MARGINALIZED INCLUSION: A QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION OF
FEMALE SOLDIERS IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY

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ANNABETH M. FISH

DR. GLEN STAMP-ADVISER

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ABSTRACT

THESIS: Marginalized Inclusion: A Qualitative Examination of Female Soldiers in the United States Army

STUDENT: AnnaBeth M. Fish

DEGREE: Master of Arts

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Although women have been aiding in the war efforts of the United States since the Revolutionary War, women still struggle for equality within the United States Army. For today’s female personnel, there are many new challenges, as well as old battles that continue. This thesis examines these challenges by analyzing nine semi-structured in-depth interviews with current and former female United States Army soldiers, using constructivist grounded theory and structuration theory as the primary frameworks.

Keywords: United States Army; women; gender discrimination; non-traditional labor; structuration theory
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my Aunt Mary, who shared with me her great thirst for knowledge, as well as the importance of education. Though she passed before seeing me graduate, it was always her dearest wish that I would earn my master’s degree.
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Chapter One: Introduction

In today’s military, women have the freedom to serve in more capacities than ever before. Since the 1970s, the United States military has made great strides towards a fully gender\footnote{For the purpose of this study, the term gender is used to describe both the biological, physical sexual characteristics of an individual as well as the traits, behaviors, attitudes, and roles generally associated with either being male or female. The terms female, feminine, and woman/women are used interchangeably throughout this thesis as it does not address issues of gender identity.} integrated military. Although there is still a great deal of progress to be made, women now serve as officers and enlisted personnel in every branch of the military, in a variety of fields. With the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Army personnel have been enduring deployments of longer duration and frequency (Burrelli, 2013; Disher, 2006; Eberstadt, 2010). Unlike wars of the past, today’s female soldiers deploy more regularly, which creates a unique challenge for women who are still seen as the primary caretaker of the family in American society (Eberstadt, 2010).

According to a 2011 report from the Women’s Bureau of the U. S. Department of Labor, “military women face challenges that differ from those of male colleagues, and report higher levels of stress over the impact of their deployment on family” (as cited in O’Connor, 2013). Even women without families are subject to societal pressures and expectations that value war and soldiering as men’s work (Terriff, 2006; Van Creveld, 2000).

In addition to sexist social assumptions, women who choose to serve in the military also continue to struggle against the military’s repressive patriarchal structure (Mitchell, 1989; Silva, 2008; Suter, Lamb, Marko, & Tye-Williams, 2006). The United States military, particularly the United States Army, with its historical masculine roots, is not always the most welcoming to female personnel (Arendt, 2008; Rogan, 1981; Schneider & Schneider, 1988; Stiehm, 1989). Given the military’s masculine heritage, it is understandable that female members of the military are still a disadvantaged minority (Holm, 1992; Katzenstein & Reppy, 1999; Ryan, 2008).
combat these disadvantages, women must work harder to maintain legitimacy, constantly battling against discrimination and stereotypes that permeate the culture of the United States Army (Fish, 2012; Herbert, 2000).

Many of the tensions that female soldiers face stem from the often conflicting demands of both the Army’s culture as well as American society. As such, it is important for researchers to explore how the culture of the United States Army affects female soldiers, as well as how the inclusion of women affects the masculine minded culture of the military. Work-life communication scholars seek to problematize issues related to the work-life metaphor, which implies that the personal sphere and private sphere remain separate (see Kirby & Krone, 2002). Within the context of the military, a separation between work and life is very difficult, given that the military is more of a lifestyle than just a job with its demanding hours and lengthy deployments, thus reifying the importance of organizational member commitment.

For this study, I conducted nine semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews with female United States Army personnel so as to investigate the relationship between female soldiers’ perceived constraints and their perceived agency related to inclusion within the United States Army. As befits an interpretive study, I designed the interviews to provide my participants with an opportunity to be heard, as women in the military are an understudied minority, particularly those serving in the United States Army. Today women account for approximately 14.5% of the entire United States military, according to Pentagon representative Chelsea, who was a participant in this study. This thesis focuses solely on the experiences of women in the United States Army for several reasons. First, the United States Army is the largest branch of the United States Armed Forces, and while other branches such as the United States Navy and Air Force have a higher percentage of female active duty personnel, the United

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2 COL Chelsea is a public affairs officer who previously specialized in recruitment and retention.
States Army has approximately 74,000³ female personnel, which is about 10,000-15,000⁴ more female personnel than any other branch. Perhaps more importantly, I chose to focus on the United States Army based on the results from a previous study that showed that not only does the United States Army have more female personnel than any other branch, but also gender discrimination (Fish, 2012). For my undergraduate honor’s thesis, I conducted 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews with female officers in the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. Of the 20 participants, 14 were current or former United States Army officers, and during this study, I found that the United States Army officers reported more than twice as many incidents of gender discrimination than any other branch (Fish, 2012). While the sample for that study was not representative of the United States Army as a whole, it indicated a clear need for further study on the matter. As such, this master’s thesis is focused on the experiences of female United States Army personnel at all levels, including enlisted, officer, and warrant officers⁵.

Given that the status of female personnel in the United States Army is still a highly contested and volatile issue, structuration theory is used to frame the analysis. Under structuration theory, constraints are situated in the contexts of social structures such as social norms and military policy (Giddens, 1979). Agency refers to an agent’s perceived ability to influence and shape social structures (Giddens, 1979, 1984; Hoffman & Cowan, 2010). In this

³ This number is based on 2013 statistics that were provided by participant COL Chelsea.
⁴ See previous note.
⁵ The United States Army has three rank structures: enlisted, warrant officer, and officer. Enlisted personnel are commonly equated to the blue collar jobs of the United States Army. Enlisted personnel typically do not have education beyond a GED or high school diploma and they are trained to do specific jobs such as vehicle maintenance. In the United States military, warrant officers are military personnel who came into the military as enlisted personnel and have been awarded the status of warrant officer based on merit and are paid in accordance with the Department of Defense’s Warrant Officer Pay Grade Scale, which has five levels, the lowest being W1. Warrant officers are recognized as officers above enlisted ranks, but below the lowest level of officer ranking. Officers are required to have a bachelor’s degree (or more advanced degree) in order to receive a commission. Officers are trained to be leaders rather than specifically skilled and trained for specific jobs as enlisted personnel and warrant officers are. See Appendix A for more information about the United States Army rank structure.
context, I examined how female soldiers respond to the structural constraints, such as marginalization, that impede or facilitate their inclusion into the United States Army. For this study, marginalization is defined as the ways in which female soldiers and their contributions to the United States Army are given less recognition and awarded less value than male soldiers. Likewise, inclusion is defined as the ways in which female soldiers and their contributions to the United States Army are recognized and valued as much as their male counterparts.

The following thesis is arranged first with a literature review that addresses the gender integration process of the United States military, followed by sections exploring societal expectations of women serving in the United States Army, a brief summary of existing literature regarding the military’s culture and lifestyle, as well as an overview of structuration theory as it applies to both this study and the field of communication studies. Although the topic of women in the United States Army and military as a whole is continually discussed in politics and mainstream media, there are surprisingly few academic studies on this topic. As such, most of the sources for this study draw from a variety of disciplines, including history (specifically military history), sociology, and psychology.

Following the literature review, the methods section details the data collection and analysis process. Data was collected via semi-structured in-depth interviews, and then analyzed using constructivist grounded theory. After a review of methods, the results section details the findings from this study. Next, the discussion section offers some theoretical contributions, as well as applied recommendations that can be used to improve the conditions for female personnel in the United States Army. Finally, this thesis closes with a summary regarding the current status of women in the United States Army and the military as a whole.
Chapter Two: Literature Review
Marginalized Inclusion: Gender Integration of the U.S. Military

Historically, the military has formally excluded female participation, though the United States has long depended on women to aid in war efforts. Since the birth of the American military during the Revolutionary War, women have always assisted with war efforts in a variety of informal capacities, such as caring for the wounded or providing food for soldiers, most of which were not recognized as being part of the military’s efforts (D’Amico & Weinstein, 1999; Enloe, 1983). It wasn’t until 1942, when WWII reached an apex, that three United States auxiliary forces were created in order to allow women to aid in the war efforts. The Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), the United States Marine Corps Women’s Reserve (USMCWR), and the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) were designed to train women to take over stateside military positions to allow the male personnel to serve overseas in combat (Harrell, Beckett, Chien, & Sollinger, 2002; Harrell & Miller, 1997). Prior to being assigned to a post, women who were accepted into these auxiliary units attended basic and advanced training camps similar to those attended by their male counterparts. They also wore uniforms, and took enlistment oaths as both enlisted personnel and officers. By the end of World War II, women were serving in many different roles, including intelligence, communications, science, technology, and maintenance, though women primarily served clerical and medical roles that were considered to be most suitable to their gender (Harrell et al., 2002).

From its inception, the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) was the only women’s auxiliary branch that was officially considered to be part of the United States military, commonly known as the women’s branch of the United States Navy. Initially, the United States Marine Corps Women’s Reserve (USMCWR) and Women’s Army Auxiliary
Corps (WAAC) auxiliary branches were not considered to be part of the military, therefore excluding women from earning the titles of rank and the status of military, as well as military benefits and retirement. In 1943, the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) gained official recognition as being part of the United States military, and was subsequently renamed the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) (Monahan & Neidel-Greenlee, 2010). Five years later, the United States Congress passed the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, providing the United States Women Marine Corps Women’s Reserve (USMCWR) and other auxiliary units with official military status.

Although the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 created a career path for women in the United States military, women were still prohibited from serving in a number of capacities, including anything relating to combat, thus relegating women almost exclusively to medical and administration support positions (Monahan & Neidel-Greenlee, 2010). These restrictions also limited the total number of women who could serve in the military, and decreed that women could only serve in command positions in medical fields, such as nursing (Ferber, 1987). Additionally, the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 specified that women were not allowed to be promoted to a permanent grade above the O5 ranking—a distinction that is particularly important since officer ranks go as high an O10 (Ferber, 1987). By prohibiting women from being promoted above the O5 status, the military effectively inhibited the gender integration process, as this restriction further reinforced the idea that women were not as capable as their male counterparts (Ferber, 1987). Following WWII and the gradual conversion of the women’s auxiliary branches, a majority of the auxiliary branch personnel left their wartime positions and returned to their traditional roles in the home (Rogan, 1981). Those
who chose to continue with military services faced limited career choices, as well as substantive social stigma and discrimination within the military.

During the 1970s, the women’s movement within the United States military again began to make progress. After the United States military became an all-volunteer force in December of 1973, it became clear that the United States military was now, more than ever, going to need to rely on women to ensure that the forces would remain fully staffed (Burrelli, 2013). The political and social changes of the 1970s proved to be a boon for the gender integration movement within the United States military, particularly in 1975 when Congress ruled that it was unlawful for the United States federal service academies to preclude candidates based solely on gender (Rogan, 1981). This policy change was an incredibly significant victory for women, as one must receive a congressional nomination in order to even be offered the chance to apply for a place at the service academies, and service academy graduates are widely considered to be the “best of the best” within the military (Disher, 2006; Iskra, 2007; Rogan, 1981). The ruling also mitigated some of the stipulations established by the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act of 1948. And so, in the fall of 1976, for the first time, females joined the ranks of the United States federal service academies, though many senior military colleges such as the Virginia Military Institute and The Citadel were still allowed to continue their male only tradition for many years to come (Iskra, 2007).

In addition to questioning the morals, intentions, and sexual orientations of the first female cadets, many critics of gender integration also questioned the practicality of educating women at institutions designed to develop and train leaders in combat roles when women

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6 There are five United States federal service academies: the United States Military Academy (West Point, NY), the United States Naval Academy (Annapolis, MD), the United States Coast Guard Academy (New London, CT), the United States Merchant Marine Academy (Kings Point, NY), and the United States Air Force Academy (Colorado Springs, CO).
weren’t permitted to serve in combat or on sea duty (Disher, 2006). For the women attending the United States Naval Academy, these questions abated two years after the first women entered the academy. In 1978, a federal judge ruled that the laws that banned women from serving sea duty were unconstitutional and the laws were amended so that women could start serving at sea onboard noncombatant ships (Iskra, 2007). For the women attending the other service academies, their ineligibility for many roles would continue to be used as a reason for the devaluing of female personnel until 1992 when the policies that dictated women’s eligibility began to be renegotiated.

Finally, during the Clinton administration, policies regarding women in the military began to undergo revision. Specifically, between 1992 and 1994 many of the policies that dated back to the inception of the auxiliary branches were reassessed and revised (Burrelli, 2013). The first major change came with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1992-1993, wherein President Clinton created the Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces, which ultimately led to the repeal of the combat exclusion laws that prevented women from serving as pilots in the Air Force and Navy (Burrelli, 2013). Following this change, in 1993 President Clinton approved a bill that ended the ban that kept women from serving onboard combatant ships (Burrelli, 2013; Dunivin, 1994; Eberstadt, 2010). Finally, in 1994, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin created more opportunities for women by approving a new general policy that allowed women in the military to be assigned to some combat units, though only at the brigade level or higher (Burrelli, 2013; D’Amico & Weinstein, 1999). Essentially, these policy changes opened up many positions within the military (such as working on combatant ships and aircrafts) that women were previously banned from holding, with notable
exceptions being Special Forces units in all branches, direct combat roles such as infantry, and
the Navy’s submarine fleet (Gutman, 2000; Harrell et al., 2002).

Following the changes enacted in the early 1990s, a lengthy debate began about whether
the Navy’s elite submarine force should undergo gender integration. The exclusion of women
from the submarine fleet is notable because this was considered to be one of the most protected
and isolated masculine strongholds in the United States military—especially given that special
operations units are routinely assisted by support units that frequently include female members
(Pessin, 2010; Tyson, 2000). All Special Operation Force units, such as the Navy SEALs or
Army Green Berets, work with service ally units, or support teams, that assist the units in many
ways, including medical, supply, and communication (Enloe, 1983, 2000). Additionally, specific
positions with certain Special Force units are not officially reserved for males only but often
women are unofficially excluded from these positions artificially through selection processes
conducted by selection boards staffed primarily by males (Burrelli, 2013; D’Amico & Weinstein,
1999; Fish, 2012). It is also important to note that in some instances, female personnel may be
temporarily attached to combat units, such as infantry, in order to aid in the fulfillment of
specific deployments, missions, or other special circumstances (Burrelli, 2013).

After 17 years of intermittent debate, on April 29, 2010, the Navy officially announced
that women would be integrated into the United States Navy’s submarine fleet by the end of
2011 (Pessin, 2010). Later, in February of 2012, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense
for Personnel and Readiness released a report stating that the Department of Defense was in the
process of further lessening combat restrictions for women (Burrelli, 2013). The policy changes
in 2012 allowed an estimated 14,000 positions to be opened up to female personnel, including
select positions at the battalion\(^7\) level of direct combat units (Burrelli, 2013). In accordance with
the February 2012 report, on January 24, 2013, a press release from the Department of Defense
announced the official repeal of the Direct Combat Exclusion Rule. In addition, the press release
stated that Defense Secretary Leon Panetta stipulated that these changes must be enacted by the
various branches in a timely manner. The timeline included a May 15, 2013 deadline for
implementation plans, with completion to be enacted by January 1, 2016. At the time this
literature review was completed, no further information regarding these changes had been made
available to the public.

Despite the great progress made within military policy, the military is still a
predominantly masculine culture, which is evident from the resistance and roadblocks that
women have faced while trying to earn equal rights and access to military careers (DeGroot,
2001). Although women are now legally entitled to work in most positions within the military,
women are still barred from what many consider to be the essence of the military: direct combat
roles such as infantry and Special Forces positions\(^8\) (Titunik, 2000). In addition, women in the
military are often met with resistance by their male counterparts, and women continue to be
constricted by societal norms.

**Double Binds: Societal Expectations of American Women in the Military**

\(^7\) The United States Army is divided into seven levels. The smallest level is a squad, which typically consists of
9-10 soldiers and is commanded by a sergeant or staff sergeant. Squads belong to platoons, which typically
consists of 16 to 44 soldiers and are commanded by a lieutenant (O-1) with an NCO (non-commissioned
officer; a high ranking enlisted personnel). A company (sometimes called a battery) is three to five platoons
that are commanded by a captain. The next level is the battalion, which is comprised of four to six companies,
and is commanded by a lieutenant colonel—female soldiers are allowed to hold the command position, though
females are rarely selected for this job. A brigade is composed of two to five battalions and is commanded by a
colonel who is the coordinator of all tactical operations. Brigades are commanded by a division, which is
composed of three brigades lead by a major general. The final command structure is the corps, which is
composed of two to five divisions and is overseen by a lieutenant general. There are currently three corps in the
United States Army. Please see Appendix B for a diagram of the organizational units provided by the United

\(^8\) Although the Department of Defense has announced that women will no longer be banned from direct combat
roles, at the time this was written no such change had been implemented.
Although there has been great progress for women in the United States, women are still constrained by many traditional societal expectations. Stereotypical assumptions, often framed in the form of double binds, influence the daily lives of women (Bordo, 1993). It is important to examine these gendered assumptions to understand the social context military women negotiate in their realities. Just as they were in the past, women are still cast in stereotypical roles as caregivers, whereas men are the defenders, the warriors (Eberstadt, 2010; Kaplan, 1994). These expectations have many influences on women, especially those women who choose non-traditional roles, such as military service. Though many discriminatory policies in the United States military have been repealed, and women are now legally eligible for most positions within the military, female personnel are still restricted because of gender, and assumptions that gender determines ability and success. Gender stereotypes often define men as “protector” and “defender” while women are defined as “protected” and “defenseless”, or as some say, the “Butterfly”—helpless, incompetent, and unreliable liabilities rather than soldiers (Arendt, 2008; Hanson, 2002; Kaplan, 1994; Nantais & Lee, 1999). For those women who have shown military prowess, there’s another label offered: Amazon (Hanson, 2002). The Amazon stereotype describes females who are lacking in feminine traits, who are overly masculine, and who are often assumed to be lesbians (Hanson, 2002). For women serving in the military, this Amazon/Butterfly dichotomy has no grey area, and these extremist stereotypes reinforce societal beliefs that women in the military are either excessively feminine to the point of being incapable of performing their jobs, or are overly masculine and lack any feminine characteristics aside from their physical sex (Hanson, 2002).

