commander just decreed that no women could go in the field. Except that
125 all of our tactical training and our skill training happened in the field. So that meant that women
126 never received the practice. At that time we were tested twice a year, and if you didn't pass the
127 test, you didn't have high enough promotion points to get promoted. So it was a systemic way to
128 make sure that women were lower ranked on the hierarchy of who could get promoted. These
129 junior enlisted programs are done at the company and battalion levels. So women weren't
130 allowed to go in the field. Then, I became a training NCO in the unit which meant that I had to
131 go in the field because I was conducting the classes. So I was the only female that went to the
132 field in that military police company because I was who conducted the classes.

133 **Larissa:** Were there other women that came in at that point?

134 **Bea:** As long as that commander was there, there were no women in the field, period. It was only
135 because my sergeant said, 'I don't have anybody else to teach classes, if she doesn't go then we
136 don't have anybody to teach the classes. That's how I got around it. So that's blatant but as you
137 get higher in responsibility and rank, whether it's an NCO or officer, you don't have people
138 telling you so much what you can and cannot do because of your gender, you just have people

139 who are passively not participating or corrupting or sabotaging what you are trying to do. The
140 there are other factors involved, in a lot of reserve units there is not a high standard of conduct,
141 there is not a high standard of performance and things are done the way they've always been.
142 Then when someone comes in and tries to improve the standard and hold them to a standard,
143 human behavior is such that they don't want to participate with that, they like it the way it's
144 always been. So you run into that.

145 **Larissa:** How long ago did you say you left?

146 **Bea:** December.

147 And where were you before you retired?

148 **Bea:** I was with a local reserve unit at a local base.

149 **Larissa:** How long had you been doing that?

150 **Bea:** I was at that one for ten months and before that I commanded a unit in Florida and before
151 that I commanded a unit in Baton Rouge. Before that I was a staff officer in Southern California.
152 Almost all of my assignments were away from where I lived because of the Don't Ask, Don't
153 Tell policy. I needed to be where I would not inadvertently run into people. If that was not in
154 place, I would have spent my entire career out here. It created a huge logistical and financial
155 hardship on my family. Fortunately that's gone now.

156 **Larissa:** Since the time that you have been out of the military, what has your experience been in
157 terms of the way people respond to you as a veteran.

158 **Bea:** People don't really know unless I tell them, I mean my neighbors know because it's been
159 part of our conversations, they see me in uniform. Unless I tell people, there's no indication. I'm
160 technically retired so I am in the retired reserves. It doesn't really mean anything unless we have
161 like WWII.

162 Because it's not part of the normal conversation in America, so few people are in the military
163 that there has to be a reason why it would come up and in general, it doesn't usually come up.

164 **Larissa:** No? Like the work you do, what do you do for a living?

165 **Bea:** I write stories, it's in my writings. It's in my art, my photography. If I exhibit some things,
166 you'll see things but because I work at home, I don't run into people.

167 Before, when I was in the reserves, I was always traveling, it would come up because I had to
168 schedule things around my reserve weekends, my reserve commitments so then it would be part
169 of the conversation with someone. You know, if we wanted to go do something and I said, 'No, I
170 can't go that weekend, I have to go to Florida.' 'Oh, why are you going to Florida?' 'I have
171 reserve training', then it becomes a conversation. But most people, they're just curious about
172 what being in the military is like. It's not so much related to gender. Sometimes you get
173 questions, about what it's like but that's usually because someone has a particular interest.

174 **Larissa:** I have some questions that I just want to cover. If you have another way that you want
175 to answer that or you think that's not really the right question, you let me know.

176 **Bea:** Okay.

177 **Larissa:** You do with it what makes sense.

178 **Bea:** I was in Iraq in 2005 so ask me questions and I will tell you stories.

179 (Bea: read the questions herself)

180 **Bea:** The debate over women serving in combat is a very complex question. On the one hand,
181 women who are capable should have the opportunity to hold any position in the service.
182 Particularly since combat experience is crucial for someone who is going to make strategic
183 operational decisions and employ forces, if they have no understanding of what happens during
184 combat, then they have no understanding of what they're doing. That puts people at risk.

185 That is a systemic answer. Another facet is because we no longer fight set battle pieces, like we
186 did in say WWII or Korea, or even in Vietnam, we don't have discernible front lines anymore.
187 So women, regardless of the position they are in, they are subject to being in a combat
188 environment and are subject to having to respond to a combat engagement. Now, there's a
189 difference between a combat engagement that is a planned offensive action and a combat
190 engagement that is a planned counter-offensive action because of a defensive action you've had

191 to execute. The women driving a truck on a convoy have to respond to an attack, they are doing a
192 defensive engagement and then they are doing a counter attack.

193 That is different from an infantry patrol that going out walking the trail and seeks out, finds, and
194 destroys the enemy. Those are two different things. Now, there's the issue of assignment and the
195 issue of training. Women should have absolutely the same access to combat skill and leadership
196 training that men do, because, women will be placed in combat situations where they will be in
197 leadership and having to execute decisions and having to plan in a combat environment, in a
198 combat engagement because of the nature of modern warfare, because it's fought everywhere. If
199 we do not offer them the same training, we are cutting our own throats for when those units and
200 those personnel are placed, particularly when and where the leaders are placed.

201 For example, the Army Ranger School, about ten years ago, opened up training to men,
202 regardless of their occupational specialty and regardless of whether they were going to be
203 assigned to Ranger Battalion. They could still go through Ranger School, get Ranger training,
204 which is the best tactical leadership training program in the world, and then they took that
205 experience back to their units which made them better soldiers and better leaders, regardless of
206 their assignment. Women were not allowed to do that because of the combat exclusion. They
207 said, you can't go to that school because of the combat exclusion. That's a poor reason. If a
208 baker, and a supply clerk, and a truck driver can go to combat Ranger school then an Army
209 military police soldier, who happens to be female, who is more mobile and has more firepower
210 than an infantry platoon, and is often the combat response force is the military police platoon,
211 they have a direct need for that training. But they couldn't get it, but the baker can, and the
212 mechanic can.

213 Now that we have a lifting of the combat exclusion, women may be assigned to two hundred
214 more jobs. It increases the need that women should be able to have access to that training. Now
215 they are going to be at a lower level of assignment, in units that have a higher probability and
216 likelihood in the more traditional sense of a combat zone, of being in an engagement whether it's
217 defensive or offensive. Women absolutely should have access to the training. It should be the
218 same training, the same standard as it's always been. Not all men can manage the physical
219 standards of Ranger school, not all women will be able to. There is a 33-35 percent difference in

220 muscle fiber which creates and average 33-35 percent difference in strength between men and
221 women, that's just physiology. Because this is a functional skill, training, that should be the same
222 for everybody. As opposed to the Army PT test which is gender neutralized. Men do more
223 pushups than women do, men should have to do 33-35 percent more pushups to get the same
224 score a woman would because they are 33-35 percent stronger because of physiology.

225 There is another issue about infantry. The sole purpose of infantry is to identify, enclose, and
226 destroy the enemy. It is the most physically demanding of any job in the army. While yes,
227 women should be able to have access, the small percentage of women who would
228 physiologically be able to do the job, may not provide enough value to counterbalance what
229 women in the job, because of non-negotiable factors, like strength, how that would impact the
230 unit's capability.

231 I think there is another cultural issue about- I think there's something to be said for one gender
232 having to be that violent, and another gender not having to be. I'm not sure we want to create an
233 indistinguishable warrior class, for either gender, like that.

