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Military Enlistment: The Motivations of Former Military Personnel Coming From Single-Parent Homes

Jada Amber Philips
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Jada Philips

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Single-Parent Homes

by

Jada Amber Philips

MA, John Jay College, 2010

MA, John Jay College, 2008

BA, Mount Mary University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

June 2015

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how the single-parent home environment, together with other demographic attributes like socioeconomic status, influenced young adults' decisions to enlist in the military. Adolescents transitioning into adulthood are often faced with the choices of what to do after high school, such as whether or not to join the military. Previous studies on youth enlistment in the military do not address in-depth the question of why they enlist or their motivating factors. Interviews via face-to-face, over the phone or via Skype, were conducted with 9 participants between the ages of 25-35 years who were high school graduates or GED holders who enlisted within 2 years from graduation, from single-parent homes, and separated from the military on their own accord prior to starting the study. Participants were voluntarily recruited through social media using purposeful sampling. Guided by Carl Rogers' theory of self-concept, data were analyzed via coding techniques to draw out common themes, and 4 composite themes emerged: (a) those individuals raised by absentee mothers were more likely to enlist in the military service, (b) troubled homes predicted the desire of the young adults to leave their homes, (c) evasion from the family conflict and financial stability were motivations for enlistment in the military, and (d) deprivation from human basic needs influenced the decision to enlist in the military. The findings can help with determining factors that cause disconnect in the family structure along with gaining a greater understanding a child's sense of belonging such as what is found in the military culture. Results can also be used to influence military professionals/recruiters about the specific types of individuals who are likely to be recruited into the military and how to develop and/or use tools to further assess the ability to sustain the military culture.

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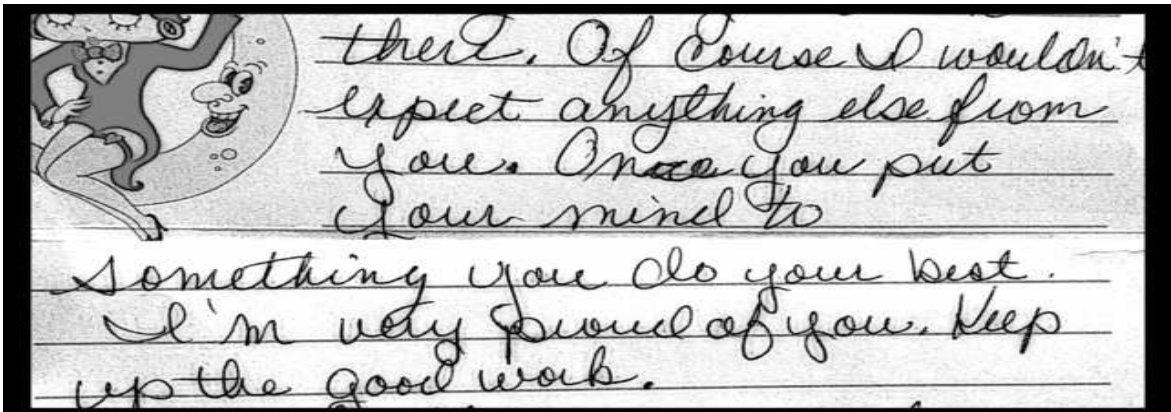
Psychology

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my close family and friends, you all know who you are. A special feeling of gratitude and appreciation goes to my husband, Dell Philips, for the love and encouragement you gave and the sacrifices you made during the span of this graduate program. Thank you for understanding the demands of the degree, to include the hardships that came when many, many hours were spent away from home to work two part-time jobs and internship. I also dedicate my dissertation to my parents. My dad, Stuart Dove, taught me to never settle unless it makes me happy. With his hands full with five daughters, this is just one of the many ways to say thank you for all that you have done and continue to do! My mom, Patricia, taught me to be a strong, independent woman. And without her, I probably would not have taken my educational journey this far. Her confidence in me has never left, and I will never forget the following words written to me while I was in military training 3 weeks before her passing:



So I say to the heavens above, thank you Mom. I miss you and I love you always!

Lastly, I must put out a special dedication to a former client from my veteran peer-to-peer support line who helped me brainstorm. She defined the real meaning of reciprocal peer support after taking time to work with me on finding a topic.

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Although a dissertation is essentially an individual work, I could never have reached the heights or explored the depths without the assistance, guidance, support, and efforts of others. First of all, I thank Dr. Tony Hobson, my committee chair, and Dr. Denise Horton, my second committee member. I thank you both for your ongoing support, direction, advice, and help throughout this dissertation journey. Without your continuous encouragement and constructive feedback, I would not have been able to complete this dissertation. I really do appreciate all the time and work you two have put forth to ensure I succeed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Adolescents transitioning into adulthood are often faced with the choices of what to do once they leave high school. These choices often include one of three options: postsecondary education (i.e., college), joining the workforce, or enlisting into the military (Spence, Henderson, & Elder, 2012). For those who come from a single-parent home, one option was college after graduating from high school. However, not everything goes as planned, especially with the possibilities of unprecedented challenges and issues. Examples of these issues are (a) lack of parental guidance, (b) lack of financial assistance, (c) struggle for work, and (d) work-life-balance. My dissertation topic was influenced by these pressing issues, especially because I have experienced them on a personal level. My intent with this dissertation was to review the reasons why an individual chooses to join the military, with an emphasis on the fact that the military might offer a more secure environment from one's current situation. This includes the assurance of having the following key needs met: discipline, routine, steady income, job security, camaraderie, and connection.

Background of the Problem

As of 2004, Department of Defense statistics have shown that nearly 200,000 youth enlist in the military each year. As of 2011, the Department of Defense reported recruitment numbers for the five months from July to November 2011 were 42,437 men and women (Department of Defense, 2011). However, these statistics do not address the question of why people enlist in the military or their motivating factors. Research has

shown that single-parent homes, social isolation, and socioeconomic status are key predictors of military enlistment (Bachman, Sigelman, & Diamond, 1987; Spence et al., 2012). Kleykamp (2006) suggested that economic benefits that accrue from enlistment can also provide motivation to join, such as social mobility for disadvantaged minorities, steady employment, civilian-equivalent jobs, and educational benefits.

Still, others may choose to enlist as a means of breaking away from financial inadequacy at home, or perhaps due to a lack of opportunity, or even simply from the persuasiveness of recruiters (Hagopian & Barker, 2011). However, few researchers have examined these motivations in detail. Of the potential motivations, breaking or moving away from problems and difficulties that exist in enlistees' home lives is one of the common concerns, which often include unstable and/or alternative homes, social isolation, and even abuse (Spence et al., 2012). In cases where enlistment is motivated by a desire to move from home rather than to the military, it is unclear why one would chose enlistment rather than civilian options. This dissertation examined the experiences of young adults coming from single-parent homes who were motivated to enlist in the military and why enlistment ended up being the route they chose.

In this chapter, the research background covers some of the existing literature related to military enlistment and the motivational factors involved. The research problem and research questions are defined and identified. The theoretical underpinnings and the nature of the study are discussed. The scope and delimitations are described. Finally, the significance of the study is presented, followed by an outline of subsequent chapters and their content.

Selected articles relating to military enlistment and the motivational factors will be discussed in Chapter 2 and include some of the following authors. Bachman et al. (1987) provided information on the self-selection process by examining individuals who have not yet served in the military, comparing those who had plans to serve versus those who did not. The authors also gave information regarding those who do plan to serve as to whether or not they anticipate having military careers. Kleykamp (2006) provided information on factors associated with military enlistment that included an examination of educational goals, institutional presence of the military in the communities, and race and socioeconomic status. Spence et al. (2012) provided insight into the link between adolescent family structure and military enlistment. The authors examined the differences in family structures, including alternative structures such as single-parent households. Woodruff et al. (2006) provided information on individuals' inclination to join the military and how it has slowly decreased over the years. Burdette et al. (2009) examined the relationship between religiosity and motivation to military service, finding that self-identified religious evangelicals were more likely to enlist compared to religious nonevangelicals and nonreligious individuals. Hinojosa (2010) examined the self-concept of male military personnel and premilitary recruits using grounded theory in order to understand the role of military involvement in defining their masculinity and the importance of masculinity within their self-concept. The above literature will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, linking it with the current study's theoretical framework and the research problem that will be described in the next section.

Problem Statement

A basic analysis of the U.S. military complex reveals that huge armies of untrained or undertrained soldiers have, for years, been considered not merely a questionable strategy for military effectiveness but also a positive drain upon resources that might be more usefully directed (Krueger, 2006). Note that the effectiveness of the modern military in the United States, as in many other countries, is based on technology, skill, training, and expertise (Krueger, 2006). Modern battlefield equipment requires extensive training to operate and significant expertise to maintain. Even the most physical roles often require grueling training, practice, and expertise with a variety of weapons (Krueger, 2006).

This change in emphasis from troop numbers to troop skill has meant that military recruiters are not looking for “warm bodies,” but people with the physical, intellectual, educational, and psychological fitness to fulfill their military roles (Dobkin & Shabani, 2009). Moreover, the significant investment of time, money, and training that goes into preparing personnel means that motivation has become a key factor to consider in accepting enlistees (Warner & Asch, 2001). Those with temporary or fragile motivations will be less likely to endure the requirements of training and are more likely to leave at the earliest opportunity, taking with them the investment the military has made in them (Cigrang, Todd, & Carbone, 2000).

Thus, it is fair to assume that the prospective recruits must not only have high motivations for joining the military, but that their motivation must be of such character that it can withstand the rigors of training (Lucas, Pankurst, & Hogg, n.d.). The military

must be able to choose from among prospective recruits whose motivations are not only strong, but also highly resilient so as not to waste the significant investment in training it will give to a recruit who will quit even before she or he is qualified for deployment (Cigrang et al., 2000). A few studies have been conducted that offered insight as to how a recruit's motivations can provide the drive necessary to complete training. These studies produced statistics of the demographics of individuals who were in the military. However, these studies barely, if at all, explored how such demographic and socioeconomic aspects affected an individual's decision to enlist in military services. Bridging this gap was the purpose of this study.

Purpose of the Study

The major research issue investigated in this study was how the single-parent home environment, together with other demographic attributes, such as age, gender, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status, affected a young adult's decision to enlist in military services (i.e., what their motivations were).

Study Parameters

To keep the study focused, I selected participants who enlisted in the military during the last two decades. This is because, as discussed in the review of related literature, socioeconomic condition was an important factor in influencing individuals to enlist. In addition, the first decade of this century, most specially, was marked by an economic condition that has not happened since the Great Depression as well as the beginning of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was important to keep the parameters of the study within the last two decades to make the findings of this study up-to-date and,

therefore, useful for those interested in using these findings for their broader implications (e.g., for policy making, recruitment). It has also allowed for more appropriately targeted recruiting campaigns, designed to attract the most effectively motivated recruits, and for modification or adjustment of training programs, benefits packages, or other aspects of military life to better retain the troops. Hence, the main objective of this research was to explore and identify the factors that motivate individuals from single-parent homes to enlist in military services. To keep the study focused, the participants who were invited to participate in the study were

- men and women between 25-35 years of age,
- individuals who were high school graduates (or received GED) who enlisted within 2 years from graduation,
- individuals who came from single-parent homes, and
- individuals who separated from the military on their accord (one's own choice without coercion) prior to the start of the study.

Research Questions

The overarching research question for this study was as follows: What role does the family structure play in a young adult's decision to enlist in the military? The specific research questions were as follows:

RQ1: Based on their experience, what aspects or characteristics of a single-parent home contributed to the decision of young adults to enlist in the military?

RQ2: What demographic attributes of young adults affect their decision to enlist in the military?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Rogers's (1947) theory of self-concept. According to this theory, "the self is the central ingredient in human personality and personal adjustment" (Purkey, 1988, para. 6). The theory has informed the study by approaching individuals as a *self* that perpetuates throughout the lifespan and is affected and directed by personality, experience, environment, and social factors, while affecting those factors in turn. In particular, scholars have viewed motivation as a part of self-concept and understood it to be a subjectively perceived and changeable facet of how a person views himself or herself (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Motivation can be changed both by external factors and by self-reassessment and experientially altered assessment criteria and values. In other words, motivation will not be viewed as a fixed facet of an individual or even a real or reified phenomenon, but rather as a subjective interpretation of self in relation to values, goals, and environmental context (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993).

This theoretical perspective was related to the research questions in such a way that Rogers's (1947) theory of the self is subjectively perceived and fluid. As such, an individual's self, as affected by and due to some factors (e.g., environment and social factors), makes him or her decide to enlist in military services. These individuals may perceive the environment within the military complex as something that can positively affect their condition, and, hence, also their self-concept. Viewing it this way, this research could explore if enlisting in military service is a form of escape from one

environment to a better one. The theoretical underpinning of this study is discussed further in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

This study was qualitative in design, consistent with the need to explore both the complexities of individual motivation and the need to develop broader hypotheses regarding motivations towards enlisting in the military. A greater understanding of enlistee motivation has allowed for more appropriately targeted recruiting campaigns designed to attract the most effectively motivated recruits and allowed for modification or adjustment of training programs, benefits packages, or other aspects of military life to better retain the troops (Dobkin & Shabani, 2009; Warner & Asch, 2001). More so, a greater understanding of enlistee motivation has provided a view on the psychological state of an individual's ability to adequately perform the tasks presented by the service, especially during wartime and active duty deployments. A further exploration on these individuals' motivations has provided insight indicative for effective and successful recruitment (Cigrang et al., 2000).

Recruitment Procedures

A purposeful (criterion-based) sampling was used for recruiting nine participants into the study. Listserv e-mails and social networking websites (Facebook and LinkedIn) were used to find and elicit recruits who met the inclusion criteria. All interested parties were sent further information about participation in the study through an e-mail. Those who contacted me or replied to the e-mail or post, expressing interest in participating in the study, were sent a preliminary questionnaire and a copy of the consent form through

e-mail. The questionnaire was used for basic personal information to confirm that each interested party met criteria to participate in the study.

Depending on the responses in the preliminary questionnaire, the participants were invited to participate in a face-to-face or phone interview, both of which would be audio recorded. A semi-structured interview was conducted, and participants' responses were transcribed verbatim. The transcript was then subjected to thematic content analysis.

The face-to-face and phone interviews called for a phenomenological analysis. Note that a key factor in accepting enlistees was an individual's motivations for enlisting in military service (Warner & Asch, 2001). Phenomenology aimed to describe the intentional experience without prior knowledge, biases, and explanations (Cohn, 1997).

The open-ended questions for the semi-structured interviews allowed for a richer understanding of the lives of those who were motivated to join the military and the factors within their lives that produced their motivations (Creswell, 2013). This form of questioning allowed me to have a rather structured interview while also allowing the participant to answer each question in his or her own words as opposed to identifying multiple choices as found in quantitative surveys.

Assumptions

For this research, I assumed that an individual's demographic profile (i.e., age, gender, educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and belonging to a single-parent home) had a significant effect on his or her decision to enlist in military service. This is due to the findings of some studies showing that demographic profiles were key predictors of military enlistments (Bachman et al., 1987; Spence et al., 2012). This

research also included the assumption that these participants with temporary motivation (reasons found in single-parent home structures) may have found that the discipline and stringency of the military training was a significant factor that could drive an individual to leave as early as the training phase.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this research was defined by the research questions identified previously. The factors covered were the demographic aspects of the participants and how these aspects motivated individuals to enlist. The chosen respondents were only those who joined the military coming from single-parent homes but who had left the military prior to participating in this study. The study did not examine those individuals from single-parent homes who had and were still enlisted nor did it examine those individuals from single-parent homes who were planning to enlist.

Limitations

The results of the study were limited by a number of different factors. One factor that affected the outcome of the research was the participants' attitudes about disclosing personal information and their willingness to cooperate in introspective and reflexive questioning. Gaining cooperation depended on the respondents' attitude toward the research. The best measure to gain cooperation was carefully selecting the prospective participants prior to scheduling the face-to-face or phone semi-structured interviews. A second factor that has affected the outcome of the study was the age range and war era of when the respondents served. With that being said, a third factor that may have affected the results of the study is the fact that the respondents were individuals who have served

and are now separated from the military; There was no examination of individuals who were in the process of enlisting or seeking to enlist. In addition, a fourth factor limiting the study is the fact that the experiences of the individuals were a retrospective account of their motivations. A fifth factor limiting the study was the process in which participants were recruited (via social networks and listservs). This was a limiting factor as there were other means of contacting participants; nevertheless, these two chosen media were highly frequented by the target population of the study. Finally, the sixth factor that affected the results of the study is the fact that the study was limited to individuals who had joined the military coming from single-parent homes.

Significance

This project addressed the underresearched area of the motivation of enlistees who chose military service versus civilian options. This study can contribute to social change because the findings offered insight into how to integrate new recruits into a complex organization such as the military. This research looked at the backgrounds of those who decided that the military was the best option for them and provided insights into where these individuals came from, what their support systems were like, the closeness of their families, and how conflict was handled in the home. The study also investigated whether their motivations remained once the realities of training became apparent, as well as if their commitment to military service continued when presented with the opportunity to leave. In doing so, this study offered information regarding enlistees' motivational fitness, to add to the physical, intellectual, educational, and psychological fitness that already forms a part of the acceptance process.

Summary

In sum, this research explored the motivational factors of individuals enlisting in the military, specifically for those who came from single-parent homes because a number of enlistees were from a single-parent family structure (Spence et al., 2012). A questionnaire was designed based on existing literature that explored the key predictors of military enlistment (Berryman, Bell, & Lesowiniski, 1983; De Posada, 2009; Eighmey, 2006; Gibson, Griepentrog, & Marsh, 2007; Legree et al., 2000; Spence et al., 2012; Woodruff, Kelty, & Segal, 2006). Through phenomenological inquiry, this research has exposed the motivations that high school graduates have for enlisting in the military service; their self-concept prior to enlisting; their assessment of the quality of their home lives; the impact of their home experiences on their decision to enlist; and their self-concept after leaving versus joining the military. This study has helped to bridge the gap in the existing literature on the subject.