According to Kaplan (1994), these assumptions reinforce the underlying patriarchal culture of the armed services, and limit the opportunities of women in the military, as well as in
general society. Scholar Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1995) described these societal expectations of, and assumptions about, women as a series of double binds, which force women to walk a very fine line when pursuing success. As per Jamieson, the five double binds are: Womb vs. Brain; Silence vs. Shame; Sameness vs. Difference; Femininity vs. Competence; and Aging vs. Invisibility. The Femininity vs. Competence double bind is perhaps the most important and restricting of the double binds: women can’t be both feminine and competent, because femininity is considered by many to be just another way of saying overly emotional and unable to function under stress (Jamieson, 1995). While a 2008 study of female ROTC cadets conducted by Silva did not use the framing of the Femininity-Competence double bind, a very similar concept was explored. According to Silva (2008), female cadets are expected to express femininity, but refrain from exhibiting feminine hysterics, such as being overly emotional, crying, etc. Women are also expected to be professional, competent, and skilled—attributes normally associated with men, especially within the military (Silva, 2008, p. 938). The contrast between society’s notions of women as overtly feminine and the military’s preference for staunch masculinity creates an odd tension for military women, as female personnel are expected to exhibit traditional feminine characteristics while simultaneously adhering to the military’s Spartan emotion codes (Arendt, 2008, p. 12).

Female military personnel also experience a tension between serving and not serving. Many still consider female military involvement to reflect poorly upon the women who choose to serve, reinforcing the idea that although military policy allows women to serve, cultural expectations dictate that women should refrain from such masculine commitments, whereas men are usually celebrated for their willingness to sacrifice and serve (D’Amico & Weinstein, 1999; DeGroot, 2001; Herbert, 2000). As explained by Herbert in a 2000 collection of narratives of
female military personnel, women in the military are not like other women—because “real”
women don’t fight in wars; rather, war is men’s work.

Just as societal expectations underscore that female participation in the military is
inherently deviant, media coverage of female personnel also further this sexist stereotype
(Herbert, 2000). Unlike male counterparts, female military personnel are always labeled as
female, and are never considered just military personnel (Prividera & Howard, 2006). They are
disrespected by the media and by society, continually being accused either of being masculine
and lesbians, or as helpless creatures that are a liability to “real” soldiers (DeGroot, 2001;
Herbert, 2000).

The cultural bias against women in the military stems from a tradition that espouses the
value of women as mothers and wives, and is furthered by government regulations and policies
that claim to be protecting women from the horrors of war (Alfonso, 2010; Disher, 2006;
Eberstadt, 2010). Despite the fact that women serve alongside combat troops in supporting roles
that often require the female troops to be on the front line, in the direct path of combat-related
dangers, female military personnel are still marginalized (Eberstadt, 2010). In 2005, new
legislation was introduced in the House of Representatives seeking to increase restrictions on the
roles of women in the military, citing that the risks of having females in combat roles, such as
being taken as prisoner or being raped by enemy forces, outweighed the need for gender equality
in the military. According to a supporting report from the Center for Military Readiness⁹,
females lack physical capabilities and are unable to handle deployments as well as males.
Further, they argue that female personnel inhibit group cohesion because their presence can be
distracting for male personnel (Alfonso, 2010; Enloe, 2000). The report also highlighted that

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⁹ The Center for Military Readiness is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization that opposes the
participation of gays or lesbians in the military and also advocates for continued limitation of female
participation in the military.
one of the main reasons that females should be banned from combat is that their value as mothers outweighed their value as soldiers: “There is no military or demographic reason, however, why America must expose young women, many of them mothers, to direct ground combat” (Alfonso, 2010, p. 66). As a result, women in the United States continue to be restricted to their traditional gender roles, and are only assigned value when they have fulfilled their purpose of reproducing children (Eberstadt, 2010). Women who choose not to have children are vilified, especially those who chose not only to forgo motherhood, but do so by choosing a non-traditional career, such as serving in the military (Eberstadt, 2010).

Although many of the stereotypes of female military personnel suggest that females are less competent than males in terms of their ability to serve in the military, there is evidence that indicates otherwise. Bray, Camlin, Fairbank, Dunteman, and Wheless (2001) examined how different types of stressors affected the job functioning capabilities of men and women using a survey that consisted of several scales designed to measure stress and its affect in the workplace. Prior to analyzing the data, Bray et al. (2001) predicted that the job function and productivity of female military personnel would suffer more from familial stress than the job function and productivity of male military personnel experiencing comparable levels of familial stress. The proposed hypothesis by Bray et al. (2001) was based on previous studies and what is considered to be general knowledge: women are less able to function during periods of increased stress. After analyzing the data, Bray et al. (2001) found that more women claimed to experience familial stress than men; however, unlike their predictions, the data showed that male military personnel were more likely to have lower job function and levels of productivity than females while experiencing familial stress. This finding is relevant and important as it contradicts the stereotype of women being unfit for the military because of their familial obligations.
Another interesting finding of the study by Bray et al. (2001) focused on the relationship of stress to perceived competence. Bray et al. (2001) found that approximately 33 percent of female military personnel claimed to experience heightened stress stemming from issues of being female and in the military. The analysis of this data by Bray et al. (2001) revealed that female military personnel who claimed to experience large amounts of stress stemming from issues of being female and in the military experienced a significantly lower level of productivity at work. One interpretation of this finding is that the stress female military personnel perceive as a result of being women in a traditionally masculine field decreases the ability of female military personnel to successfully complete their jobs. As a result, one must wonder whether the assumptions about the ability of women stems from perception or reality—are women actually less able to perform tasks required of military personnel or do the assumptions that they are less qualified perpetuate lower levels of success? However, further research to more fully understand how perceptions of stress affect (or do not affect) female military personnel is needed.

Another way in which female military personnel tend to differ from male personnel are the ways in which they express their contributions to the military. Ryan (2008) used in-depth interviews to study female veterans in regards to how they express themselves and commemorate their parts in the war effort. Ryan found two recurring trends: that women frequently deprecate the importance of their contributions and that women tend to position themselves as auxiliary to major historical events (such as Pearl Harbor), rather than as part of the significant events. Likewise, Suter, Lamb, Marko, and Tye-William’s 2006 study, which also used in-depth interviews, illustrated similar sentiments. While examining how female veterans create, maintain, and share concepts of self, Suter et al. (2006) found that even amongst peers, female veterans deprecate their own experiences and worth, especially in comparison to the experiences
and efforts of their male counterparts. This finding is significant, as it offers a concrete example of the ways in which female military personnel reify their own discrimination.

Enloe (2000) argued that this expressed feeling of lowered self-importance is common among female military personnel and most likely stems from societal values that often teach women that they are less important and their contributions have a lower value than men ways, particularly within the military. Suter et al. (2006) suggested that these prejudices may also stem from previous policies that defined female service personnel as auxiliary rather than military. Given the paucity of studies in this area, more research is needed to more fully understand the experience of women in the military.

The military’s unbalanced expectations of, and assumptions about, women can lead to many misconceptions about the ability and value of female personnel, which also negatively affect how women in the military view their own contributions. The above examples of the cultural expectations of females show that women are still generally perceived to be less successful and useful members of the military (Eberstadt, 2010; Ryan, 2008; Silva, 2008; Suter et al., 2006). This perception can be seen in many ways, especially within media coverage and studies regarding competence and productivity of military personnel. In part, these assumptions are reified through media portrayals of women who serve, which affect both public opinion, as well as the opinions of government officials and individual members of the military (Howard & Prividera, 2004; Nantais & Lee, 1999; Prividera & Howard, 2006).

These media stereotypes are often reflective of the double binds that women in the military must negotiate (Alfonso, 2010; DeGroot, 2001; Howard & Prividera, 2004; Nantais & Lee; 1999; Prividera & Howard, 2006). Given that such a small percentage of the American population has direct experience with military service, much of popular opinion is formed on the
information depicted by the media, which makes the media’s portrayal of the double binds faced by military women even more crucial. Prividera and Howard (2004, 2006) hypothesized that the media generally depicts the military prototype as white and masculine, whereas women, especially women of color, are negatively stereotyped as weak and inferior. When male soldiers are killed or captured, the media discusses these incidents as heroic sacrifices by soldiers; when the same involves female soldiers, the media portrays the female soldiers as being helpless victims, damsels in distress waiting to be saved by the brave men in uniform (Howard & Prividera, 2004; Nantais & Lee, 1999; Prividera & Howard, 2006).

In particular, there have been two recent situations that illustrate the media’s bias against female soldiers: the 1991 capture of Army Specialist Melissa Rathbun-Nealy and the 2003 capture of Army Private Jessica Lynch (Howard & Prividera, 2004; Nantais & Lee, 1999; Prividera & Howard, 2006). Nantais and Lee (1999) examined the case of Melissa Rathbun-Nealy, the first American female to be taken as a POW. Not surprisingly, many of the articles portrayed Rathbun-Nealy as needing protection, as a victim instead of a soldier, and as a liability to the military. Similarly, Howard and Prividera (2004) examined media portrayals of female military personnel, primarily by focusing on the capture and subsequent rescue of Army Private Jessica Lynch. Howard and Prividera (2004) focused on the dualism and paradox associated with the term “female soldier.” According to Howard and Prividera (2004), the media portrayals of Lynch reify the ideology that women are protected, not protectors, and therefore not real soldiers, regardless of the job that they perform (p. 96). Howard and Prividera (2004) found that the majority of portrayals showed Jessica Lynch’s military identity was “stripped” by the media, as she was portrayed as a “victim” and her rescuers as “military heroes” (p. 96). Howard and
Prividera (2004) concluded that such portrayals are common, and that women in the military are frequently treated as “secondary characters in the overall narrative” (p. 96).

In a second study, Prividera and Howard (2006) further examined the ways in which the media covered (or in some cases, elected not to cover,) PFC Lynch, SPC Piestewa\(^{10}\), and SPC Johnson\(^{11}\) and reinforced the idea that the military’s prototype is male and white and that females are accessories and liabilities, and who are typically expendable and unimportant. The latter is especially true for women of color, as illustrated by the media’s extensive coverage of PFC Lynch compared to the limited coverage of SPC Johnson (Prividera & Howard, 2006).

Throughout the coverage, PFC Lynch, SPC Piestewa, SPC Johnson, and other female soldiers involved were described with a notable absence of their soldier identities, as the media made little mention of their ranks or job duties, and instead the coverage focused on their marital and family statuses, using words such as “mother” and “victim” (Prividera & Howard, 2006). In stark contrast, the media coverage of male personnel touted their ranks and job duties, using words such as “hero” and “warrior” (Prividera & Howard, 2006). As these studies reveal, media coverage of contemporary female soldiers continues to be discriminatory and reinforces demeaning stereotypes of women in the United States military (Howard & Prividera, 2004; Nantais & Lee, 1999; Prividera & Howard, 2006). Although these studies present compelling evidence regarding the ways that female soldiers are portrayed in the media, these studies are rapidly becoming outdated. Additionally, further studies are needed to fully understand how the media portrayals actually affect how media users view female soldiers.

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\(^{10}\) SPC Lori Piestewa was the first female United States military member to be killed during Operation Iraqi Freedom; she was also the first Native American woman to die in combat while in service to the United States military.

\(^{11}\) SPC Johnson is a Panamanian-born soldier who was the first black or Hispanic female American soldier to be taken as a prisoner of war.
Given that the United States military is a microcosm of the greater United States society, it is easy to understand that the societal expectations of women affect the policies about, and treatment of, women in the military (D’Amico & Weinstein, 1999; Eberstadt, 2010; Enloe, 1983, 2000; Field & Nagl, 2001). Further, the military culture’s fixation with its traditional roots as a masculine organization and continued tolerance of discrimination and segregation of female members create what can be considered to be a tenuous if not hostile environment designed to limit the success of female members (D’Amico & Weinstein, 1999; Dunivin, 1994; Enloe, 1983, 2000). Now that I have discussed some of the societal expectations of women that inhibit the military’s gender integration process, the next section will examine some of the unique challenges that women face to being successful soldiers in the United States military.

More than a Job: Military Culture, Expectations, and Lifestyle

Before one can fully understand a subculture, one must understand the greater culture in which the subculture resides, since the subculture often reflects the standards and foundations of the larger culture. The previous section offered insight on the general status of women within the overall culture of the United States, as well as an overview of media portrayals of female soldiers. The following provides an overview of the culture and lifestyle of the United States military, and how the cultural heritage of the military affects today’s military personnel.

Management scholar Edgar Schein (1992) defines “organizational culture” as the following:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 12)
Like other cultures, the United States military has its own culture with its own norms, policies, and expectations. As previously stated, the United States military culture is a subculture of American society; as such, the values and expectations of the military’s cultures generally reflect those of American society (Bodnar, 1999). While today’s American society may be less restrictive to women than in previous years, the traditional culture of the United States military is one that is still steadfastly rooted in masculine ideals and has deep structures that reflect its gendered origins (Dunivin, 1994). In the following sections, I will first discuss the military’s cultural preference of males, followed by an exploration of the military’s expectations of today’s soldiers, and finally, I will discuss the gendered lifestyle expectations of Army personnel.

The “good ol’ boys” club: The masculine military culture. The deep structures of the military’s culture can be described as a combat, masculine-warrior paradigm that reflects the roots of the military as defenders and protectors, roles traditionally filled by males (Dunivin, 1994). Dunivin (1994) identified the roots of the military’s conservative culture, and noted the tension between the deep-rooted structures of ideal type and model that still exist alongside the current, newly created paradigm of “Today’s Military,” in which military personnel are supposed to be warriors and peacekeepers (p. 532). Dunivin (1994) concluded by hypothesizing that the contradictory ideas exerted through the military’s ideal type, model, and paradigm impacts the identity processes of individual members, and calls for further study on the effects on the individuals.

The lack of change in the military’s culture and values are exacerbated by the policies that continue to segregate and marginalize women by preventing them from serving in direct combat as equals to male personnel. As former Department of Defense Under Secretary of
Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Edwin Dorn once stated during testimony to Congress, “The combat exclusion reflects and reinforces widespread attitudes about the place of women in the military. Put bluntly, women may not be regarded as ‘real’ soldiers until they are able to do what ‘real’ soldiers do, which is kill and die in combat” (Dorn12, as cited in Dunivin, 1994, p. 536). As Dorn notes, one of the reasons women continued to be diminished is that they are not allowed to participate as fully as male soldiers, resulting in a vicious circle that allows misinformation to continually reinforce negative stereotypes and assumptions about the abilities of female soldiers and women as a whole.

Given that the military’s policies are controlled by politicians rather than military personnel, the policies are changed in accordance with the demands from society. As a result, changes in military policy do not guarantee that the members of the military are willing or ready to undergo the prescribed changes. Further, given the military’s rigid and bureaucratic hierarchical structure, the process of cultural change is slow and requires at least one full generational cycle for cultural changes to be fully embodied, as evinced by Bodnar (1999). Bodnar’s (1999) study on racial integration of the United States’ Naval Academy used percolation theory, which states that in order for a hierarchical structure to change, the marginalized group will continue to be discounted until there are members of said group at every level of the organization, which requires bottom-to-top movement. It generally takes at least one generation for marginalized individuals to be able to complete a full bottom-to-top movement (Bodnar, 1999). Bodnar’s (1999) findings can be generalized to other hierarchical cultures and changes, including the overall culture of the United States military, thus reaffirming that the

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12 This quote cited in Dunivin came from a closed testimony before Congress. After failing to find the original source, I tried contacting Dunivin to find out where she was able to find this source. Unfortunately Dunivin did not respond to my repeated attempts to contact her.
marginalization of women in the military is related to, if not caused by, the policies that exclude women from direct combat positions (Bodnar, 1999; Dunivin, 1994).

Terriff (2006) reaffirms Bodnar’s theories about military culture and the process of cultural change. Like Bodnar (1999), Terriff (2006) views change within the Marine Corps’ culture as a gradual process that creates an increasingly complex culture that is in some ways contradictory to the original cultural model of the United States Marines Corps, and the military as a whole. Similarly, Van Creveld (2000) examined the history of women in the military from several perspectives, including the masculinity of military culture in the past and present, as well as the place of women in the military of the past, and the changes that have occurred for women in the military in the past thirty years. Van Creveld (2000) focused on the extreme masculinity of military culture and concluded that the culture’s masculine heritage and identity restricted the ability of female members to succeed. Like other studies, Van Creveld (2000) found that the prevailing ideology reifies the belief that females are weaker than males and less able to successfully complete missions, especially combat missions. These strongly negative assumptions about women further impede their collective success as personnel in the United States military (Terriff, 2006; Van Creveld, 2000).

Army of one: Expectations of today’s army. One of the central tenets of the military is a strong, enveloping culture that helps transform citizens into soldiers, and allows the military to function as a cohesive unit. The military’s reliance on this collective doctrine that favors the success of the group over the success of individuals is a large part of this culture (Rosen, Bliese, Wright, & Gifford, 1999). Standard American culture encourages individualism rather than team-mindedness, whereas the military relies on its personnel to function cohesively (Espevik, Johnsen, Eid, & Thayer, 2006; Rosen et al., 1999). A sense of shared mentality, or team
mindset, is valued in the military primarily because of the increased productivity of group synergy, as individuals who report feeling interconnected function more efficiently and effectively than groups of individuals that lack feelings of dependence or shared responsibility (Espevik et al., 2006; Ledgerwood & Liviatan, 2010; Rosen et al., 1999). As such, military training seeks ways to promote the shared experience necessary for teams to develop group cohesion (Espevik et al., 2006; Rosen et al., 1999).

The group cohesion process in the military begins with intense socialization and physical training in the form of basic training camps, commonly referred to as “boot camp” or simply as “basic” (Enloe, 2000). During basic training, new members are stripped of their civilian identity and are indoctrinated with military traditions, expectations, language, and dress (Enloe, 2000). Those who successfully complete basic training are then considered to be official members of the United States military, an elite title that separates them from civilians. In the United States, during basic training camps, male and female recruits are held to different standards and the common belief is that women receive better treatment from instructors (Enloe, 1989, 2000; Feinman, 2000; Rosen et al., 1999). This initial segregation can be seen as the beginning of gender inequity within the military, as women’s basic training has the reputation of being easier, even though recruits are subjected to the same training plan, regardless of gender (Feinman, 2000).

You’re a soldier first: Lifestyle expectations of military personnel. In addition to the challenges of being part of a culture whose foundations fail to include those who do not exemplify masculine ideals, female military personnel are also held to many different standards than male military personnel, particularly in terms of lifestyle choices (Enloe, 2000; Mitchell, 1989; Monahan & Neidel-Greenlee, 2010). Female personnel are often required to make a
decision to either deviate from the military’s lifestyle protocol or society’s prescribed vision for women (Enloe, 2000; Silva, 2008). Given that the military’s culture inherently favors males over females, it is understandable that there are different expectations for males and females (Terriff, 2006). As Richard (2007) notes, for many military personnel, especially the newly enlisted, the military base is where military personnel both work and live. Living in such close proximity to the workplace, in an environment controlled by the same cultural expectations and rules, allows the military to control both the public and private lives of personnel (Richard, 2007). Through this control, the military is able to fully espouse the ideology of the culture to personnel, thus reifying its fundamental tenets (Richard, 2007). Richard (2007) uses the term “Camouflage Closet” to describe “the ways in which military culture demands its members to live public and private lives that are indistinguishable from one another” (p. 12). Richard’s (2007) study primarily examined the ways in which military programs, such as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and “How Not to Marry a Jerk(ette),” are designed to manipulate personnel into fully exemplifying the social rules and regulations of the military culture. Richard (2007) conducted a rhetorical analysis of these programs, which yielded interesting insight into the military’s use of propaganda to support their mission. However, this study’s lack of participant research limits understanding of the program’s effect (Richard, 2007, p. 25). Further studies are needed to understand how the military really affects the personal lives of their soldiers, particularly the ways in which soldiers react to, and are influenced by, programs such as “How Not to Marry a Jerk(ette)” (Richard, 2007).