234 And it would be difficult for a female to be a battalion commander of an infantry battalion, for
235 example, if she had never been an infantry platoon leader or company commander. To not
236 understand the deprivations and the demands of what happens, of what an infantry soldier has to
237 go through. Trying to find the balance of it would be difficult. Now, it's not something that could
238 be changed in a short period of time, it would take probably a generation of soldiers inching their
239 way through, to create a culture that would be similar to the culture I experienced in my ROTC
240 battalion where everybody is a soldier.

241 It takes something away from the male rite of passage, that we have very few rites of passage for
242 men in our society anymore and one of the only few we have are things like, you join the
243 military, but you don't just join the military, you join the infantry. Now if we take those last rites
244 of passage away, what do we have left for them? If you have no rites of passage for men and for
245 women, how do they grow up?

246 **Larissa:** That's a real interesting question.

247 **Bea:** And we no longer have a draft, the majority of people do not join the military. We don't
248 have anything in our society that is a rite of passage anymore, like we used to, and we have a
249 generation of twenty somethings that can't figure out what to do with their lives. So I think
250 there's probably a connection.

251 [Interruption]

252 [...] destabilizing the fabric of those institutions that enables them to be successful.

253 **Larissa:** So your experience when you first went into the military, where, as you said, the
254 environment was such that everyone was a soldier, are there other-

255 **Bea:** I was fortunate in that my first exposure was a unit like that, not all units were like that. My
256 reserve unit that I was in at the same time was the opposite, women can't go in the field, but in
257 my ROTC unit, women did everything. At the same time I experienced that.

258 **Bea:** When I was Iraq, I volunteered to be convoy commander. Convoy was an additional duty,
259 we had to provide our own security when we went out. As a civil affairs unit, we had to go
260 outside our little operating base often to interact with the local people but we had to provide our
261 own security to do that which means we had to create our own convoy. I volunteered to be
262 convoy commander and I was told no, because I was female. I was the most qualified. As a
263 military police officer, I had more tactical training and more tactical experience, and was one of
264 the only officers who had been in the Army during the Gulf War, where I'd been an area security
265 tactical leader. I had more experience than anyone else of the officers who were eligible to do
266 this. I volunteered and I was told no because I was a girl. So then, the commander asked all the
267 other men and they all told him no. So then he had to come back to me and the NCO who was
268 the NCO in charge of the convoy team, went and said, 'I want Major C because she's the only
269 who will know what to do'. The supply officer, the vet, the logistics officer, the finance officer,
270 none of them have the same level of experience and training as I had. And they wouldn't let me
271 because I was a girl. No one else would do it so they had to come back to me. Okay, you can be
272 the convoy commander.

273 That's in 2005 so misogyny is still there. I ran eighteen convoys while I was there and I had to
274 come back early because of a death in the family and a non-combat related injury. While I was
275 there, I averaged two a week.

276 **Larissa:** How long were you there?

277 **Bea:** June to September.

278 It was right when there was not a lot of stuff going on, it was a quiet time.

279 If the army wants to make sure that women succeed, they'll send more than two. The marines
280 sent two or three women through the basic infantry course and of course they didn't last, two fell
281 out because of injury and the third said I'm out. I think the tipping point has to be fifty percent
282 of the class. If they create a cohort that is fifty percent male and fifty percent female, I think two
283 things will happen; a higher percentage of women will pass then the usual pass rate and they will
284 have a smaller fail rate than any other class the first time they do it.

285 **Bea:** Because the women will create something for the men to force them to go a little further
286 than some of them would. Without doing it so that it is really balanced, the power dynamics and
287 the personal dynamics are going to be out of proportion and it is too easy to set someone up to
288 fail.

289 It is very important that the standards stay the same. Women should probably be in the basic
290 infantry, but for our elite units, or maybe it needs to be the other way around. Women can be in
291 the elite units because the elite units operate at small levels. Whereas, your basic line infantry
292 unit is a bunch of guys who live together and when they are not at war they just practice it over
293 and over and over. It creates an issue, I think, sociologically and culturally, do we want women
294 to be the vicious combat killers that the infantry are. The infantry are special, the really are.

295 **Larissa:** In terms of the training they get?

296 **Bea:** No, in terms of what their job is. They live in the worst conditions, for the longest time,
297 with the most deprivation.

298 [Break]

299 **Bea:** It is still news when a woman makes general officer and it shouldn't be but it is still a big
300 thing when a woman makes general office. The culture has changed, the last ten years of war
301 have changed some of that as the units go out and spend a year in active war, in a combat
302 environment, and the ability to have blinders on about how things have changes and improved is
303 a lot harder after that. That is forcing change faster.

304 **Bea:** One of the conflicts that I always ran into because I has a combat experience in 1990-91 as
305 a lieutenant, we didn't have call up mobilizations again until 1996 for Bosnia, and then it was in
306 2001 for was on terror. So for ten years, I was the only person in my unit that had any
307 deployment experience or had been in, you know nothing really happened in that war but I still
308 went to a war, I still ran missions. I was the only one that had that experience, short of the fifty
309 year old Vietnam Vet.

310 (15.18)

311 **Bea:** What I would constantly run into was, 'well, this is the way we've always done it', and I
312 would say, 'well, that's too bad because this will get you killed!' My position was always more
313 adamantly more we have to change it and fix it. I was often the only voice in that because I was
314 the only one with experience. It's one of the reasons that I stayed.

315 Now we have a whole generation of service members, male and female, who have been
316 deployed, been to war, not just once but 3 or 4 times. They were in a real war. The Gulf War was
317 a real war but it was a minor conflict compared to the last 10 years in Iraq and Afghanistan
318 where we have young 20 something leaders, and NCOs and soldiers, who have more combat
319 experience than generations.

320 (16.18)

321 **Bea:** In essence, someone made the example, not since the Indian Wars in the 1800's, have we
322 had young leaders so exposed to constant conflict. That's a hundred years, a hundred and fifty
323 years since then. That's even more, that's making a differentiation between WWII, which was
324 set piece battles, and the Indian Wars which were insurrections, insurgent battles and that's more
325 equatable to Iraq and Afghanistan was. Constant conflict where you don't know where you

326 enemy is sometimes. We have a generation of a force that has been exposed to that so their
327 return to society will be interesting.

328 So one of the things that I also think is different is- women, some women, are able to be very
329 successful. But they have to meet a certain cultural definition of what a woman is supposed to be
330 and look like and if you don't, then it's harder for you.

331 **Larissa:** So, when you're in the military?

332 **Bea:** Yeah, there are other aspects that are harder for them too. If you're feminine looking, tall,
333 you know, 5'7', or taller, and you're a really, really good jock, but you're feminine, you'll do
334 better, because, if you are not those things, it's easier for men to have conflict with you because
335 they can't, there's no attraction. So, when there is an opportunity of attraction, even if it can
336 never be acted on, or even conscious, women are interacted with differently. Now, what's harder
337 for them, is not being pushed into that lump of, you're just a sex object, and you're stupid
338 because of your vapid brain, they have to fight that prejudice.

339 They will get a little more license with accomplishing things because men want to cooperate
340 with them. But if you're not a potential sex object, if you are clearly unavailable, it's harder for
341 you because now you're a competitor and there's no chance that I'll have you. That's, for gay
342 women who don't meet the mold, that's an added problem that they have to deal with.

343 **Larissa:** So do you think that when women are in the military, if they, (interruptions)

344 **Larissa:** Do you think, do women try to, work to sort of present themselves in a certain way?