In Chapter 2, I discuss seminal literature on motivation and Rogers' (1947) theory of self-concept as related to the subject of this research in greater detail. In addition to this, contemporary literature from peer-reviewed journals and academic sources were consulted regarding existing studies related to the topic of interest in this dissertation. Chapter 3 has a detailed description of the research design related to phenomenological inquiry and why this approach was best suited for this study. Following this is a discussion and description of the target population of the study, sampling frame and sampling technique, data collection tools, and the questions of the research. Issues such as questionnaire design and its limitations have also been included in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 is based on the analysis of collected data and the findings of the research. Data collected for each question is summarized and analyzed, and the results of the analysis are presented in tabular form. Chapter 4 also includes the discussion of the results of the study with reference to the existing theory and literature in the field of study.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I discuss the results of the analysis in correlation with the existing literature for cross-validation. The conclusion includes areas of future research that can be recommended, based on the findings from this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this literature review, existing studies and peer-reviewed articles are gathered to support the idea of the topic of this dissertation. More specifically, it addresses themes and issues that support the problem statement, purpose, and research questions of this study. This chapter includes the following themes: (a) joining the military, (b) impacts of self-concept to decision making and motivation, (c) demographics of the military, (d) motivating factors, (e) enlistment, (f) personal experiences in relation to decision making, and (g) family structure and childhood in relation to enlistment decision.

Research Strategy

With this question in mind, a literature search was conducted using several sources of information. The following databases were accessed using search terms *military* and *enlistment* as the root of all inquiries: PubMed, PsycInfo, and Google Scholar. In addition, a Google search of military-related data and websites was completed. These terms were used in conjunction with other search words such as *recruitment, mental illness, attrition, psychosocial, personality, decision making, and family*.

The studies found often included words and phrases such as, among others, *motivation, propensity, cohesion, morale, attachment, self-efficacy, self-esteem, adverse childhood experiences, organizational commitment, satisfaction, turnover, attrition, and retention*.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria of Literature Review

Numerous studies were found, necessitating the definition of inclusion and exclusion criteria to refine the scope of the literature review. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- Investigating the military in the United States and the United Kingdom. As military service is voluntary in both countries, a similar process of recruitment, assessment, screening, and enlistment is utilized in both countries.
- Dating from Operation Desert Storm (1991) until the present, when the United States and the United Kingdom had been actively deploying personnel in actual armed conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Studies from Israel, even though military service is by conscription, as conscripts are required to apply for the preferred military jobs. Thus, identical recruitment and screening processes are employed (Ben-Ari & Findler, 2006; Gati & Saka, 2001).
- Studies investigating recruits' motivations and how these predict enlistment.
- Studies investigating military misconduct and personality as well as psychosocial factors predicting military misconduct.
- Studies investigating prevalence of mental illness in the military and how personality and psychosocial factors predict mental illness.
- Studies investigating attrition and the predictors of attrition amongst recruits.

Data Quality Verification

Using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) verification of trustworthiness process, each article was reviewed for data quality. According to Lincoln and Guba, trustworthiness of findings requires documentation of (a) credibility, (b) dependability, (c) transferability, and (d) confirmability. The following are eight different techniques that permit verification of trustworthiness through Lincoln and Guba's noted process: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer review, debriefing, negative analysis, clarifying researcher bias, and member checking. The identified papers were evaluated as to the goal, importance, relevance, and appropriateness of the research design, recruitment strategy, and methodology. This was used to appraise the value of the papers to this investigation and how they identified new areas of research.

Review of Literature

The search retrieved approximately 79,502 records. Most of these dealt with injuries, diseases, as well as medical and mental conditions suffered by enlisted personnel in the course of combat and service. The review was filtered using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The studies included in this literature review dealt with enlistment motivations, enlistment propensity, family involvement, and the personality and psychological characteristics of recruits that predicted enlistment and staying in the military as career soldiers. With the exception of one qualitative study that evaluated the reasons for military enlistment by interviewing active-duty military recruits (Ginexi, Miller, & Tarver, 1994), all studies were quantitative. All the studies featured a research design that involved the use of quantified and weighted questionnaires and scales. All the

studies involved either active-duty recruits, enlisted men and women, deployed personnel, combat veterans, or retired personnel. There were no qualitative studies that investigated how recruits' experience in a single-parent home played a role in their decision to enlist nor were there any studies that investigated why military recruits failed to finish basic training.

With regard to the topic at hand, a few relevant questions could be posed. Why do recruits choose to join the military? What factors affect their decision to join? How do these factors/motivators impact their effectiveness during training? Why do some recruits withdraw during service? Do the factors/motivators affect recruit withdrawal? Why are some recruits separated or dismissed from the service?

Joining the Military

In 1973, the structural imperative of conscription to the U.S. military ended with the adoption of an All-Volunteer Force policy (Carden, 2008). This meant that the decision to join the military was an individual's personal decision rather than one mandated by the state. With the coming of the *war years* (Operation Desert Storm until the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts), the capability of the military depended on maintaining a sufficient number of qualified personnel (Bachman, Segal, Freedman-Doan, & O'Malley, 2000). Aggressive recruitment efforts began; thus, the military needed a rapid means of surveying and screening prospective recruits (Baker, Berry, McClintock, & Norris, 2001) so that recruitment efforts would become more efficient and targeted to attract only those who were desirable to the military (Bachman et al., 2000).

The American military decided to define these “desirable” recruits as high school graduates who passed aptitude, physical, and medical tests (Laurence, 1984). There arose a need to pinpoint prospective recruits who had characteristics that predict enlistment, as well as reenlistment upon the conclusion of their tours of duty. Along these lines, there was a perceived need to recruit those who would not fall to attrition during basic training or their first deployment. *Attrition* is a term that encompasses both voluntary and involuntary discharge (Military Dictionary, 2008).

Early on, military leadership realized that personal motivations were an important screening tool (Motowildo & Lawton, 1984). Thus, it became necessary to learn what “hot buttons” of motivations to push to elicit enlistment propensity and eventual enlistment (Baker et al., 2001). At the same time, the military began to modernize. Equipment became more sophisticated, requiring training of personnel who could operate and maintain it. The military needed young men and women who were capable of being trained not only in combat, but also to have the technical and vocational skills necessary to operate and maintain sophisticated machinery. The military would begin to invest in each recruit it enlisted and trained (Wilson, 1966). The need to ensure that the military’s investment paid off became evident; it became essential that recruits had the motivation to stay in the military and continue serving as career soldiers.

Impacts on Self Concept: Decision Making and Motivations

The term *self-concept* refers to the totality of the thoughts and feelings of individuals with reference to themselves as objects (Sirgy, 1982). Self-concept has been defined and treated in different ways. For example, behavioral theorists have seen the self

as a collection of conditioned responses. In organismic theory, the self is treated in a developmental and functional manner, while phenomenology treats the self holistically with its complexity and dynamics (Sirgy, 1982).

According to Eccles (2008), the theory of self-concept essentially deals with the balance between structural- and agency-based factors in identity formation. Structural-based factors are those that affect behavior and identity over which individuals have little or no control. These can include areas such as socialization within the family and the education system; childhood environment; peer group pressure; personality; social factors such as class, gender and ethnicity; and experience. The common denominator in all these examples is that, while they impact identity formation, they are all almost totally outside the individual's control. Agency-based factors relate to the individual's freedom and ability to make decisions, in this case, about their own personal identity and self-concept. While daily life generally includes elements of both factors, the extent to which one outweighs the other has important implications for behavior (Eccles, 2008, p. 231-234). Within the context of this research, the extent to which an individual can make a subjective decision to enlist in the military, which is based on the attainment of personal goals and values, will be of clear interest to the military.

Rogers' (1947) theory of self-concept resonates with the two broad approaches to decision-making power. On the one hand, the conventional approach to power is the Weberian view of power being exercised in a top down hierarchical manner, whereby those with power instruct those below them in the organizational structure which must be obeyed. This is the form of decision-making power that comes instantly to mind when

one considers military conscription. The state makes the decision and the individual has to accept. The other form of decision-making power is that advocated by postmodernist thinkers such as Michel Foucault. For theorists such as Foucault, one or a few individuals did not necessarily hold power in a hierarchical setting. For Foucault, power flows and circulates throughout society and its institutions. Individuals within these institutions internalize what is required and regulate themselves by making rational decisions, in this case to enlist in the military. Consequently, their values, norms, and self-concepts are not imposed from above, but are individual social constructs, usually arrived at through a process of discourse.

According to Rogers (1947), the theory of self-concept states that the self is the central ingredient in human personality and personal adjustment as it identifies the concept of oneself as the central idea. Epstein (1973), who studied the theory, has integrated it into a broader framework to explore potential compatibility. An individual's self-theory has different postulates arranged hierarchically. The postulates can be operationally identified by the cognitions implicit in the individual's emotional responses to events. Self-concept of an individual is initially developed to aid in keeping a favorable balance between pleasure and pain as it integrates all the data of experience, and maintains the person's self-esteem (Epstein, 1973). Occurrences of failures in the different functions may ultimately dissolve the self-theory while producing stress in increasing levels.

Kinch (1963) is one of the first who have studied self-concept theory. In the development of self-concept theory, there are three basic postulates of our formalized

theory. According to Kinch (1963), the postulates are: (a) individuals' self-concept is affected by their own perceptions of how other people around them respond towards them, (b) individuals' self-concept drives their decisions, behavior, and feelings and (c) individuals' perception of the manner by which others respond to them reflects the actual responses towards the said individuals. In summary, Kinch's development centered on individuals' perception of how other people respond to them.

Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) presented a motivational theory based on self-concept in order to explain processes undertaken by charismatic leader to produce profound transformational effects on their subordinates rather than charismatic leadership theory, which lacks ability to fully explain its effect of subordinates or follower. The self-concept theory argues that charismatic leadership has its effects on the subordinates by encouraging their engagement with particular attention to the mission established and expressed by the leader (Shamir et al., 1993). Based on the self-concept theory, Shamir et al. (1993) had arguments regarding (a) charismatic leaders' behavior and their effects on followers, (b) the role of values on the followers in establishing a charismatic relationship with the leader, and (c) certain organizational conditions that improves the effectiveness of charismatic leaders.

The self-concept theory has informed the study by approaching individuals as a 'self' that perpetuates throughout the lifespan, and is affected and directed by personality, experience, environment, and social factors, while affecting those factors in turn. In particular, motivation is viewed as a part of self-concept, and understood to be a subjectively perceived and changeable facet of how a person views himself or herself

(Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Motivation is alterable both by external factors and by self-reassessment and experientially altered assessment criteria and values. In other words, motivation has not been viewed as a fixed facet of an individual or even a real or reified phenomenon, but rather as a subjective interpretation of self in relation to values, goals, and environmental context (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993).

This theoretical perspective is related to the research questions in such a way that Rogers's theory of the self is subjectively perceived and fluid. As such, an individual's self, as affected by and due to some factors (e.g., environment and social factors) makes an individual decide to enlist in military services. These individuals have perceived the environment within the military complex as something that can positively affect their condition, and, hence, their self-concept. Viewing it this way, this research has explored if enlisting in military service is a form of escape from one environment to a better one (i.e., military).

Demographics of the U.S. Military

In the 1970s, Kuvlesky and Dameron (1971) studied inclination towards enlisting in the military among young adults or adolescents. More specifically, their study had a purpose of investigating the inclination toward military service for Black American teenage boys and their White counterparts, based on the data gathered in rural East Texas during 1966. Generally, Kuvlesky and Dameron (1971) hypothesized that Black Americans were more inclined towards military service. However, the findings of the study did not support the said hypothesis because the results suggested that Black

American teenage boys and their White counterparts were equally inclined towards choosing a career in the military (Kuvlesky & Dameron, 1971).

The study of Bray, Curtin, York, Williams, and Helms (1990) also focused on determining and further investigating the population or demographics of young adults with the highest probability of enlisting in the military during the earlier decades. More specifically, Bray et al.'s (1990) focus was the young adults who enlist in the active Military Services and Reserve Components of the Armed Forces. Using data gathered from the 1989 Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS), which studied 30-minute telephone interviews with young adults during each fall. More than 11,000 young American men and women in the age of 16 to 24 were interviewed. The results showed that the interaction of aptitude and ethnicity indicated higher probabilities to enlist in the military for those who belong to the group with lower aptitude (Bray et al., 1990). This probability significantly decreased as the aptitude level increased, with the decline rate higher for Black Americans than for their White counterparts (Bray et al., 1990).

According to Baker (1985), young job applicants do not have enough preparation from their family or school to allow them to decide wisely in their occupation. More specifically, there is a common belief persisting in the media that the U.S. military recruits and enlists young men and women who are disadvantaged and who have low educational attainment or prospects (Kane, 2005). The media even hypothesize that the quality of recruits has fallen during the so-called "war years" from 2003 until the present due to ongoing military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have portrayed the wars

in Afghanistan and Iraq as unpopular and have reported that the supply of “quality” recruits has been falling (Kane, 2005).

Evidence proves otherwise. Recruits from 2003-2005 have been representative of the general population. Recruits are usually high school graduates of the “middle income” household class (Kane, 2005). Thus, the common misconception that recruits choose the military because they have no job options because they want to escape the marginalization resulting from poverty may prove to be not so true (Ginexi et al., 1995).

However, a study by Spence et al. (2012) found that adolescents from alternative family structures (single-parent, stepparent and nonbiological-parent homes) tend to enlist in the military instead of going to college. The study specifically noted that it could be the lower socioeconomic status of single-parent homes that predict military enlistment or that single-parent homes have less parental involvement in the adolescents’ lives. This study did not investigate if those recruits from single-parent homes had any other options. The study also did not investigate other factors that may have played a role in the decision to enlist, to include closeness in the family and social support. The study instead found that for those adolescents from single-parent homes, the military is a better option than going to college or getting a civilian job because the military provides a steady pay, stable housing, a stable daily routine, a sense of purpose, a greater sense of independence, and a sense of belonging. The study, however, mentioned that the cohort data it used were of those enlistees who joined prior to the 9/11 attacks. Thus, although this study may have been published in 2012, it studied data that was prior to the 9/11 attacks. With this being said, enlistment motivations may differ, specifically focusing on the fact that

motivations may be due to patriotism. Of prime importance to this research therefore will be uncovering the effects of demographics, if any, on the different experiences that impact on the formation of an individual's perceptual reality of enlistment as the main career choice, especially post 9/11.

The U.S. military services can no longer rely on recruiting draftees into the service to fill the ranks required (Griffith, 2008). Instead, the military is now required to recruit volunteers to serve in the military branches – Marines, Air Force, Navy, and Army. This translates to the need to compete in the marketplace for available and qualified young adults who are fit for service, with colleges and employers as their competitors (Griffith, 2008). This is the first time since 1973, when the military has to heavily rely on volunteers to enlist in the military and fill the necessary positions during a prolonged war, thereby challenging the defense sector of the United States. Figure 1 shows the trend for college enrollment in the recent years to exhibit the competition that the military has with schools in terms of recruitment.

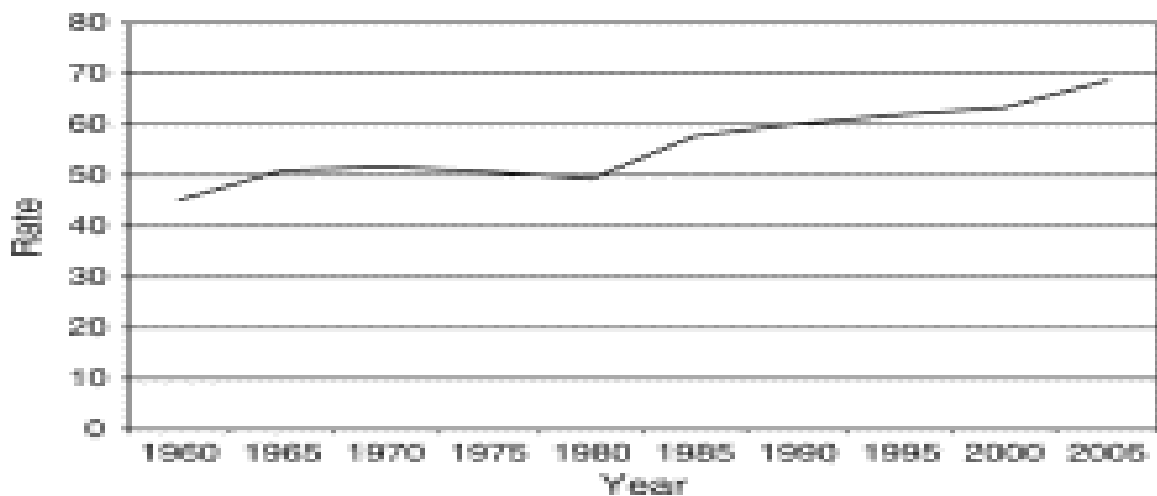


Figure 1. College enrollment rates for years 1960–2005. From (Griffith, 2008)

Moreover, Kelty, Kleykamp, and Segal (2010) examined the effect of military service on the transition to adulthood of young enlistees to the military. The authors highlighted changes since World War II in the role of the military in the lives of young adults (Kelty et al., 2010). The focus is especially on the shift from a conscription to an all-volunteer military has changed the way military service affects youths' approach to adult responsibilities. The authors noted that military volunteers are now family- and career-oriented; thus, they show the military provides the material and social support needed by their members, especially the young servicemen and women to promote their responsible membership in family relationships and the wider community (Kelty et al., 2010). Therefore, they argue that transitioning to adulthood is more stable and orderly for military members than for their civilian peers; thus, contradicting claims that recruiting young military men and women is disadvantageous to the military (Kelty et al., 2010).

Another study, which is by Yeung and Gifford (2009), investigated the manner by which potential enlistees look for information regarding their intent to enlist, thereby affecting their decision to enlist. They investigated the information that young potential enlistees to the military seek to help them make their decisions. More specifically, they focused on the Internet and explored its influence on enlistment decision making. Analysis of recent Army new recruit surveys showed that a sizeable proportion of recruits have encountered Army advertising or sought recruiting information online as determining factor that affected their decision to enlist into the military (Yeung & Gifford, 2009). In online discussion forums, soldiers and prospective soldiers ask questions, express their insights and concerns, and talk about their frustrations. Potential

recruits were most interested in recruiting processes and what to expect from a military lifestyle, seeking opinions and details on job functions, duty stations, and benefits. These findings suggest that potential recruits, when unable or unwilling to find it from military websites or talking to recruiters, may seek information online that leads them to decide on enlisting in the military (Yeung & Gifford, 2009).

Motivating Factors

In the previous decades, studies that were directed towards understanding the dynamics and rationale for having young adults enlist in the military were conducted. In the study of Segal, Segal, Bachman, Freedman-Doan, and O'Malley (1998), the objective was to investigate gender differences in the inclination to enlist in the military for male and female high school seniors. Part of the study was determining the differences in the preferences and expectations between genders. The researchers used surveys to uncover the possible differences between genders. They were able to establish that young women have lower propensity to enlist or to serve in the military as compared to their male counterparts. This reflects the demographics of the military during those times in terms of gender. Moreover, having children has high positive effect on the propensity of young men to enlist in the military; while the same situation slightly discourages young women to enlist in the military (Segal et al., 1998).