Another expectation the military places on personnel is that the military isn’t a Monday through Friday, nine-to-five job: Being a member of the United States military is a twenty-four hours a day, three hundred and sixty-five days a year commitment. Being a member of the
military requires personnel to put the needs of the military before all else, including their families. For men, this commitment, which often requires leaving their families for an extended period, is seen as a heroic sacrifice. For women, however, this is viewed as reckless abandonment, as women who are wives and mothers are expected to provide for their families and to be in the home acting as the caretaker (Schneider & Schneider, 1988). Even single women are faced with these accusations about femininity and family because being a part of an organization whose sole mission is to defend and protect using any means necessary is seen as oppositional to their gender (Herbert, 2000). Although the military has high expectations of their soldiers which frequently impact their personal lives, there are no current studies exploring the work-life issues of soldiers. Given that there is no available literature on this subject, my study seeks to begin to address this need. In the next section, I offer an overview of structuration, particularly as applied to work-life issues within the field of communication studies.

**Structuration Theory**

Giddens’ (1979, 1984) structuration theory is a theory of social action based both on a systems perspective as well as cultural theories. Giddens (1979, 1984) postulated that communication between organizational members is the means through which the organization’s culture is developed and reified. Structuration theory can be used to understand how the rules and norms within an organization are created and shared (Giddens, 1979, 1984). In the most basic sense, these shared structures are the essence of the organization. Structuration theory provides scholars with a framework for understanding how members of an organization are shaped by the organization and vice versa (Giddens, 1979, 1984). As such, structuration theory can be utilized to understand how gender affects members within the context of the United States Army.
At the heart of structuration theory are two key concepts: the nature of structures and the duality of structure (Giddens, 1979, 1984; Hardcastle, Usher, & Holmes, 2005). Structures, the formal and informal organizations of society, by nature, are dynamic because they are composed of agents (Giddens, 1979, 1984; Hardcastle et al, 2005). These agents draw from the knowledge embedded within their organization but also have the ability to affect the social structures of which they are a part (Giddens, 1979, 1984; Hardcastle et al, 2005; Hoffman & Cowan, 2010; Olufowote, 2003). This cyclical relationship of change between the agents and structure is also what Giddens referred to as the duality of structure, which in a most basic sense, implies that one affects the other. Specifically, the duality of structure illustrates the idea that every action of each individual agent has an effect on the social structure of the organization; whether the action is intentional or unintentional has no bearing on the continual shaping of the organization (Giddens, 1979, 1984).

In other words, the duality of structure suggests that human agents are simultaneously constrained by, and change, social structures. Agency is the control that an agent has in particular situations, or one’s ability to influence social structure (Giddens, 1979, 1984). It is a significant aspect of structuration theory because agency suggests that humans have control in forming and shaping their social worlds (Giddens, 1979, 1984). This is an important aspect of structuration theory because many perspectives of organizing fail to acknowledge humans as active participants in constructing their social reality and only focus on how agents are controlled in their social worlds (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010).

Although structuration theory was developed for the field of Sociology, the theory has been used to study many phenomena in the field of communication, especially in the study of organizational communication, where it has been used to explain how agents simultaneously
shape and are shaped by their organizations (see Butler & Modaff, 2008; Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006; Hoffman & Cowan, 2010; Olufowote, 2003). When exploring issues of gender in the Army, structuration theory offers great insight into the ways in which the social structures of the Army shape its soldiers, as well as how soldiers act as agents to change the organization. Another aspect of structuration theory is that it offers a lens for understanding how much agency organizational members actually believe they have (Littlejohn & Foss, 2010). Additionally, structuration theory can be used to understand how perceptions of agency affect how agents understand their power within the organization, which can also be utilized to understand how and why certain members within organizations such as the military feel empowered or squelched (Hoffman & Cowan, 2010).

For the purpose of this study, structuration theory was used to gain a greater understanding of the current status of women as agents within the organization of the Army. Additionally, this study sought to better understand how women, as marginalized agents within the organization of the military, feel empowered through, or disallowed from, the process of shaping the military as an organization. To that end, the next section offers a review of some of the current communication literature that utilizes structuration theory to understand organizations and their members. Although the following literature examines organizations that are very different from the military, the applications of structuration theory do offer insight into the applicability of structuration theory to examining gender in the military.

In the field of communication, structuration theory has been used by scholars to gain greater understanding of many issues related to work-life, including how organizations facilitate members’ feelings of inclusion or exclusion, as well as how the marginalization of certain members affects the greater organization (Salmon, 2012), which is the primary focus of this
study. Kirby and Krone (2002) used structuration theory to examine how implied social rules affect the usage of policies such as maternity/paternity leave. As Kirby and Krone (2002) found, the maternity/paternity leave is available as per organization policy; however, social stigma is often attached to the members of the organization receiving these benefits. Kirby and Krone’s (2002) work provides an excellent example of an application of both the nature of structure as well as the duality of structure through an explanation of how the agents within the organization have exerted power and altered the organization’s structure by making the policy implicitly prohibited by punishing those who choose to partake in it. Kirby and Krone (2002) demonstrate how agents can marginalize other organizational members, even when the organization’s structures and policy do not, which is a common issue for women in the United States Army.

Similar to Kirby and Krone’s (2002) work, Hoffman and Cowan (2010) used structuration theory to study workplace accommodation of family and personal life. Using grounded theory, Hoffman and Cowan (2010) explored how rules and resources are enacted by agents within organizations to reify or restructure their systems. Although the specific rules and resources identified by Hoffman and Cowan (2010) are unique to the organizations of the participants they studied, their findings underscore some of the common work-life balance issues faced by many employees, including those within the United States Army, where resources (such as leave, promotions, or deployment exemptions) and regulations (such as policies that stipulate eligibility for jobs and locations) are often a source of contention, and as is usually the case, the marginalized agents are penalized more frequently and severely than those who have greater authority established within the organization (Disher, 2006; Enloe, 2000).

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13 Hoffman and Cowan (2010) had 107 participants from many different organizations—participants were recruited through classes and participants were not asked for the name of their organization in the survey.
Another application of structuration theory is understanding how organizations handle internal and external changes, such as restructuring, mergers, or major changes in organizational policy, all of which are concerns that have affected the United States Army at some time. Goodier and Eisenberg (2006) used structuration theory as a framework for understanding how an organization undergoing a major philosophical change enacts the change at the individual level as well as within the overall organization. Using the duality of structure as a key organizing framework, Goodier and Eisenberg (2006) examined how the actions of both the individual members and leadership affect the overall structure and belief system of the organization. Goodier and Eisenberg’s (2006) study of this philosophical change with the structuration theory lens is a similar application to the one proposed for this study of gender within the military. As detailed in previous sections, the military has been undergoing gender integration processes for many years; however, despite all of the policy changes designed to create equality and opportunity for women within the United States Army, women are still marginalized members, primarily because of the unwillingness of the individual agents who do not support gender integration within the United States Army (Disher, 2006; Enloe, 2000, Terriff, 2006).

Some newer applications of structuration theory have included examining work-life balance issues for in-home daycare providers (Butler & Modaff, 2008), as well as how technology has changed organizations (Golden, 2013). Given the blending of the work and life systems, Butler and Modaff (2008) used structuration theory to better understand how the combined systems work together to better understand the dynamics of in-home daycares. While Butler and Modaff’s (2008) use of structuration theory to understand in-home daycare workers is not directly applicable to the topic of this research, their study does provide an excellent example
of how the tenets of structuration theory can be applied to any organization, regardless of size or function. Likewise, while Golden’s (2013) examination of the effects of technology on an organization are not directly applicable to the topic at hand, her study demonstrates the versatility of structuration theory, while also highlighting how organizational structures affect agents and their families, which is very relatable to the study of gender within the military. As previously explored, military commitment is more than just “a job,” given that many, if not all, aspects of soldiers’ lives are affected; there are lasting effects on the soldiers and their families, which in turn can also affect the military if organizational commitment becomes more than the soldiers and their families are willing to accept (D’Amico & Weinstein, 1999; Enloe, 1983, 2000; Field & Nagl, 2001; Iskra, 2007).

For the women of the United States military, inclusion has taken many years; though women in uniform are still marginalized and struggle to obtain legitimacy within the United States Army (D’Amico & Weinstein, 1999; Enloe, 1983, 2000; Field & Nagl, 2001; Iskra, 2007). Feeling the weight of society’s expectations and the military’s demands, the women who choose to serve as soldiers in today’s Army must continually work to gain and maintain validity and respect as soldiers. Although there are now more women serving in uniform than ever before, and military policy now offers more opportunity for today’s women in uniform, there are still many ways that the military continues to demean, depreciate, and deprecate its female soldiers, thus underscoring the importance of this research. As highlighted throughout this literature review, there are many gaps in the available research, particularly within the field of communication. Additionally, much of the available research regarding women in the military is both outdated and unavailable, given that the military is a closed system that is unwelcoming to
outsiders. As such, this study seeks to provide a much needed communication perspective by answering the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the perceived barriers that female soldiers face?

RQ2: How do female soldiers respond to these barriers?

RQ3: What agency do female soldiers perceive they have?
Chapter Three: Methods

To explore the lived experiences of female United States soldiers, this study utilized a naturalistic interpretive approach, given the limited information available on this topic. Using an interpretive approach for this research allowed me to explore how female soldiers understand their own lives within the context of the United States Army. The interpretative paradigm has been used by communication scholars as a means of giving voice to marginalized individuals, allowing them to be heard and seen in ways that they usually are not. For example, Favero and Heath (2012) used interpretive research to explore the work-life balance struggles that female professionals experience. I utilized interpretive methods to create a space to share the marginalized experiences of the understudied female personnel of the United States Army (Favero & Heath, 2012). As a feminist interpretive scholar, I believe my responsibility as a researcher is to provide my research population with a chance to speak for themselves. I believe this to be especially important given that women in the Army (and military as a whole) are still a marginalized population, who are rarely given the opportunity to speak freely without fear of retribution. Having acknowledged my personal ideological perspective, I will now describe my research population, as well as the means through which I was able to access this population.

Military Connections

When attempting to study the United States military, one of the most important aspects to consider is access. In order to speak with soldiers on an official basis, one has to utilize military public relations, which requires individuals to get military clearances similar to those issued to contractors, according to COL Chelsea, a representative of the United States Army Department of Public Affairs14. Going through this process is time consuming, difficult, and very expensive, 

14 The information regarding the U.S. Army’s public relations policies was shared with me by participant COL Chelsea, who is a public affairs officer.
as thorough government background checks are needed before clearances can be issued. Those with media credentials may have an easier time at gaining access, though the United States military is also very careful when screening media queries and generally does not allow free access to soldiers, instead requiring that all interactions be supervised by a military public affairs officer. Organizational communication scholars use the term “closed” to describe organizations that do not allow information to flow freely between organization members (insiders) and outsiders (Miller, 2012). For the United States military, restricting this flow of information is very important, as it is one of the many ways that the organization protects itself and national security. To those on the outside, the United States Army has a reputation for being a secretive, close-knit community that does not provide ready access to outsiders. Although stories regarding the Army are often discussed within mainstream American media, there are few in-depth personal narratives available, particularly from the female perspective, thus adding to the air of mystery that surrounds the United States Army. As a closed system, the United States military is very difficult to study without inside connections. As the daughter of a former Air Force officer, I am a “military brat,” inhabiting a space somewhere between an insider and outsider; additionally, I have the added benefits of having purposely established close relationships with military insiders.

While there are many differences between the branches, the entire United States military shares a common culture of understanding how life in the military works. From my perspective, there are four groups of insiders within the culture of the military: active duty service personnel, veterans, spouses, and children. Active duty service personnel have the most credibility and connections with each other, followed closely by veterans, who have more limited connections because they are no longer active members of the community. Spouses and children are more

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15 Military brat is a commonly used term to describe someone who is the child of military personnel.
like tertiary members who do not have as much clout within the community and are most often treated as bystanders. Although most military children are treated as bystanders, I took special care to maintain and nurture my relationships within the military community. Additionally, in 2012, I completed an undergraduate honor’s thesis examining the experiences of female officers in the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps, with a focus on emotional labor (Fish, 2012). That introductory work in this program of study is followed by the current research, which differs in the following ways: 1) an examination of the overall experience of female soldiers; 2) studying personnel of all rank rather than focusing solely on officers; and 3) a narrower focus on just the United States Army (Fish, 2012). While my previous study focused heavily on emotional labor, I was also able to recognize that women overall are still very much marginalized in the United States military. The data collected for that study also aided in my design of this study, particularly in terms of the interview guide, as well as identifying key informants that helped make this study possible. Additionally, the previous study did not utilize a theoretical framework, whereas this study utilizes structuration theory as a primary framework. Now that I have provided an overview of my credentials as a researcher of this subject area, I will discuss more specifically how my key informants and research participants were selected.

**Participants & Recruitment**

This study utilized maximum variation and snowball sampling techniques. Maximum variation sampling occurs when researchers attempt to “access a wide range of data or participants who will represent wide variations of the phenomena under study” (Tracy, 2013, p. 135). My desire was to find shared experiences from a variety of my participants, rather than similarities that would emerge from participants that are very homogenous (Patton, 1990). While recruiting participants, I sought women of many different backgrounds including age,
years of service, education, and rank. I also made an effort to recruit participants of varying marital and familial status, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. Participants were selected purposefully to ensure variety of sample, as well as theoretical saturation. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) suggest that in qualitative studies, theoretical saturation can be reached most efficiently by purposefully selecting participants based on study requirements while also being mindful of the variations of one’s overall research population. As such, this research population was carefully selected to ensure theoretical saturation despite the small number of participants. Eight of the participants are still currently serving as active duty soldiers and one participant received an honorable discharge from the United States Army. The age of study for the participants ranged from 21 to 45, while they reported 3 to 24 years of service. For this study, there were three enlisted personnel, one warrant officer, and five officers. More specific information regarding the participants is contained in Appendix C.

Participants were recruited and selected by using snowball sampling methods with e-mail as the primary method of recruitment. I relied on four key informants to help me reach a wide range of women for this study. Two of my key informants were participants in my previous study, and the other two are personal friends who did not participate in the previous study as they did not meet the previous study requirements. For this study, only three of my key informants opted to participate; however, all four key informants helped me recruit at least one additional participant. Snowball sampling methods allow for a participant group to be hand selected to ensure that all participants met all study requirements (Wrench, Thomas-Maddox, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2008). Although the sample cannot be considered to be representative of the greater United States Army, this study’s sample does showcase the wide variety of women who choose to serve in that military branch. The women interviewed for this study varied widely from each
other: some were self-described as White middle class Americans, others as biracial military brats, and others as African-American women. They represent a multitude of socioeconomic and geographical categories, with varying levels of education. Some are at the beginning of their Army careers, while others are nearing retirement. Regardless of their age, race, or socioeconomic background, all of the women who were interviewed for this study shared three characteristics:

1) All are currently serving in, or have recently been discharged from, the United States Army.

2) All of the participants self-identified as females.

3) All of the participants were eager to have their voices heard, as the United States Army does not offer much opportunity for their personnel, particularly women, to speak and be heard.

The women who participated in this study are all very different, but their shared common experience is what draws them together, and what draws my attention to their accounts and stories.

**Data-Gathering Procedures**

A total of nine interviews were conducted by phone for this study. Phone interviews were chosen as the data collection method due to geographic and budget considerations. Given that my participants were located all over the United States and abroad, it was simply not feasible to conduct in-person interviews. Interviews lasted between 60-120 minutes and were all recorded so that transcriptions could be created after completion. To address the primary research questions, nine semi-structured in-depth interviews (see Appendix D for the complete interview guide) were conducted with female United States Army personnel. Interviews are a
commonly used research tool, as they provide researchers with the opportunity to gain further understanding of the personal experiences of individuals, as well as a way to examine the inner workings of organizations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). The interview guide was designed to collect in-depth personal accounts of the experiences of the individual participants, and to allow the researcher to have the flexibility during the interview to pursue emerging topics (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), so that each participant was able to provide an honest narrative and have a voice through the research. As explained by Johnson (2002), in-depth interviewing creates an opportunity for the researcher and participant to develop a level of comfort that allows the researcher to better understand the complexities of the participants’ lived experiences. The interviewing method was selected based on the success of other similar studies on military personnel (Arendt, 2008; D’Amico & Weinstein, 1999; Enloe, 1983, 2000; Field & Nagl, 2001; Herbert, 2000; Ryan, 2008; Silva, 2008; Suter et al., 2006). Many of the studies cited within the literature review relied heavily on interviewing for information, as interviews provide researchers with the opportunity to gather a wide range of information in an effective and efficient manner. The interview protocol for this study had three major areas of concentration: the participants’ backgrounds, military career history, and social experience within the United States Army.

During the interviews participants were encouraged to share stories based on personal experience, with additional questions or prompts used as needed. For example, the official interview guide did not include questions regarding marriage or children; however, if a participant spoke about a related subject, questions such as “How does having children affect your career in the Army?” or “What are some challenges of being a soldier and a wife or
mother?” were offered as a means of gaining further understanding of each participant’s life in the United States Army.

**IRB Procedures**

This study’s data collection policy received IRB approval from the Ball State University Institutional Review Board. All participants were provided with the IRB approved informed consent form (see Appendix E) and were required to read, sign, and return the form prior to scheduling an interview. Prior to the start of the interview, the researcher reviewed the IRB approved informed consent form with every participant, taking special care to highlight the part of the informed consent form regarding the audio recordings that were created for the purpose of creating transcripts for analysis. All audio recordings were stored in a secured location accessible only to the researcher and were destroyed upon completion of the study. Participants were assigned a coded name to ensure confidentiality. All interview materials (informed consent forms, audio recordings, field notes, transcriptions, coded material, and coding sheets) were stored in separate secured locations accessible only to the principle researcher, in order to protect the identities of all study participants. Additionally, all of the required research protocols as outlined by the Ball State University Institutional Review Board were followed.