345 **Bea:** Some women take advantage of it, take advantage of the innate level of consciousness
346 where men will try to help them, to make things easier for them, some will take advantage of
347 that, which makes life really hard for the rest of us. So, they let them carry their stuff, they
348 pretend they don't know how to do stuff, they take advantage of it, which feeds that, 'women
349 can't do things'. And then you have other women who are able to do without that, they don't
350 take advantage of that. And they don't allow women to take advantage of that.

351 One of the challenges was creating an environment where there is no distinction, male or female.
352 One of the ways it shows up, when I was first in, in the late 70's, early 80's. After that one
353 commander left and we had a new commander.

354 His position was everybody's a soldier, a soldier's a soldier. So we would go out and be, well,
355 how are we going to do lodging? Well, every platoon had a tent, we stayed in our tent, male and
356 female, that wasn't an issue. He trained everybody exactly the same. It wasn't an issue. So you
357 worked out the fact that you had 33 people in one tent together, you figured it out. When I went
358 to the Gulf War and when I went to Bosnia, I was in lodging with other people, I figured it out.
359 So, the whole argument of you can't have women because you need a different shower and all
360 that, well, you figure it out.

361 [Break]

362 **Larissa:** Do you think there are different expectations of how women will behave when they're
363 in the military versus when they are out of the military?

364 **Bea:** Well, our society as a whole right now, has progressed through a period of men and women
365 working in the same environment so as a whole, I think civilian society expects women to be in
366 any job position. And, even in nontraditional fields, firefighting, law enforcement, women have
367 been in those fields now for 20 years, it's not such a big thing anymore. So, that generation that
368 grew up with women being in any job, they're in the military in the junior ranks no, leadership
369 ranks, they don't have a problem so much now with women. As this generation leaves, and that
370 generation takes over, the culture will change. And it's that incremental change that will create a
371 culture where the issue of women in combat will just go away.

372 **Bea:** The experience of coming back to the civilian world, particularly after 10 years of war, I
373 think, is extremely difficult now because one of the things that happens in a combat environment
374 is that your priorities change and your perception changes of what's important. When I came
375 back from the First Gulf War, I was a financial aid officer at the University of Florida, and one
376 of my jobs was I processing scholarship applications. So, I would process applications and it
377 would go to the person that funds it and the student would get their money, but I had all these
378 students coming to me saying I'm not going to get my money. I would go back and I would say,

379 why didn't you process these? Why didn't you fund them? And they would say, well, you didn't
380 write their social security number in the right place on the form. So it had to be written, you
381 know, in the top right hand corner and I thought, well if it's anywhere on this side of the paper its
382 good, but the person who funded was like no, it had to be right there.

383 **Bea:** So, before I went to war, I might have been that person. When I came back from war, I was
384 like, this is bullshit. It doesn't matter where it is, what matters is the student gets their money so
385 they can go to school and pay their bills. Your priority of what is important vastly different after
386 a war. You know, what you're going to do with your life should become clearer, or for many, it
387 becomes very confusing. Because before, you had one job. Look at a basic infantry soldier, he
388 has one job. He goes on patrol, does his mission, comes back, cleans his gear, eats, sleeps, plays
389 cards, plays a game. Mostly all he does is this one thing. You come back here and you have
390 family, you have a job. I'm talking about reservists in particular here. Because in active duty,
391 you just go do the job there, you practice the job. It's still the same job.

392 In the Reserves you go do the job that you don't normally do, you just get to practice tiny little
393 pieces of it because you only have 16 hours a month to practice and eight of those hours are
394 taken up with bullshit and other things.

395 So your time practicing is really limited, then you go off and do this whole army thing and you
396 come back and at first, no one understands you- you can't talk about your experience with your
397 family. As a whole, we tend not to talk about our experiences with those who haven't had those
398 experiences because they're hard to articulate. What you think is important is not the same
399 priority that other people have. Things are busier and faster.

400 **Larissa:** Than what you experienced away?

401 **Bea:** Yeah, right. Things are busier and faster. I tell people that when I was in a combat zone, I
402 slept great. They're always surprised and I think this is true for a lot of combat vets, we sleep
403 great. We're physically exhausted, and we have no distractions. You go to sleep, you sleep. It's
404 dark and it's quiet. Here, it's not dark and it's not quiet, there're lots of distractions. And there're
405 things that are always pulling at you.

406 **Bea:** You either come back very clear or they come back with a very confused sense of self, they
407 come back to a different environment because it's not the same environment as when you left.
408 My wife and I have been together for twelve years and so she has been through three
409 mobilizations with me. Two were in the country and one was out and she earned really quick,
410 after the first one, when I go away she can't move anything in the house. There is no changing of
411 carpet, no moving of furniture, everything has to be where it was when I left.

412 **Larissa:** So when you came back, it was not different.

413 **Bea:** So it would not be unfamiliar to me. Because the first time I went, I didn't even go to
414 combat that time, I went to St. Louis, I came back in six months, things were different, and I
415 went ballistic.

416 So we figured out real quick, everything stays the same. So the, we were able to process what
417 was going on because of our education levels and our backgrounds and some other things so we
418 were able to figure it out, but a lot of veterans can't figure it out, they don't have access or
419 exposure or education to provide the tools to do that. I have a therapeutic background so I know
420 to go get help. A lot of veterans still don't know how to do that and still don't feel comfortable
421 doing that. It is very confusing to come from an environment where your decisions impact
422 whether someone lives or dies. And they literally have the weight of living or dying on them and
423 you come back here and, 'do you want fries with that?' is the kind of questions.

424 So you have choices here where you didn't have them there. When we came back from the Gulf
425 War, the first thing we did was we all ran to Burger King because we didn't have Burger King
426 and Baskin Robbins back then like we do now. So the first thing we did was we got off the bus,
427 we got released, we went to Burger King, and there're 40 of us standing in the line at Burger
428 King and we can't order. We can't order because we don't know what to do with choices.

429 That was 25 years ago, our society is far more faster, with more choices now, with the internet
430 and everything else. People don't know what to do and they know that they felt a certain way
431 during certain times and they want that feeling back so they engage in high risk behaviors to get
432 the adrenaline back, they feel like they can't talk to anybody. It's one of the things about Swords

433 to Plowshares that's so great because they do things to help veterans through that journey.
434 You're definitely different, and I think women are different than men.

435 **Larissa:** Because, when they come back?

436 **Bea:** When they come back it's going to be different too.

437 My experience was also affected by the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. So I did not have the
438 experience of forming strong bonds with other military service people because wasn't able to
439 because of the fear of exposure, so I don't have those war buddies to go back to. Many veterans
440 come back and they still have their Army buddy they can still call, they can talk to, I don't have
441 those buddies because most of my career was spent under the specter of, 'I can't get close to
442 anybody'.

443 **Larissa:** Yeah, you had to keep that totally separate.

444 **Bea:** Totally compartmentalized lives so that impacted my relationships both inside and outside
445 the military. Because I was chronically sexually harassed, while I was in the military, and had
446 males give me difficult situations, my ability to interact closely with men is affected. I think that
447 is independent of my identity in terms of being a lesbian. So, that impacted things, my ability to
448 integrate into a normal civilian work environment is significantly impacted. I can integrate fine
449 in a military environment but I could last about six months in a civilian job.

450 **Larissa:** Is it because in a military environment, you know what to expect?

451 **Bea:** Partly, but in some jobs you should know what to expect but I think it's more finite in terms
452 of what's expected and the standards that are applied. What my job was, it was unique, military
453 police and civilian affairs are both unique. They are both highly cognitive. So, even my roles in
454 the military were different than the average experience as a result that, coming back into a
455 civilian environment, I often had issues with authority. More though now because I was used to
456 being the one with authority, you know, when you're used to be the authority and then you're
457 not.