Currently, as the military becomes more modernized so that the operation and maintenance of specialized equipment requires higher technical skills, a growing number of recruits are motivated by the opportunity of acquiring military training, which they can use in civilian life after their military service (Baker et al., 2001). There are also recruits

who claim that they join the Army for intangible goals such as self-development; that is, they want to be more mature, more responsible, and more disciplined persons (Griffith & Perry, 1993). Intangible goals such as “doing something you can be proud of” and “working with people you respect” also make military enlistment appealing to young people (Spence et al., 2012, 4).

Kleykamp (2006) investigated the factors that are associated with the decision of high school student in joining the military after graduation rather than choosing to attend college or join the labor force. The propensity to enlist in the military translates to actual enlisting behavior. Among potential male enlistees who claimed they will definitely enlist, 70% did enlist within five or six years. Among those who claimed that they will probably enlist, 29% actually enlisted (Bachman et al., 2000). This highlights the importance of understanding the intention to enlist as this translates to actual enlisting and choosing a career in the military service.

Kleykamp (2006) highlighted three influences on military enlistment: (a) educational goals, (b) the presence of the military institution in communities, (c) socioeconomic status, and (d) race. Results showed that with higher presence of a military institution, the possibility of enlisting in the military with respect to enrolling in college, becoming employed, or doing other activity increases as well. With this, aspirations of attending college were clearly found to be associated with the decision to enroll in college versus enlist. This also increased the possibility of deciding to join the military rather than the civilian labor market, or remaining idle (Kleykamp, 2006).

Some of the challenges of recruiting in the military is the tough competition with high numbers of youth pursuing education beyond high school, increasing opportunities in civilian jobs, and the international and domestic occurrences that may contribute to the heightened concern among individuals (Eighmey, 2006). In line with this, Eighmey also studied the motivation of young adults in enlisting in the military. A conceptual framework was developed to include the themes that are central to youth's goal setting and decision making in terms of considering a career in the military service. Seven themes emerged from the data to reflect the distinct motivations that were identified. Themes that emerged included terms such as "occupational" and "institutional" goals in relation to job benefits, and values such as "fidelity" and "dignity." After the September 11, 2001 attacks, the data also showed that the theme of "doing something for the country" emerged as one of the motivation to enlist in the military (2006).

A more novel motivation for joining the military was proposed by Ben-Ari and Findler (2006). They observed a higher motivation to join the military in times of high risk of death, such as during times of often-occurring instances of terror attacks in Israel. They posited that when there is a reasonable certainty of death, young people employ defense mechanisms that cause them to reflect and choose to serve in the military, which validates their worldview. Furthermore, enlisting increases self-esteem, as it enables young individuals to live up to the standards and values of their society.

Acquiring funds to finance college education is a motivation to enlist (Kleykamp, 2006); however, the prospect of cash incentives and bonuses paid upon enlistment do not predict higher enlistment (Asch et al., 2010). Between the fiscal years 2000 and 2008, the

budget allocated by the Department of Defense (DoD) for enlistment and reenlistment bonuses increased to \$625 million from \$266 million.

Incentives have been used to encourage recruitment. However, in the study of Korman, Glickman, and Frey (1981), incentives were proven to be less effective in encouraging enlistment. Korman et al. (1981) stated that the use of incentives assumes that more is better; however, their study proves otherwise. Korman et al. (1981) investigated the potential influence of incentives to the enlistment in the Navy using two nationwide surveys. The first survey included 17 varying incentives, while the second survey used 15 incentives. Each survey used a 5-point Likert-type rating system for each incentive. Pair-wise comparison of the survey results was performed. No significant difference was found between the different survey results with respect to the number incentives given, including the differences in monetary amount (Korman et al., 1981). Korman et al. (1998) further explained that the theory that more is better is not applicable because, in some cases, too much incentive may foster distrust and doubt; hence, the insignificant difference found in the enlistment decision, despite the changes in the number and amount of incentives given.

Asch et al. (2010) studied the influence of cash or bonus incentives to enlistees' as well as reenlistees' decision to go into military service. In line with this, there have been several questions raised by the Congress and GAO regarding the effectiveness of handing out bonuses for enlisting, together with questions related to the kind of services received from enlistees for this large increase in bonuses, and whether bonuses were paid to individuals who would have enlisted or reenlisted in the absence of bonuses. Asch et

al. (2010), in their study, provided an empirical analysis of the impact of cash bonuses on the enlistment intention of young adults. Two independent analyses of the effect of bonuses on Army enlistment were done by Asch et al. (2010). The results from the models are consistent, lending credence to the robustness of the estimates. Results showed that cash bonuses do not affect the enlistment intention of potential youth enlistees into the military.

Patriotism is also a consistent motivation (Griffith & Perry, 1993). A correlation between religious involvement and propensity for enlistment was found (Burdette et al., 2009). Despite the evidently significant relationship between military and religion, Burdette et al. (2009) are some of the foremost scholars exploring the association between the two concepts, with a clear focus on military enlistment. Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, they used a person-oriented analysis of young men, specifically those who have finished high school but have not yet gone to college, and grouped them categorically in terms of patterns of adolescent religious involvement. Youth members who were found to have high religious evangelical tendencies were more likely to enlist in the military, as compared to those who were considered as highly religious and nonevangelical, and nonreligious altogether (Burdette et al., 2009).

Polich, Fernandez, and Orvis (1982) investigated the effects of offering special educational benefits to the decision of military enlistees to actually enlist in the military. In 1981, the DoD offered benefit programs based on Congressional bills to test the effects on enlistments by "high quality" youth. Results from two national surveys that evaluated

the programs showed that educational benefits can increase enlistments substantially, but offering a uniform benefit to all recruits could have undesirable effects, such as reducing enlistments in the Army and in combat specialties (Polich et al., 1982). Based on the results, it can be implied that conducting benefit programs that cater to specific subgroups of potential enlistees can improve filling hard-to-fill occupational specialties, while increasing the overall number of high-quality recruits (Polich et al., 1982).

As previously discussed, Bachman et al. (2000) also examined the factors that have significant relationships with military service enlistment intention (military propensity) and actual enlistment. They used bivariate and multivariate regression analyses in their study. These analyses were used separately for men and women, using survey data from nationwide samples totaling more than 100,000 U.S. high school seniors. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework of decision making as provided by Bachman et al. (2000), wherein the concepts of (a) background and aspirations in terms of education, (b) background in terms of family and demographics, and (c) a wide range of behavior, attitudes, and values are included. Data was also collected from a subsample of more than 15,000 of the high school seniors obtained 1 or 2 years after graduation. The study results exhibited that correlations exist between propensity and actual enlistment among women and between military propensity and actual enlistment among men. Lower enlistment rates were observed among individuals with college-educated parents, high grades, and college plans; moreover, enlistment rates are higher for men (Bachman et al., 2000).

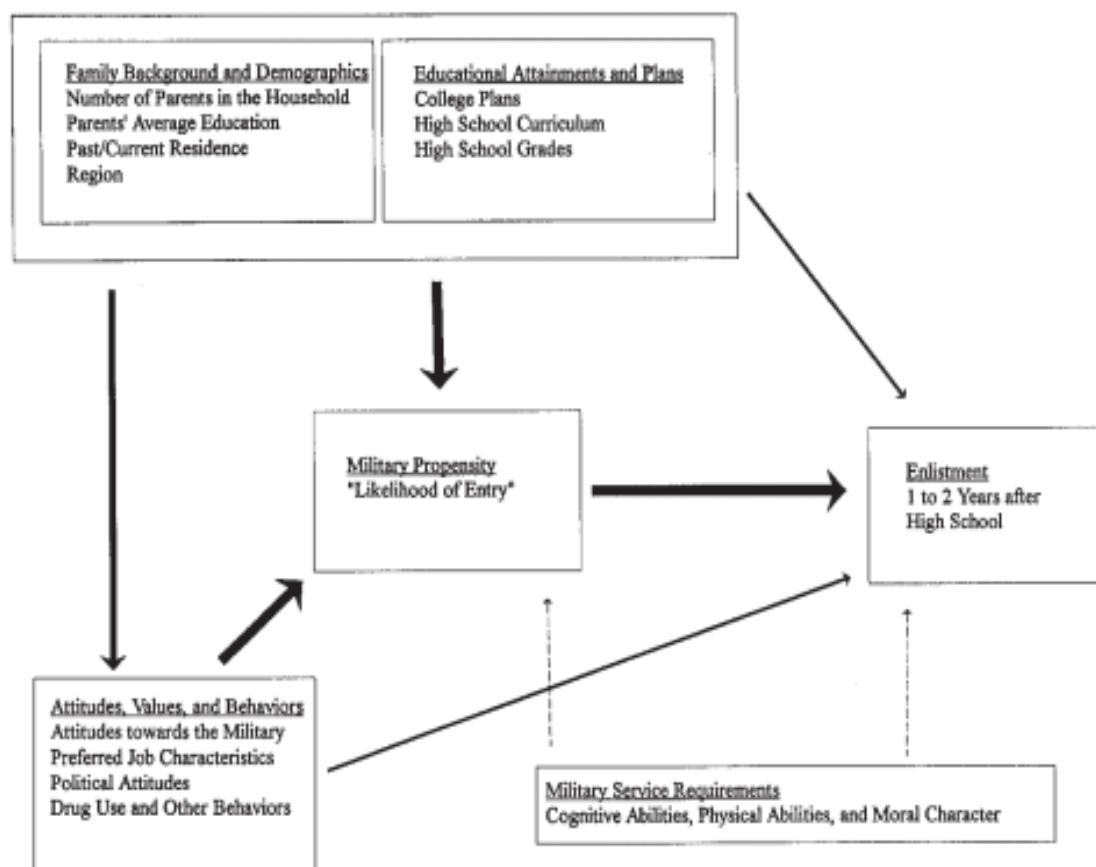


Figure 2. Conceptualization of decision-making. (Bachman et al., 2000)

Propensity to serve as a soldier is linked to studying high school seniors or graduates who showed strong intention to enlist in the military (Woodruff et al., 2009). Seventy percent of male high school seniors who expressed strong desires for enlisting in the military actually enter within six years of high school graduation. Woodruff et al. (2009) further claims that the youth's propensity to serve in the military has been declining. This is the cause of insufficient number of high-propensity or eager-to-serve youth to meet recruitment needs; hence, the military is forced to recruit even the youth with low propensity to serve. Woodruff et al. (2009) discovered in their study that

soldiers with high enlistment propensity prior to commencing their initial service have significant institutional motivations to join the military and have plans for a military career. However, an individual's enlistment tendency or propensity was not significantly related to occupational or pecuniary motivations.

De Posada (2009) studied the dynamics and motives of enlistment with the consideration of demobilization. More specifically, her study focused on enlistment and demobilization motives of the military towards illegal armed combatants, paramilitary, and guerillas in Colombia. The specific variables considered by de Posada (2009) in her study are given in Table 1. Using an exploratory principal-axis factor analysis, de Posada (2009) was able to show in her study that four factors facilitate and promote the enlistment of young adults. These factors include: (a) fun and adventure, (b) economic safety, (c) retaliation, and (d) promises. From Table 1, the variables that were found to have significant effect on enlistment as determined by the four factors are: (a) Lack of economic opportunities, (b) Forced recruitment, (c) Agreement with the ideology and group policies, (d) Resentment against the armed forces, (f) Attraction to the arms and camouflaged uniform, (g) To live an adventure, (h) Security of basic needs: work, food, and clothes, and (i) Enlistment by deceit.

Amongst all these motivations to enlist in the military, no study has explored the relationship of being from a single-parent home to the young adult's propensity to serve or to enlist. This is despite the fact that adolescents from alternative family structures (single-parent, stepparent, and nonbiological-parent homes) are the ones who exhibit high tendencies of enlisting in the military instead of going to college (Spence et al., 2012).

Table 1

Variables Considered for Factors of Enlistment Motives

Variables
Age of enlistment
Economic situation prior to enlistment
Lack of economic opportunities
Forced recruitment
Agreement with the ideology and policies
Resentment against armed forces
To live an adventure
Security of basic needs
Enlistment by deceit
Influenced by others
Tradition or culture
Revenge against illegal armed group

Enlistment

When a prospective recruit expresses interest in enlisting in the military, the recruitment officer informs the potential recruit of the benefits of enlistment. The prospective recruit will also be subjected to a battery of tests (usually the ASVAB, Armed Forces Qualification Test) and a physical/medical examination (Berryman et al., 1983). Provided that a recruit passes this preliminary screening, he will be enlisted and undergo basic training or boot camp (Bachman et al., 1999).

Boot camp begins the aggressive reorganization of the recruit's life. The recruit is separated from family and brought in close contact with strangers with whom it is

necessary to get along, and at times, compete (Maysless, 2004). The recruit is subjected to random drug tests, which, if failed, are grounds for dishonorable discharge (Bachman et al., 1999). Recruits are also subjected to rigorous physical training and conditioning (Kubisiak et al., 2009). They are expected to obey orders and follow a rigid code of conduct.

During boot camp, the military determines whether or not the recruit has the physical endurance and emotional resiliency required to proceed to the next phase of vocational training. Thus, the decision to enlist may be a personal decision of the recruit. After enlistment, the decision to stay in the military depends firstly on the recruit, who must exhibit continued fitness and motivation, and, secondly, on the military, which must make a decision on whether to accept the recruit for further training and eventual deployment (Bachman et al., 2000).

It is also during boot camp that the beliefs and perceptions of the recruit about the military are confronted with the reality of the military experience. As long as the recruits' perception and expectations of military life correspond with the reality of his military experience, the recruit will experience satisfaction and will not choose to withdraw from basic training. Satisfaction, therefore, is a negative predictor of turnover and attrition (Motowildo & Lawton, 1984). Higher levels of satisfaction lead to adapting to the working or training environment (Lee et al., 1992). Adaptation to the working or training environment predicts organizational commitment; that is, the working or training environment is perceived as enhancing the recruit's self-esteem and self-efficacy, providing a motivation to stay in the military service (Lee et al., 1992). The choice of

military service as an occupation occurs when there is congruity between the recruit's personal and professional self-concept and the requirements and conditions of the working environment (Tziner, 1983). Success at boot camp, in terms of adjusting to the physical demands of training, enhances the recruit's self-esteem and self-concept. The choice to stay and pursue a military career will be motivated to the degree that the recruit's self-esteem and self-concept are enhanced by the boot camp experience (Tziner, 1983).

It is also at boot camp where the recruit develops cohesion and morale with his co-recruits (Murphy & Sharp, 2011). Morale is a positive state of mind derived from inspired military leadership, as well as a shared sense of purpose and values, well-being, and perceptions of work (Murphy & Sharp, 2011, p. 13). Cohesion is a team spirit that indicates the level of coordination, cooperation, support, and consensus that exists among co-recruits (Rom & Mikulincer, 2003). Spence et al.(2012) found that enlistees who come from single-parent homes, divorced-parent homes, or non-biological parent homes enlisted because they are motivated by the desire for social inclusion and belonging. The military environment provides structure, stability and comradeship in a regimented lifestyle that situates young people within a reliable social group (p. 4). Enlistees who come from single-parent homes may feel socially isolated or lonely and may be more apt to seek a stable group of individuals to provide a support system (p. 5).

Cohesion and morale are manifestations of relationship-seeking behaviors or attachment behaviors, as these reflect the extent to which the group (the squad or the platoon) serves as a safe haven for the recruit. The higher the cohesion, the higher the

support and reassurance a group offers the recruit (Rom & Mikulincer, 2003). When a recruit has formed an “attachment” to his squad or platoon at boot camp, the squad becomes a “secure base” for him to “explore” and more fully engage with military life (Bretherton, 1992). To the extent that the recruit fails to form attachments to co-recruits at boot camp, he will be less able to deal with the stress of boot camp (Murphy & Sharp, 2011).

Decision-Making in Young Adults

Several researchers have studied the decision-making process of young adults. In the study of Baiocco, Laghi, and D’Alessio (2009), decision-making process of young adults or adolescents have been studied. The authors studied 700 adolescents and their decision-making styles and the factors that affect their decision making (Baiocco et al., 2009). Results from the study showed that young adults with higher school achievements or higher academic performance had more incidences of rational decision making as their style of making decisions (Baiocco et al., 2009). More specifically, young adults with an internal locus of control have higher tendencies of using a rational style of decision making (Baiocco et al., 2009).

Moreover, Byrnes (2002) also studied the decision-making process of young adults in comparison to adults. According to the study results, adolescents or young adults tend to have low competence in decision making in areas of advice seeking, adaptive goal setting, evaluation process, and learning. However, young adults have been found to have similar level of competencies with adults in terms of coming up with a

decision, specifically in aspects of knowledge of options and response to moderating factors (Byrnes, 2002).

Halpern-Felsher and Cauffman (2001) also studied the decision-making process of adolescents or young adults in comparison to adults. Results showed that young adults differ from adults in making decisions, with adults having more competence for decision making. More specifically, young adults were less likely to consider the costs or risks involved as well as the potential benefits that may be gained, given the decision that will be made (Halpern-Felsher & Cauffman, 2001).

In the study of Gibson, Griepentrog, and Marsh (2007), the authors studied the role played by parents in the decision of young adults to enlist in the military. They applied the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to model how youths decide on their career choice given their personal intentions and the suggestions of their parents. Specifically, a TPB model was developed for youth-parent conversations. The researchers tested the model with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine parental influence on youth intentions and decision-making behavior. Results indicated that a modified TPB model was useful for describing how the belief of the youth and their parent resulted in a decision exhibiting intentions for enlistment and behavior during preenlistment (Gibson et al., 2007). Figure 3 shows the model used regarding parental influence to their children's decision to enlist in the military. Results showed efficacy beliefs exhibit the strongest influence that parents have on their children. This was followed by the effect of parents' attitudes towards the youths' normative beliefs. Implications for recruitment and outreach efforts were discussed (Gibson et al., 2007).

Even with the specific influence that parents have on the intention of their children, specifically young adult children, to enlist in the military, this study still did not explain the aspect of a nontraditional home environment to enlistment decision among the youth.