**Analysis**

In order to ensure consistency in the collection and analysis of the data, the principle researcher conducted and transcribed all of the interviews. During each interview, I kept detailed field notes to ensure accuracy in data collection. After each interview was completed, the audio recordings of the interviews were used to create transcripts. All transcripts were typed verbatim from the recordings and yielded a total of 201 double spaced typed pages of interview transcriptions. After all the interview transcripts were completed, I reviewed and coded all
transcripts utilizing constant comparative thematic analysis strategies consistent with constructivist grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, 2002) so as to identify trends and similarities across the experiences of women serving in the United States Army. According to Ellingson (2009), a strength of grounded theory analysis is that it provides researchers with a framework through which to examine data and allow for themes to emerge organically. As with traditional grounded theory approaches, this study did not seek to provide generalizable results, but rather to understand how individual participants experience and interpret their lives, as well as to add to the existing body of theoretical research (Charmaz, 2002; Hoffman & Cowan, 2010). According to Charmaz (2002), grounded theory analysis investigates how “participants construct meanings and actions” while taking into account the relationship between meaning construction and the local and cultural context (p. 677). This was significant because social and organizational level gendered discourses influenced how female soldiers experience their everyday lives.

Constructivist grounded theory provides an opportunity for researchers to explore and analyze data without being hindered by preconceived notions and expectations (Charmaz, 2002). These coding practices allow for researchers to become more and more focused with each coding, utilizing a practice of memoing throughout coding to create a running account of the emerging themes. This simultaneous paired coding-memoing approach provides the researcher with a thorough and sound understanding of the data within the total body of the artifacts (Charmaz, 2002). Memo writing was an important part of this analysis because it “links coding to the writing of the first draft of the analysis” (Charmaz, 2002, p. 687). One of the purposes of memo writing is to contextualize a code’s content by identifying its “fundamental properties,” looking for its “underlying assumptions,” and showing “how, when and why it develops and changes” (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001, p. 167).
Further, the constructivist grounded theory method was selected for this study as a means to allow for the voices of the participants to be heard without being filtered or colored by external bias and expectations. By using constructivist grounded theory, I was able to code each transcript individually to understand how each soldier experiences the military before beginning to compare the emerging themes (Charmaz, 2002). Comparing the emerging themes allowed for me to gain a general idea of some of the challenges that female soldiers face during their military service and allowed for greater clarity to be gained regarding the current status of women as an understudied minority population in the United States Army.

For this study, I completed three levels of coding. After transcribing all of the interviews, I read through all of the interview transcripts. Immediately after reading each transcript, I wrote notes regarding initial themes that I identified within each individual interview. After the initial reading and completion of basic memoing regarding the thematic elements of each interview, I created a list of nine themes found throughout the data. In the next round of coding, I coded each interview for the nine themes, noting each instance the theme was expressed within the data. Throughout the coding process I utilized memoing to help focus my understanding of the data. The nine themes became the categories used to answer the research questions and are contained in the results section.

Finally, in my third level of coding I utilized structuration theory as a framework for completing deductive analysis. Structuration theory has previously been used by many communication studies scholars, especially when paired with the interpretive paradigm as a means of not only providing voice but also to shed light on organizational confines (Butler & Modaff, 2008; Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006; Hoffman & Cowan, 2010). After conducting the first two levels of coding, I relied on several elements of structuration theory as a framework for
understanding the current status of women serving in the United States Army. Specifically, I focused on the concepts of organizational control and individual agency to apply structuration theory to the experience of female soldiers in the United States Army. These ideas from structuration theory functioned as sensitizing concepts, as they focused my attention to certain themes in the data, such as instances of marginalization or inclusion (Golden, 2013). Also, structuration theory provided a crucial framework throughout my memoing process, as it allowed me to fully understand the power structures within the culture of the military.

After completing the analysis, I employed member checks and reflection as a means for ensuring that I accurately understood, and my data reflected, my participants’ experience (Baxter & Babbie, 2004; Ellingson, 2009). Member checks are the process of sharing one’s research with the participants (Baxter & Babbie, 2004), thereby allowing them to engage with the research. Tracy (2013) recommends also engaging in member reflections, which is the process of providing participants with space to offer feedback on the research that is presented to them during the member check process. For this study, I involved three participants in my member check and reflection process. I selected the three participants deliberately, inviting one officer, one enlisted soldier, and one warrant officer to participate. I sent all three participants 15 pages of selected portions of my results section. After my participants had a chance to review the material, I had each participant call me at their convenience to discuss the work. The resulting discussion with each participant lasted between 15-45 minutes. During the conversations, I took notes about what we talked about pertaining to the research; immediately following the conversations, I also created memos. None of the conversations resulted in any major changes, though I did make some minor changes, such as adding participant rank to their names, as I learned that female personnel are often referred to without rank as a culturally sanctioned
mechanism for belittling their contributions. The resulting minor changes were done to ensure that my research accurately reflected the views of my participants.

Additionally, Tracy (2013) offers that rigorous qualitative research should be theoretical, and if appropriate, offer practical applications as well. This study offers a theoretical analysis of the current status of female soldiers, through the application of structuration theory. The theoretical analysis of the data was used to create suggestions for practical applications that can be adopted to help create an Army that is more welcoming and inclusive of female personnel. I am very passionate about the inclusion of women in the United States military, so this research was designed to provide working suggestions to improve the lives of female soldiers while simultaneously adding theoretical contributions to the field of communication, a practice that Tracy (2013) advocates as being a central tenet to creating substantive qualitative research.

Now that I have provided an overview of my ideological perspective as a researcher, my connections with the military and my participants, as well as a thorough explanation of my recruitment tactics, participant recruitment/selection, and data analysis, I will now share the results of this research. Following the results is a discussion regarding the theoretical contributions of this study, as well as some proposed practical applications. Additionally, I explore some of the strengths and weaknesses of this study, followed by some recommendations for future studies before offering a final summary and conclusion.
Chapter Four: Results

In the following sections, I will first address the barriers that female soldiers face in the United States Army. Next, I will address how female soldiers respond to these barriers. Finally, I will explore the perceived agency of female United States Army personnel.

Perceived Barriers

RQ1: What are the perceived barriers that female soldiers face?

Although today’s Army has more female soldiers than any time in U.S. military history, the women who choose to serve in today’s Army continue to fight many of the same battles that their predecessors faced. While some policies have changed to be more inclusive of female soldiers, there are still many policies that continue to marginalize female soldiers. Discriminatory policies are not the only challenge with which female soldiers continue to struggle. In this section, I will discuss the three main barriers that female soldiers continue to face: gender discrimination, Army lifestyle expectations, and challenges associated with motherhood.

Gender discrimination. Finding that gender discrimination in the Army, and military as a whole, is still a problem is not really a surprise. For the purpose of this study, gender discrimination is broadly defined as the use of gender as a reason for differentiation, especially as pertaining to the act of offering special privileges or punishments for males and, females. Gender discrimination in the Army has been documented and discussed for years. As detailed in the literature review, gender integration of the United States military has been continuously fought and protested against. While the idea that gender discrimination is a barrier with which female soldiers must cope is not a novel concept, the fact that it continues to be such a problem underscores that this is a problem that truly needs more attention to be solved. According to the
data collected for this study, there are two main causes of gender discrimination in the United States Army. The first hurdle that women face to equality in the United States Army is the many discriminatory policies that keep women from being fully accepted as soldiers. Next, the Army’s masculine dominated culture also continues to be unaccepting of women, which further marginalizes female soldiers. In order to explore the current gender discrimination problems in the United States Army, I will first discuss how military policies continue to reinforce gender discrimination, and then I will discuss how the culture of the United States Army further reifies the marginalization of women in the Army.

Although the policies of today’s Army are more inclusive of women than ever before, there are still many ways in which Army policies continue to restrict the growth and success of female soldiers. The status of women in the United States Army (and military as a whole) has been undergoing continual debate and revision, and while the most recent changes will allow female soldiers to serve in units and positions from which they were previously barred, there are still a number of discriminatory policies that have not been addressed. One example is the Selective Service Act. One of the greatest barriers to legitimacy that female soldiers face is that females, unlike males, are not required to register for Selective Service (commonly referred to as “the draft”). The Selective Service Act requires all male citizens and immigrant non-citizens to register for service when they turn eighteen. It is a series of laws that can only be amended by Congress, and the fact that women are not required to register for Selective Service has real consequences for the women who serve in today’s Army. When the Selective Service Act was revisited in 1994, Congress noted that females should continue to be excluded from the draft due to their inability to serve in front line combat positions. Although the policies regarding women have been changed and are slated for implementation by the end of 2016, the Selective Service
Act has not been readdressed. One of the reasons for this ongoing policy is that the majority of Americans are still against the idea of women being involved in active combat. This policy is just one example of the means through which the Army continues to encourage gender discrimination, as explained by LTC Martha:

The units themselves don’t want it, i.e. Special Forces, SEALs, Infantry. They want to protect their last little bastion of man-dom. Protectors of the domain of men. They want their good ol’ boys club to continue. It has nothing to do with the actual capabilities of women and everything to do with their negative views on the abilities of women. They like being exclusive. They like wearing the pants and putting women in their place. That’s why it’s a thing. The Army loves clinging to the few remaining portions where the girls can’t go.

Exclusion from the Selective Service Act may appear to be a small example of discrimination; however there are larger ramifications, particularly within the culture of the United States Army, as described by LTC Alexis:

No matter what the Army does, women will never be thought of as equals in the Army or military as a whole until women are required to register for Selective Service like men. It’s as simple as that: until women can be drafted, men and women will never be in the same category when it comes to the military…Women can serve!...If women want to stop being treated as less than equal, we need to start there. We need to show everyone that we can take responsibility and take care of our country like the men do.

As the above quote illustrates, gender discrimination in the United States Army is pervasive, largely because the culture of the United States Army continues to be dominated by the Army’s masculine roots, as explained by CPT Catherine: “I call it an ‘All boys’ club’ mentality. I think a
lot of people, in society, and some decision makers, in the past, have leaned on what I think are excuses.” Additionally, policies such as the Selective Service Act further reinforce sentiments that men and women are not equal in their ability to serve in the United States Army, as stated by LTC Alexis:

I do think that women are excluded from serving in specific units or MOSs\(^\text{16}\) because of the military and society’s perceptions that women and men should not be fully integrated under certain conditions. I think a lot of people think that women aren’t capable of handling certain conditions that go along with those jobs.

Similarly, CPT Catherine offered:

Bringing up conversations about how seeing a female soldier’s dead body has a worse effect on a soldier than seeing a dead male soldier’s body. That’s not a reason, and that’s certainly not an argument about why you can’t put a woman in harm’s way. If she wants to serve her country and she’s capable of doing her job, then there’s no reason why she shouldn’t be afforded the same opportunities [as male soldiers].

For the women of today’s Army, the struggle to assimilate goes far beyond the ban on combat roles. Even though there are more women serving today than ever before, women are still a minority within the United States Army. Being a marginalized minority has many disadvantages, even in areas where women should be recognized as equals. Although women are now eligible to serve within all rank levels of the United States Army, women are still not represented at all levels of the United States Army, as described by the most senior participant of this study, COL Chelsea:

It is harder for women to be generals but it’s not just about gender discrimination. Like, it’s a numbers game. There just aren’t as many women in the higher ranks and like, men

\(^{16}\) Military Occupation Specialty—otherwise known as the specific job a soldier has within the Army.
are more traditionally seen as the big leaders, the generals, the presidents. I guess when I say it out loud it does sound like gender discrimination, doesn’t it? I think that’s one of the challenges the Army has. There are a lot of like, underlying assumptions that affect us, and we probably don’t think about it. Don’t get me wrong—it’s really fucking difficult for anyone to become a general, but I guess it might be slightly easier for men.

There’s this saying in the Army, “Many are called; few are chosen,” and what it means is that many soldiers want to be generals, want to be the elites, but few people actually make it. To make general you have to be someone really special—you have to be smart and talented and motivated and lucky—you have to have the right experiences, been in the right places, make sure the right people notice you.

As explained by COL Chelsea, female soldiers, particularly those in leadership, continue to be affected by preconceived notions that females are inherently less capable soldiers than males.

Negative perceptions of female soldiers are still very prevalent in the culture of the United States Army, as described by CPT Jenny:

I think people underestimated what me, and other women, were capable of because they hadn’t had much experience with female leaders or female officers or female soldiers in their life. Like, there was this time on a deployment where I was asked to make a call [decision] about how to install something remotely—I made my call over the radio but it wasn’t well-received. The guy on the other end, I think he was MAJ or something like that, he called back, “Is that a bird on the radio? I don’t trust pussy—get me someone who knows what’s going on.” And it became this whole joke, even though the other soldier said the exact same thing, so that was pretty frustrating. I think there’s a lot of people who still just underestimate women.
Similarly, LTC Martha offered:

I don’t think men face the same kinds of negative preconceived notions that women do, even though there are plenty of men who aren’t capable soldiers, just as there are females who aren’t capable soldiers. What people don’t see, though, is that it’s not your reproductive organs that make you a good soldier: It’s your brain, your heart, and your determination to succeed. I have that, but I don’t display it the way the Army prefers. I’m GI Jane, not GI Barbie.

While there are policies in the United States Army designed to prevent women from being penalized by these negative stereotypes, there are still ways in which the culture of the Army continues to punish women and prevent them from reaching their full potential, as described by LTC Alexis:

I competed for a position of Company Commander [information removed to protect identity of participant]. Although not explicitly stated, all previously selected Company Commanders were Ranger qualified. Females cannot attend Ranger School, so I knew I was not competitive for this position, although I was allowed to interview. That was the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do. I knew walking into that interview that I was never going to get the job, even though I would have been good at it. I knew I was never going to get it and I knew that I was just there to fill their quota, so that they could say that they weren’t discriminating against women. There’s nothing more humiliating than having to be a puppet in front of an interview board that you know isn’t even seriously considering you. I remember sitting there, watching the interview board. As I answered the questions, there were several jackasses who weren’t even pretending to pay attention. One was on his computer, and the others weren’t even taking notes. It was the biggest
waste of my time and to this day when I think about that, I still feel sick to my stomach and ashamed that I participated in that stupid little game.

Gender discrimination in the United States Army, as well as society as a whole, can be viewed as one of the limiting structures for female soldiers. Consistent with other communication scholarship that applied structuration theory (e.g., Hoffman & Cowan, 2010), the interviews indicate that the gender discrimination soldiers experience at a personal level are indicative of both social and organizational patriarchal norms. Critical organizational communication studies scholars argue that to get to the heart of issues of organizational power, researchers must address discourse at a social and a personal level (Ashcraft, 2007). Understanding this relationship is important because discriminatory beliefs can function as forms of social control by limiting the perceived choices of action women believe that they can make (Ashcraft, 2007). These barriers exist materially in the form of formal military policies that legally exclude female participation, and then also extend into the informal norms of the United States Army. However, it is not just the culture of the United States Army that continues to marginalize women; rather, it is only more apparent in the Army than it is in greater society. Given that the United States Army has such a masculine dominated history, it is easy to understand why the culture of the Army continues to be unwelcoming of female soldiers, as explained by CPL Courtney:

If you want gender equality in the military, you need to start by creating gender equality in society. You can’t just expect the military to be different from greater society. It is merely mimicking what society is already doing, that’s all.

Although discriminatory policies and culturally accepted discrimination of women continues to be two of the largest barriers to women in the United States Army, another barrier that women
face in their battle to be successful soldiers are negative stereotypes and preconceived notions about the abilities of female soldiers. While gender discrimination as a whole continues to be a great barrier for women in the United States Army, another barrier that women face are the lifestyle expectations of soldiers.

**More than a career: Army lifestyle expectations.** One of the challenges for those serving in today’s United States Army, regardless of gender, is that being a soldier extends beyond the usual work day—soldiers do not have forty hour work weeks, as COL Chelsea shared:

> If you are in a command that you have soldiers underneath you that are working for you as in people that are in the field\(^{17}\), and that can work at any point, and you have twenty-four hour operations, then yeah you’re going to get chastised if you’re the commander and you’re trying to go home. You’re seen as a loser, and I would think that of my own commanders. If they’re not willing to do that and they take that job, knowing it’s supposed to be 24/7, then you’d better be there pretty much 24/7 and you can plan on being there at 7 [in the morning] and not leaving til 7 [at night]. You know, that’s how it is. And there are some easy jobs in the Army, but nothing’s really 9-5 unless you make it that way, and you’d better not if you want to succeed.

Not only are soldiers expected to be prepared to work more than the usual forty hour work week, but most soldiers live on post\(^{18}\), which means that even when they’re not at work, they’re still expected to live within Army standards and expectations of soldiers, as explained by CPT Catherine:

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\(^{17}\) In this instance, field is a colloquial term that describes extended training exercises that take place in a remote location rather than a soldier’s usual place of work. Field exercises usually last at least 7 days and are considered to be 24/7 operations that are designed to simulate deployment experiences.

\(^{18}\) Post is a term that refers to the Army base where soldiers are stationed.
I am the United States Army, embodied, and everything I do reflects back on the Army. So I have to be careful: I have to make sure that I am always behaving how an officer should, and that whoever I’m with, that he is also behaving appropriately in public. Because it’s not just what you do. It’s the company that you keep too. And that’s really difficult to negotiate sometimes.

It is not by accident that the Army prefers for its soldiers to live where they work; rather, it is something that has been engineered and created over hundreds of years. By restricting soldiers to living and working in the same space, a culture is created that rewards those who are dedicated soldiers and punishes those who deviate from the norms, as explained by COL Chelsea:

I had to learn to be more conservative and more under the radar in social situations. I’m kind of a natural show off, so that was hard for me. The Army has its expectations and they don’t change to fit you—you have to change to fit them.

While this sort of work-life relationship is difficult for any soldier to negotiate, it is especially difficult for women, as the behavioral expectations of women are much more stringent than men. COL Chelsea explains further:

Even when you take that uniform off and put on your dance clothes, you’re still Army. I think in many ways that’s harder for women—I mean, men don’t really get labeled for dressing provocatively or for sleeping around. And when a male officer takes his soldiers out for drinks, he’s one of the boys, he’s being a good leader. When a female officer does that, well, she’s being inappropriate, she’s coming on to her men. It’s just different, you know?

Similarly, CPT Jenny offered:
I know a lot of my male friends who would go to the place on post where you can go get beers on Friday afternoons or go somewhere after work, and I have friends of mine who just go with their platoon sergeants after work and people are like, “Oh that’s cool. They have a really good relationship.” You can still do that and be professional as a male, but I don’t know. I think I could have done that but it would have had to been done in a specific way: Like, I would have had to bring another LT from my unit with me and their platoon sergeant, so that it would have been the four of us together, because just having the two of us, me and my platoon sergeant alone, probably would have been inappropriate. People would have thought that it was a little bizarre.