458 It gets back to the feeling that- you know, you go to a combat zone, you go to a war zone, and
459 you get a different perspective on what is important. The details that are important are the details
460 that affect the production of the result and whether or not someone will get hurt. So now you're
461 in a civilian environment where no one is going to get hurt, unless you're in law enforcement or
462 a firefighter, probably nobody's going to get, or a guy on wire, you know, people aren't going to
463 get hurt by your decisions with a computer.

464 But that stress is still there and how you learn to respond and adapt to that is you either gain
465 skills and do it well and adequately or you don't, and if you don't, you develop post-traumatic
466 stress disorder based on the trauma that you were exposed to. I had post-traumatic stress from the
467 first Gulf War and it took many, many years to learn how to manage it and how to recognize
468 when the PTSD was responding as opposed to me who was responding. And it's not always,
469 even now, 28 years later, it still comes up, and that impacts my ability to interact now. The
470 combat experience of the last 10 years is so much more intense, and the soldiers that are coming
471 back that are experiencing post-traumatic stress are doing so at such a higher level in a more
472 demanding, more pressure ridden society than twenty eight years ago. There are more
473 opportunities to get assistance or talk about it more, there's also more opportunity for it to be
474 uncontrolled, and for them to not access that.

475 **Larissa:** In terms of women's experience when they're, as they're coming back. Are there things
476 from women's experience in the military that is useful to them, or being a woman, are there
477 some things about that identity that are helpful? Not just the, I guess it's very difficult to make a
478 broad generalization.

479 **Bea:** Well, the level of exposure is different, there's a small minority of women who are exposed
480 to any combat operations, although many women are on bases and the bases get shelled, they get
481 exposed to mortars. There's a finite group of women who are on convoy a lot, they get exposed
482 to IED and the problems associated with that, but as a whole, the men, who are in the combat
483 arms, who are in direct combat roles, are more-they've had more exposure to trauma than the
484 women who are in less combat roles, with the exception of military police and civil affairs, who
485 are outside the wire more often, and drivers, who are outside the wire more often, and the
486 medical side, male and female, because they're dealing with the aftermath, but the people who

487 are just staying on the base, they get mortared occasionally but- they're not very good at hitting
488 what they're shooting at, so. You know, when I got to Iraq, we got mortared the same day we
489 were there. Our first morning we woke up to mortars and we all come running out of our tents
490 and we all run to the bomb shelters and everybody else is just sitting in their camp chairs.
491 They're like, 'that's a mile away, it on the other side of the base'.

492 They get used to it and unless it's right where you are, you feel the concussion, I got knocked out
493 of bed with concussions a few times because the explosion was within a quarter mile of us, but
494 that was it. And the first couple years after I came back, and we would go to Disney World, and I
495 didn't like the fireworks. I love the fireworks but for a couple years I couldn't watch fireworks, I
496 could feel it. But now I'm fine, but how people respond to those things are different now. If you
497 got mortared every morning in your little outpost as a grunt, yeah, you probably have a different
498 experience when you come back. There are very few women that get there, because we have
499 medics that are out there with them, and some others, but for the most part, women are not.

500 I'm not going to degrade women's experience, those that have exposure, have issues when they
501 come back. And there are women that don't have exposure and men that don't have exposure at
502 all and they have issues when they come back. Just the act of being in a combat environment,
503 even if no one ever shoots at you, will affect you, and it will change you. You will still have
504 lived with fear every day that you were there. If someone says they didn't, they're lying, or like
505 me they've been there so many times they're numb to that emotion.

506 When I was in Iraq, I never was conscious of ever being afraid, but I don't think that was
507 because I didn't have any fear, I think it was because I was numb to fear by that point. It was put
508 in this little box on a shelf. When I was in the Gulf War, I was afraid all the time, you either
509 learn how to manage fear or you were afraid and unmanageable with your actions. I learned how
510 to manage fear, that's what got me where I was in Iraq, where it didn't affect me so much.

511 If you have fear, it creates a physiological response in you, high levels of cortisol, high levels of
512 adrenaline at intermittent times, and other stress related responses. Your serotonin levels might
513 be low, although you do get a lot of sun out there so your serotonin levels might be high because
514 of that. It creates physical changes in your brain, some different than others. There's a theory that

515 these physiological changes as a result of chronic toxic stress levels in your brain are one of the
516 things that are a precursor for PTSD.

517 There's research that supports that, so you come out of that environment, regardless of your
518 gender, and you still have high levels of stress hormones, you have changes that have occurred in
519 your brain and they have adapted to the high levels of stress hormone, and now your behavior is
520 a consequence of that. Now, how women respond, is part because of our conditioning and other
521 things, we're supposed to be quiet and we're not supposed to be disruptive.

522 If you have kids, and you still have that sense of protection, what do you do? Women have the
523 highest rate of homelessness among veterans, women veterans have the highest rate of
524 homelessness.

525 So you come back, and you encounter people who don't see you as a veteran. If they know
526 you're a veteran, they don't see you as a war veteran. They don't know, they think you were in
527 an administrative job. Much of the public has no concept of what women do in the military or
528 what the military does. Our movies don't show women in the military except as nurses and love
529 interests. We have no movies where it's a 'Band of Sisters'. Until that media representation is
530 more realistic, the American public will continue to think that the quarter to half of a percent
531 that's in the military is something that it's not.

532 **Larissa:** Not understand or believe that women were in that...?

533 **Bea:** Right now we have more people in the Congress who are veterans than we have had for
534 forty years. We have fourteen or seventeen veterans or something like that in Congress and I
535 think five are women. That is really important because that brings a voice that hasn't been there.

536 **Bea:** (reads interview question aloud) Do you think women's veterans are treated differently than
537 male veterans when they return home?

538 Yes, I do because I think our society invalidates their experience, it doesn't provide a way for
539 that experience to be validated.

540 There was recently someone here, a Gulf War veteran who recently published a book, a
541 children's book, and I was talking to her and I said, 'why don't you go to the VFW?' and she
542 said, 'Well, I went to the VFW when I first got back and I had a horrible experience because they
543 didn't want women. And that's common.

544 **Larissa:** Really? Even in the veteran's organizations?

545 **Bea:** Especially in the veterans organizations all those old guys who didn't like women in the
546 military? Now they're old guys in a community organization that don't want women in their
547 club. All boys tree house, no girls allowed.

548 However, there are lots of posts that aren't like that, the VFW post here is very welcoming to
549 me, very friendly. They nominated me for elected position. I've only been with them for a year.
550 I brought some other women in because they want people, they want us to participate. I walked
551 in to an American Legion post in New York once and I got looks like, 'You don't belong here,
552 why are you here?' So, that happens, it's going to still happen for a while. It will happen until it's
553 integrated into our society.

554 **Bea:** (reading interview question aloud) Do you think people respond differently to you now as a
555 veteran than they did before you were in the military?

556 That's kind of hard to say. I would say yes, in that, because of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy
557 where I had to subjugate my identity and compartmentalize my relationships. I developed, in
558 part, my own sense of self or personality is one of isolation. I had very few relationships. And,
559 because the last ten years I was called up three times and I would have to come back and
560 reintegrate, and reintegration to me is a pretty much isolating.

561 All my friends I had before 9/11 are gone because they moved on with their lives while I was
562 stuck responding to the needs of the country. And everything else in my life was put on hold. So
563 they have moved on. So, if I had not been in the military, I would probably be a published author
564 of several books, my kids would not be 3 and 9 months, they would be 20 and 25, I would be
565 retired from my civilian career, not starting my civilian career, I was constrained from my
566 writing career while I was active in the military because you write what you know, I couldn't
567 write what I knew. I couldn't even write fiction about what I knew for fear of exposure, so that

568 aspect of my life was on hold. When 9/11 happened, everything in my life was put on hold. My
569 life would have been very different, I think.