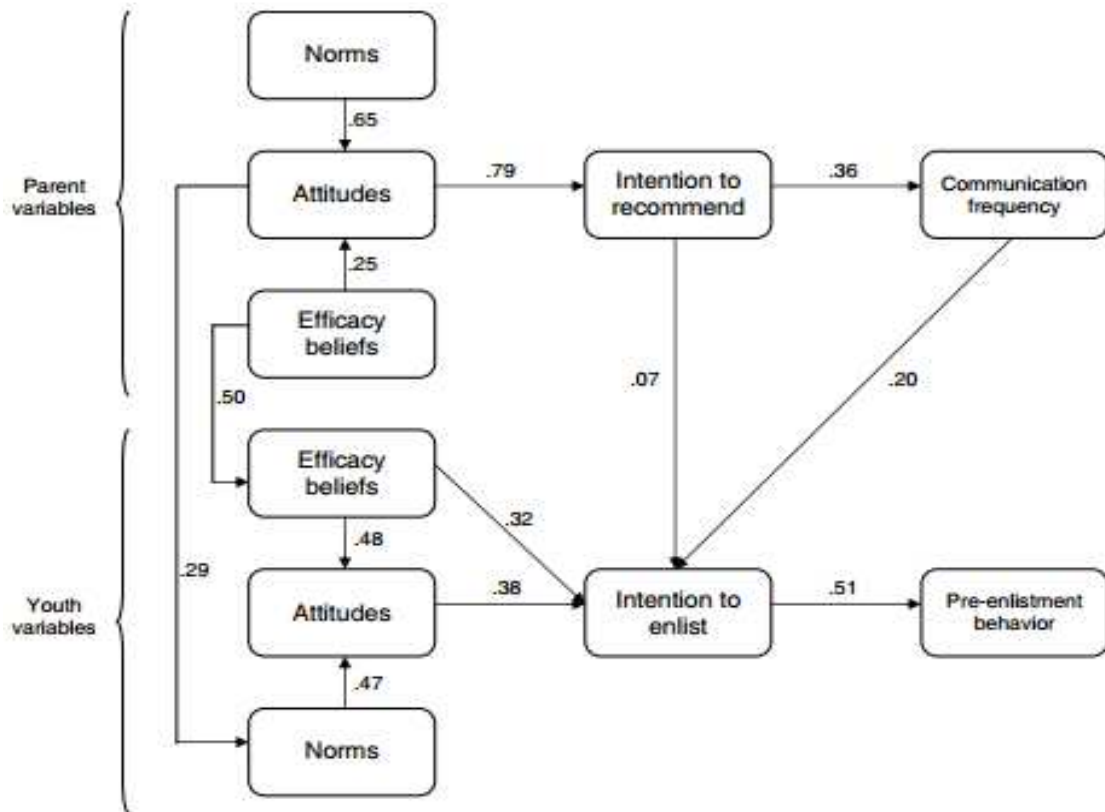


Figure 3. Hypothesized model predicting youth enlistment intention and behavior. (Gibson et al., 2007)

Parents' role in decision making, specifically in the decision of enlisting into the military, was also studied by Legree et al. (1998), using the Army Communications Objectives Measurement System (ACOMS) survey. The ACOMS is a survey that helps understand the factors related to military enlistment while considering both parents' and children's decision-making dynamics; thus, making it unique. Figure 4 illustrates the decision-making model. This model facilitates analysis of how parents influence the

decision making of their children, specifically in terms of enlisting into the military. Results of the study showed that a young adult's perceptions of their parent's attitude toward the military and the parent's perceived attitude towards military service have low correlation levels. This implies that parents fail in terms of correctly communicating their own beliefs and perception to their children, who interpret them incorrectly. More significantly, results indicated that the young adults' perceptions of their parent's attitudes is related to their inclination to enlist in the military, and that self-perceived parental attitudes predict military enlistment. Interventions were suggested to enhance the military enlistment situation through (a) facilitating youth perceptions that parents have positive views of the military, (b) encouraging positive parental attitudes through parental education regarding the advantages of military service, and (c) encouraging parents to be actively involved in the enlistment process (Legree et al., 1998).

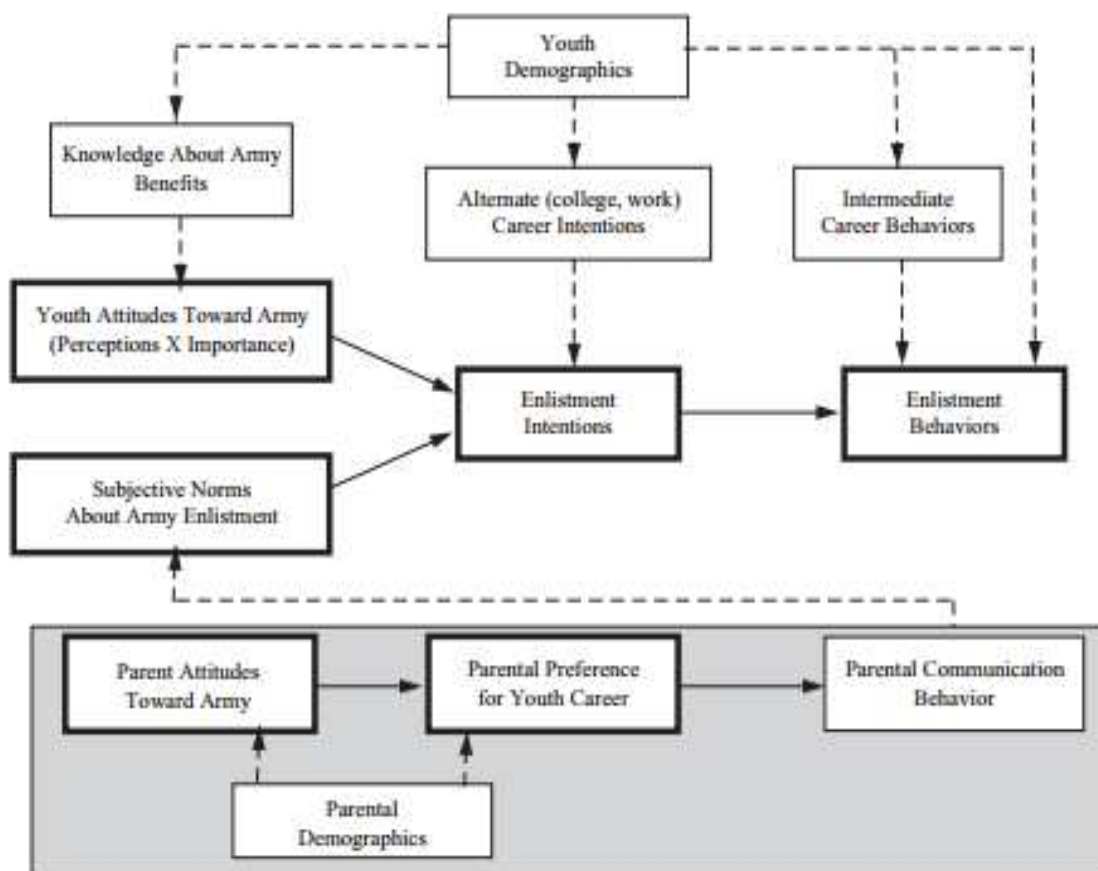


Figure 4. Enlistment decision-making model. (Legree et al., 1998)

Personal Experiences Affecting Decision Making and Perceptions

Sher-Censor and Oppenheim (2010) have studied the experiences of military personnel, specifically female personnel, who have had experiences of earlier individualism. They investigated the associations between young women's individuation during their mid-adolescence and their decision patterns in relation to adjustment two years later to leaving home as mandated by entering the military service. Forty nine mother-daughter pairs were asked to participate in the study, wherein the level of connectedness and individuality during mother-daughter interactions were observed when the child was 16 years old. After two years, the young women, then 18 years old, reported

their psychological distress and negative expectations regarding their decision to join the military and the prospect of leaving home. Findings showed that young women with higher level of connectedness with their mother had less psychological distress in relation to their decision making; thus, those with higher individuality in terms of low to medium connectedness with their mothers, have experienced more negative expectations in relation to their decision to enlist in the military (Sher-Censor & Oppenheim, 2010).

Figure 5 illustrates this relationship.

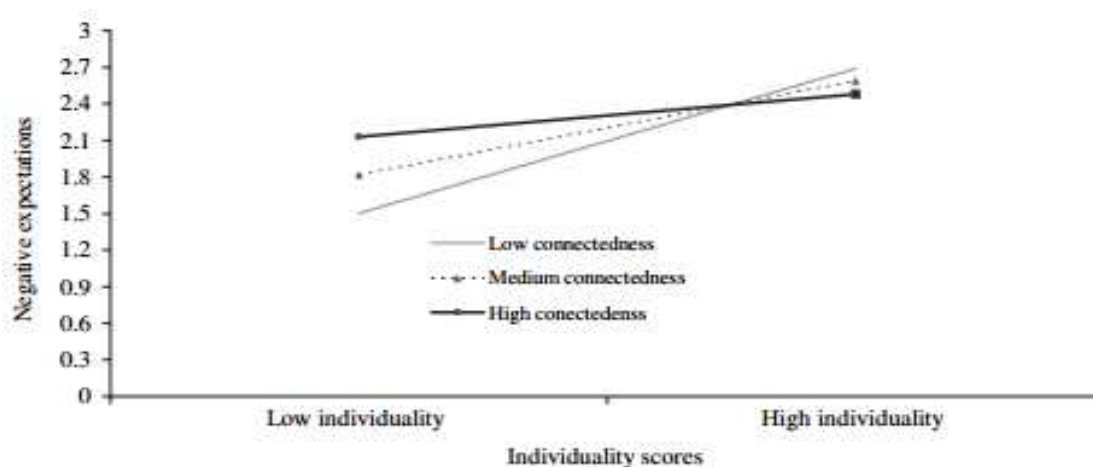


Figure 5. Relations between girls' individuality at age 16 and their negative expectations two years later at low, medium and high levels of connectedness at age 16. (Sher-Censor & Oppenheim, 2010)

A person's individual attributes or characteristics, including his or her environment influence the individual's behavior and decision-making processes (Ghosh, 2008). The personal values of an individual shape the internal conscience and decision making. When disagreement occurs between one's values and the action taken, it leads to a feeling of guilt, shame, and nagging doubt (Goleman, 1998). Self-awareness and self-

management are the foundation of the personal competence. It is the core of how one manages oneself, based on understanding the internal strengths and weaknesses.

To better understanding the aspects of career development, Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) presented a social cognitive framework. These three aspects of career development are: (a) the development of career-relevant interests, (b) the academic and career choice selection, and (c) creation of educational and occupational pursuits.

Bandura's (1986) theory on social cognition was the basis of the framework with specific highlight on the means by which individuals exercise personal agency in the career development process. Lent et al. (2000) focused on self-efficacy, outcome expected, and goal dynamics.

Family Structure and Childhood Experience Affects Enlistment

Not all recruits attach to their squad. One trend of studies carried out between 2000 until the present focuses on the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences noted amongst military personnel both in the United Kingdom and the United States. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are stresses or traumas associated with physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and dysfunction in the home such as when there are instances of experienced domestic violence, mental illness, substance abuse, parental discord or crime (Dube et al., 2003; Chapman et al., 2004).

In the general population, studies have shown that ACEs predict chronic mental and physical illnesses (Dube et al., 2003; Chapman et al., 2004) as these disrupt neural development in the child. In the military, ACEs have been associated with depression, combat trauma, and post-traumatic stress disorders (Cabrera et al., 2007; Iversen et al.,

2007). ACEs have also been associated with the prevalence of anti-social behaviors (Macmanus et al., 2011) and misconduct amongst military personnel (Booth-Kewley et al., 2010).

More importantly, ACEs have been associated with lower levels of self-directedness and cooperativeness which render a recruit less responsive to leadership, and thus, unable to contribute to morale among co-recruits. Further, ACEs have been associated with poor impulse control and poor interpersonal behavior, which inhibit cohesion and attachment to other recruits in the squad (Murphy & Sharp, 2011). On a personal level, ACEs lower the recruit's resiliency to traumatic and stressful conditions during basic training, thus making it difficult for him or her to cohere with the squad and also making the recruit feel "singled" out (Murphy & Sharp, 2011).

A more recent study on the potential effect of personal experience in terms of family structure to the decision or inclination of enlistment in the military was done by Spence et al. (2012). In their study, the authors investigated the possible relationship between a young adults' family structure and their tendency or propensity to be inclined to enlist in the military rather than to choose other post-high school activities. They conducted data gathering using the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health using a multinomial logistic regression analyses to compare the probability of choosing a career in the military or choosing to attend college or to be immediately involved in the labor force right after graduating from high school. While considering this comparison of options available to the youth, the family structures of each of the young adults were also considered. Results from the study showed that alternative family structures can

significantly predict the potential to enlistment among young adults as compared to choosing to attend college (Spence et al., 2012).

Being a part of a household with a single parent during adolescence was found to have a significant relationship with a higher propensity to enlist into the military. This relationship is associated with the socioeconomic status of the family and the social isolation felt by the young adult in the household. In another nontraditional family structure, which is living with a stepparent or without a biological parent, the tendency to enlist in the military is becomes more significantly related to the family structure (Spence et al., 2012). This relationship has also been found to be independent or regardless of emotions related to social isolation, parent–child relationship attributes, or socioeconomic status of the family. Moreover, choosing a military career may be less promoted as compared to a college degree, enlisting in the military is more valued by young adults living in homes with non-traditional family structures because it opens opportunities for independence and a greater sense of belonging, which are the factors that are deemed insufficiently provided in their homes.

Psychosocial Factors That Predict Attrition

In general, college attrition has been studied by several researchers. Robbins et al. (2004) did a meta-analysis type study that investigated the relationship that was proposed to exist between psychosocial and study skill factors (PSFs) and college outcomes for students. Based on the educational persistence to continue studying and on the motivational theory models, the PSFs were grouped and labeled into nine broad constructs, namely: (a) achievement motivation, (b) academic goals, (c) institutional

commitment, (d) perceived social support, (e) social involvement, (f) academic self-efficacy, (g) general self-concept, (h) academic-related skills, and (i) contextual influences. In their study, Robbins et al. (2004) targeted two college outcomes, which are performance cumulative grade point average or academic performance and persistence. Results of the meta-analyses showed moderate relationships between retention and academic goal.

Knowing that there are motivations for enlistment that transcend mere considerations for a stable income, training, and college tuition assistance, military recruitment campaigns have aggressively marketed the military as a “family” where recruits can find a sense of belonging (Spence et al., 2012). This particular recruitment angle has important implications for not only young people from alternative family structures where socioeconomic independence and sense of belonging are intersecting goals; but also for those who have ACEs and yearn for social inclusion. Evidence from literature indicates, however, that recruits with ACEs might not be suited to the highly stressful aspects of military life such as basic training, vocational training, and actual combat. There is a question then that presents itself: do recruits and enlistees from alternative family structures or with those with ACEs and with high motivational goals to enlist actually succeed through basic training? Do they acclimatize to military life and make it their career path? Or do they fall to attrition precisely because their emotional and psychosocial experiences make them unsuitable to the regimented military life?

High rates of attrition are costly for the military, which expends significant financial resources searching for and training qualified applicants to fill vacant positions.

High attrition is directly connected with discontinuity and loss of readiness. The investigation of how ACEs play a role in causing withdrawal or termination during basic training taps psychosocial frameworks to understand the process by which recruits decide to stay or leave the military (Weiss et al., 2003). Psychological processes, not demographic variables alone lead to behaviors that relate to retention or attrition (Weiss et al., 2003).

Much similar to the case of civilian workers who resign from their civilian jobs and enlist in the military, recruits who have an early discharge from serving in the military are assumed to apply or get recruited into the civilian workforce. Buddin (1984) has studied the effects of initial job in the military and an enlistees' preservice experiences to the early attrition of enlisted males in the military, as measured within their first six months of being in the service. He examined the behavior of attrition in relation to the job matching models and the recent firm-specific human capital. Based on the results of the analysis, it was found that enlistees who had a record of frequently jumping from one civilian job to the next or had been recently unemployed have higher tendencies of early attrition. Moreover, the characteristics of the initial assignment experienced upon joining the military, such as individual suitability and satisfaction, have no significant effect on early attrition. Furthermore, high school dropouts experience higher chances of early attrition than for high school graduates (Buddin, 1984).

All studies found were those that investigated enlistment motivations and goals of those who had already enlisted and were in active service. No study was found that investigated those enlistees who later voluntarily withdrew or were involuntarily

discharged. There is no information if they suffered from ACEs or if they came from alternative family structures. There is also no information whether these ACEs and alternative family structures played a role in their decision to withdraw from the military or be discharged from the military. It can be asserted that ACEs and alternative family structures among recruits who have withdrawn, been terminated from basic training, or been separated from the military sometime after training should be investigated, as these factors may have played a role in determining their attrition from the military. Also, since ACEs affect the development of perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes, the best way to investigate them is not through a quantitative study, but through qualitative means, that will allow the recruits to state in their own words their personal attitudes, motivations, beliefs, and processes that led them to enlist and/or withdraw from basic training (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005).

Summary

The body of research on enlistment propensity and on personality characteristics of suitable recruits demonstrated that those who were considered desirable by the military were actively and aggressively recruited (Eighmey, 2006; Gibson et al., 2007; Ginexi et al., 1995; Griffith, 2008; Kleykamp, 2006; Segal et al., 1993; Spence et al., 2012). The enlisted recruits possessed the minimum eligibility requirements as they were provisionally enlisted to begin basic training. Despite the fine screening process, many recruits withdrew or were discharged before graduating from basic training or right after their initial enlistment. Therefore, the question arises as to why they quit despite their enlistment propensity, high motivation to enlist, and their possession of suitable

personality characteristics. What would cause those recruits to abandon the military career path on which they had embarked? In all the literature surveyed, there was no study found that investigated recruits who voluntarily withdrew or were discharged, even before finishing basic training or how their initial motivating factors may have been a reason for this failure. This research has addressed this issue by examining the single-parent home structure to distinguish if it played a role in being one of the possible threats that may be inconsistent with the organization of the structure of the self. This is the basis of the problem, purpose, and research questions of the study, which is recapped in Chapter 3, together with the research design that has addressed the said purpose and research questions.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In the previous two chapters, details were reported of the reasons young adults chose to enlist into the military after high school graduation versus attending college or going straight into the workforce. Young adults were noted to join the military for a number of reasons, some of which included social mobility, civilian equivalent jobs, educational benefits, and steady employment (Kleykamp, 2006). As previously noted, young adults who come from alternative home structure, specifically single-parent homes, are more likely to join the military as opposed to going to college (Spence et al., 2012). Part of this trend has been attributed to either the lower socioeconomic status of single-parent homes or the lack of parental involvement in adolescent lives (Spence et al., 2012). What researchers do not know, however, is how the experiences in single-parent homes play a role in the decision toward military enlistment. Rogers' (1947) self-concept theory may shed light on an unknown experience. This chapter outlines the qualitative method used to assist in understanding the experiences of these young adults.