As the above quotes illustrate, the Army has different standards of acceptable behaviors for their male and female personnel, particularly pertaining to friendship. While friendship between male coworkers is accepted and encouraged, female soldiers have difficulty fostering friendships with their coworkers, as there are many assumptions made about friendships between males and females. There is a cultural assumption that male and female coworkers cannot be together with third party supervision, as unsupervised interactions are frequently judged as being inappropriately sexual. Given that more than 85% of the Army is male this creates a difficult situation for females, as the Army expects soldiers to be friendly with each other without breaking the social norms that stipulate that males and females cannot simply be friends. Not only are females restricted in the ways that they are allowed to socialize with their male counterparts, they are also criticized for not having those strong bonds with their coworkers, for not being committed enough, for not being “Army enough,” as described by SFC Sara:

I guess another one of my challenges has always been that I really care about my family, especially now [that I’m a mother and grandmother]. When I get off work, I don’t want to
go out [with my coworkers]. I want to go home and read my grandson a story before he goes to bed. I don’t want to spend my weekends with my soldiers—I see them all day, every day. I just want time off, away from the Army, but people who do that, we get labeled as not being “Army enough” and that’s so frustrating, because I have always given the Army everything I can, but like I said, when I decided to start letting my family be a priority, I suddenly wasn’t “Army enough” and that means I’m never going to make E8. I will spend the next four years—the only years I have left before they kick me to the curb—I will spend them as an E7 who isn’t “Army enough” to make E8.

As the above quote illustrates, the Army has created a tough double bind for women, similar to that described by Jamieson (1995), wherein women are forced to walk a fine line between being too friendly with male soldiers while also risking not being “Army enough” by not socializing enough with coworkers. Not only do female soldiers have to put a considerable amount of effort into ensuring that their friendships are appropriate but even when they are not on base or on duty, they must still be cognizant of their behaviors, as explained by CPT Catherine:

I think another challenge is that when you’re Army, you’re always Army. It doesn’t matter whether it’s 2 a.m. on a Saturday and you’re out with your girls, or 8:30 p.m. after a long day of work and you’re just grabbing a bottle of wine at the grocery store in your pajamas with your boyfriend because you just need to unwind. Even when you’re not wearing your uniform, you’re still Army and what you do matters. I naively thought that once I left West Point I’d have my own life again—but it’s just not true.

For today’s female soldiers, the demands of the Army extend far beyond work, more so than males. Being a soldier means that they’re constantly under the surveillance and supervision of the Army, and even when they’re not being watched, actions in their personal lives can have
great consequences on their professional careers. This is especially difficult for women, as women are still subject to more stringent societal expectations that their male counterparts. Not only are female soldiers expected to always be soldiers and continually keeping in mind the Army’s ideals, they are also still expected to fulfil their traditional societal roles as wives and mothers. This combined with the “Army enough” double bind explored above creates a very difficult lifestyle for female soldiers, as described by COL Chelsea:

You can’t succeed or really survive in the Army if you don’t love it and you aren’t all in. I think it’s more of a struggle for women because it’s still more of a bad thing for women to be too into their work. Like sometimes I feel like even in the Army there’s this tension because your superiors want you to be all Army, but they also want us women to have it all: be married, have kids, that stuff, so that they can use us as recruitment fodder and tell people that the Army has changed and that women be in the Army and be wives and be mothers, and be good at all of it. But I don’t think that’s true, or at least it doesn’t come easy, for any of us.

As COL Chelsea indicates, the lifestyle demands are a challenge for all women, but for those soldiers who are also mothers or wives, there are even more tensions and struggles that come along with those responsibilities. While it may seem contradictory, the Army (and military as a whole) is still very much attached to the traditional, conservative ideals of family and femininity. As such, women in the military are very much encouraged to exude femininity and do typical feminine things, such as get married and have children, as explained by CPT Catherine:

I’m kinda chronically single: I don’t date very much, because I really don’t have time, and I’m really not interested in being married and having babies right now. Last year, when I went to the company Christmas party, I didn’t take a date, because I had broken
up with the guy I was seeing and it was really awkward, because my commanding officer remembered him from our fall mandatory fun event! He, like, point blank, asked me why we broke up, and get this, had the audacity to remind me that I’m not getting any younger! And then his wife started in too, talking about how officer spouses are supposed to help with events like the Christmas party and how they could have really used some more help. It was ridiculous—I used to think my parents put pressure on me to get married and stuff, but let me tell you, it is still something the Army wants too. The Army wants to be able to show people that soldiers, especially female soldiers, are doing what they’re supposed to do—having babies, and are still able to be good soldiers. It’s just insane, because you’d think they’d only want you to focus on being a soldier, but that’s not what makes recruitment look good, you know?

Although “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” has been repealed, the culture of the Army still offers more support of those who fulfil the traditional heteronormative ideals, and those who don’t are subject to great scrutiny, as explained by PVT Cara:

I think boys have it easier [in the Army]. No one ever gets surprised when a boy wants to join the Army and play soldier, but when a girl wants to do it, well, maybe there’s something wrong with her. I once had someone ask me if I liked girls and that’s why I joined the Army and don’t want to have babies. Hell no, I like boys, and I want babies, just not right now. When was the last time you heard a man get asked if he joined the Army because he wants some dick? Sorry, was that too graphic? My mama would be so embarrassed if she heard me say that!

Similarly, LTC Martha offered:
I think the most successful female soldiers are the ones who are somehow still feminine while being very efficient and effective. The girls who are pretty, who wear a little bit of makeup—not too much, but just enough. The ones who wear dresses on the weekend, and bring husbands and babies to work functions. That may sound counterintuitive, since having babies in the Army makes your career certainly more difficult. But somehow...somehow those are the soldiers who seem to have the most success. I guess they’re the ones who are what the Army wants people to see...they are women who have it all—the career, the husband, the two point five kids and a dog named Ranger. I’m not one of those women, for a variety of reasons, so I haven’t had some of those luxuries.

For women who are more like me, I do think the Army can be an unfriendly place. Like I said, I used to have to fight that lesbian label all the time. It was tough.

As the above narrative shows, women in the Army still have many struggles, particularly those who struggle with finding a balance of the masculine and feminine demands of the United States Army. Now that I have discussed some of the general lifestyle struggles of women in the Army, in the next section, I will explore some of these challenges that are specific to female soldiers who are mothers and wives.

**Boots and babies: Challenges of motherhood.** Prior to the 1970s, if a female soldier became pregnant during active duty service, she was automatically discharged from the United States Army—whether she wanted to leave or not (Burrelli, 2013; Eberstadt, 2010; Monahan & Greenlee, 2010; Stiehm, 1989; Van Creveld, 2000). Now that female soldiers are allowed to continue serving after having children, there are many challenges that are associated with being a mother and a soldier. One of these challenges has to do with the work commitments the Army expects of its soldiers, as explained by COL Chelsea:
I remember when I was younger, it used to be routine for me to work for days on end—literally. I used to keep spare uniforms in my office. I’d work all day, break for a run or something, grab dinner, and come back to my office and keep working. I’d crash out on the couch if my office had one, or on a cot in the supply closet, and then I’d shower in the PT area and get dressed and start all over again.

While that sort of commitment may be the Army’s ideal or gold standard, it is simply not feasible for someone with children. For those who are soldiers and mothers, there are always decisions and compromises, as shared by LTC Alexis:

Balancing work and family [is a constant challenge]. My husband and son have sacrificed in many ways so that I can continue to serve. It’s constantly a battle and I always have to make decisions about what’s more important: am I going to stay late and get some extra work done, or am I going to go to my son’s soccer game? It is really, really hard. But I love my son and I love being a soldier, so it’s a struggle I’m committed to continuing with. My husband and I postponed starting a family until later in our careers: We were both LTCs when our son was born, so that we could manage both our careers and a family. It’s a constant struggle, and I don’t know how people at lower rankings survive being a parent in the military.

As showcased in LTC Alexis’s above narrative, the decisions that have to be made are not easy, especially when one loves serving her country but also values supporting her family. For LTC Alexis, one of her coping mechanisms is that she relies on her reputation and prior service to support her ability to leave work when there are emergencies that call her home. However, other soldiers are not always as fortunate and do not have the luxury of rank to support their parenting decisions.
Another challenge that soldier parents face is that the actions of their children do reflect upon them as soldiers, particularly if they live on base, as explained by CW3 Angela:

There’s no real privacy. A few months ago, my son and some of his friends got caught playing ding-dong-ditch. That’s bad enough, right, it’s embarrassing because the MPs\textsuperscript{19} picked him up. But it doesn’t end there: I got reported to my commanding officer and he pulled me into his office and reamed me out, asking me how he can trust me to control and lead soldiers if I can’t manage my own son. Even worse, my promotion board was last month—that incident was actually brought up! If that had happened off base, that would have been a private family matter. But there is no such thing as private when you’re a soldier.

As described in the above narrative, female soldiers who are mothers have extra challenges, particularly those who live on base, as most families do, given the financial incentives that come along with living in base housing\textsuperscript{20}. While most employees’ parenting skills are not evaluated when promotions are being considered, that is just de rigueur for military personnel.

Although there have been many changes in our society, women are still considered to be the primary caretaker of children, even when they have employment outside of the home (Hochschild & Machung, 2003). This creates a particular challenge for female soldiers who are mothers, particularly where deployments are concerned. Until the early 90s, female soldiers rarely deployed alongside their male counterparts. In fact, it was not really until the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that female soldiers really started deploying as frequently as their male

\textsuperscript{19} MPs is an abbreviation for military police.

\textsuperscript{20} Families in the military receive housing from the military in one of two ways, either (A) by living in a house on base that is completely covered by their BHA (Basic Housing Allowance), or (B) they can find housing off-base which can be paid for with their BHA. The BHA is based on the number of dependents, rank of the soldier, and location—however, in many locations, the BHA does not fully cover the cost of living off post, so most families prefer to live on base, despite the other drawbacks such as lack of privacy and strict housing regulations, including not allowing grass to be longer than 1 inch, or policies that prohibit any toys or other debris to be left on the lawn/porch/sidewalks/driveways overnight.
counters. While the frequency and duration of deployments vary by branch and MOS, increased deployments also lead to increased field training exercises. The combination of the deployments and required trainings can be quite draining to families, as explained by LTC Alexis:

Outside of combat deployments, I have spent approximately one third of my time away from home and my family for other requirements like TDYs\textsuperscript{21} and field trainings. My husband and I have to work really hard to make sure that there’s always someone there for our son. To be honest, we couldn’t do it if we didn’t have such a great babysitter and support system—we’re constantly relying on the kindness of other military spouses, especially the ones who are stay at home parents, to help pick up when we’ve got ends that won’t meet.

Parenting can be difficult enough, and most working parents report feelings of inadequacy either at work or in their personal lives, as a result of having too much to do and not enough time (Hochschild \& Machung, 2003). This is particularly true for female soldiers who are mothers, and this is made even worse by deployments. During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States Army suffered from a lack of ready forces, which meant that soldiers were deploying much more frequently than ever before. During the height of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, the average soldier was deploying every other year, with each deployment lasting between 12-18 months\textsuperscript{22}. Such deployments do not just affect the soldiers, however, but also the families. While deployments are a challenge for any military family, societal expectations of mothers cause further complications for female soldiers, as described by LTC Alexis:

\textsuperscript{21} Temporary duty posts—these can be as short as a week, or as long as 4-6 months.
\textsuperscript{22} According to statistics from the Pentagon, which were shared with me during an interview with one of my participants, COL Chelsea, who works in Public Affairs.
My son was young when I deployed the second time, but he was also old enough to know that I was away. We were lucky: My husband’s mom was able to come stay with them for most of the time I was deployed, so she really helped make sure that my son wasn’t constantly stuck in daycare or with a babysitter. I don’t think you ever realize how many sacrifices other people have to be willing to make for you in order to serve in the military—it’s not just about personal sacrifice, especially for women. We rarely talk about those serving on the home front—you know, the ones who get left behind—the wives, the children, the husbands, but when you join the military, your family does too.

As LTC Alexis eloquently shared, deployments mean great sacrifices for soldiers with children, particularly for deployed mothers, as most mothers are the primary providers or coordinators for the care of children and the home. Although male soldiers also make great sacrifices when deploying, our society still values the parental care of mothers more than fathers: This can cause many logistical problems in terms of childcare, but also, mothers are more likely to be condemned for leaving their children during deployments. While this may seem like an exaggeration, CPT Catherine offered a poignant explanation of these differing roles:

The Army is a slice of society, and society at large is still not ready to put us [women] on an even playing field yet. I personally get sick and tired of hearing people make rude comments or initiate conversations with, “Well, I can’t believe you’re a mom and you’re deploying to Iraq for 12 months. I can’t believe that you went to Afghanistan and left your children. I can’t believe you were in the field for a month doing training while your children were at home.” You know what? Dads do that on a regular basis in the military. And a father is just as important in a child’s life as a mother and I don’t think society thinks that. Society places more emphasis or value on the mother being a more
important, playing a more important role in a child’s life. I personally disagree with that. I personally think that a father is just as important, so if you’re going to give a mom a hard time for serving her country, and leaving her children or child for an extended period of time, you should be giving the father an equally hard time. But society doesn’t. I rarely hear people say, “I can’t believe you went overseas to Iraq for 12 months and left your son and daughter with your wife.” People are like, “Oh, that’s so great, you’re a hero, you’re serving your country and defending our freedom.” That’s not okay. That’s a double standard.

As CPT Catherine offers, mothers are given less praise and more criticism for serving in the Army, which requires personnel to be away for extended training exercises and deployments, whereas males are lauded for their service. We see this double standard enacted in many ways in society, particularly in media coverage of male and female soldiers. While this may seem like a small casualty, this condemnation of female soldiers can be quite detrimental both to individuals, and females in the military as a whole, given that this sort of negative attention is one of the reasons that eight of this study’s participants indicated struggling with during their time in the Army. Although deployments are a challenge for all mothers in the Army, for mothers who are single parents, there are even more challenges associated with deployments and military service as a whole, as described by CW3 Angela:

Deploying as a single parent is very hard and brings many challenges. Any time I am scheduled to deploy or go to a school, my son is relocated to Texas with my family, which means he is taken out of school, reregistered at another school, and has to make new friends. Then I come back, take him out of school, and do it all over again. I have

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23 Extended training programs are casually referred to as “schools” by many military personnel.
to balance being a mom, a dad, and a soldier. It is rewarding to say the least, but definitely a challenge balancing it all.

Similarly, SFC Sara offered:

When I was deployed once while my daughter was in high school, well, she was staying with her daddy, and, uh, she got into some trouble. I shouldn’t sugar coat this: She got knocked up and I felt real responsible, because I don’t think that would have happened under my supervision. So when that first happened, I was real stressed and had trouble focusing on my job, because all I could think about was how my little girl’s life was falling apart in the states while I was over in Afghanistan helping everyone but her. So that was real hard for me, and it was real hard for her, but that wasn’t really the Army’s fault, you know?

As CW3 Angela and SFC Sara shared, deployments are hard on families, particularly those who are single parent or divorced families, since the shift in parental responsibilities can mean relocation, in addition to coping with the extended absence of one parent. Regardless of the marital status of the parents, deployments are very difficult for children, as explained by CPT Jenny:

Another thing is the children, a lot of time, these young kids barely recognize their parents when they get back because a year in their life is such a huge amount of time and they don’t remember them, or it’s just really hard for them to like, accept this new parent in again.

For those left behind, deployments mean a lot of uncertainty, fear, and worry. Additionally, as CPT Jenny indicated, deployments are a very long time, particularly for young children. Despite the obvious effects deployments seem to have on families and children of soldiers, there are very
few studies on this subject, particularly from a communication perspective. As CW3 Angela offered,

The greatest challenge by far is leaving my son behind. Being deployed is a job and you adjust because that is what you are trained and paid to do and signed up for when we all enlisted in the Army, but nothing can prepare you for the feelings of leaving family.

For the women serving in today’s Army, there are many challenges associated with service. Female soldiers are still subjected to a variety of forms of gender discrimination, from discriminatory policies to the residual effects of the Army’s masculine-minded culture. Female soldiers also continue to be the subject of many negative stereotypes, particularly since society still values men as soldiers, whereas females are more valued for caretaking. Society’s insistence that women should still be the primary caretakers of family is also contradictory to the Army’s 24/7 mentality, which further causes problems for women who choose to serve in the Army.

While it may seem contradictory, the Army still encourages women to fulfill the ideal of being a good soldier and mother, which ultimately creates an almost impossible standard for female soldiers, as explained by COL Chelsea:

I don’t think it’s a working model [being a good soldier and good mother], especially when you’re a young officer. I can’t really attest to the enlisted side, but that’s why so many young females don’t make it past captain, because they want to have a family and realize that the Army really isn’t conducive to that, or they have the family and get tired of missing dance recitals and football games because Uncle Sam is not as kind and flexible as other jobs. I mean, don’t get me wrong, there is a reason for that. We’re protecting the country, not selling clothes, so it is really different and the expectations are what they are for a reason: but it doesn’t change the fact that it makes it really hard to be
a good soldier and a good wife and a good mother—especially if your better half is also military.

As the above quote from COL Chelsea illustrates, the United States Army has high expectations for their female personnel, which can be seen as barriers along with gender discrimination and conflicting lifestyle demands. Now that I have explored some of the perceived barriers experienced by female soldiers in the United States Army, in the next section I will examine how female soldiers respond to these barriers.

**Responses to Barriers**

**RQ2: How do female soldiers respond to these barriers?**

In the previous section, I discussed the perceived barriers that female soldiers face while serving in the United States Army. Throughout the data collected for this study, there were three main themes that best represent how this study’s sample population responded to the barriers they encountered while serving in the United States Army. First, I will discuss how the perceived barriers above affect female soldiers’ confidence in the workplace. Next, I will discuss how female soldiers use masculinity and physicality as a defense mechanism. Finally, I will discuss issues of minimization among female soldiers.

**Issues of confidence.** As previously discussed, one of the greatest perceived barriers that female soldiers face in today’s Army is gender discrimination. Gender discrimination takes many forms, from discriminatory policy to negative stereotypes about the abilities of women as soldiers. The Army’s cultural bias and preference of male soldiers has many ramifications for women. In the data collected for this study, five out of the nine women interviewed indicated that they have struggled with issues of self-esteem and confidence. For the purpose of this study, confidence and self-esteem are broadly described as the feelings or beliefs that individuals have
regarding their competence and abilities. While self-esteem and confidence may not seem to be of great importance, they do actually have a significant impact on how soldiers perceive themselves, and perhaps more importantly, how others perceive their abilities as soldiers, as evinced by LTC Alexis:

I think this [serving in the Army] is a lot harder for women because I think we [women] kind of come into Basic with this underlying thought that we aren’t as good at being Army as men, because that’s what we always hear. I think self-esteem has been my biggest struggle throughout my career.