570 I like my life where I am right now, I am of that life that I had so I'm not sure that I could change
571 any of it, but I would if or could. I think there are a couple of decisions that I would make
572 differently. There are a few things I would have done differently but the big ones, they probably
573 would have all been the same.

574 **Larissa:** If there was a young woman-

575 **Bea:** I'd tell her to join the Coast Guard, I would. People talk to me about joining the military.

576 **Larissa:** Is there anything else that you think...

577 **Bea:** I think that the experience of women integrating back into society after deployment or after
578 military service, will depend in part on where, what their service was characterized by. If their
579 deployment was characterized by combat zones, it is far more difficult.

580 [Break]

581 We have higher suicide rates, but we don't really know because we didn't track them before so
582 we don't know if their higher.

583 The fundamental thing that you have to confront is that life is simple in combat zones, it's not
584 simple in civilian life. Life is simple in the military, even on active duty, compared to the
585 Reserves experience, it's not simple in civilian life.

586 It's a lot harder for the Reservists because you have your military job, which is a lot more than 2
587 days a month. It's only 2 days a month when you're like a private. Once you make NCO or
588 officer, it's a lot more than two days a month, it would get more and more. I would spend 20
589 hours a week as a commander when my unit was here last year, I was at the unit 3 days a week. I
590 was there, at the unit, 3 or 4 days a week, to get stuff done. [Break]

Appendix F. Interview with Candace

Interviewee: Candace

Interviewer: Larissa Mansfield

Date: 9 April, 2013

Place: San Francisco, CA USA

1 **Larissa:** Tell me a little bit about when you joined the military and what the circumstances were
2 around why you decided to join. Then, if you could just explain a little bit about what you did in
3 the military.

4 **Candace:** Well, I joined the National Guard in 2000. I joined kind of just on a whim to see what
5 I could do. I went to basic training in October of 2000, got out in March. I was military police
6 and I went back to National Guard duty, one weekend a month and a couple of weeks in the
7 summer, kind of helped out my recruiter and all that. On September 11, on the morning of the
8 attacks, my unit called me and said ‘get here’, basically. There were no orders, we didn’t know
9 what was going on so we just- I packed up my things and left. Left my job, it was the last day I
10 ever worked at my job, left my house; it was the last day I actually lived at home. It kind of
11 changed my whole course of what I was going to do. Another reason why I joined this particular
12 unit was because it was close to where I got accepted to school and this was a way I could get to
13 know people and get to know people there before I went to college, and so my dad wouldn’t
14 worry about me as much.

15 **Larissa:** And where was this?

16 **Candace:** It was in Virginia. I was born and raised in Virginia. In a small town in southern
17 Virginia and my unit was in Virginia Beach.

18 **Larissa:** And you were going to go to school in?

19 **Candace:** In Hampton University in Virginia and that unit was one of the closest to where I was
20 going to be going. That’s just kind of how it happened. There was really no big patriotic or I
21 need to get out of trouble reason, it was mostly, ‘let’s see if I can do this’.

22 **Larissa:** Okay, and after you got called up and then where did you go, what did you do?

23 **Candace:** I did security at a small base for like a couple of days in Virginia and then I went to
24 the National Guard Bureau in Arlington, Virginia, and after that I went to Fort Belfort and did
25 security for one particular site that handled communications, I think for the White House. I’m
26 not exactly sure what they handled; I didn’t ask too many questions. I did that up until August of
27 that year. I was released from active duty in 2002.

I went and lived in Baltimore with my aunt for a little bit and in February of that year, Columbia was February 3rd, so it would have been February 5th. My first sergeant calls me and he is asking about my head because I had had a headache the weekend before. We had drill that weekend and it was the same weekend as the Columbia disaster. I remember because it had been the Columbia disaster that weekend. I'll never forget that. So I'm at work and he calls me and he's like 'how's your head doing?' and I say 'if you're calling me it's probably not about my head.'

He said, 'You should probably sit down.' and then he told me I had orders to go to Southwest Asia. Ok, so I figured I was going to Afghanistan and really some part of me thought Iraq but I thought maybe Afghanistan, who knows, and a couple of days later I reported for active duty. February 10th is when I reported for active duty. I was sick when the rest of my company went in April so I couldn't deploy right away and I was actually given the choice to get off active duty, stay on active duty and stay stateside, or go to Iraq. I chose to go to Iraq because it was still pretty early and no one knew. The big questions weren't coming out.

Larissa: When was this again?

Candace: It was 2003. When I went in September, there was still, there was some of that why are we there? But it was still not very big, at least it was not big in my world, and also we were short female MP's and I knew that if something happened, I would never be able to forgive myself for not going and helping out. It was my team, my people.

So I went and I was a guard for high value detainees. So the Deck of Card prisoners who were the high ranking people in the Baath party. I guarded them. I came back and I was sort of 'okay, I'm back'. We weren't really given any resources, if they told us about it was so quick. I immediately went back to work and I got a job at the Pentagon, and what really kind of changed things, turned the tide, was my ex-finance. We were in Iraq together and when he came back he was very bitter about a lot of things and he was mad that some people went and some people didn't, he was like, 'why didn't they go? I went.'

He also once said that he wished Iraq would be turned into one big glass parking lot and I said, 'Hmm, I'm not sure about this.' When I was working at the Pentagon, I was working in developmental testing and evaluation which means that I got to push through paperwork for

56 weapons and all these tools that we weren't using currently and I was one of those soldiers
57 without plates in my vest in Iraq.

58 **Larissa:** What's that?

59 **Candace:** Armored plates, we had a flack vest and there are armored plates that were supposed
60 to go into it so if you got shot or something happened, it got deflected. I wasn't given a plate
61 stateside because they were so heavy and they didn't want me to have to lug those around, it's
62 annoying. They said you'll get them from your unit when you get there. I get there and my
63 supply sergeant says, 'I'm not going to give them to you, we're short.' I kind of looked at him
64 like, 'there's some right there' (pointing). He said, 'I can't give you those.' So I was in a war
65 zone without proper protection. One of the things that I'll never forget, and still kind of haunts
66 me to this day- my first week or two there I had to go on a convoy to take a prisoner to the
67 hospital. This was before I really knew about the dangers of the IEDs. I was like, okay. My
68 platoon sergeant comes up to me and he kind of taps my chest and he feels that there is nothing-
69 there's something missing there. He says, 'let me see your weapon.' I give him my 9mm, which
70 was my service weapon, He looks at it, cocks it back, puts it on fire, and put's it back in my
71 holster. He says, 'If he makes one wrong move, I want you to shoot him in the head.'

72 In my head, and almost every day, I'm thinking, what was a wrong move? Luckily he didn't
73 move- he was just as scared as I was. I think he could see the fear in my eyes. We ended up
74 talking; he was one of the people who cried when I left. We became pretty cool friends, if you
75 could say that about the prisoners we had there. I think back, what if he would have gone into his
76 pocket and grabbed something? Would that have been the wrong move? What if he had made a
77 run for it? Could I have shot him? What if he was in his pocket getting Chap Stick or something
78 and I shoot him. I run through that scenario almost every day.