Research Methodology

A qualitative methodology was selected for this study because the topic at hand needed to be explored within its natural and uncontrolled environment and not in the controlled settings of a laboratory. Mitchell and Jolley (2012) claimed that qualitative studies, unlike quantitative studies, allow researchers to have in-depth study or investigation of a particular phenomenon within its actual and uncontrolled environment. Qualitative research also offers researchers access to the richness of the data collected by

qualitative means, especially through interviews, which this research has made use of (Moretti et al., 2011). In a quantitative Likert-type survey, responses are in the form of a numbered rating system, which limits respondents in their answers. However, in a qualitative study, specifically one that uses semi-structured interviews to gather data, participants can freely articulate and explain their responses without being limited by choices of answers and without having to write or type them. Thus, using semi-structured interviews reveals more information and explanation from the participants compared to surveys. With this population and the topic of enlistment motivations being investigated primarily only through quantitative approaches, there continues to be a gap where more in-depth information is needed about the feelings, thoughts, and actions behind the motivations and decisions behind choosing to join the military.

Research Design

A phenomenological approach was chosen for this study. Phenomenology was the most appropriate for this study because this tradition seeks to understand a common meaning for these individuals and their lived experiences, being from single-parent homes and enlisting in the military (Moustakas, 2004). Phenomenology is said to be appropriate for studies that use the lenses of the participants themselves to describe a phenomenon; thus, it is investigating using human experience (Silverman, 2011). Moustakas (2004) stated that phenomenology is used when the researcher has to make meaning out of the experiences of people to address a particular issue being studied. This research asked a question that specifically calls for examining the lived experiences of individuals coming from single-parent homes who have chosen to enlist in the military

after high school. As stated previously, a phenomenological study helped find a “collective real meaning” for the phenomenon surrounding enlistment motivation for individuals coming from single-parent homes and how the homes may or may not have provided social support and involved conflict and/or closeness within the family.

In regards to other forms of qualitative approaches, such as case studies, ethnography, grounded theory, and narrative, the following are reasons why these approaches were not appropriate for this study. The use of a case study approach was not appropriate because it explores real-life bounded system(s) where information is gathered from real-life cases (Yin, 2009). As this study worked with those individuals who had already joined the military as a means of escape and were now currently separated, this type of research tradition would not allow for collection of data in real-time. The use of a narrative approach was not appropriate, because this type of tradition looks to research the lived and told experiences of one or two individuals and how the person has identified him- or herself through their experiences (Creswell, 2013). In regard to this study, the research question sought to understand the phenomenon around enlistment motivations rather than the story and identity of a person who has chosen to join the military as a means of movement from their lives in a single-parent home setting.

The use of an ethnography approach was not appropriate because this type of research focuses on shared patterns, behaviors, and language (Creswell, 2013). Ethnography could be used if this study were looking to examine the military culture and the day-to-day lives of individuals in the military. However, this study looked at the lived experiences of individuals who shared a common meaning among the

decision/motivation to transition from their home lives to a committed enlistment into the military. Lastly, the grounded theory approach was not an appropriate tradition at this time because this model builds from the bottom up to define a new theory, but this study did not seek to identify a theory for the phenomenon surrounding enlistment motivations.

Participants of the Study

Participants consisted of nine men and women selected from a sample that met the study criteria. For phenomenological studies that use interviews, such as this one, a sample size of a minimum of eight participants is sufficient to gather detailed accounts from personal experiences to reach data saturation point (Mason, 2010; Moustakas, 2004; Silverman, 2011). The inclusion criteria for participants in this research were as follows: (a) individuals who were currently separated from the military by their own accord (one's own choice without coercion), (b) individuals who were between the ages of 25 and 35, (c) individuals who came from single-parent homes, (d) individuals who were high school graduates, and (e) individuals who enlisted into the military within 2 years of their high school graduation. Researchers have suggested that young adults who come from alternative family home structures (i.e., single-parent, stepparent, and nonbiological-parent homes), specifically single-parent homes, tend to enlist into the military instead of going to college (Spence et al., 2012). Particularly, researchers noted that it could be the lower socioeconomic status of single-parent homes that predicted military enlistment or that single-parent homes have less parental involvement in the adolescents' lives. Military enlistment for young adults coming from single-parent homes means a steady pay, stable housing, a stable daily routine, a sense of purpose, a greater sense of

independence, and a sense of belonging. Adolescents in single-parent homes, who have transitioned from high school to the military, may provide a better understanding of the experience of their home lives and how it affected their decision to join the military.

Participants were male or female veterans who came from single-parent homes.

Participants were no longer affiliated with a branch of military service as they had already separated.

Participants were recruited through purposive (criterion-based) sampling.

Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study because this allowed for incorporation of a deliberate selection of participants to attain comprehensive understanding of the sample (Patton, 2002). Marshall and Rossman (2011) also claimed that this sampling technique is frequently used in studies that employ phenomenological approach.

Purposive sampling was started by browsing through and contacting potential recruits over social media networks, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as through listserv e-mails. Information of the intended study was publicly posted on the social network sites. This flyer can be found in Appendix A. Interested parties were encouraged to e-mail me directly with their contact information (phone and e-mail address), and I sent out a brief screening questionnaire that fully assessed each individual's eligibility to participate in the study. This questionnaire can be found in Appendix C. For all interested parties who met the criteria of the study, a letter was e-mailed to them, describing the study along with a request for acknowledgement of each participant's willingness to partake in the study. This letter can be found in Appendix B.

Measures

The purpose of this study was to identify how the role of the family structure may have played a part in young adults' decision to enlist in the military through the use of semi-structured interviews. Specific questions for the interview are listed in Appendix D. In this case, the family structure was identified as a single-parent home setting in which the military enlistee had been primarily raised and was a part of before deciding to enlist in the military. The single-parent home was either a single-father or single-mother home. The broad, overarching research questions to better understand the enlistees' experiences prior to the decision to enlist in the military were as follows:

Research Questions

The overarching research question for this study was: What role does family structure play in a young adult's decision to enlist in the military? The specific research questions were:

RQ1: Based on their experience, what aspects or characteristics of a single-parent home contribute to the decision of young adults to enlist in the military?

RQ2: What demographic attributes of young adults affect their decision to enlist in the military?

Ethical Protection of Participants

The participants in this study were adults between the ages of 25 and 35 who were free to choose whether or not to participate in the study. There was a minimal risk of harm associated with this study with regard to possible psychological stress that may arise. The risk of stress was not believed to cause any harm or danger to the participants,

but may have brought up some past emotions or feelings from their family history. However, if a participant did happen to experience any harm or difficulty associated with their participation in this study, a referral to local services was to be made immediately. Each participant was provided with an informed consent letter that discussed the realms of the study, to include the reason for the study, the time parameters of participation, the possible risks and benefits of the study, the compensation for completed participation, and the noted fact that participation could be withdrawn at any time. Each willing participant was required to read and sign the consent form prior to participating in the study, informing me of their acknowledgment of the study, what their participation entails, and their willingness to continue participation of the study. All files, paperwork, audiotapes, and transcripts obtained from the study were stored in a locked cabinet in my home office. Only myself and two peers who were selected to assist in validating results had access to the transcripts. All identifying information of the participants were removed from the transcripts prior to the data validation process. Copies of the Consent to Audiotape and Statement of Confidentiality are located in Appendix B.

Procedures

The following were general procedures that served as a sequential guide to recruit and inform the participants, collect and analyze the data, and validate all of the findings.

1. Send out a public notice on two social media outlets (Facebook and LinkedIn) and through e-mail listservs for a search of currently separated military veterans from single-parent homes who would like to participate in the study.

2. For all interested parties, each will be prescreened through a brief questionnaire via e-mail to determine their eligibility for participation in the study.
3. For all interested individuals who are eligible and meet previously noted criteria for the study, a scheduled meeting will be set up with the identified participants to present the study and provide a copy of the informed letter of consent describing the study.
4. I will contact each interested participant to schedule for the one-on-one face-to-face interview. A follow-up telephone call will be made and a follow-up e-mail will be sent if there is no response within one week of the informative meeting.
5. At the start of the interview, each participant will be given a copy of the letter of consent, describing the study, and each participant will be required to sign the consent form, acknowledging the nature and purpose of and their participation in the study. The interview will also include semi-structured questions listed in Appendix A. The interview will conclude by conducting a quick debriefing session, during which the participant and researcher can talk about the study and the participant's experience in the study. Also, a second interview will be scheduled for approximately one month following the first interview in order to validate the findings. This is called member checking. The length of time between the first and second interview will allow enough time for the audiotapes to be transcribed and analyzed.

6. Audiotapes will be transcribed verbatim and analyzed according to the steps outlined at the end of this chapter.
7. The two selected peers will validate themes extracted from transcripts. The peer reviewers will independently analyze the transcripts and independently derive themes from the data. Both peers who are selected for the validation process will adhere to the ethical protection of participants identified in this proposal.
8. The second interview will be conducted in an individual format, as was done with the first interview, to provide further validation that the results of the data depict each participant's experience. This is called member checking.

Data Collection

Data were collected from the completion of one face-to-face interview. The interview focused on the background of the participant to gain an understanding of his/her family structure that existed throughout their childhood into adulthood. It also focused on how that experience in the home may or may not have influenced their decision to enlist in the military. This interview included the process of building rapport, signing consent forms, gathering of information with regard to the research study, and debriefing the participant after the interview.

The participant addressed the details of their experience in their home lives prior to enlisting into the military by answering focused, semi-structured questions that related to the research question in this study. Some specific questions included: (1) How would you describe your family and each of your family members? (2) What was your

role/position in your family and can you describe what that was like for you? (3) What was your relationship like with your parent? (4) What was your relationship like with your siblings? (5) Was your family supportive or not supportive?

Data for the study were collected via one-on-one interviews with each participant. Each participant was interviewed in a private conference room that was rented out for use by me to ensure that the participant was in a safe, confidential, quiet, and comfortable setting. For cases when a participant could not travel to the interview location, an online and/or phone interview was scheduled instead. This option was used as a last resort only if other methods were infeasible or highly impractical. Each interview lasted between an hour to two hours. The interviews were audio taped and later transcribed word for word. All data was organized by creating a file for each transcribed interview. As Creswell (2013) noted, the use of having organized files helps the researcher to be better prepared for the analysis process. The organized files were then stored securely in my home office (i.e., audio and text files were on a password-protected thumb drive, and all paperwork was secured in a locked drawer in my private, personal desk.

Data Analysis

As previously noted, all data was initially gathered through one-on-one face-to-face semi-structured interviews. All interview data were audio taped and then transcribed for further analysis. Data were then analyzed through the steps outlined by Moustakas (2004). The following are the steps in which the data were analyzed:

Horizontalization: Go through the transcripts from the interviews and highlight all significant statements. These highlighted areas will reflect an understanding of each participant's experience with the phenomenon.

Cluster of Meanings: Develop a cluster of meanings from the statements and make themes from them.

Textual Description: Take the themes and make a description of what was experienced by the participants. As Moustakas (2004) notes, descriptions of the settings that influenced the experience are also made from the themes/significant statements. This is also known as Structural Description.

Essential, Invariant Structure (The Essence): This is the final part of the analysis where I have written a combined description that includes the essence of the phenomenon. This section is a paragraph or two of descriptive passages that focus on the common experiences found among the participants. The reader of this passage will be able to walk away with an understanding of the experience of the phenomenon.

Data analysis was also conducted through an electronic tool known as the MAXQDA software. The main focus of this software is for the use of qualitative analysis, and is noted to help “develop a system of categories, code segments of your documents, and write and organize memos,” (MAXQDA, 2013, para. A1). The use of the MAXDQA software tool helped with the coding and categorizing of themes and statements.

Verification of Findings

There were various forms of validation techniques used to verify the trustworthiness of the data interpretation and results. One form of validation was done through a process called substantive validation. This validation process looked at the researcher, the literature, and the sources of information. The researcher should be able to understand their own topic as well as what the literature states about it in order to gain a complete picture. This form of validation helped to give substance to what information was found. As Creswell (2013) stated, “Self-reflection contributes to the validation of the work... The researcher, as a sociohistorical interpreter, interacts with the subject matter to co-create the interpretations derived” (p. 248).

Other procedures I used to ensure quality and verification of the findings were found from three of the eight verification checks by Creswell (2013). These verification checks include the following: the use of member checking, the use of clarification of researcher bias, and the use of peer reviews. I have ensured that all participants’ perspectives were appropriately reflected in the data interpretation through two different checkpoints. There were both member checking and peer reviews. First, the data was validated through a peer review, where the peer asked “hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Second, member checks were completed where each participant reviewed the data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions about their account of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Each participant reviewed the interpretations and themes so they were able to judge the accuracy and credibility of their accounts (Creswell, 2013, p. 252).

I also clarified my biases by noting my experiences and assumptions around the topic so that I could be honest about why I even wanted to complete this study as well as to ensure the biases did not affect how the data was interpreted. Lastly, I used two peers, who were trained and educated in qualitative inquiry, to review the interpretation and results in a critical manner by asking questions about the meanings, interpretations, and methods of the study (Creswell, 2013).

Summary

Based on the purpose and research questions of the study, I have used qualitative inquiry through phenomenology as the research approach and design. I have recruited a total of nine participants through social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as three different APA listserv e-mails. Purposeful sampling was the chosen method for recruitment. Consenting participants were interviewed to complete data gathering. To analyze the data, I performed the following phases: (a) horizontalization, (b) cluster of meanings, (c) textual description, and (d) essential, invariant structure. After this, the data was presented and discussed in chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology study was to explore and identify the factors that motivate individuals from single-parent homes to enlist in military services. The study specifically examined how demographic attributes, such as age, gender, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status, affect a young adult's decision to enlist in military services. The overarching research question that I examined was as follows: What role does the family structure play in a young adult's decision to enlist in the military? This question was guided by the following specific questions: (a) Based on their experience, what aspects or characteristics of a single-parent home contributed to the decision of young adults to enlist in the military? (b) What demographic attributes of young adults affect their decision to enlist in the military?

This chapter presents the results of the qualitative analysis conducted purposely to answer the research questions. It contains a discussion of the data collection and analysis techniques used in exploring the factors that motivate individuals from single-parent homes to enlist in military services. In addressing the need to triangulate the collected data, this chapter presented the thematic analysis conducted by two peer reviewers. These peer reviews were conducted after the interviews and data analysis were completed. The peers reviewed themes that were evaluated to determine its consistency with Moustakas' (2004) method of analysis. This chapter contains the textual and structural descriptions of the meanings emerging from the transcripts of the participants' face-to-face interviews. The summary of relevant findings ends this chapter.

Data Collection and Analysis

I collected the data using face-to-face, online (Skype), and phone interviews with nine participants who were (a) currently separated from the military by their own accord, (b) between the ages of 25 and 35, (c) from single-parent homes, (d) high school graduates, and (e) enlisted into the military within 2 years of their high school graduation. The focus of the semi-structured face-to-face and phone interviews were to gain an understanding concerning the role of the family structure in childhood and adulthood that influenced their decisions to enlist in the military service.

In conducting the interviews, I ensured that I followed the ethical research procedures. I ensured that consent forms were signed prior to the interview, and participants were debriefed after the interview. The activities were conducted in a private conference room that was rented to ensure that the participant was in a safe, confidential, quiet, and comfortable setting. For those participants who lived outside commuting distance, interviews were completed online (Skype) or via phone. All interviews lasted 1 to 2 hours, and they were audio recorded using an IOS iPhone recording app. I transcribed each interview as they were completed. All transcriptions were organized in a manner that is helpful in the sorting and analysis of data.

In the analysis of the data, I utilized Moustakas' (2004) steps in data analysis. In the process, I followed the horizontalization approach, in which I highlighted and noted significant statements that were valuable in understanding the experiences and motivations of the participants in enlisting in the military service. I initially defined the meaning of the statements, which would help me in identifying the codes necessary for

the analysis using MAXQDA 11 software. All initial codes were defined along with the associated terms and phrases. I then uploaded these codes, terms, and phrases for computer sorting and grouping. MAXQDA 11 was helpful in clustering the meanings of the codes I initially identified. MAXQDA 11 was also helpful in counting the number of times each code appeared in the participants' transcripts. The codes with the most number of hits were considered essential experiences of the participants.

From the group of codes, the meanings of the experiences were thematically categorized. These thematic categories with the invariant constituents were then summarized to constitute the answers to the research questions. The thematic categories emerging from the transcripts of the participants were then given appropriate textual descriptions. These descriptions detailed the experiences and how these experiences of the participants influenced their decisions to enlist in military service. The final process was the consolidation of the combined descriptions of the participants' experiences that summarize the understanding of the phenomenon.

Demographic Profile of the Study Participants

A total of nine ethnically diverse participants completed the study. Five of these participants were male while four were female. With the exception of Participant 1, all had a high school diploma. Majority of the participants were Active Army (6, 67%). Table 2 shows the profile of the participants.

Table 2

Demographic Profile of the Study Participants

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	HS Diploma/GED	Branch of Service	Age	State
1	F	African American	GED	Active Army	31	WA
2	F	African American	HS Diploma	Active Army	31	CA
3	F	Asian American (Filipino)	HS Diploma	Active Army	27	NJ
4	M	African American/Puerto Rican	HS Diploma	Active Army	34	WI
5	F	Caucasian	HS Diploma	Air National Guard	34	WI
6	M	African American	HS Diploma	Army National Guard	33	WI
7	M	Asian American (Indian)	HS Diploma	Active Marine Corps	26	NJ
8	M	Caucasian	HS Diploma	Active Army	25	NJ
9	M	Hispanic (Mexican)	HS Diploma	Active Army	28	CA

Presentation of Findings

Using Moustakas' (2004) steps in data analysis, I examined the participants' transcripts for codes relevant in answering the research question: What role does the family structure play in a young adult's decision to enlist in the military? Using Moustakas' steps in conjunction with the MAXQDA 11 software, the participants were interviewed, textual data were collected, and the data were analyzed to discern themes that developed from the data. A descriptive analysis was conducted regarding the differences between the participants' responses. The analysis compared the invariant constituents reported within the main themes.

Listing and Preliminary Grouping

The coding process utilized the MAXQDA 11 software, which has the capability to list the key words and phrases emerging from the transcripts of the participants. For instance, key words identified in Interview Question 1 include (a) *childhood*, (b) *parental involvement*, and (c) *motivation*. This list of words and phrases guided me in identifying and describing specific codes, which were then reuploaded in MAXQDA 11 for code grouping. For instance, the key word *childhood* was identified as *alone* and *difficulty*. The grouped codes served as the basis for determining the themes. These themes were refined from the coded text to reflect the themes critical to the central question. The advantage of using MAXQDA 11 is that analysis comes with source identification, which matched the code with the participants' verbatim responses.