Similarly, CPT Jenny offered:

I think I have always struggled with my self-confidence and that was a huge weakness for me at West Point and even once I went active duty. Even though I was smart and good at stuff, I always felt like I wasn’t.

As described by LTC Alexis and CPT Jenny, a lack of confidence can be a great detriment for female soldiers. Female soldiers who lack self-confidence are often perceived by others to be weak and unable to be good soldiers, as the nature of being a soldier requires the ability to make decisions quickly and without wavering. Failure to do so can have dire ramifications, not just for the individual but also others around them, as explained by CPL Courtney:

I think my first deployment, I spent a lot of time being paralyzed by fear. I didn’t know how qualified I was and it took one of my sergeants chewing me a new one before I realized that I needed to stop being afraid and let my instincts and training take over.

Have you ever seen that Scrubs episode where Elliot tells JD that she like just takes a breath when things get crazy and in her mind, things freeze for a second, and then she’s able to triage and kick ass? It’s hard to believe that that works, but it really does. Once I
got past my fear, it was easier, much easier. So it wasn’t really for a lack of training, but a lack of self-confidence, you know?

Although it is possible that male soldiers also suffer from similar crises of confidence, data from this study show that these women often enter the Army with a preexisting belief that they are not as fit for duty as males are. These negative beliefs are further reified by the Army’s cultural preference for males as soldiers. In addition to worrying about whether they are good soldiers themselves, female soldiers also bare the perceived burden of ensuring that female soldiers are overall well-represented by their actions, as explained by CPT Catherine:

I guess at first though, a lot of time, I was kind of faking it ‘til I could make it real: it is pretty intimidating, knowing that maybe you’re doing something no other woman has ever tried, knowing that if you screw up, you could ruin it for all women. I used to lie awake at night, worrying that I wasn’t good enough and that I was going to ruin things for other people.

For the women of today’s Army, each new step towards a gender neutral Army offers women more freedom, but progress comes with stiff penalties if not successful. As such, it is easy to understand how this pressure, combined with negative stereotypes about female soldiers, is creating a toxic environment for women in the military. Although the sample population of this study cannot be considered representative of the United States Army as a whole, the narratives of the participants present a troubling picture. For example, this study population included two West Point graduates. West Point graduates are widely considered to be the best and brightest of the nation, as students need a congressional nomination to even be considered for acceptance at the service academies (Disher, 2006). Both of the West Point graduates interviewed as part of this study indicated that they either currently struggle, or struggled in the
past, with issues of self-esteem and confidence. Given that these two individuals can be thought of as the “gold standard” of women in the Army, it is especially troubling to see that they too suffer from a lack of confidence, despite their superior training and talent as soldiers. Now that I have discussed how issues of self-esteem and confidence affect female soldiers, I will examine how female soldiers use displays of masculinity and physicality as a response to the perceived barriers that female soldiers face in the United States Army.

**Masculinity and physicality.** As previously discussed, the United States Army clings to heteronormative beliefs, which creates a double bind for women, asking them to be feminine in nature while exuding masculine competence. For the purpose of this section, masculinity and physicality are used together to describe the Army’s physical and mental requirements for soldiers, specifically, they are used as measurable demonstrations of the abilities of female soldiers. For some women, the masculine physicality ideals of the Army are difficult to meet, as described by SFC Sara:

> Another thing that’s hard for me is keeping my weight down. I’ve never been very athletic, so I’ve always struggled with that in the Army. When I was a young thing, I never had no problems with that but now it’s hard. I always had big hips, you know, and a booty, and the Army’s measurement system isn’t really designed for women—it’s designed for men. I heard they’re working on changing that, but we’ll see. I always have to work at it and be real careful.

Similarly, PVT Cara offered:

> That’s one thing that blows about my job, is I work with a lot of jacked up jerks who think they big men, but they really ain’t. I’m not a real good runner, ain’t never been cuz I hate it, and so they give me shit about that a lot. They like to ask me what I’d do if
someone tried to run from me at the gate or something and I always tell ‘em that I can
catch someone just as good as they can but they still give me shit about that shit all the
time. It’s annoying, you know, but I guess that’s just the way things are.

As described by SFC Sara and PVT Cara, some female soldiers struggle to meet the male-
dominated physical requirements of the Army, which further fuels assumptions that females are less able to be good soldiers, since the physical fitness requirements for males and females are different. However, while some female soldiers struggle to meet the minimum fitness requirements of the United States Army, there are other soldiers who use the physical fitness standards as a means of overcoming the negative perceptions about female soldiers, as described by CW3 Angela:

I have not been discriminated against, mainly because I have been able to maintain the physical fitness aspect of being in the military. As long as you can stay in unit runs and score high on the physical fitness test, you are normally good to go. I know there are a lot of women who struggle with that though, and who have been discriminated against because of that.

As CW3 Angela described, the culture of the Army is one that rewards those who are physically fit and able to demonstrate great physical strength. Given that women are stereotypically thought of as weaker than their male counterparts, the use of physicality as a means of combatting these negative stereotypes seems to be an appropriate response. Similarly, CPT Jenny offered:

I tried really hard during PT in the mornings. PT is always a way for men, good or bad, to judge women, like to see if they can run fast or whatever, keep up at PT, or at least try to keep up.
Using physical fitness as a means of demonstrating value and ability as a soldier is one of the ways that female soldiers cope with the stereotypes that women are less able soldiers than their male counterparts. For some female soldiers, demonstrating physical prowess comes naturally, as explained by LTC Martha:

I love adventure: That’s one of the things that’s always kept me in the military. Some people are designed for desk jobs. Not me. I’m 5’11 and I push 180—that’s muscle, not fat. I’m designed for jumping out of airplanes and running 20 miles with a 100 pound ruck on my back. I’m designed for deployments and mucking through the mud. I’m designed for the dirty part of the Army and I wish I had had more opportunities to do that while I was still young enough to really be good at it and enjoy it.

However, there is also a double bind that exists within this coping mechanism: women who are too physically fit are also subjected to negative labels, as being too physically fit is unfeminine and deviant. Women who are considered to be too physically competitive with their male counterparts are subject to being labeled as lesbians or Amazons. As previously discussed, the United States Army as a whole is still very heteronormative, despite the fact that “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” has been repealed. As such, those who are too physically competitive with their male counterparts still risk being shunned by the culture of the Army, as described by LTC Martha:

Completing a combatives instructor course as the only female among 40+ Special Operations guys was probably up there [as one of my greatest accomplishments]. You should have seen their faces. Like I said, I’m a fairly impressive looking chick—and I kicked ass. And I really enjoyed it. Nothing like getting to throw around the people who think you can’t hack it. There haven’t been a lot of female combatives instructors, but
this chick, I’m one of them. That training was hard, like, mentally, because I could physically beat the guys all day, but at the end of the day, they’d still try to pass it off, saying they’d gone easy on me and that I just wasn’t on their level, and never would be, no matter what. Or they’d take the other angle, and call me a butch lesbian, a dyke, an Amazon. But it wasn’t that big of a deal: I mean, I passed the course, so the shit they said, it just doesn’t matter. I’ve got the patch, and I wear it proudly. They can’t take that away from me.

Although physical fitness standards in the United States Army have been used to demonstrate that some women are not fit soldiers, there are others who use physicality as a means of showcasing their skill and expertise as soldiers. While some women are further penalized and shamed for being too physically fit, the physical standards are still a measurable way for female soldiers to demonstrate that they are better than the negative stereotypes that label female soldiers as weak and meek. Female soldiers often use physical standards as a means of demonstrating ability; another strategy used by female soldiers is the use of minimization as a response to the perceived barriers that female soldiers face.

Minimization. Throughout the data collected for this study, the greatest barrier that presented itself was gender discrimination, however, many participants were hesitant to use the label “gender discrimination” to describe their experiences. In fact, many participants had the tendency of diminishing their experiences, claiming that their experiences weren’t as bad as they might seem. The following section explores this idea of minimization, which this study broadly defines as the ways in which female personnel denigrate their personal experiences, specifically as coping mechanisms against discrimination. Minimization is likely a result of the Army’s cultural pattern of punishing the victim rather than the perpetrator. This can be seen throughout
military history, particularly in how the military handles issues of sexual violence (Grove, 2013; Ward, 2011). Few of my participants used the phrase “gender discrimination” to describe problems they’ve personally experienced, and when speaking of compromising situations or experiences, the female soldiers typically minimized these experiences, as PVT Cara shared:

I worked for this terrible man. He was disgusting. Used to make comments, about my booty and boobies. I never said nothing, because I was scared of making trouble, but he never touched me—just said things, so it wasn’t too bad.

Similarly, CPL Courtney offered:

I work in medical, so we treat all kinds of soldiers. And sometimes, well, sometimes we don’t get the nicest people. I hear comments all the time, like “Damn, honey, if all my nurses looked like you I’d volunteer to get shot more often!” It sounds funny, but it’s pretty humiliating. I remember this one time, I was treating some spec ops guy and I asked him if he needed anything, you know, in reference to medicine for pain or whatever. You know what he said? “I could really use your lips on my dick: That’d make me feel a whole lot better.” It was probably just the narcotics talking, but I was upset about it. I didn’t say anything though, because I didn’t want to get him in trouble, and like I said, he probably didn’t even mean to say it.

As the above quotes illustrate, female soldiers are conditioned to accept these offensive behaviors as “normal.” The culture of the Army is one that has traditionally protected perpetrators, while punishing victims for reporting these sorts of behaviors, which further silences female soldiers, as explained by CPL Courtney:

I think the Army has been doing women terrible injustices for many years. They’re no longer systematically ignoring rape cases and stuff like that, though I guarantee that there

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24 Spec ops is an abbreviated term for a special operations soldiers.
are so many cases that go unreported. I mean, if the Army can teach someone like me to keep my mouth shut, imagine how much they can silence someone who’s more timid, someone who’s been raped or harassed by someone in charge of her? I there’s still a lot of abuse of power that occurs and the Army needs to do better by us [female soldiers].

Similarly, COL Chelsea offered:

Discriminated against? My immediate thought is no. Not me—others I’ve known, sure. My sister, you know, she definitely had problems. We may be twins, but we’re different. I’m…what did my boss call me last week? An abrasive bitch. I prefer assertive. But my sister, well, she’s softer, easier to bother, I hate to say weaker, but I’m definitely stronger.

It’s just our personalities.

As the above quotes show, the women who serve in today’s Army have learned to cope with discriminatory behaviors by minimizing their negative experiences. Although this is not a healthy coping mechanism, it does provide female soldiers with temporary relief from the discrimination and protects them from retaliation by their perpetrators.

For the women serving in today’s Army, there are several ways that they overcome the perceived barriers of being marginalized members of the Army. Female soldiers often suffer from a lack of self-confidence, likely a result of the negative stereotypes they encounter from others. In response to those negative stereotypes, some female soldiers use physical fitness as a means of demonstrating that they are equal to their male counterparts. Finally, female soldiers also engage in minimization of their personal experiences as a means of protecting themselves from being punished by the masculine greater culture of the United States Army. In the next section, the means through which female soldiers perceive their agency in the United States Army will be discussed.
Perceived Agency

RQ3: What agency do female soldiers perceive they have?

Structuration theory stipulates that in any organization, agents have some form of control over the organization, which is referred to as agency (Giddens, 1979, 1984). For the women interviewed for this study, there are three ways that female soldiers perceive agency within the culture of the United States Army: mentoring and sisterhood; performance; and policy. Each of these are discussed in the next section, and framed using Giddens’ concept of agency.

Sisters-in-Arms: The power of mentoring and sisterhood. Throughout the data collected for this study, one of the strongest themes was that female soldiers really felt bonded to each other. This bond was referred to by several participants as being familial in nature, specifically similar to the relationship of sisters. As such, throughout this section I will explore how female soldiers bond together to form a collective sisterhood. Structuration theory can be used to understand power structures in organizations. In hierarchical organizations, like the United States Army, the application of structuration theory allows scholars to recognize the varying power levels within an organization, and how some agents have more voice than others (Giddens, 1979, 1984). As marginalized members of the United States Army, one of the ways that female soldiers gain a greater voice in the organization is by banding together, a concept eloquently explained by CW3 Angela:

Throughout my time in the Army the thing that has been best for me is that I’ve felt like I was a part of something bigger than myself. I’ve been fortunate to work for a lot of really great people, and especially a few women who have really been there for me. The thing about the Army is that you have what we call battle sisters—they’re the ones you deploy alongside, that you work alongside, that you learn alongside. In the Army, you
don’t stay in one place for long, but the connections you make, they follow you. They help you find new battle sisters, and then you help others. The Army is all about being an Army of one. A lot of people think that means that as an individual soldier you do it all. That’s not what it means. Army of one means that the entire Army moves together, as one. Yeah, it’s not entirely true, but the way I see it, all of my battle sisters and I, we’re an Army of one and we work together to make things happen, to make things better for all of us, and for all those who will one day serve.

In this powerful narrative from CW3 Angela, we see this soldier simultaneously recognizing that females are still marginalized but that through collective action, female soldiers can increase their agency in the organization. By relying on each other as support systems, female soldiers have turned their marginalization into a mechanism for bonding, as evinced by LTC Martha:

I’ve had some really amazing mentors throughout my career. So I decided that if I stayed in the Army, I could maybe help make the Army experience better for some other women, and save them some of the heartache I had when I first came in. I think a lot of women are conditioned to believe that they’re not good leaders—not just in the Army, but everywhere, seriously. But I think that’s a load of bull crap. So I decided that I needed to stay in because there were bound to be other women who would eventually work for me and if I could be a mentor for them, well, maybe we could start changing perceptions.

Similarly, CPL Courtney offered:

I really love the sense of camaraderie I feel with my coworkers. We’re a team, you know, we’re always in it together, no matter what the mission. I’m particularly lucky. I work in medicine and there are a lot of really smart, powerful, and talented women who
work with me. I’ve been lucky enough to have some really amazing mentors to show me the ropes. Women who have been there and know what you need to do to get through and to be good at your job. In that sense, I love that. I hate that the Army still sees us [women] as different, as less than the boys we serve alongside, but I love that there are ladies like me and others I know who kick ass and take names—no, make names for ourselves.

For female soldiers, being marginalized has allowed for their group to create a strong sense of identity and pride in that identity, as explained by SFC Sara:

Even though there aren’t as many of us [female soldiers], I think in some ways that makes us connect better. We’re all really different and maybe we don’t care for each other on a personal level, but I think at least professionally we’ve always got each other’s back, because we know there are a lot of people who don’t want us to succeed or do well. Maybe it’s like that everywhere, I don’t really know, I’ve never had a job outside of the Army. But I do know, I do know that I feel like I share something with every woman who has, is, or will serve in the Army. Why? Because in the Army, you’re not just soldiers, you’re a team, you’re a family, and well, I guess I just happen to think my sisters need me more than the brothers.

What is perhaps most impressive about this solidarity is that the women do actively see this as a means of agency, as explained by CPT Jenny:

It’s really important not only for women to have women role models but for men to have women role models. Just seeing that first woman who is successful in her job or position can convince men, and women, that women as a whole can be successful [in the Army]. But it is always that first woman, or group of women, to blaze the trail, so to speak.
By recognizing that the culture of the United States Army recognizes the female gender as a limiting characteristic, female soldiers have used their group identity as a means for creating a strong, cohesive front that helps their individual voices be heard. Even when individuals don’t get along, they are still able to recognize that the collective needs of female soldiers overcome individual desires, as SFC Sara shared. Now that I have discussed how female soldiers rely on friendship and mentoring as a means of agency, I will next discuss how personal performance can be used as a means of agency.

**Being all you can be: Competence as a means of agency.** Throughout the data gathered for this study, the participants frequently discussed how they rely on competence to demonstrate their abilities as soldiers. For this section, competence is defined as the measurable ways in which female soldiers use their abilities to prove to themselves and others that they are capable soldiers. Although women continue to be a marginalized minority within the United States Army, the women who were interviewed for this study all indicated that they feel great pride in their service. For the participants of this study, serving in the Army has provided them with an opportunity to demonstrate their strengths, both to themselves and others, as explained by CPL Courtney:

> I never knew how strong I was before the Army. I never believed in myself like I do now—that’s not to say that I felt that way when I first joined, I had to grow into being this soldier. But now, I kick ass, and I don’t take shit from anyone, and I stand up for myself. I’m strong too, stronger than a lot of people give me credit for. But that’s okay, because sometimes it’s fun being the underdog who proves people wrong, you know? And as a female soldier, I think that’s a lot of what we [female soldiers] do—we prove to everyone that we’re good soldiers, just as good as the guys, hell, if not better!
Regardless of the status of women within the United States Army, service in the military offers military personnel unique experiences that outsiders cannot experience. For women, this can be especially rewarding, as they are completing tasks historically thought to be impossible for women. While some continue to discount women in uniform, the experience can still be quite rewarding, as explained by LTC Martha:

On my first deployment, my commanding officer looked at me one day and told me that I’m one in a billion—not million, billion, with a B. That’s a pretty high compliment, and he [the commanding officer] had never had a female lieutenant, so he initially wasn’t part of my fan club. But that’s one of the reasons I stayed in. He told me he had never met a woman who could hack the job like I could, that could be as physical and determined as the others [male soldiers]. I told him that was because he hadn’t worked with enough women, but I was so proud of myself. You want to pinpoint the day that I finally felt like I was a soldier worth a damn and that meant I needed to stay in to help others get to that point? That was the day.

As discussed previously, one of the issues that female soldiers face is a lack of self-esteem and confidence, likely caused by the negative stereotypes regarding women in uniform. While the initial lack of confidence can be detrimental both to individual soldiers and female soldiers as a whole, serving in the Army can be a catalyst that allows the female soldiers to learn about their abilities and grow in confidence, as CPT Jenny mentioned during her interview:

I was never terribly sure of myself or my abilities, even after I got accepted to West Point, or during my time there, or when I first pinned as a lieutenant. I was really painfully shy. The Army really helped me grow out of that. I can’t pinpoint the exact time it happened, but I know that the day I separated from the Army, I was a completely
different person than the shy, unsure cadet who reported to West Point—and by the time I got out, I was the kind of woman I had always wanted to be. Strong, competent, capable. And I knew it, I didn’t have to hear it from others anymore, because I really believed it.

While the abilities of female soldiers continues to be debated within the Army and greater society, the women of today’s Army are working every day to prove that they’re better and stronger than anyone ever thought they could be. Today, female soldiers are still subject to negative stereotypes and still judged by their appearances, but for some soldiers, this just creates an opportunity for them to prove the stereotypes wrong, as explained by CPT Catherine:

Everyone just assumes that because I’m built more like a gymnast than a soldier that I can’t possibly be in the military, or be as good as the other soldiers. Well, I’ve got news for them: I may be short and thin, but I’m an absolute bad ass. I always max out my PFTs and I always score expert on my weapons qualifications. I am just as good of a soldier and officer as anyone else, if not better.