79 I blocked it out for the first couple of years and then I went to see the Hurt Locker when it came
80 out in 2010, 2011? It became abundantly clear that I could have died out there and that I was not
81 okay. I went to see it and although the movie portrayed it in a really crappy way- it was not the
82 best war movie ever, I don't know why it won an Oscar- there were two scenes that really hit me
83 hard. One was when the captain was walking and he just stepped on something and blew up. I
84 was like, 'it was really that easy to do that.' The second scene, the one that bothered me the

85 most, is when he's at home- he goes to the grocery store with his wife and his kid and his wife
86 asks, 'can you go get us some cereal?' Then they show this one shot of him standing and they
87 show this really wide angle of endless boxes of cereal. And the fear on his face, it's like, 'Oh
88 shit.' In the next scene they show him back in the combat zone with a smile on his face. To me,
89 that broke my heart because I know exactly what he felt like.

90 I only went to Iraq once because the way the National Guard deploys, I couldn't deploy for
91 another two years after that. By then I had hardware in my foot and I couldn't go. When I got
92 back in December of 2003, it was right around Christmas, I didn't know that- I thought things
93 would just be normal again and I went to a mall. It was a small, L-shaped mall, probably half a
94 city block; it was really a small mall. I went looking for a pair of shoes. I probably spent two and
95 a half hours in that mall until finally- it's funny now because it's so ridiculous- I went to a Lady
96 Footlocker and was crying and told the woman to pick out a pair of shoes for me. I said, 'can you
97 please, I can't make choices.' I felt really bad. I didn't tell anyone about that; it was so
98 embarrassing that I couldn't pick out a pair of shoes.

99 Later on, after I moved out here in 2007, finally I went to go get a claim on my foot because I
100 hurt my foot in the military. The claims person was talking to me and he said, 'Where do you sit
101 in restaurants?' I said, 'Near a wall so I can see the door and see exits. Doesn't everyone do
102 that?' He asked, 'When somebody touches you from behind, what do you do?' I said.
103 'Occasionally I will swing at them.' I still do, I don't like it when people come up behind me. He
104 gave me a number for a counselor at the Vet Center, he said, 'I think you need to talk to this
105 person.' I got really angry; I was like, 'There's nothing wrong with me. I'm not crazy! What's
106 wrong with you?'

107 Then I started researching PTSD and I thought, oh! I thought it was only for people who were
108 actually shot someone or saw dead bodies. The stuff that I experienced, yeah, that's actually
109 valid. For the first time, I thought, I'm not crazy; I'm not that weird combat vet. This doesn't
110 have to be my new normal. Eventually I started getting counseling. I'm not one hundred percent,
111 there are days when I just hole up in bed and don't do anything but at least I can recognize the
112 problem. If I do see it, I can control it and get myself out of those spots.

113 It took me a long time. I got off active duty in 2004, although I got home in late December and it
114 took me until 2011 to go get counseling. I think that's pretty normal. I didn't want anything to do
115 with vets, with the military, after the Pentagon, I was done.

116 **Larissa:** When did you leave the military again?

117 **Candace:** I kind of left after I got back but I kind of drilled a little bit. I went back to drill status
118 and got out of that in 2005. I was having a lot of ankle problems and there was no way I was
119 going to be able to pass a PT test ever again because my ankle was hurting so much. I was told
120 that I had permanent tendonitis and there was nothing that could be done about it. I ended up
121 walking one day to work and I felt a snap and I thought- that doesn't feel good. I kept going on
122 it, I thought I had just sprained it again, until finally I went to a doctor and I found out I had a
123 tear on my tendon and my foot had to be reconstructed. I didn't know that since it was a service
124 connected injury that the VA would have paid for it so I went through my private insurance to do
125 it.

126 We were pushed out when we got out. The National Guard has it a lot worse because when we
127 are done, we have to go back to civilian life. We don't have that structure of going back to a
128 military life.

129 We are expected to go back and be normal. No one comes back- I don't think anyone comes
130 back from war the same person as when they left. If they did then they're either a sociopath or
131 they're lying.

132 **Larissa:** When you were in Iraq or serving with the National Guard, did you serve with other
133 women in your unit and did you have experiences that had to do with being a woman that were
134 different, were there other places where you felt that gender played a role?

135 **Candace:** Being a woman in the military police corps- the military police corps, within their
136 own corps, they are held to a higher standard. Someone messes up there really badly, they're out
137 of there. We had women in our unit. We didn't have many but we had enough to be able to
138 deploy on our squad so every day we had someone to take care of the female detainees, we only
139 had two. Outside of my unit...

140 There was actually one thing that bothered me. When we were leaving Iraq, there was one team
141 that convoyed out and all the women- they wouldn't let us be on that convoy, one woman was
142 allowed on that convoy and she was a combat medic. The rest of us flew. They didn't want
143 women on the convoy which I felt was dumb. If there was something that would have happened-
144 like if a woman came out, they couldn't search her, not legally. It kind of bummed me out
145 because I wanted to go with the unit but without plates, there were like, 'hell no!' Although it
146 was pretty uneventful.

147 The military as whole- they did comment on my looks and I was fine with that. Whatever, I'm
148 not going to let that bother me but there were two occasions that I blocked out for a long time. It
149 was a hot day in 2002. It might have even been today because it was right around my birthday, a
150 couple of days before. It was a hot day, an unusually hot day and I was wearing a white wife
151 beater and a pair of capris. I was on crutches because my ankle. I said, 'It's really hot today' and
152 someone came up from behind and poured a bucket of water over my head and yelled, 'wet t-
153 shirt contest! Not so hot now, are you.' All the guys were cracking up, they were laughing. I was
154 embarrassed but I didn't want to be seen as that woman who couldn't take a joke so I just
155 laughed it off, I was like, 'you guys, that's crazy, you're silly.'

156 There was another situation right after my birthday; this was all in the same week. Three of the
157 guys that were there, I was actually friends with one of them. We were out drinking and my
158 friend was saying something kind of close to my ear and the other guys got upset. I don't
159 remember how it all transpired but I remember I was standing up and said, 'hey guys, don't do
160 that.', or something. One of the guys grabbed my crutches and pushed me down and pinned me
161 down. My friend who I was talking to, he ran and kind of tackled the guy who was on top of me.
162 He got beat up so I could get away. I have no idea what he would have done if he hadn't done
163 that. I never admitted to that either because I thought, I should have never been out drinking with
164 those guys. I blamed myself. It took me until last year to actually admit to that, to say, 'that
165 happened.' For a long time I thought, that's just guys being stupid in the military. They were like,
166 no, that's military sexual trauma. So one of the biggest things I'm working on now is letting
167 people know, MST isn't just rape. A lot of people think that's all it is. In some ways, the
168 repeated sexual- having people pour water over your head and do all these things to embarrass
169 you. The psychological impacts of having some man embarrass you, because you're a woman.

170 The Invisible War says it's an occupational hazard but that's not right. In the civilian world,
171 someone would be getting fired. Any job, any real world job, someone is going to get fired.

172 **Larissa:** Do you stay in touch with any of the people that were in your unit, either men or
173 women?

174 **Candace:** Not really. A couple of them, we're friends on Facebook but I don't talk to them on a
175 daily basis. I only talk to one of them and that is my ex-finance, every once in a while, and that
176 doesn't happen that often.

177 **Larissa:** Did you get engaged while you were in the military?

178 **Candace:** We got engaged after Iraq and then we broke up in 2007. I think for him- he was
179 protective of me when we were in Iraq because of the situation. I think he was protective of me
180 because I didn't have those plates and he was worried about me. From there, his protection
181 became controlling until it hit a critical mass. He just didn't trust me. If I came home late from
182 work, ten minutes late, he would call me. If I went out with my girlfriends, he would text me or
183 call me every hour. I came home late from a party and he accused me of cheating on him.
184 Finally, I was like, I'm done. I couldn't take it anymore. I wanted to go out with a friend, a guy
185 friend, and I knew he would lose his shit. I decided, I'm just going to break up with you before I
186 make your dreams a reality. Even then, he told me he didn't think I'd make it out here. He told
187 me, 'I think you're going to fail out there, but I want you to prove me wrong.' Those were his
188 last words to me when I was about to go to the airport.