The preliminary groupings in the study were coded on the following three-stage life dimensions: (a) childhood, birth to 10 years of age; (b) adolescence, 11 to 17 years of age; and (c) adulthood, 18 to current age. At this stage, two relevant questions were posed: (1) What motivated you to enlist in the military service? and (2) What have you learned from your experiences living in a single-parent household? From these questions, I coded, sorted, and identified essential texts and phrases that were relevant in this study.

Reductions and Elimination

I ensured that coded data were accurate and were a valid representation of the phenomenon. The evaluations of these data also extend in determining whether lived experiences and perceptions conveyed by the participants are necessary and sufficient to describe the phenomenon. For example, Participant 1 shared that she was left under the

care of her sister and grandmother. While I described that Participant 1 experienced physical abuse under the care of her grandmother, I did not include how Participant 1 described the character of her grandmother. I selected the descriptions of the lived experiences that were only relevant in the study. In cases where vague descriptions appeared in the transcripts, I condensed and reexamined the text for more descriptive words that could be used verbatim in the data presentations. For example, the terms “no money” and “less care and love from the mother” were mentioned by the participants but have been broadly defined. In this case, I reexamined how these terms were articulated to understand the meaning. These terms as conveyed by the participants suggested that the participants were not experiencing the things that are considered necessary for a pleasant life, such as enough money, food, love, and care among others.

Clustering and Thematizing

The invariant constituents of the experiences were clustered to form thematic labels. Specific themes emerged from the thematic labels based upon the invariant constituents. The listing and preliminary grouping code report was used to generate the four thematic labels critical to the central question: (a) childhood experiences of individuals with absentee mothers, (b) adolescents’ experiences of individuals with troubled homes, (c) motivations of young adults to enlist in the military service, and (d) identified personalities of young military service members. The number of participants offering the experience assists in revealing the meaning, horizons, and the essence of the lived experience.

Thematic Label 1: Young individuals raised by absentee mother were more likely to enlist in the military service. The first thematic label, childhood experiences of individuals with absentee mothers, was determined from the three themes or invariant constituents. This theme answers sub-research question one: Based on their experience, what aspects or characteristics of a single-parent home contribute to the decision of young adults to enlist in the military? The invariant constituents central to the theme are as follows: (a) mothers are working fulltime, (b) grandparents assumed the role of the parents, and (c) children received less care, love, and attention. All participants in the study mentioned these constituents.

The first invariant constituents, *mothers are working fulltime*, emerged from the nine participants in the study. This invariant constituent suggests that young adults who enlisted after high school have mothers who are career-oriented and are financially supportive to the needs of the family. A number of these participants had fathers who were problem drinkers. Participant 3, a Filipino, shared that she grew up with a mother who was in America to work as a nurse. She was raised by her father when she and her siblings were still young. She said: “Well, my mom came to America, ‘cause she got the job opportunity, so she left us in the Philippines when we were like 3 years old. And then, I was 3 and everyone else was, obviously, different ages, ‘cause there’s four of us. We’re all a year apart.”

Participant 1 described her childhood as: “My mother was not really around, so my eldest sister was more like my mother. My mother was a truck driver who had her CDL, and she was always out working a lot.” Participant 9 described his mother as: “My

mom was a single mother, so she worked two full time jobs, and she was very concerned about us, and we didn't live in the best neighborhood.”

The second invariant constituent, *grandparents and/or siblings assumed the role of the parents*, suggests that, in the absence of the mother, someone from the family provides maternal care for the children. Participant 1 described her older sister who she said acted as her mother. She said:

My oldest sister did a lot of the motherly duties when my mother was not home. My sister even took us, my sisters and I, to church... My mother never took us to church. From ages 8-10, my mother sent my sisters and me to live with my grandparents while she did her own thing with another man and her fifth child, my youngest sister. During these two years she left us to her parents, my sisters and I were abused by our grandmother... She was a very abusive woman. She would punish us for no reason at all, while my grandfather was out of the home working all the time to provide for the household. These years were rough years for me, as I felt like a motherless child, wondering why my mother was not around and why she did not want us in her care.

Participant 7 described that the failure of his father to take care of the siblings forced the grandmother to assume the role of the parents. Participant 7 said:

And actually, before my father, we went to my grandmother. So we were pretty much raised by them, they were really, my grandparents on my father's side, so my paternal grandparents, my real parental figures while growing up pretty much. If I needed anything school-wise done, then my dad would step in, but, pretty

much, they would greet you when you came home from school, my grandma would always like to fix me something to eat, or my brother or my sister, and much pretty just take care of us throughout our childhood.

The third invariant constituent, *received less care, love, and attention*, suggests that while the participants' single parents were committed to provide the needs of the family, the participants had been receiving less moral support. Participant 4 shared:

Well, from what I recall, my mom was never around during that age and I was always at my grandma's house. So, I really didn't have a relationship that much with my parents during that time, I mostly was at my grandma's house... She was taking hiatuses where she wouldn't come home for months. My father was at work so I ended up at grandma's house all the time. As far as my parents during the time period, I'm honestly not sure what really happened. We never discussed it. We never actually went through it.

Thematic Label 2: Troubled homes predict the desire of the young adults to leave their homes. The second thematic label, *adolescent experiences of individuals with troubled homes*, was determined from the three themes or invariant constituents (Table 3). This theme answers sub-research question one: Based on their experience, what aspects or characteristics of a single-parent home contribute to the decision of young adults to enlist in the military? The invariant constituents central to the theme are as follows: (a) struggles the family conflict, (b) engages in drug abuse and alcoholism, and (c) works for personal needs.

The first theme, *struggles the family conflict*, emerged from the nine participants of the study. The participants all shared that they were in conflict with their mothers who vaguely set rules in their homes. Participant 2 shared that she often hung out with friends to escape from the stressful environment. Participant 2 said, “I’m living under her roof and I’m coming and going as I please, and she’s like, ‘no these are my rules and you need to follow them,’ so that was, it became a bit stressed.” Participant 5 also shared that he witnessed the fights of his parents. Participant 5 shared that being raised by an alcoholic father and a workaholic mother was certainly stressful for her. She said:

I know my dad came to pick us up and my mom wouldn’t let us go because he was already drunk and she didn’t want us to get in the car. So it caused a lot of, you know, animosity between me and my mom. I didn’t understand why, I thought she was just being mean and not letting me go with my dad.

The second invariant constituent, *engages in drug abuse and alcoholism*, emerged from the transcripts of seven participants of the study. These participants turned to drugs and alcohol along with their friends in the neighborhood as a coping mechanism. Participant 4, for instance, said that sharing his rape case with the public never crossed his mind. He said drugs for him were easily accessible. He said:

One instance was my friend had got his hands on a bunch of drugs. This was a changing factor in high school. I was with the jocks and partiers and I didn’t hang out with the smart people at that time. I was anti-bullying actually, more or less. I didn’t allow people to get bullied and I didn’t feel the need to pick on people who couldn’t defend themselves so I think in that aspect. I started working and paying

for me to go to kickboxing. I started learning how to defend myself in social settings, mentally, and physically... The partiers supplied the jocks with cocaine so they could do better in their sports activities.

He explained: “It was a sense of numbing the situation that I didn’t talk about yet. At this point in time, no one knew I was raped yet.”

The third invariant constituent, *work for personal needs*, emerged from the five participants who work during their adolescence years. These participants claimed that working early taught them the value of hard work and perseverance. Participant 8 explained:

You gotta work; you gotta earn your keep pretty much, you know? I don’t even know how to word it, but if you don’t work, then you don’t eat, so I was always doing something, you know, like raking leaves, stuff like that.

Table 3

Adolescents’ Experiences of Individuals With Troubled Homes

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Struggles the family conflict	9	100%
Engages in drug abuse and alcoholism	7	78%
Work for personal needs	5	56%

Thematic Label 3: Evasion from the family conflict and financial stability were motivations of the young adults’ enlistment in the military service. The third thematic label, *motivations of young adults to enlist in the military service*, was

determined from the four themes or invariant constituents (Table 4). This theme answered sub-research question one: Based on their experience, what aspects or characteristics of a single-parent home contribute to the decision of young adults to enlist in the military? The invariant constituents central to the theme were as follows: (a) stable income to start a new life, (b) evade the family conflict, (c) avail college education through military benefits, and (d) perceived financial success in military service.

The first invariant constituent, *stable income to start a new life*, emerged from the transcripts of the nine participants of the study. These participants shared that they needed stable work where they could buy their house, car, and other material things necessary in starting a new life. Participant 2 shared that working in the neighborhood only gave her a few dollars. She said, “I really didn’t have much money, I had a job, but it really wasn’t enough, and I did need the structure you know, I figured I need something along the lines, the structural level.”

The second invariant constituents, *evade the family conflict*, emerged from all participants’ transcripts. The participants perceived that joining the military would provide them the opportunity to escape their family problems. Participant 3 shared her story:

So that was like around 18, 19, then he deployed, and I was like, “This is my time to leave.” You know what I mean. “I’m gonna escape.” That’s what I remember. I would make like escape plans and stuff, you know? I would have my emergency bag ready, so I was ready to run away and stuff like that. I remember thinking like that. There was times I lived in a homeless shelter in Hawaii, a few times, ‘cause

it got really bad. And there were a few times he would have to go to the MP's station and I would try to run away and then what would happen? I would end up going back. Going back to him 'cause where else do I have to go? I didn't have money, I wasn't working at that point. I had my son. You know what I mean? The only income was his income at that point. Right? And there was one time actually I had my mom buy me a plane ticket to leave. My older one was about 8 months at that point. And I flew back home; I was like, "I'm done. I'm leaving him; I can't take it anymore."

Table 4

Motivations of Young Adults to Enlist in the Military Service

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Stable income to start a new life	9	100%
Evade the family conflict	9	100%
Avail college education through military benefits	7	78%
Perceived financial success in military service	4	44%

Thematic Label 4: Deprivation from human basic needs influences the decisions of young adults to enlist in the military. The fourth thematic label, *identified personalities of young military service members*, was determined from the four themes or invariant constituents (Table 5). This theme answers sub-research question two: What demographic attributes of young adults affect their decision to enlist in the military? The invariant constituents central to the theme were as follows: (a) emotionally and materially deprived, (b) rebellious, (c) optimistic, and (d) impulsive.

The first theme, *emotionally and materially deprived*, emerged in the transcripts of the nine participants. These participants shared that while their mother worked; they were left under the care of either siblings or grandparents. Participant 9 described the involvement of his mother in his life:

My mom, yeah, she was working full time at a packing house kinda like in the fields with oranges, and afterwards, she would go to her second full time job as a janitor, but then after, she couldn't do it no more, then yeah, sometimes, we were moving in with our grandma just 'cause it was kinda too much for her, you know? Five kids and its by herself, you know? So it was kind of tough for her. But yeah, sometimes our grandma helped raise us too—grandma and grandpa, I should say.

The second invariant constituent, *rebellious*, emerged from the transcript of eight participants. The majority of the participants shared that being raised in a home where their mother dictated everything was stressful. Participant 3 said that there are needs of an adolescent that the older generation may not appreciate. Participant 3 said: "I feel like, I think, at that age, 11 to 17, is definitely independent but, at the same time, rebellious."

The third invariant constituent, *optimistic*, emerged from the transcript of six participants. Two thirds of the participants shared some level of optimism in bettering their lives, considering their circumstances. Participant 4 reflected on the trauma he experienced throughout his childhood years, but also reflected on how he continued to remain positive especially for those who suffered like he did. He said, "I felt like I have been through everything... So I could console somebody if they lost a parent and console and understand when someone said their parents were going through a divorce. I could

understand having a drunk mom... So it was easier for me to take a kinder ear and let people know how to get through it.”

The fourth invariant constituent, *impulsive*, emerged from the transcript of three participants. These participants shared that they were spontaneous and/or reckless during their youth years, exhibiting behaviors that were unhealthy both mentally and physically. Participant 1 said that she had no real structure or guidance during her adolescent years. She noted:

At the age of 14... ummm... my life was kinda crazy because I was smoking weed, I was dating older guys, and, at the same time, I was running track and playing basketball... I was dating a drug dealer who did everything for me, and I was thinking that that was the life.

Participant 4, who experienced the loss of his grandmother and primary caretaker during his childhood, said, “So when she died, it was different. I became colder... I flirted, I started drinking excessively, and I started having random sex like nobody’s business, so I became popular.”

Table 5

Identified Personalities of Young Military Servicemen

Invariant Constituents	# of participants to offer this experience	% of participants to offer this experience
Emotionally deprived	9	100%
Rebellious	8	88%
Optimistic	6	67%
Impulsiveness	3	33%

Final Identification of Invariant Constituents

Each participant's interview was reviewed for validation and analysis. The review was conducted to verify that each theme or invariant constituent was explicitly expressed and coded. The research was then validated through the listing and primary grouping code report.

Individual Textual-Structural Descriptions

In this section, textual and structural descriptions are combined to describe how individual participants discern their experiences based from the feelings and perceptions conveyed in their individual transcripts (Farquharson, 2009). In the presentation of the participants' experiences, I utilized the verbatim responses and literal interpretation of the words in order not to lose the meaning of the phenomenological thoughts and experiences. These experiences reflect the invariant constituents and themes presented in this chapter.

Individual textual-structural description for Participant 1. Participant 1 was raised in a home with an absentee mother who left her in the care of her older sister and her grandmother. Participant 1 had four siblings but the other two were in the care of her father. Participant 1 shared that her mother was a truck driver. Thus, she said: "My oldest sister did a lot of the motherly duties when my mother was not home." She further shared that there was a two-year period in her childhood when her mother left them with her abusive grandmother. She shared, "These years were rough years for me, as I felt like a motherless child, wondering why my mother was not around and why she did not want us in her care."

Participant 1 described these years as confusing and at the same time painful. She explained:

...it's hard for a child to understand when crying for your mother that she just has to leave you there because of other reasons. But as a child, I didn't know. It was painful because I wanted to be with my mom, but she was not there all the time.

These experiences had taught Participant 1 the values of family, relationships, and hard work. As such, she shared that her primary motivator in joining the Army was her willingness to provide the financial and moral support for her children through hard work. She said:

I was in a bad situation, and I felt like I couldn't give up because I had two kids, and I felt like I had to do something to make things better for them, and even if it was like...well I was like 20 when I joined, and I had to go into a structured environment. At the end of day, if I could provide for mine and have a steady income. I felt like if I had to put myself in a dangerous situation—that's where I came from—a dangerous situation.

Participant 1 had a challenging life in her adolescence. She was raped by her father while her mother was incarcerated. At 14-years old, she was a victim of child labor in Texas and had been engaged in drug abuse. It was only when she reaches the age of 15 with her sister-in-law that she managed to achieve recovery. She implicated that the "structure" or policies her sister-in-law gave taught her the meaning of discipline. She said:

She didn't care...it was just as long as I was in school, and I got my chores done in her house, and was responsible for the things I did, and that I came home at a certain time. Yea she did give me a curfew. So I had some kind of structure. But I just thought that during that time in my life, that was not where I wanted to be, and so I joined job corps.

However, she became a teenage mother at the age of 17 and experienced abuses from her partner who was the father of her first two children. These experiences had taught her to value herself more than others. She said that caring for herself would mean care for her children.

When asked to describe her adolescent family life, she said "out of control." She explained:

My life was out of control as an adolescent. It was just... I had no, no, I had no ummm... no security, I had no direction, no structure, and just doing whatever. And putting, putting myself in dangerous situations, and I wasn't realizing that I could die tomorrow. But for me it was, it was so much about survival and being the best that I didn't see the things I was doing that would put me in a situation where I would probably regret it one day.

Based on these life experiences, Participant 1 said that joining the military would allow her to improve her life. She said: "...being able to get my education out of it ... and bettering myself." She modeled the life of military service men and women who were able to support their family through serving the government. She described the uncle of her husband who had positive experiences in the Army.

His uncle, Tracy, was in the Army during Desert Storm. He had a wife, two kids, a nice home... and seeing this and knowing that he was in the service, he was able to take care of his family and provide structure for them, and a foundation that seemed like to me, no one could take away, because he had earned all of that. So that, within itself, made me think positively about the military.

Her decision to join the military was precipitated when her first husband abandoned them. She said that the ultimatum that the landlady of their home gave her was a signal for her to leave the children with her sister-in-law so she could work.

Working in the military had never been fun for her. She did the best thing she could for her children. She described herself as a “very strong person.” She said:

Despite all the challenges that I have had... I have continued to be strong and that I have a lot of strength, and that I have a lot of determination. And those two things contribute to a lot in my life.

Individual textual-structural description for Participant 2. Participant 2 was raised by a mother who frequently traveled. She said that her childhood years had been fun because she could do things on her own and said that hard work for her was rewarded through travels. She said that the decision to join in the military never crossed her mind until high school. She said during her younger years: “I don’t think anything from that timeframe. Umm... I don’t even think I knew at that time that my grandpa and my dad were in the military... or had been in the military at that time.”

Participant 2 shared that her life in her early adolescence was “emotionally taxing.” She said that this experience was attributed to her father who was a cocaine user

and the absence of her mother. Participant 2 said that the absence of her mother affected her life. She justified:

It affected me a lot, because you know at the time, like I said, I thought they just, you know, my grandma and grandpa and stuff. I thought they were just tolerating me, just kinda doing my mom a favor by watching me, so you know her being around was kind of like a safe place so when she was gone, it was really stressful... 'Cause like, it seemed like she was the only ally I had, but she wasn't around very much.

The unmonitored life she had during her puberty had caught her in a situation in which she engaged in sex with a 14-year-old high school student?. At 17-years old, she realized that she was a loner and a bisexual. She claimed that while she had friends, she was not able to hang out with girls more often. It was in this stage of her life that she was unable to determine which group in the community she would fit in.

Participant 2 had difficulty finding the people and the environment that would accept her sexuality. Eventually, when she began playing soccer, her teammates became her friends. However, dealing with friends had caused her troubles with her mother. She revealed that she would regularly hang out with friends at the bar. It was only during her 19th year that she realized that she wanted a structured environment where she could start a life. While she was initially influenced by her older cousin who joined the Army, it was only after living her life with friends that she finally decided to join the military.

Participant 2 weighted all her plans and realized that her interests would no longer give her life direction. She explained that the structured environment in the military

would provide her good life directions. She said the only way for her to afford a house and car was to have a decent job. She justified that a decent job would require her getting a good education. She realized that all these aspirations could be fulfilled by joining the military service.