For the women of today’s Army, one of the ways that they experience agency within the culture of the United States Army is by being exemplary soldiers. Rather than bowing to the negative stereotypes and the Army’s low expectations, the female soldiers interviewed for this study recognize the opportunities to prove their excellence. Doing so is a strong display of agency, as they are reaffirming their places in the United States Army. In the next section, I will discuss how female soldiers view policy changes as a means of agency within the United States Army.

**Policy as a means of legitimization.** Historically, Army policies created more limitations than opportunities for soldiers. However, as female soldiers have become a larger part of the United States Army, military policies are finally starting to create more space and opportunity for female soldiers. By the end of 2016, female soldiers will officially be eligible to 

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25 Physical Fitness Tests
serve in most MOSs\textsuperscript{26} within the United States Army, including in combat specialties (Burrelli, 2013). Although the female soldiers do not directly control the creation and implementation of Army policy, many of them believe that the policies control the fate of women in the Army, given that the Army is a bureaucratic hierarchical government organization. As such, this can be seen as a type of agency for female soldiers, as explained by CPT Catherine:

I think it’s [the policy changes] really important for women, because once we’re in those roles [combat MOSs], we’ll once again prove that we can hack it. They used to say that women were too soft for West Point, well, we’ve shown that isn’t true. They used to say that women couldn’t manage deployments and being away from their families. That’s not true either. I think we’re just held back by ignorance, and while the policies don’t cure ignorance, they do make it possible for us to prove people wrong and show them what we’re made of.

As CPT Catherine shares above, the policies don’t change underlying assumptions about female soldiers, but they do create an opportunity for female soldiers to continue to further the mission, to continue proving to the Army and society as a whole that female soldiers are as capable and qualified as their male counterparts. By utilizing the official policy changes as a means of agency, female soldiers are taking limiting structures and reframing them so they can benefit female soldiers rather than control them (Hoffman & Cowan, 2010). This allows female soldiers to benefit from the power behind the policies, while still furthering their mission. Doing so provides female soldiers with more agency, and more importantly, agency that is recognized within and outside the organization. For SFC Sara, these upcoming policy changes are particularly important, as they create an opportunity for change with the United States Army and beyond, as she offered:

\textsuperscript{26} Military Occupation Specialty—otherwise known as the specific job a soldier has within the Army.
Times are changing for our country and more importantly, for our Army, which is great. So I’m looking forward to the changes, because I think it is a new era for our Army, and it is a new era for women.

Similarly, LTC Alexis posited, “I know the Army is opening up a bunch of positions for women on April 1 and that will help combat those misperceptions [about women].” As SFC Sara and LTC Alexis shared, changes to Army policy creates an opportunity for women. Additionally, these policy changes are indirectly a result of the work that female soldiers have already done. Females in the United States Army and military as a whole have come a long way from very humble beginnings. While female involvement in military action used to be limited to volunteer positions within auxiliary units, women have earned the right to serve as fully recognized personnel in the United States military. While some still maintain that it is a privilege for women to serve in the military, female soldiers have valiantly fought and died for their rights in the United States Army and military as a whole. Although female personnel are still marginalized in the Army, and in many ways within the greater American society, rather than being constrained by discrimination, female soldiers continue to create agency for themselves by seizing every opportunity presented to them within the confines of the United States Army. As such, female soldiers are using every resource available to them, turning organizational control into opportunity, which is, in many ways, the ultimate expression of agency within an organization.

**Summary of results.** For the women serving in today’s Army, there are still many barriers that prevent women from achieving success as easily as their male counterparts. Female soldiers are still subject to many forms of gender discrimination in the United States Army, both through official limiting structures such as policies that exclude women, as well as by the
masculine-dominated culture that continues to show a cultural preference for males, regardless of their capabilities. Female soldiers are also unfairly stereotyped as being weaker and less able than their male counterparts, despite the fact that female soldiers have excelled at every challenge presented to them while serving in the military. Another barrier that female soldiers face are the double binds of the Army’s lifestyle expectations that require females to walk a fine line between fulfilling the Army’s masculine ideals of strength, power, and competence while still maintaining their femininity. Additionally, even though the lifestyle of the Army is rather restrictive and not conducive to a healthy work-life balance, the Army’s preference of heteronormative ideals still reward female soldiers for being wives and mothers. Despite being culturally sanctioned, female soldiers who have families struggle with the demands of the Army and motherhood, especially given that the recent op tempo\textsuperscript{27} has meant that soldiers are deploying frequently or constantly undergoing extended trainings.

Although female soldiers are still subject to many barriers in the United States Army, they are finding ways to combat these barriers. For female soldiers serving in today’s Army, there are several primary responses to these barriers. Unfortunately, in response to the gender discrimination and negative stereotyping about female soldiers, many of today’s female soldiers suffer from a lack of self-confidence and esteem regarding their abilities as soldiers. While many soldiers outgrow these feelings of inadequacy, these struggles with self-esteem offer an opportunity for others to capitalize on their weaknesses. However, while female soldiers may experience more feelings of inadequacy than their male counterparts, female soldiers also respond to the barriers in more positive ways. One such way is by using physical fitness as a measurable level of success. While some female soldiers see the Army’s physical fitness

\textsuperscript{27} Op tempo, or operational tempo, is a term used to describe the frequency in which the Army (or specific units) is currently deploying or serving overseas missions, or stateside extended trainings.
requirements as a potential stumbling block, others use these standards to show that they are just as capable, if not more so, than their male counterparts. Another coping mechanism that female soldiers rely on is minimization, particularly of their experiences with gender discrimination. Rather than recognizing and reporting discriminatory actions, many female soldiers engage in minimization to downplay the severity or frequency of discrimination that they encounter. This is likely a result of the Army’s historic tendency to punish victims of sexual violence and discrimination, rather than the perpetrator. Regardless of the cause of the minimization, these behaviors are concerning, as they aid in the Army’s cultural acceptance of gender discrimination.

Despite the many barriers in the United States Army, female soldiers continue to combat these barriers and exert agency within the organization as a whole. One way this is accomplished by female soldiers is by collectively reclaiming their marginalized identity through bonding with each other. By recognizing the strength that they have as a whole, female soldiers are able to use their collective resources to further combat their marginalization. Additionally, female soldiers rely on their performance as soldiers as a means of agency within the culture. Given that the Army as a whole is an espoused meritocracy, measurable performance offers the best opportunity for soldiers to be recognized for their strength and skill rather than by their gender. Additionally, the success that is a reward for performance also helps reduce the feelings of inadequacy that female soldiers experience early in their Army careers. Finally, female soldiers also use Army policy as a means of agency. By capitalizing on the opportunity provided by policy changes, female soldiers are able to prove time and time again that they are just as capable and qualified as male soldiers. Now that I have shared the results of my study, in the next section I will problematize some of the findings, as well as offer some applied suggestions.
that may help increase the status of women in the United States Army. Finally, I will identify some of this study’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as some areas for further study.
Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain further insight regarding the current status of female soldiers in the United States Army. Throughout the interview process, the nine women who participated in the study shared a wide array of stories about their lives as soldiers. For the women who serve in today’s Army, there are still many barriers that they must face and overcome on a daily basis. Gender discrimination within the United States military is a topic that has been previously studied in many fields; however, scholarly research in this area has been lacking a communication studies perspective. As such, this study sought to begin to fill that gap. Using structuration theory as a theoretical framework for the analysis, I was able to find many important commonalities across the stories of my participants. I used constructivist grounded theory to guide this study, in order to provide an open exploration into the way female soldiers experience life within the context of the United States Army. By using grounded theory, I was able to let my participants’ voices guide me throughout the research process. In the following sections, I will first discuss the theoretical contributions this study brings to the field of communication studies. Next, some practical applications are discussed, followed by an analysis of this study’s strengths and limitations, as well as areas for future research.

Theoretical Contributions

This study relied on structuration theory as the framework for analysis. While there have been many applications of structuration theory in the field of communication studies, no studies to my knowledge have examined an organization as rigidly hierarchical as the United States Army. Like any true hierarchy, those at the top of the organization have the most power. One of the barriers that female soldiers continue to face in the United States Army is that women are still a minority throughout the entirety of the Army, and particularly at the highest ranks of the
organization. Being a minority in this rigid hierarchy means that females have less agency than their male counterparts, as their contributions to the organization are either not taken seriously or ignored altogether. While applying structuration theory to the United States Army, I realized that the greatest barrier to agency affecting female soldiers is the lack of representation throughout the Army, particularly at the top of the organization. As structuration theory dictates, organizations and agents shape and change each other. One of the challenges that women face is the culture of the United States Army is still dominated by masculine values and voices that continue to degrade the contributions of women, thus further reducing the agency of female soldiers. As such, female soldiers must recognize that by participating in the reification of these values, they are furthering the hegemonic traditions of the United States Army that prevent female soldiers from being promoted up through the ranks as easily as the male soldiers.

One of the ways that female soldiers maximize their agency and voice within the culture of the United States Army is to join together to create a collective voice as a band of sisters. However, one of the most prominent mantras from this collective voice is the continued reification of gender discrimination at all levels within the United States Army. Female soldiers continue to be conditioned and coerced by the organization to ignore gender discrimination, thereby allowing these problems to remain hidden. It is crucial that female soldiers stop relinquishing their agency in this manner—if they don’t speak for themselves, no one else is going to speak up for them on this issue. The women who serve in today’s Army need to reverse their collective stance on gender discrimination and stop being complicit in their own oppression—rather than shaming those who have been discriminated against into silence, they should use their collective agency to protect and support each other through these difficult situations. If the female soldiers of today’s Army continue to systematically ignore gender
discrimination, they will allow gender discrimination to continue to create barriers for themselves and those women who will serve in the future. Additionally, it is important for the leadership of the United States Army to recognize the ways in which the overall culture of the organization of the United States Army continues to devalue female soldiers. Although female service in the United States Army (and Armed Forces as a whole) continues to steadily increase, the culture of the Army continues to be hostile to its female personnel. One of the primary difficulties for female soldiers is that the United States Army continues to officially limit their agency by marginally including them at all levels of the organizational hierarchy. However, the policies regarding women in combat are continually changing, offering hope that the official limitations on female agency in the United States Army will decrease. Additionally, the culture of the United States Army continues to privilege male values and voices, thus unofficially silencing and reducing the agency of female soldiers. As such, one of the most important future goals of the United States Army should focus on creating a culture that gives female soldiers equal status and agency. Now that I have identified how this research adds to the existing body of literature regarding women in the United States Army, I will now discuss some proposed applications that could be used by the United States Army (and military as a whole) to create a more inclusive culture as well as increased agency for female soldiers both individually and as a whole.

**Applied Approach**

As outlined above in the Theoretical Contributions section, the greatest challenge that female soldiers continue to face in the United States Army is that the overall organization systematically allows gender discrimination. The female soldiers are particularly key in this oppression, as they are allowing the abuse to remain hidden and shameful. One important
change that needs to occur within the United States Army is the creation of an environment that support, not shames, victims of gender discrimination. This, of course, is not easily accomplished. Changing attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors that are so ingrained within a culture requires time and dedicated effort, as well as strategy.

Given the data that I have analyzed from the participants in this study, I believe that the best way for the United States Army to handle this problem is to begin addressing the problem early and thoroughly. First, the United States Army needs to do a better job of ensuring that the perpetrators of such acts are the ones who are punished, rather than the recipients and victims. Currently, the culture of the United States Army continues to be forgiving and supportive of negative masculine ideals that further gender discrimination. By creating a system that punishes perpetrators of gender discrimination, the United States Army will take great steps in defeating the taboo nature of gender discrimination in the United States Army.

The United States Army needs to create a system that will allow female soldiers to report instances of gender discrimination without fear of reprisal. However, perhaps more importantly, the United States Army needs to train all of its personnel, both male and female, to recognize gender discrimination in all its forms. Currently, the training that the United States Army offers on gender discrimination is combined with training regarding sexual harassment and assault, topics that are generally considered to be taboo within American society and particularly in the masculine culture of the military. Given the inherent shame of anything that is related to sexual violence, combining education on gender discrimination with information regarding sexual assault furthers the shaming of victims of both gender discrimination and sexual assault. By creating gender discrimination awareness and prevention training that is not linked to sexual harassment and assault, the United States Army will be more able to encourage its soldiers to
realize that being a victim of gender discrimination is not shameful. Although this will require a cultural change within the organization, successfully undergoing such a change will create a better, more inclusive environment for women in the Army.

While this sort of training may be a costly undertaking for the United States Army, many positive benefits for both the individual soldiers and the overall organization will result. Gender discrimination in organizations has been shown to be a gateway to sexual harassment and sexual assault (Fitzgerald, Magley, Drasgow, & Waldo, 1999). By creating an environment where gender discrimination is not tolerated, the United States Army will gradually see a reduction in the frequency of sexual harassment and violence within the ranks. Additionally, female soldiers have a much lower retention rate than their male counterparts, which causes the United States Army to waste millions of dollars every year on training soldiers who will ultimately leave the Army much sooner than the average male. The United States Army, therefore, has a much lower return on investment for female soldiers, which is a waste of money, a waste of government resources, and a waste of talent. The United States Army continues to suffer from a decline in the quality and preparedness of soldiers, as a result of having two extended active combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. While creating better gender discrimination training and reporting methods will not solve all of the United States Army’s problems, an environment can be created that is better for female soldiers and for the overall readiness of the United States Army.

Another area in which the United States Army needs to improve on are the policies regarding the female body. While the United States Army has created physical fitness regulations for males and females, the United States Army has failed to create different measures that accommodate the body differences between males and females (O’Keefe, 2013). Namely,
the United States Army does not recognize that males and females vastly differ in terms of hip and waist ratio (O’Keefe, 2013). This is an important distinction, and currently causes many issues for women, as a woman who has big hips but is within the accepted weight range for her height can still be penalized for being outside of the weight regulations (O’Keefe, 2013). Making these policy changes will create an environment that more fairly evaluates female soldiers, while also helping them feel more confident and experience less stress during their military training.

Another struggle that is unique to female soldiers is that the United States Army does not offer post-natal physical fitness programs to help women lose weight after having a baby, as shared by SFC Sara and CW3 Angela, who both identified struggles with their bodies post-birth. Female soldiers are required to be back to their pre-pregnancy weights within 180 days of giving birth; failure to do so means that soldiers are assigned a probationary status, which is re-evaluated in six months and those who have not remedied the problem are immediately discharged for failing to meet Army physical standards (O’Keefe, 2013). Being assigned probationary status also has negative effects on soldiers’ promotion status, even if those soldiers do return to their pre-pregnancy weight within the six month period (O’Keefe, 2013). This causes many problems for both the Army and female soldiers, and yet, is a problem that could easily be solved. The military already offers specialized pregnancy physical fitness training alternatives that include exercise such as yoga and low impact cardiovascular exercise, as opposed to the usual strength training and traditional high impact cardiovascular exercise that is found in the average physical fitness training (O’Keefe, 2013). By creating postpartum pregnancy physical fitness training programs for female soldiers, the United States Army will be
able to care for the soldiers both physically and emotionally, as well as increase the retention rates of female soldiers with children.

As previously discussed, women in the United States Army are quite adept at creating informal mentoring networks. Although these informal networks provide both professional and social support, creating a more formalized mentoring network could help ensure that all female soldiers are able to find support through mentors. Mentoring in the United States Army is important not only for moral support for female soldiers, but also reinforces some of the Army’s central tenets, especially in regards to teamwork, as explained by COL Chelsea:

There was an element of teamwork there [in Basic]. There was no time where you felt alone. You always had your peers there, helping you along if you needed it and wanted it, or if they saw you stumble. We try to instill that in the military…That’s how the Army rolls. They rolled like that 24 years ago and they still roll like that. And people learn early on that even though you’re “An Army of one,” you can’t do anything without someone else helping you out. So, you know, it’s huge about teamwork and it’s huge about putting that leadership element in that you can be leadership today but make sure that you’re taking care of people first and mission always. I think they try and instill that with the warrior ethos—with the never leave fallen comrades behind, and that pops out at me immediately when I think about it.

These informal networks seem to be very beneficial for female soldiers, and if implemented correctly, a formal mentoring network could yield even greater results both for individual soldiers and the larger organization. Mentoring in the military has been previously studied, but in a very limited capacity, and all currently available studies focus on the practice of mixed gender mentoring, rather than female to female mentoring as this study advocates (Archer,
The practice of minority mentoring has been shown to promote positive change within organizations (Blood, Ullrich, Hirshfeld-Becker, Seely, Connelly, Warfield, & Emans, 2012; Kalbfleisch & Davies, 1991; Vega, Yglesias, & Murray, 2010). Creating a more formalized mentoring network in the United States Army could help foster the proposed gender discrimination training changes, and could potentially cause an increase in the retention rate of female soldiers.

For the women who choose to don the United States Army uniform and serve our country, there are many obstacles that they must overcome in order to be successful. While the policies of the United States Army seek to create an organization that is inclusive of female soldiers, the culture of the United States Army continues to be less welcoming. In some situations, the Army’s culture uses group cohesion amongst male personnel as a way of keeping female personnel on the outside. However, despite the lack of a warm welcome, there are many personnel who really identify with the ideal of valuing a team over individuals, and thus learn to create their own support networks with other female soldiers who feel marginalized by the United States Army. Like COL Chelsea indicates, the female soldiers learn to trust and depend on each other and they use those connections not just to further themselves, but to further the potential of all female soldiers, by “make[ing] sure that you’re taking care of people first and mission always.” As explained by CPL Courtney,

It’s something that not a lot of people do, and especially women—there still aren’t very many women in uniform, so I like to think that I’m doing my part to help change that and to show people that women are just as capable at being soldiers as men are. I think that in many instances, females have to work harder to gain legitimacy, whereas men kinda get that automatically in the military. I think it’s bullshit, but that it absolutely happens.
Our Basic and Advanced trainings are the same, but women’s basic often has this reputation of being softer, which is why I try to make people see that it’s not, and that we’re [women] not.

As COL Chelsea and CPL Courtney offer above, female soldiers can gain agency by leading by example to the United States Army at large, but perhaps more importantly, as an example and a mentor for other female soldiers. As explained by LTC Martha,

I’ve had some really amazing mentors throughout my career…So I decided that if I stayed in the Army, I could maybe help make the Army experience better for some other women, and save them some of the heartache I had when I first came in. I think a lot of women are conditioned to believe that they’re not good leaders—not just in the Army but everywhere, seriously. But I think that’s a load of bull crap. So I decided that I needed to stay in because there were bound to be other women who would eventually work for me and if I could be a mentor for them, well, maybe we could start changing perceptions.