189 **Larissa:** When you moved out here?

190 **Candace:** Yes.

191 **Larissa:** When did you move out here? Why did you choose San Francisco?

192 **Candace:** 2007.

193 I came here because he always promised to bring me here on vacation. He never did. In fact, he
194 spent a lot of our vacation money on a purebred German Shepherd puppy. He thought we needed
195 one for protection. We lived in a kind of transitional neighborhood. It was becoming very
196 gentrified in D.C. and he insisted we needed a dog to protect us. He bought the puppy and I

197 didn't really want it but if said no, he would shame me and guilt me. If I said yes, I'm just stuck
198 with a dog. The lesser of two evils for me at that time was just let him get the damn dog. Finally,
199 when we broke up, I was like, 'I need to go on vacation, I need to get away for a few days.' He
200 said, 'Yeah, you do. Where are you going?' I just kind of blurted out, 'San Francisco.' He said,
201 'You'll like it there.' I said, 'I hope so.' I was kind of committing to it.

202 I contacted a friend I only knew online through photo sharing. Actually, the whole saga of us
203 breaking up, the everyday of it is inadvertently in photos. I was doing a self-portrait project at the
204 same time and people could tell that something was not right. People would say, 'You're not
205 smiling like you used to.' So they saw it before I did.

206 I moved out of the house at the exact half way point. I didn't mean for that to happen, it just did.
207 I contacted her and said, 'Okay, I'm coming out, where should I go, what should I do?' She said,
208 'Come here, stay with me' and I said, 'Okay, I'll be there for a week. I came here and fell in love
209 with the city. I ended up moving out here two months later. I cashed out my 401K, if I didn't sell
210 it, donate it, give it away, it came with me. It ended up being two suitcases of clothes and I
211 shipped some stuff from my parents.

212 **Larissa:** They are kind of general questions and if they don't really fit your situation or
213 experience then just move on. If there is something else that I didn't cover that you want to add,
214 please improvise away. What do you think about the debate over women in combat roles?

215 **Candace:** Women are in combat roles, if you really think about it. The way the war is, there is
216 no front line. Shoshana Johnson, who was the first Black and Hispanic woman POW, she was a
217 cook and she got captured, and she was a POW. And we have people who are in supply who are
218 in just as much danger, if not more danger, than anyone else. I was telling at a forum I went to, I
219 think it's more frightening to be in these support roles than to be in infantry or artillery. In those
220 situations, you know you're going to get shot at; you can almost bank on it. With us, it's, 'Is this
221 the day I'm going to roll over an IED?' So in my opinion, it's great for promotion because
222 combat jobs normally get promoted faster and to higher ranks. I think this opens it up to us but at
223 the same time it does concern me with the high incidence of MST, it's like, well, will this really
224 change it and it's another reason why they are opening it up so it's more of a level playing field.
225 I'm hoping that's the case but it's something we have already been doing.

226 **Larissa:** The men you worked with, how do you think they felt about women in the military, do
227 you have an impression of that?

228 **Candace:** In my unit we were pretty much treated as equals. Some of the other ones, they were
229 just- Some of them, they weren't terrible to me, they just didn't treat us the way they should
230 have. Some of them treated it like it was an all boy's club and we were girl infiltrators. For the
231 most part my unit treated me very well.

232 **Larissa:** Do you think it made a difference if there were more women in the unit, do you think
233 that changed anything? Or do you think it was the individual personalities that made it more
234 difficult.

235 **Candace:** I think it was more about personalities. The guys really treated me pretty well, in my
236 unit anyways because they knew my ex was there, we were still together. They didn't do
237 anything to me, they didn't really say anything too off color to me but some of the other women
238 there, oh my God, I can't believe they would talk about a woman this way. They knew I wasn't
239 like them. There were some women who actually did sleep with men for money out there. A
240 couple of them were in my unit. They wore wigs and makeup and got their hair done. We were
241 in a war zone. I understand you want to look put together but you don't really need mascara out
242 here. They kind of respected me more for that. I made sure my hair was together and everything
243 but I didn't wear full makeup and made sure my shirt wasn't as tight as I could get it. There were
244 women who did that because they knew they could get the attention out there. I hate that that was
245 a big part of it.

246 **Larissa:** What do you think the women that did that got out of it, what do you think they gained
247 from it?

248 **Candace:** Honestly I don't know. I tried not to associate with them. I didn't want to be seen as
249 one of those girls who does that. They knew I wasn't but outside of our camp, they didn't know
250 that.

251 **Larissa:** Do you think that women's experiences in the military are different from men's
252 experiences?

253 **Candace:** Yes, because we do have the different standards for PT and we don't have the artillery
254 and all that stuff. I'm kind of a different case because as a woman, I was as close to combat as
255 any woman can get. I had the specialized weapons training; we worked really closely with other
256 men soldiers in combat situations, in basic training, in all of our training. I think that as a whole,
257 because of the difference in jobs, we were quite. In the grand scheme of things, we weren't, we
258 all had the same goal, if something came down, you made sure you and everyone else was
259 protected. From outside of the combat zone, I think it was different. I can't really explain it, but
260 it was.

261 **Larissa:** If there was a women that you know who was considering joining the military, what
262 advice would you give her?

263 **Candace:** Research it. Let her know the pros and cons of it. Research her options. If she thinks
264 it's her only option to change her life, which some people think the military is the only option. I
265 would have them explore scholarships or working in non-profits or something. I don't want them
266 to think that the military is their only choice in that situation. If someone wants to join for the
267 right reasons, meaning they want to develop some skill or they want to learn something- but they
268 also have to be aware that we go to conflicts a lot. When I joined, I didn't really imagine going to
269 war, especially being National Guard. Technically, I should have never gone to Iraq because war
270 was never officially declared. The status of the National Guard is, we are only supposed to go
271 overseas if there is a declared war. We are supposed to be there for state emergencies, that is our
272 primary focus. If people look at the history of Hurricane Katrina, the National Guard wasn't
273 there so they had people who weren't trained in natural disaster helping. It had a really bad
274 trickledown effect.

275 I would let them know their options, the pros of being in the military, the cons, the risks, the
276 rewards, and I would let her make her own decision. I am not going to tell someone not to join. If
277 I had a daughter, I wouldn't tell her not to join, I would just give her the most informed facts that
278 I have.

279 **Larissa:** When women leave the military, do you think their experience is different from men
280 who are returning?

281 **Candace:** Yes! Especially, I've noticed this a lot, I'm going to the VA hospital, they assume that
282 I'm married, that my husband was in, and I'm not the veteran. Or they think my dad was in, or
283 they assume that I was a cook or supply or admin. I tell them military police and they are like
284 "Oh, really?" I get that look a lot. And a lot of women don't identify as veterans because for a
285 long time, women like the WAACS and WAVES, they really weren't identified as veterans.
286 There are a lot of people who don't understand that unlike Vietnam and WWII, and Grenada and
287 Korea, we are fighting a very different kind of war and they still can't get it through their heads
288 that women are there. A lot of us are there. The treatment we get back here is kind of - I work the
289 VA and I do outreach to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans to let them know about their benefits. I
290 do a lot of speaking engagements. When I am at an event or I am tabling, or telling about the
291 services, when I am with the males, they ask them "where did you serve?" They ask where with
292 them and they ask me, "did you serve?" I tell them 'Yeah, I probably saw more combat than any
293 of these guys.' So it's still taking a lot of people, a lot of time to realize that we served too, we
294 did these same things, if not more dangerous things.