When asked about her personality that contributes her life decisions in joining the military, Participant 2 implicated that her decisions were made because of all of the ambiguous things that happened in her life. She said she was lost and that finding herself was possible in the military organization. She said: “I didn’t really have a “personality” then, I was just doing whatever I could to stay around people and that, not having a clear-cut idea of who I am, I think is another thing that really affected my decision to join.” She claimed that the military experience she had contributed in knowing herself better. She further explained that the training and expectations of the officers developed her strong sense of self.

Individual textual-structural description for Participant 3. Participant 3 barely knew her mother when she resided in the United States. She came from the Philippines along with her three siblings. She and her siblings were raised in a home with a mother who frequently worked during the day and night. She said that she spent her early childhood years with a disciplinarian father in the Philippines. However, her mother decided to bring them all to the States. Participant 3 said that her siblings and her father had several adjustments with their new environment. However, her father returned to the Philippines to work as an engineer.

Participant 3 recalled that she and her siblings were living in poverty in their childhood years. Unable to be taken care of by their mother, Participant 3 said they slept at their mother's friend's house and were picked up by their mother the next morning to drop them off at school. She said that they were beneficiaries of supplemented lunch because they could barely afford to buy food.

With five people in the house, Participant 3 recalled that her mother was careful of her expenditures. She shared that she grew up in a home where everything had to be shared and simple. In her younger years, she learned the value of saving money and being frugal in the spending of money. She said:

I always act like I don't have money just like my mom. Not that I have much anyway, but I always act like, "Oh, no I don't have that right now," even though I do. I'm just, you know? 'Cause I'd rather just save it. 'Cause I do want to get a house.

Participant 3 stressed the value of family. She recalled that they never had a complete family because her dad went back to the Philippines when they were supposed to be together. For Participant 3, distance had never been a hindrance in valuing the family. Like her immediate family, her husband had been living separately from her and her kids. Participant 3 taught her son on her belief that "As long as you have someone there for you, that's what matters. As long as you don't feel like you're alone by yourself, then you're fine." She said that her experiences had taught her the value of being independent.

Participant 3 was not emotionally attached to her mother. She had a fight with her mother so that she eventually lived in the houses of her boyfriend and her mother's friend. She worked in the mall and as a babysitter. She recalled that she did not inform her mother of the plans to join the military service. For her, enlisting herself in the military would provide her the opportunity to send herself to college. She thought that entering in the military service would be the first step to be totally independent from her mother. Participant 3 met her husband in the military service. With her childhood and marriage experiences, Participant 3 learned the need to be independent, revalued life, and appreciated the self.

Individual textual-structural description for Participant 4. Participant 4 was raised in a home where his mentally unstable mother “was never around during” his childhood years. He was left in the care of the grandmother. While the family did not discuss the whereabouts of his parents, he suspects that his mother was “probably in some psych ward.” His grandmother was described as drunk, yet caring woman. He said, “She made sure I was fed. She made sure I did my homework, and she made sure I learned Spanish.”

Participant 4 shared that he had brothers and sisters who chose to stay in the streets to steal and join gangs. He claimed that his grandmother taught him “to be honest and to be myself.” He said he was raised in a home where there was discipline. He related this as:

So I think what she instilled in me was basically if you want something, ask for it. And if you don't have it, you need to work for it. If I was hungry, I went to the

garden; I had to pick something to eat. If I made a mess, I was forced to sit there and clean it up until it's done. I would have to sit at the table and eat all my food which today is something I do. So I think that was very crucial to who I am today.

When asked about his childhood motivation to join the military, he said the idea of joining the military did not come in during his childhood years. However, his grandmother taught him of the worldly happiness that an individual could enjoy if he or she worked. He said that perhaps the idea of traveling motivated him to pursue military service at the latter age.

Participant 4 shared that he went through a “very rough” adolescent life. He recounted that by stating, “My grandma died, my parents got divorced, and I was raped.” He said that his teacher raped him, who he reported years after the incident. While the rapist got jailed, he never became the person he once used to be. He said that while he performed academically, he was transferred to several different schools due to bullying. He shared that he was once in the gifted classroom and was doing perfectly in school up until the rough days of his life came. He stated he hung out with people in the streets. His move to his aunt’s place exposed him to substance abuse. This was the period when no one did anything to fight for justice for his rape incident. With the passing of his grandmother, Participant 4 shared that he was different. He said:

So when she died, it was different. I became colder. I now was no longer the dork in class anymore when I got into high school. Now I made jokes, I flirted, and I started drinking excessively. And I started having random sex like nobody’s business, so I became popular.

Participant 4 said that during his high school years, his motivation was to graduate and get out from his home. He could not stand his mother who was “diagnosed with schizophrenia after my grandma died.” Unable to defend himself and grieve properly after the loss of his grandmother, Participant 4 exposed himself to learn kickboxing and other mental and physical activities where he could defend himself. He realized, “that everybody was going through their own troubles and it was my coping mechanism for being raped.” He further stated that while he experienced all this, he managed to listen to the life problems of his peers. He said:

It was easier for me to listen to them and give advice because I felt like I have been through everything. My parent figured had died, I was taken, and my innocence as a child was completely stripped from me. Within a year, everything I thought in the world had changed. So I could console somebody if they lost a parent and console and understand when someone said their parents were going through a divorce. I could understand having a drunk mom, you know what I mean? So it put me at a different emotional level to where, all of this stuff I knew how that feeling felt. So it was easier for me to take a kinder ear and let people know how to get through it.

When asked about the values learned in his adolescence, he said he learned the “Courage to speak up for people that couldn’t defend themselves in school. Courage to not know what was going to happen at home, and still being able to hold a brave face in public.” He further stated that “I learned to be driven. I learned that I couldn’t change my parents but I could myself.” The realization came early in his life when he realized that

every fun experience he and his friends had were all toxic. He knew by then that he could not manage his emotions and dispositions, and that he needed an environment where he could start a new and better life.

Participant 4 stated, “I joined the military at 17.” His motivation was the result of the compendium of life obstacles that would not allow him to earn admission into a college. He reflected:

Well, at the time, I knew that school was going to be expensive, and I couldn't have my parents sign off on any loans. At that time, I knew that I wasn't going to be able to get into any colleges because I had the attendance rate of a drop out. I knew that I couldn't change 3 years of drinking and cocaine abuse in one semester. The military and going into it, the drive, I wanted to learn how to protect myself even more. I had kickboxing, but I wanted something to make me more secure and able to handle myself. Deep down inside, I still felt that if something happened, I still felt that the 11-year-old boy would fold and crumble. So I had to do something to get me out of the city and help me defend myself. At that time, travel and putting me at a different place that was not here—which ironically, I am still here.

Participant 4 considered his family as the stumbling block of his dream to stay out in their community. He narrated the incidence when he was supposed to work and stay permanently in California, but had to come home because his brother stole and smashed his car. He said that every time opportunity knocked for him, family concerns back him off. He summarized his motivation in the military as:

I joined the military to get away from my family. The military allowed me to travel, it allowed me to be around people who were homophobic, rednecks, black power people. It allowed me to be around all these different type of people but, at the end of the day no one cared because it was about the work.

Individual textual-structural description for Participant 5. Participant 5 was raised in a broken home in the custody of “tough” mother. She said the period when her parents had divorced was a tormenting part in her life. Participant 5 shared that she was close with her father, and being in the custody of her mother tormented her. She stayed with her mom while her father visited her every weekend. Her mother did not allow her father to pick them up at home because he was an alcoholic. Participant 5 shared that while they were staying at the custody of their mother, she and her sister were taken care of by nannies. She said that living in this type of family set-up had taught her “honesty and just being independent and honest, self sufficient.”

When asked about her motivation in joining the military service, Participant 5 said she always heard her father talking about “being a cop or going into the military.” She claimed that her father served the “Army for a brief period, probably like 6 years maybe.” She said, “It was something that I wanted to follow in his footsteps. I wanted to prove to myself and I thought that it would be out of respect for my dad and things like that.”

Participant 5 grew up in a home with a mother who was strict. She shared that her mother was always adamant about her happiness and well-being even when it came to choosing who she hung out with. Participant 5 said that it was in her high school days

that she eventually broke the rules of her mother. She said that while her mother made efforts to establish connections with her and her sister by eating together during dinner and weekends, the attempt had not been successful after she remarried. She shared:

My mom almost kicked me out of my house in my junior year because we got into an arguing match with her. I yelled at her about my stepdad and how he wasn't my dad and didn't deserve his attitude. I couldn't stand him, like there were little things. My mom would work all day until 4:30 and she would come out of her office and he would look at her, and he was retired by then, and go, "Well, what's for dinner?"

Participant 5 shared that the conflict she, her mother, and sister had motivated her to join the military. She wanted to escape their family and relive the experiences she heard from her dad, who died alone in his apartment during her teen years. She blamed herself for the passing of her father because she had an argument with him a week before his death. She finally joined the military after high school, and eventually mended the feud with her stepfather, mother, and sister.

When asked about what she learned from her past high school experiences, she said that she learned how to be independent. She recalled that her mother stripped off almost half of their allowance from their father's social security. She said that she grew up in a situation that she had to buy her own things from the remaining money of the social security. She recalled:

In some ways, I appreciate it because it made me very independent. I had to pay for my own car and my own car insurance. She was never handed anything on a

silver platter and she was going to raise us to be the same way. We had to work for everything that we got essentially. I had a job once I was a freshman in high school. I started working at a restaurant, and that was my spending money.

She summarized that the motivations for her to join the Air Force included her ego. She stated she needed to prove that she could survive away from her mother. She also acknowledged the influence her father had on her.

Participant 5 had been successful in her military career, but ended up discharging after an injury and worked in the civilian community as a security officer. While her civilian job enabled her to afford all the things she wanted, including a house and a car, she attributed her successes to the military. During her time in the military, she learned the value of family. While on her deployment overseas, she said:

Deploying overseas I would say gave me the opportunity to really reflect on the fact that my family means the world to me. I mean, sometimes, I think I take them for granted. They didn't understand why I volunteered to go overseas in '08, yet they supported my decision. I think being away from my family has brought me closer to my family; I value my time with them a lot more.

When asked to describe her personality that contributed to her decision to enlist in the military, she said: "I am a very hard-working individual. I am also very determined and love a challenge, to challenge myself and prove that I was able to accomplish something as challenging and rewarding as the military."

Individual textual-structural description for Participant 6. Participant 6 described his family as relatively stable and reliable. He said the family life involved "a

lot of teamwork and responsibility.” Participant 6 was only raised by his mother who worked in a restaurant and a hotel. Participant 6 claimed that he never saw or met his father, and did not care to find time to know who he was. In his childhood years, he said his mother taught them the value of “responsibility, hard work, and the importance of education.”

Participant 6 shared that his high school years were ordinary days for him. He played basketball and football but was later recommended to an art scholarship in Rhode Island. He had been consciously selecting opportunities that could provide him with financial stability. He declined receiving the art scholarship offered to him because he believed that the art profession would not provide him a financial advantage. With these experiences, Participant 6 said that the values he learned in this period were “hard work and determination.” He saw these values in his mother, who worked night and day to provide the basic needs of the family.

Participant 6 currently focuses his attention on studying information technology after serving and giving many years of his life to the military service. His aspiration to acquire a better income can be seen in his goal to study nursing or pharmacy. He saw the long-term need, shortage, and stable income in the healthcare professions. When asked about the values he learned in this period, he said, “I work hard and I manage money well.” Participant 6 said that he had been prior active service, and now used the earned benefits he acquired over the years. He said that having a son changed his direction and commitment in life.

Participant 6 summarized his motivation to enlist in the Army by stating that he was looking for an organization where he could send himself to school for free. He felt that being an African American minority, he had no financial capacity to send himself through school. He said:

Minority parents, they don't have good credit, so when they go to get a student loan or something like that, then you be like, "Okay, that person needs to have a cosigner." So, if that person doesn't have a cosigner with good credit, then how does the minority then turn around and pay for school?

When asked about the different influences that affected his decision to enlist, Participant 6 reflected on the fact that it was not just his brother's military involvement that influenced him but that it was also the "lack of a positive environment" that influenced him as well. He said:

I don't think friends and anybody had a big impact on that; my brother enlisted and it was pretty good for him, and I mean it was good for me. I didn't know a lot of people joining the military, but I guess my brother—my brother speaking the truth about it. My brother will tell anybody, be like, "Hey, how many brothers you know getting out of the hood or stop going in those inner circles?" You know, you be like, its cool to hang out, and, you know, see people, but I be like, all the people I went to school with, there were maybe a couple people that joined the military, but mainly out of the minorities maybe one, two.

Participant 6 recalled that he had several military missions in the local community and overseas before he finally had the time to go to school. Participant 6 said that the years

before and during his enlistment in the military, he always had a “strong work ethic, being reliable, willing to help others.” He captured this in a statement:

I liked working with the state people... That really helped a lot. I liked working with the Honor Guard, you know, ‘cause the Honor Guard kind of hooked up with the VA. And well, we get ours... like all your enlisted records, so if you’ve got an honorable discharge that all comes from Milwaukee. Stuff like that, and you know, knowing people, meeting with people, you know helped out a whole lot.

Individual textual-structural description for Participant 7. Participant 7 was raised in a home of spiritual parents and grandparents. Participant 7 was an Asian Indian who had a stay-at-home father and a working mother up until his parents divorced. He had a brother and a sister who he said were raised by their grandparents when their father couldn’t attend to their needs. While Participant 7 did not experience spending more time with his parents, he learned the value of family. For him:

Family always matters and they always count. I know, like that’s not the case with a lot of families, but personally mine was you always get together, you always set aside differences, and just enjoy each other’s company pretty much as best you can for a specific holiday or during a get together or things of that nature.

Participant 7 described his mother as a person who valued the importance of money. His father, on the other hand, taught him that money is good but “that it’s not the end all be all.” Participant 7 sees himself as not intellectually at par with his brother and sister. He said that while he started school early, he could not catch up the knowledge and skills expected in a boy like him. Participant 7 had less self-confidence when he was a

boy that ended with him seeing a speech pathologist to correct his stuttering. He grew up dealing with a lot of bullying in the schools and lacked any real friendships. Due to this, he used his toys and imagination to build a new world of his own, a fantasy world where things were OK. When asked about the possible motivation in joining the military during his childhood, he said that joining the military never crossed his mind.

When asked about his adolescent life, Participant 7 said that his mother became ruder and frequently threatened to kill them. His mother was always out of the house working while his father was too busy on reading news articles. Participant 7 always heard his mother yelling and blaming his father and paternal grandparents for her difficulties in life. He described this experience as:

There was a lot of resentment being built to my mom and it wasn't resentment that was fed into my ear about my mom; it was resentment that she was doing on her own... And it was like ... Come home, walk into this stressful home environment, it wasn't even a home really, it was a house. A home, to me, is a very warm, fuzzy place that you can retreat to that you're always welcome in. This was literally just a house that people occupied and it felt very cold.

Participant 7 shared that his adolescence years were not very different from his childhood. He still experienced awkwardness to mingle with schoolmates. While he was not totally a loner, he had few friends like other students did. Participant 7 was often chased and bullied in school. He ended up becoming the aggressor in high school. He was known as a troubled kid by most of his peers. He described himself that time as

someone who would opt to join street gangs. Participant 7 depicted himself as a self-conscious young man who wanted to look attractive.

Participant 7 can be described as an introvert and has a depressive type of personality. His parents divorced when he was 13-years old. Because his mother married his uncle, the family bonding was noted as “not as close as it used to be.” While his father was able to cope with the divorce and managed to earn for himself, the earnings, including his savings, were later spent on his father’s medical treatment. This life obstacle affected Participant 7, such that, at that point, he thought suicide was an answer. He said he was experiencing stress before and even after joining the military service. He said:

During the military, it was traumatic for what it was in itself and it was traumatic for other reasons too because you know, you go over and you have all these friends who say they’re going to support you and care about you, and then when you’re over there you really learn who your true friends are in the worst scenarios and who really cares about you. So that was really kind of gut-wrenching for me in an already intense place; so I had to deal with that whole emotional rollercoaster ride I was facing on top of what was going on around me, and it was to the point where I...had availability of weapons...so I would like purposely put a pistol to my forehead and squeeze the trigger and see how far I could squeeze it until I stopped, and, in my head, I was always like, *well if it happens then it’s a win-win for me, but if it doesn’t happen, then it’s also win-win for me.*

When asked about the values learned from his experiences, he said that time spent with a person is valuable. He said:

Work is good but it's not the end all be all like some make it out to be so enjoy your life while you can. Don't waste time... like I have a few values... Don't waste time in doing something that you don't like or being with someone that you know you have no future with. You know, it's just going to cause heartache and frustration in your life, so just be true to yourself. Like, just be integral; I think being an integral person is key to enjoying life and being true to yourself as a human being. So, a lot of people do things because they expect others to praise them for it rather than do it out of their own free will and their own reasoning to want to do things.

Participant 7 claimed that the personality characteristic that contributes in his decision to join the military were "My tenacity, my stubbornness,...willingness to look at something more than myself...selfless behavior... selflessness qualities." He said that dealing with his decisions in the military service was supported by his family. However, he said that in terms of the community and friends from high school, his schoolmates thought that "going into the military saw it as a "cheaters" way out of life." Other's think that military service are for individuals who cannot support themselves in college.

Individual textual-structural description for Participant 8. Participant 8 described his childhood as a loner who worked hard to earn money. When his mother died when he was nine years old, his father became a drunk who was unable to provide care for him. He said: "You gotta work...if you don't work, then you don't eat." He said

that when his mother died, he knew he would not be able to go to college if he did not work. He viewed that enlisting in the military would allow him to enroll and earn a college degree. He said, “The way we grew up, the only way I would have gotten into college would have been, you know, going through the military. So that definitely influenced me because getting a degree was something I wanted to do.”

Participant 8 shared that his life condition did not change even during his teenage years. He said that his father’s health condition worsened, and he became the caregiver. It was during this period that he was caught in several troubles. He said that there was no one in his life who guided him through every step of the way. However, he said that while he had been a bad kid, he was a person who had “lots of love.” He explained that he learned he needed to love himself to be able to cope with the challenges in life. In his childhood journey, he learned “that the only thing you can really trust and rely on is yourself because, you know, if you put too much faith into everybody else, you can’t guarantee that everything gets accomplished.”

Participant 8 shared that while attending high school, he worked as a dishwasher. He said that a co-worker in a café had been kind in giving him food. Participant 8 noted he was a loner who had only two friends in high school and an older sister. When asked about a description of his family during his adolescent years, he said that “I don’t really have much good to say about my family.”