Like CPL Courtney, LTC Martha sees mentoring as an opportunity for female soldiers to create change within the culture of the United States Army. While gender discrimination continues to permeate the ranks of the United States Army and act as a constraint upon the success of women, those soldiers who choose to endure and continue as soldiers, in spite of the hardships, are exerting agency and demonstrating that female soldiers do have the means to promote changes within the masculine dominated culture of the United States Army.

By relying on each other for support, women in the United States Army are using the constraints of the hegemonic culture to their advantage to create a strong subculture of female soldiers who are capable, confident, and willing to help each other out. This is very important in an organization that still has a strong “good ol’ boys” network within it, because it provides
female soldiers a chance not only to help each other get ahead, but to also set an example and make others see that female soldiers are competent, adept soldiers, as evinced by LTC Martha:

Like I said, what I like most about being in the Army is that I get to help others become what they’ve always dreamed of being. I get to help with that. I get to lead by example. I get to counsel people and help them figure out what they need to do. I get to be the one who pushes people in the right direction. I love that. I’m good at that. And I think I’m good at teaching others to be that way. There aren’t enough officers in the Army who take the time to really teach that to young females and they need it. They need it not because they aren’t capable of it otherwise, but because no one has ever told them that they can do it. And that makes a difference, for sure. I think that’s the key to success in the Army—you have to believe you can do it and so many young women don’t. They don’t come in with the egos that men do. They don’t come in knowing that there have been millions of men just like them who have come in and done the jobs and made the differences. Grant, Sherman—all the big generals we learn about are men. The natural assumption is that they’re good at it and girls aren’t. So they just need that extra kick in the ass to know that they can. That’s why I lead by example because I can show other women that they can be me and they can be even better than me.

As the above narratives demonstrate, there may be a “good ol’ boys” network mentality ingrained throughout the culture of the United States Army, but there is also a collective resistance of female soldiers who refuse to be ignored, forgotten, or passed over. While today’s female soldiers are still fighting for legitimacy within the culture of the United States Army, female soldiers have shown, and continue to prove to others within and outside of the Army, that female soldiers are just as valuable of an asset to the Army as their male counterparts.
One of the greatest challenges that women still face in today’s Army are the societal beliefs that men are inherently capable of soldiering, whereas women are not. These beliefs have many repercussions for the women who serve in uniform. They prevent them from being fully integrated into the culture, or reaching their full potential, within the United States Army. Structuration theory provides a pragmatic framework for understanding just how devastating this sort of discrimination can be. According to structuration theory, individual agents within an organization have the power to change the culture and vice versa. The organization of the United States Army exerts power and molds agents into the type of soldiers that the organization demands. However, by continuing to diminish the capabilities and contributions of female soldiers, the organization is effectively curtailing the positive change that could occur if women were fully integrated into the military. As a rigidly hierarchical organization, the United States Army is very effective at silencing those at the bottom of the power structure. By preventing women from being able to advance freely through the rank system, the United States Army is preventing women from gaining equal ground within the United States Army.

Despite the many proverbial roadblocks present within the United States Army, there have been women who have been able to successfully navigate through the ranks and have been able to influence change within the organization and culture of the United States Army. Although women serving in today’s Army are still subject to many forms of gender discrimination and harassment, the United States Army continues to make great progress toward becoming more accepting and inclusive of its female soldiers at all levels. These changes have been hard won battles, and though some progress has been made, this section underscores that for all the changes made within the United States Army, there are still many more changes that need to be enacted.
Strengths & Limitations

Conducting studies regarding personnel in the United States military is very difficult, given that the United States Army and military as a whole functions as a closed system. By using insider connections, I was able to conduct this study without the scrutiny of the Army, therefore affording my participants’ confidentiality. Doing so encouraged my participants to share their narratives openly, allowing me to gain access to some of the experiences, both positive and negative, associated with Army service. One of the strengths of this study is that female soldiers are rarely given a chance to share stories regarding their experiences within the United States Army. This study provided in-depth personal accounts of today’s female soldiers. By providing female soldiers with a safe space to share their experiences and stories, this study was able to create a window into the otherwise unavailable, secretive world of the United States Army. Given the small sample size and the personal nature of the collected narratives, this study does not seek to be generalizable, but rather to provide a snapshot summary of the current experience of female soldiers in the United States Army. Despite the fact that this study only had nine participants, the participants represented a wealth of variety in terms of age, rank, and length of service. Although it is not designed to be generalizable, the consistency of experiences across the participants offers much insight into the day to day lives of female soldiers, and creates many opportunities for further studies.

Future Directions

This study provides a preliminary understanding of the current status of female soldiers in the United States Army. Through the voice of my participants, I was able to identify some of the continued struggles of female soldiers, mainly regarding gender discrimination, particularly providing clarity to the many ways that gender discrimination continues to affect female soldiers.
As this study revealed, many of the work-life balance issues stem from the greater problem of gender discrimination. It is important to continue monitoring gender discrimination in the United States Army because it has a negative impact on the culture of the Army. In addition to continuing broad research regarding gender discrimination in the United States Army, another area that needs more research is the United States Army’s policies and treatment of soldiers who are mothers. Additionally, parenting on a military base causes a unique blending of the public and private sphere. However, few studies examine this issue, particularly from a communication perspective; as such, further studies are needed to understand how this phenomenon affects military families. Military families as a whole have been largely neglected by communication studies, and further studies regarding the effects of deployments on the families of military personnel, as well as the military personnel themselves are needed.

The self-confidence issues of female soldiers previously discussed is another potential area for future studies, particularly studies that focus on ways to promote confidence and advocating healthier self-perceptions for female soldiers. Given that the United States Army has created a culture in which discriminatory behaviors and degradation of female personnel is culturally accepted and legitimized by both male and female personnel, further studies are also needed to understand how marginalization of gender discrimination furthers the cycle of abuse in the United States Army. Doing so could create opportunities for creating new preventative measures in the future that address both the causes and the effects of the marginalization.

Another key area for research is mentoring. This study offers some insight into the informal mentoring networks that female soldiers create for themselves, but it is a very limited overview. Further research should be done to understand the benefits and risks associated with the informal
networking among female soldiers. This research could be used to design and implement more formalized mentoring programs for female soldiers.

Additionally, this study revealed that structuration theory offers great insight into the functionality of the United States Army. Given how well structuration theory can be applied to the United States Army, it would be interesting to see if it is also applicable to other branches of the United States military. Finally, another area of research that should be pursued is the study of the use of language within the culture of the military. Throughout the interviews, I noted many instances of derogatory and crude language used both by the participants themselves, as well as instances when others directed such language towards the female soldiers. Given that language is such an inherently important part of every culture, it would be interesting to study whether the crude and derogatory language is used throughout the Army, and if so, how that affects female soldiers. Now that I have provided an overview of the theoretical and applied contributions of this study, as well as identified some strengths, weaknesses, and areas of future research, I will provide some concluding thoughts regarding this study.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

This study was designed to give female soldiers a chance to share their experiences. As a minority within the United States Army, female soldiers are still marginalized by the Army and society as a whole, and as a result, their stories are rarely heard. As a critical interpretive feminist scholar, my intent was to create that space and provide an outlet for female soldiers to speak freely, without fear of reprisal or repercussion. Not surprisingly, while initially finding participants was challenging, once involved in the study, my participants were thrilled to share their stories: As CW3 Angela shared, “No one has ever asked me to talk about my Army experience like this.” By using Giddens’ (1979, 1983) structuration theory, I was able to examine how the culture of the United States Army simultaneously includes and excludes female soldiers in a variety of ways.

Although women have long been involved in the United States military, females were not recognized as military personnel until WWII, when several women’s auxiliary branches were created. These auxiliary branches were not actually considered to be part of the official military, and as such, women were not afforded rank, retirement, or other benefits associated with military service. Gradually, the women’s auxiliary branches were folded into the existing military branches, so that women could finally be recognized as official military personnel. Since that point, the United States military has been continually undergoing the gender integration process. The gender integration process of the United States military has been widely debated and subject to great scrutiny and disapproval. As such, women continue to be a marginalized minority, particularly in the United States Army. The United States Army has more female personnel than any branch, and yet, women continued to be discriminated against in a variety ways.
For the women of today’s Army, gender discrimination continues to be one of the greatest barriers to success. Gender discrimination takes many forms: through official policy, but also throughout the culture, where a preference for males permeates all levels of the United States Army. This cultural bias continues to promote negative stereotypes regarding the abilities of women as soldiers, and this has a great negative impact on the self-esteem and confidence of new female soldiers, who are conditioned to believe that they are inherently less talented at soldiering than their male counterparts. Despite this, female soldiers continue to excel in the United States Army, as time and time again they have risen to the challenges presented to them. By doing so, female soldiers continue to unlock and earn positions in the United States Army from which they were previously banned.

The legitimacy of female soldiers is not only questioned within the culture of the United States Army, but also within greater society. Despite the many changes within American culture, society as a whole still places more value on females as mothers and wives than as professionals. Warfare is a typically masculine occupation, and American society is still indoctrinated to believe that males are inherently better warriors, whereas women are stereotypically cast as caretakers, especially in the home. Additionally, the United States Army still has a preference for heteronormative traditions. As such, female soldiers are still pressured internally and externally to marry men and raise children. Childrearing in the United States Army is very challenging, especially given that the women of today’s Army deploy as frequently as their male counterparts, a norm that began with the simultaneous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. While male soldiers are continually heralded for their service, female soldiers are condemned for the same. This condemnation has many negative repercussions for female soldiers.
Despite all the negativity surrounding female military involvement, the women of today’s Army continue to be proud of their achievements as individuals and as a whole. Female soldiers are also very much aware that their presence is still monitored closely, which causes female soldiers to be ever mindful of the repercussions of their actions. The women of today’s Army are fiercely dedicated to their country and Army, but also to each other. By creating informal networks, female soldiers are supporting each other and their cause, fueled by the hope of creating a better Army, one that is more inclusive and welcoming of all soldiers; one that celebrates soldiers based on success, rather than gender, as eloquently explained by LTC Martha:

I think that I’ve been able to change at least some people’s perceptions of female soldiers and to me, that’s huge. Because that leaves a legacy, that helps create an Army that treats women better in the future. So maybe, just maybe, one day, maybe I’ll have a daughter or a friend will have a daughter and she’ll join the Army and she won’t be called a female soldier…she’ll just be a soldier because she won’t be outside the norm like we still are today.

Just like their predecessors, the women of today’s Army continue to struggle with gender discrimination. Although the opportunities for women in the United States Army and military are continually expanding, the culture of the Army and American society still do not fully support and value females as soldiers. While policies continue to change to be more inclusive, the lack of change within the Army and American society continue to squelch opportunity for females, especially female soldiers. Despite the residual sexism of society and the Army, female soldiers continue to make strides towards a more fully gender integrated Army and society, moving slowly but surely towards the ideal that one day soldiers will be evaluated based on their abilities and actions, rather than their gender.
References


Fish, A. M. (2012). *Female United States military officers: Taking charge, challenging stereotypes, and changing history.* Unpublished manuscript, Department of Communication Studies, Hollins University, Roanoke, VA.


Appendix B

Diagram of the United States Army Operational Units. This diagram was retrieved from [http://www.army.mil/info/organization/unitsandcommands/oud/](http://www.army.mil/info/organization/unitsandcommands/oud/)

Operational Unit Diagrams

This diagram provides information on how Army operational units are organized - from the Theater Army, Field Army and Army Group level, down through Corps, Divisions, Brigades, Battalions, Companies, Platoons and ending with Squads & Sections - and the typical rank of the Commander of these type units. It also provides a listing of additional unit types that don’t fall cleanly into this hierarchal structure. A short description of each organization is provided when you select a box, or when you select one of the additional unit types.
### Appendix C

**Participant Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Years of Service</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Service Status</th>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PVT Cara</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>E2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Active Duty</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPL Courtney</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>E4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Corporal; Non-Commissioned Officer&lt;sup&gt;28&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Active Duty</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFC Sara</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>E7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Sergeant First Class; Non-Commissioned Officer</td>
<td>Active Duty</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CW3 Angela</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>W3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Chief Warrant Officer</td>
<td>Active Duty</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPT Catherine</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>O3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Active Duty</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPT Jenny</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>O3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Honorably Discharged</td>
<td>Native American &amp; White</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTC Alexis</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>O5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel</td>
<td>Active Duty</td>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTC Martha</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>O5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel</td>
<td>Active Duty&lt;sup&gt;29&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COL Chelsea</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>O6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>Active Duty</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>28</sup> In the United States Army, the term non-commissioned officer, or NCO, is used to describe enlisted personnel who have earned the rank of E4 and higher. NCOs are considered to be the lowest level of leadership within Army units. NCOs are usually in charge of supervisor several junior enlisted personnel and primarily serve as being models of expected behaviors for their junior enlisted personnel.

<sup>29</sup> At the time of the interview, this participant was still on Active duty, however, as of May 1, 2014, this individual received full military retirement, with honor.
Appendix D

Final Interview Guide
Marginalized Inclusion: A Qualitative Examination of Female Soldiers in the U.S. Army

Name:
Note: The “name” is a coded name assigned by the principle investigators. An example of a coded name is “Participant A”.
Age:
Rank:
Branch:
Enlisted or Officer:
Years of Service:

General/Introductory Questions
1. Where are you from/where did you grow up?

2. Officers only: Were you part of an ROTC program?

Pre-military experience
3. When did you first develop an interest in serving in the military?

4. Why did you decide to join the military?

Military Experience
5. What is your favorite memory of being in the military?

6. What was your experience during basic training?

7. What is your specific job/role within the military?

8. Do you enjoy your job?

9. Do you feel like you are properly trained and prepared to do your job?

10. Do you ever feel like you are unable (for any reason) to perform your job adequately? If so, can you please explain this feeling?

11. What is your greatest accomplishment during your military career to date?

12. What has been your greatest challenge during your military career to date?

13. Have you ever been deployed? If so, how many times have you deployed?

14. What was the length and location of each deployment?
15. What were some of the greatest challenges associated with deployments?

16. What were some of the benefits associated with deployments?

17. Have you ever received any medals or other special recognition?

18. Overall, has your experience with the military been what you expected?

19. How long do you plan on serving in the military?

20. Are your current plans for length of service the same as when you joined? If not, can you please explain some factors that affected your change of plans?

21. Do you have any regrets about your military service to date?

22. Have you ever encountered any negative feedback from significant others based on your career choice?

23. How does your family feel about your career? Are there any members that were particularly against your decision to join the military? Are there any that were particularly supportive of your decision?

24. Have you ever had a situation in which you felt that you were discriminated against because of your gender?

25. How do you think the military experience is different for females vs. males?

26. Do you think the Army is different now than when you first joined? Why or why not?

27. Female military personnel are often portrayed by the media as overly strong and masculine Amazons or damsels in distress (such as Jessica Lynch). Have you ever felt like those stereotypes have been applied to you? Have you ever seen those stereotypes used against others?

28. Are there any jobs/roles within the military that women are currently excluded from that you personally would be interested in? (ex: direct combat roles such as Navy SEALs)

29. In your opinion, why do you think that women are excluded from direct combat roles?

30. What advice would you give to young women thinking about military service?
Appendix E

Informed Consent Form

Study Title  Marginalized Inclusion: A Qualitative Examination of Female Soldiers in the United States Army

Study Purpose and Rationale
The purpose of this research project is to gain further understanding of the current status of female personnel within the United States Army. Findings from this research may help create an environment that is more hospitable and accepting of female United States Army personnel.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria
To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be at least 18 years old and identify as female. You must also be currently serving in the United States Army, United States Army Reserves, or United States Army National Guard, or have previously served in the United States Army, United States Army Reserves, or United States Army National Guard.

Participation Procedures and Duration
For this project, you will be asked to participate in an in-depth interview regarding your personal history and experiences in the United States Army. The interview will take approximately 1-2 hours and will be conducted by phone at your convenience.

Audio or Video Tapes (if applicable)
For purposes of accuracy, with your permission, the interviews will be audio/video taped. Any names used on the audiotape will be changed to pseudonyms when the tapes are transcribed. The tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office until the end of May 2014 and will then be erased.

Data Confidentiality or Anonymity
All data will be maintained as confidential and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data.

Storage of Data
Paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s office until the end of May 2014 and will then be shredded. Electronically stored data will be kept on the researcher’s password-protected computer. In order to protect the identities of the participants, all consent forms will be stored in a secure location that will only be accessed the principle researcher. All collected data will be coded and any identifying information will be changed to minimize the risk of a breach of confidentiality. The consent forms, revised data, raw data, and data key will all be stored in separate, secure locations that can only be accessed by the principle researcher. The raw data, informed consent form, and data key will not be shared with the U. S. Army or any affiliates thereof for any reason unless required by law. Results will not be released or reported in any way that might allow for the identification of individual participants, unless otherwise required by law. Final coded data (with all identifiers removed) will be kept indefinitely for use in future studies.
**Risks or Discomforts**
The data collected for this project will be confidential. In order to decrease the risk of breaching confidentiality, all consent forms will be stored in secure location that will only be accessed by the principle researcher. The collected data will be stored in a separate, secure location that will only be accessed by the principle researcher. All data will be coded and any identifying information will be changed to minimize risk. The data key and original raw data will also be stored in separate, secure locations that can only be accessed by the principle researcher. The raw data, informed consent forms, and data key will not be shared with the U.S. Army or any affiliates thereof for any reason unless required by law. Results will not be released or reported in any way that might allow for the identification of individual participants, unless otherwise required by law.

Some of the questions may ask participants to recall situations in which they felt uncomfortable or powerless. Recalling these situations may cause temporary psychological discomfort. All participation in this interview is voluntary. Participants reserve the right to refuse to answer any question or withdraw from participation at any point for any reason.

**Benefits**
Potential benefits that participants may attain from participation in this research study include: being able to tell her story and having someone listen, as well as the satisfaction of knowing that they have contributed to a better understanding of the changing status and experience of women in the military as well as the challenges women face in non-traditional careers.

**Voluntary Participation**
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. You may also refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason at any time. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

**IRB Contact Information**
For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070 or at irb@bsu.edu.

**Study Title**  Marginalized Inclusion: A Qualitative Examination of Female Soldiers in the United States Army

**********

**Consent**
I, __________________, agree to participate in this research project entitled, “The Effect of Early Childhood Experiences on Interest in Exercise.” I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.
Informed Consent form continued

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

_________________________________________________________ _______________________
Participant’s Signature Date

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator: Faculty Supervisor:
AnnaBeth M. Fish, Graduate Student Dr. Angela Day
Communication Studies Communication Studies
Ball State University Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306 Muncie, IN 47306
Telephone: (267) 772-3820 Telephone: (765) 285-1952
Email: amfish@bsu.edu Email: amday3@bsu.edu