295 **Larissa:** Are women veterans treated differently than men veterans?

296 **Candace:** Yeah, I can actually give you an example of that one. Through my work we have
297 outreach swag things that we give out. I honestly hate them.

298 **Larissa:** What are they?

299 **Candace:** Like little promotional things, like bracelets and stuff.

300 I had someone come up to me and say, "I have these outreach materials for women vets, do you
301 want them?" and I said "sure, what are they"

302 He gives me this compact and its pink and it has a mirror and it says, "Women Veteran" and I
303 said, "Are you fucking kidding me? This is what you use to reach out to women veterans? If I
304 weren't working and I saw that, I would come up to your table and tell you, you were sexist and
305 throw it in you fucking face."

306 Someone else said, 'I would put out lipstick if I thought it would get women to our table, and I
307 said, "No." So they outreach to women in a very terrible way and I'm the only outreach

308 coordinator in the Bay Area and there're only two of us in the whole state of California and 30
309 vet centers.

310 **Larissa:** Really? For outreach to women veterans?

311 **Candace:** For outreach to veterans, period. Our job is to- the Vet Center job is to do outreach
312 and we go out to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and tell them about the Vet Center program.

313 You have to be an Iraq or Afghanistan veteran to be in this position and there are only two
314 women. They always throw me out there if there is an event for women veterans, the guys almost
315 never come to it. Come on guys, come on, you have to reach out to these people too. I'm okay
316 with it because I understand it and some women, even though MST does affect the same amount
317 of men, even them, I don't think they would feel as comfortable speaking to a male about that.

318 I get treated very differently and they don't understand that because I'm also the only African
319 American in the Bay Area doing this.

320 **Larissa:** So you kind of end up playing two roles as well.

321 **Candace:** So I sat down with the outreach house and I said, "Look, I don't have it as easy as
322 you. Women veterans, we are hard to reach. A lot of us don't want to come out and get therapy.
323 All too often it's 'that crazy woman'. If it's a woman that's having issues, she's crazy, if it's a
324 man, he has issues or he has a problem or he has PTSD. When it's a woman they don't
325 automatically think, 'Woman veteran'. Oh, she might have had something happen to her. She
326 might have been in combat, or she might have been raped. They don't think about that. You have
327 that 'crazy woman' stigma, on top of all these other things.

328 And that's another reason why I didn't- I don't want to be that crazy woman. The crazy vet
329 thing is already a big deal. You hear about the drunk uncle Vietnam vet. We don't want to be
330 that and we avoid it for a long time, I think.

331 **Larissa:** Do you think that people respond differently or treat you differently now than before
332 you joined the military?

333 **Candace:** That was so long ago. Some people do, even in my hometown they are like, 'We still
334 don't really believe you did that.' Even my own father; on Veterans Day I called him and I was

335 like, ‘hey dad, did you forget to tell me something?’ He said, ‘Yeah, but I still can’t believe you
336 did that.’ In their defense, I wouldn’t believe it either. I am not the person you would think
337 would join the military. Even back then and even now when I meet people. Sometimes I still
338 carry around my old military ID because sometimes they think I’m kidding. I tell them, ‘No,
339 really. I went to war and everything.’

340 **Larissa:** What advice would you give to women who are transitioning back into civilian life?

341 **Candace:** Use every resource possible. There are a lot of resources out there, especially now.
342 There are a lot of women veterans who are really trying to make this a better place for us. The
343 numbers are only going to grow. We are going to have more women coming back. Don’t take no
344 for an answer, if at all possible. There are going to be a lot of people trying to tell you they don’t
345 know what services are available to you. Research everything. If you think it is something
346 combat related, go to the women’s health clinic at the VA hospital. Don’t let someone tell you,
347 ‘Oh, don’t worry about that’, pat you on the head and send you on your way. Be your own best
348 advocate and if there’s anything that you feel is not right, there are people who are willing to
349 listen. You don’t have to go through it alone. A lot of us felt like in the beginning, we did, but
350 now, if there’s a woman vet, I’ll make sure she has my information so she knows that- they
351 might not want to come to me right away because they might want to do it on their own, but they
352 know there’s someone there who might help them. Just know that there are plenty of resources
353 and plenty of people there ready to help.

354 **Larissa:** That’s all the questions. Do you have anything that you want to explain about being a
355 woman veteran, or are there any issues that are not being addressed or are not being understood?

356 **Candace:** One of the biggest ones is the MST issue. More people are learning about it but they
357 don’t really see the other parts of it. They know that MST is military sexual trauma, they’ve seen
358 The Invisible War, but they don’t understand that numbers wise – 10,000 women have reported
359 it, and 10,000 men have reported it, so it’s the same number- granted it’s 20% vs. 5% but it’s the
360 same amount of people. Just because it’s 10,000 women who reported it doesn’t mean that’s it. I
361 still haven’t really reported it. There are women, they think it’s so minor, it’s no big deal. If it’s
362 something that affects you, you can’t be afraid to report it. You don’t have to put yourself out
363 there like a lot of us are, but you don’t have to suffer in silence or alone. Letting people know

364 that it's not just rape. That guy touching your ass every day or that guy calling you "big canons"
365 all the time, that stuff affects you and you get sick of it. I try to tell people it's not just these
366 things. You don't have to accept-

367 A lot of women get discharged on personality disorders. If they do report MST- a lot of them
368 victim blame, they instill that. That is why I blamed myself for having my crutches grabbed. The
369 victim blaming, it still happens. There's plenty of support out there. It's not perfect yet, there're
370 some people you can jive with and some people you can't. You have to find your circle, just
371 don't give up. I've seen too many women give up because they feel like this is how it's going to
372 be for everything I do. If I just went with my first experience with the VA psychologist, I would
373 be, 'Screw all this!' I learned that not everyone is like that. Some people at the VA are like that,
374 we are government employees and we just don't care. There are so many people here who care.
375 If people saw my paycheck, they would know that I'm doing this because I care. I'm basically
376 just peaking above the poverty line when it comes to what I do for work. I do a lot of this on, my
377 own time. They just have to realize, not everyone's out to get you, some of us are here to help.

378 **Larissa:** Is there anything else you want to say before we finish?

379 **Candace:** Don't be defensive. There's going to be a lot of women who are defensive about their
380 experience. I am guilty of it sometimes too. But you also have to understand that a lot of people
381 don't get to see it from our side. Just recently, people didn't realize that women served in the
382 military in the scope that we did. I try not to get defensive. I try to say, 'well, we did this, try to
383 see it from my side.' I understand that it's kind of hard to grasp these women going out and
384 doing these things. Especially for the older generation it's, 'what in the hell?' Understanding that
385 is a very big part of telling your story. If you get defensive, no one is going to want to talk to
386 you. There's this one woman, I love her to pieces but I can't hear her story because she gets very
387 defensive and she blames a lot of people. I want to just sit her down and tell her, 'you know, you
388 can't blame this whole group of people for the actions of these few.' It's the whole thing with
389 veterans. With Vietnam, people called them baby killers. Not everyone did that, it was a few
390 assholes who ruined it for everybody. With cops, all cops are pigs, all cops are bastards. No, it's
391 just those few who are jerks. When I talk about my experiences, I am not trying to paint a broad
392 picture. What I think, what I saw, this is how it was. My experience is different from the others

393 that you are interviewing. We might have some of the same ones, some of the same ideas, but we
394 all know that no two women's military experience is alike.