Participant 8 shared that he joined the military when he was 17 years old. He said that he missed his military work when he got out of the military because “It was good, I liked my job. Basic training was ok, and obviously no one likes it when you’re there, but

then, when you leave, you're like I kinda wish I was back going through the obstacle courses." Participant 8 went to Korea when he was 23. However, he had a training accident that caused him to medically retire. Participant 8 shared that he had married when he was in the Army but later divorced or annulled after about a month.

When asked about his relationship with his family now, he said that his family was his "battle buddies." He said that "I visit them from time to time, even though they're a couple states away, but you know being able to say I've got brothers was a good feeling, and that's the best family life I've ever had."

Participant 8 learned the value of patience in dealing with people. He said:

They like to say what they want to say and do what they want to do, but it only affects me if I let it; you know? And I've learned a lot of patience and a lot of tolerance towards things that I probably would have never had if I hadn't been through what I've been through; you know? Because words are just words. They don't actually hurt; only if you let 'em hurt, do they.

This learning was attributed to attending anger management classes during his active duty and finding out that his girlfriend was pregnant. He said, "I do feel like I've changed a lot 'cause now I'm less impulsive." His impulsiveness was demonstrated when he was recruited in the military. He shared:

I was with a bunch of friends; we were playing basketball, and I ended up going to Will and... to meet up with this one girl I was talking to, and on the way I stopped off at this Welsh Farms. I just went to go get a soda or a coffee

something; I can't remember what it was. And I looked in, and I saw the Army recruiting station, and I walked in and I recruited in.

Participant 8 said he entered the military three months before his graduation. He said that he had good grades even with not so good attendance. He justified:

I mean, because of the lack of home life, most of the teachers, they didn't think I was really worth too much. So they would just kinda like, "Oh just pass the tests and do the homework and you're good." They didn't really care about teaching me at all.

Individual textual-structural description for Participant 9. Participant 9 was raised by a single mother who worked two full-time jobs to sustain his needs and those of his two brothers and two sisters. Participant 9 shared that his father went back to Mexico to seek medical help. However, his father eventually decided to stay in Mexico and started a new family. He was then left in the care of his mother who then asked his maternal grandparents to take care of them when she's gone for work. Participant 9 said that the absence of his father did not affect him that much, because he had never been close to him. However, he noted his two older brothers and the younger sister were affected.

When asked about what motivated him in his childhood years to join the Army, he said that action movies inspired him to enlist. He related:

I was always interested in joining the Army ever since I was, I wanna say, probably like 10-11 years old, I was always interested, in not just the Army, but any type of military force. I was, maybe it was the marines I loved; you know? At

first, I wanted to be a fighter pilot, but then I started watching all these cool Army movies, all these military movies, and I kind of always had an interest in them ever since I was a little kid. So, that just kinda what—I'm not exactly sure what kind of—I don't know; maybe I just fell in love with a military movie.

Participant 9 considered himself as a “dumb” student. He said that he tried his best in elementary school. However, he shared that he stopped trying when he was in the 8th grade. He shared that he then got a lot of Cs, Ds, and Fs for his grades and started rebelling. He said, “I turned into a pothead, and I started drinking at school. And I guess, in a way, it was fun times when it started.” He shared that his mother was too protective and they were too “sheltered,” so he thought he needed some fun. He said his mother caught him using heroin and cocaine at least four times. He admitted that he barely graduated high school. He said, “I just hated school; I absolutely hated high school. I didn't feel defeated whatsoever with myself because I knew, I knew I was the reason I was getting horrible grades.”

Participant 9 shared that his mother persuaded him to go to college. However, he admitted that he still had his vices and that he was not confident in passing the college courses. He said:

I was still in a way a hot mess. I was still smoking; I was still drinking. I would even drink and drive; I was drinking and racing my really slow car, so I was more in the party mode more than anything.

Participant 9 enrolled in a social work course but later realized that his inclination was to enlist in the military. He shared that the military service taught him to be

responsible in his life. He further shared that he also learned to be honest and loyal to a person.

Participant 9 disclosed that his mother did not want him to enlist. He shared:

She was a typical mom. She was scared; she cried a little bit because she knew the danger, so she actually just wanted me to stay at home, go to school, do college, do all that fun stuff, but, at the time, it wasn't for me.

His brothers and sisters supported his decision to enlist in the Army. However, some of his friends never cared for his decision to join the Army.

Composite Descriptions

Composite descriptions are statements describing the experiences of the individual that contributes to understanding the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). At the individual level, the participant of the study contributes his or her experiences to the overall themes of the study (Farquharson, 2009). The consolidated experiences of the participants reflects the composite descriptions of the themes identified in the study (Moustakas, 1994). These descriptions clarify how participants described the themes relating to their enlistment in the military service. All composite descriptions were culled from the individual textual-structural and structural descriptions presented earlier.

Young individuals raised by absentee mother were more likely to enlist in the military service. This theme summarized the effects associated in a home where motherly care, love, and guidance were lacking for the children. It was found in the study that children who were left behind in the care of the grandparents and/or siblings may find their situation challenging. The participants saw that their enlistment in the military

would provide them a structured environment for solitude. These children living in a single-parent home were exposed to economically deprived situations. They viewed that enlistment in the military service would provide them economic benefits that allowed them to financially support their future families.

Troubled homes predict the desire of the young adults to leave their homes.

A majority of the participants had either abusive or noncaring parental figures. Young adults with troubled homes were mostly engage in substance abuse. These young adults viewed that for them to survive, they must work for themselves. The challenges they faced as they were with their families influenced them to enlist in government programs that could provide their present and future needs.

Evasion from the family conflict and financial stability were motivations of the young adults' enlistment in the military service. The participants in this study viewed military service as a sanctuary for troubled individuals who were willing to change their lives. Two of the participants had modeled military veterans who were successful after returning from the service. The participants perceived that the poverty and other social deprivations experienced during childhood and adolescence could be addressed by joining the military.

Deprivation from human basic needs influences the decisions of young adults to enlist in the military. A majority of the participants' personalities reflected an individual who had been deprived of the benefits that they were supposed to have. These deprivations resulted in a rebellious-type personality. However, optimism was observed among the participants who viewed the military service as the solution to their personal

issues. These participants felt the military could provide support, guidance, education, financial assistance, and structure to their lives. Of all the interviews, the most notable statement that best described the level of optimism that existed for some of the participants was the following statement made by participant 7:

Well I joined when I was 17, so... And I started to go down to the recruiting station when I was 16 or 15 and a half because I was so out of shape ... I was in junior year, and I wasn't in shape at all. Like one lap around the building and I was dead, so... We, my brother and I, would basically groom myself to get the confidence and the ability to train before going down to boot camp. And I liked the results; I liked the confidence being built, and it made me, for once, kinda feel like I belong to something. Like, my whole life, I was kind of like a free floater. I could go into any situation or circumstance and adapt to it, but there was never like a real sense of this is where my group is, this is where my home is kind of thing. So that was the first time I felt that... I'm like, okay, I'm going to do this because it was the first time I felt a sense of community and a sense of pride along with it so that's what basically drew me to do what I did.

Peer Reviewed Analysis

Two peer reviewers who both completed their dissertation in qualitative analysis and have experience with doing qualitative work were invited to independently review and analyze the transcripts of the participants. The peer-reviewed analysis of these interviews was essential in determining the reliability of the reported themes presented in

this chapter. The following section presents the consolidated codes and themes articulated by the peer reviewers.

Codes Culled From Individual Participants

All nine participants in the study were asked similar open-ended questions. These interview questions asked what significant milestones of the participant's life from childhood, adolescence, and adulthood contributed to their decisions to enlist in the military. The detailed codes were appended in this study (Appendix E). A synthesized result of these codes is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Synthesized Codes per Interview Question

Question	Response
Life 0-10	Painful, confusing, unloved; good, happy times; inconsistency in rules & structure; poor parenting; stressful, conflicted; steady, reliable, teamwork, responsibility; inconsistency, religiosity, isolation, academic struggles, picked on by peers; lonely, sheltered (by mom), deserted (by dad), reserved
Values	Family, relationships, hard work; hard work has benefits; save \$, live simply, value what you have; honesty, be yourself, if you need something ask or work for it; honesty, independence, self-sufficiency; responsibility, hard work, education; family matters, \$ is useful; work hard to earn your keep; responsibility
Enlistment	Grandfather was a veteran, bad things happen to vets; decreasing emotional connection to family; travel, see new places; dad thought military was honorable; military is cool but not a personal fit; way to go to college; fascinated by military stuff
Life 11-17	Out of control, no security, survival; hectic, emotionally taxing, loner; no structure; family & personal trauma, drug use; dad died, rebellion, conflict w/s-parent; parental fights & divorce, threats from mom, resented mom, relationship confusion, disliked body; unsupervised, reckless behaviors; poor grades, rebellious behaviors, used pot/alcohol
Values	Self-care; it's ok not to fit in, be yourself; hard work, self-reliance; courage, being driven; independence, hard work; hard work & determination pays off; hustling, intimidation; self-reliance; live life day to day
Enlistment	Military = good life, income, stability; "plan D" if nothing else works; wanted direction for life; wanted to get out of city, learn self- defense & strength; be part of something bigger, prove self; get physically fit, belong somewhere; do something new; like military movies
Life 18+	Authoritative parent, teach hard work & do your best; find self, socialize more, a bit lost; live apart from abusive spouse, make stable home for kids; came out as gay, joined Reserves & found "family," relapsed, cleaned up, went active duty & got back on track; independent, productive, successful; stable, mutually supportive; reactive emotions, disconnect from dad, suicidal thought & risk-taking; married & divorced, dad died, medically discharged from military (5 years), sister lives with him & he's just now building a family (GF is pregnant); unstructured before enlistment, just smoking pot, drinking & going to college to satisfy mom
Values	Hard work; family is always there for you; be independent, live simply, take care of your kids; honesty, loyalty, defend the weak, hard work; integrity, perfectionism, learning to trust; hard work & money management; work hard, enjoy life, don't waste time, integrity, keep learning & growing, resolve conflicts, don't let your demons get the better of you; patience, tolerance, don't be reactive; learned responsibility, honesty, loyalty, & don't be a slacker from the military
Enlistment	Income, security, place to live, way to prove self; way to get back on track; steady income, education, new start on life; need to get away, drop toxic people & situations; positive active duty = desire for career military; a way to pay for school; to be a part of something bigger; saw recruitment poster and thought "why not;" needed a change, college wasn't interesting
Personality = enlist	Personal strength, determination; way to find self; independence, desire to succeed at something; courage, fearlessness, need for challenge; hard working, determined, needing a challenge; work ethic, reliable, desire to help others; tenacity, stubbornness, selflessness; impulsivity; thrill seeker, adrenaline junkie, liking new, fun things
Influences = enlist	Desire not to be like peers; friends were stagnant, way to progress; recruiters gave choices & hope; need to be different from family & peers; dad promoted it, maternal family was supportive; brother was positive; family mostly supportive; uncle (vet) was supportive; no one was supportive & mom was fearful

The reviewers highlighted common responses of the participants per question.

Table 7 shows that majority of the responses of the participants when asked, of their childhood years, what were negative experiences such as loneliness, stressful, and chaos. When asked about their adolescent years, the common responses noted were negative experiences that result from the unstable homes. Furthermore, the factors of enlistment include the desire to escape from an unstructured home environment and to change the direction of their lives.

Table 7

Common Responses per Question

Question	Responses
Life 0-10	(-) Inconsistency, loneliness, stressful, conflicted (+) Positive, protected
Values	Family, hard work, integrity, self-sufficiency, responsibility, \$ is necessary
Enlistment	Family member positive about military, way to travel, way to go to college, military is interesting
Life 11-17	(-) Unstable home life, family conflict, substance abuse, rebellion, academic difficulties, personal & family stress & trauma (+) Family unity, academic success
Values	Hard work, self-reliance, drive & determination, take care of self
Enlistment	Personal direction, self-improvement, get away, be a part of something, income & stability
Life 18+	Pre-enlistment: (-) Negative emotions, no structure or direction, poor family connection, substance abuse; (+) Trying to find self, separate from negative influences, independence, productivity During/after military: (-) Suicidality, abusive relationships; (+) Making stable home for self & kids, feeling in control, feeling successful
Values	Hard work, integrity, loyalty, responsibility, self-improvement
Enlistment	Income, security, belonging, new start, education, challenge
Personality = enlist	Strength, determination, need for challenge, work ethic, need to succeed & do something good
Influences = enlist	Desire to be unlike peers or family, family military history, support from some family or friends

The reviewers also articulated their perceived themes per question category. The perceived themes of the reviewers were examined in the context of my personal analysis using Moustakas' method of analysis. Table 8 shows these emerging themes.

Table 8

Emerging Themes per Question Category

Category	Emerging Themes
Home life (0-18+)	(-) Instability, conflict, stress, isolation, problematic/toxic relationships, poor choices, rebellion, emotionality, lack of direction (+) Protection, unity, success, independence, productivity, stability, control
Values learned	Family, hard work, integrity, self-reliance, responsibility, loyalty, self-care
Enlistment cues	Opportunity to travel/get away, go to college, military interest, find direction, self-improvement, belonging, financial security, stability, personal challenge
Personality = enlist	Strength, determination, need for challenge, work ethic, need to succeed & do something good
Influences = enlist	Desire to be unlike peers or family, family military history, support from some family or friends

When the reviewers were asked of their answers to the research questions based on how they understood the transcripts of the participants, Table 9 shows the result.

Table 9

Themes per Domain by Categories

Category	RQ1—Single-parent home life and enlistment	RQ2—Demographic attributes and enlistment
Home life	(-) No positive role models, lack of structure, lack of belonging, identity crisis (+) Resilience, self-reliance	Seeking positive role models, structure & direction
Values learned	Personal ethics, family matters, loyalty, self-care	
Enlistment cues	Military interest, seeking direction, self-improvement	Opportunity (travel, education), financial security, belonging, stability
Personality = enlist	Fortitude, work ethic, need for challenges	Seeking success, doing good works
Influences = enlist	Minimal social & family support	Need to rise above the past (people & situations)

Reliability and Validity

In this study, I utilized member checking and peer reviews in ensuring that the results of the study were valid and reliable empirical information to answer the research questions of the study. In doing the member checking, I had each participant review their transcripts after they were completed to ensure all information was accurate. I also spoke

with each participant about the various themes that emerged from the peer analysis.

These themes were found to be consistent with the participants' experiences

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the findings from the semi-structured interviews of a purposive sample of nine participants. The interviews explored the factors that motivate individuals from single-parent homes to enlist in military services. Based on the research question, four composite themes emerged in the study. These themes were: (a) Young individuals raised by absentee mother were more likely to enlist in the military service, (b) Troubled homes predict the desire of the young adults to leave their homes, (c) Evasion from the family conflict and financial stability were motivations of the young adults' enlistment in the military service, and (d) Deprivation from human basic needs influences the decisions of young adults to enlist in the military. These will be further discussed in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology study was to explore and identify the factors that motivate individuals from single-parent homes to enlist in military services. The study specifically examined how demographic attributes of the participants, such as age, gender, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status, affected a young adult's decision in considering military services. The major research issue investigated in this study was how the single-parent home environment, together with socioeconomic status, affects a young adult's decision to enlist in military services (i.e., what are their motivations). This chapter is an overview of the study, summary of the results, discussion of the results in relation to literature, limitations, implications of the results for practice and social change, recommendation for future research, and conclusion.

Overview of the Study

As of 2004, Department of Defense statistics have shown that nearly 200,000 youth enlisted in the military each year to serve the country. As of 2011, the Department of Defense reported recruitment numbers for the 5 months from July to November 2011 were 42,437 men and women. However, these statistics provided by available records do not address the question of why people enlist in the military or their motivating factors. There are various key predictors regarding the inclination of adults to join the military enlistment and these include single-parent homes, social isolation, and socioeconomic status (Bachman et al., 1987; Spence et al., 2012). Kleykamp (2006) suggested that economic benefits that accrue from enlistment can also provide motivation to join, such

as social mobility for disadvantaged minorities, steady employment, civilian-equivalent jobs, and educational benefits. These economic benefits have led them to believe that being in the military can be more advantageous in terms of economic benefits.

Others may choose to enlist as a means of breaking away from the daily struggle of living. It includes freedom from financial inadequacy at home. Others enlist perhaps due to a lack of opportunity. Still others may enlist simply from the persuasiveness of recruiters (Hagopian & Barker, 2011). The recruiters would often highlight the economic aspect of the betterment in the lives of the volunteers. Currently, there are only few studies that have dealt with the value of motivations of adults in close detail. Some have focused on the lives and common concerns faced by young adults in their homes which often include unstable and/or alternative homes, social isolation, and even abuse (Spence et al., 2012). In cases where enlistment was motivated by a desire to move away from home rather than to the military, it is unclear why one would choose enlistment rather than civilian options. The enlistee would not have a good reason not to return home if a family member wants them to. On the other hand, a college student or worker does not have a good excuse. It is to be noted that there were participants who merely wanted to leave their troubled homes as the reason for joining the military. This study examined the experiences of young adults coming from single-parent homes who were motivated to enlist in the military and why enlistment ended up being the route chosen.

Adolescents transitioning into adulthood are often faced with the choices of what to do once they leave high school. The transition into adulthood made the military volunteers more indecisive of what they wanted to pursue in their lives. These choices

often include one of three options: postsecondary education (i.e., college), joining the workforce, or enlisting in the military (Spence et al., 2012). For those who come from a single-parent home, one option was college after graduating from high school. However, not everything goes as planned, especially with the possibilities of unprecedented challenges and issues. The issues were often resolved by young adults by consulting their peers. Examples of these issues are (a) lack of parental guidance, (b) lack of financial assistance, (c) struggle for work, and (d) work-life-balance. My dissertation topic was influenced by these pressing issues, especially since I had experienced them on a personal level. This dissertation intended to review the reasons why an individual chooses to join the military, with an emphasis on the fact that the military offers a more secure environment from one's current situation. This includes the assurance of having the following key needs met: discipline, routine, steady income, job security, camaraderie, and connection. Thus, camaraderie is one of the important reasons why many still choose to be part of the military. Camaraderie will always provide a sense of belongingness to the members of the military who will choose to enlist (Krueger, 2006).

A basic analysis of the United States' military complex revealed that huge armies of untrained or undertrained soldiers have, for years, been considered not merely a questionable strategy for military effectiveness, but a positive drain upon resources that might be more usefully directed (Krueger, 2006). Note that the effectiveness of the modern military in the United States, as in many other countries, is based on technology, skill, training, and expertise (Krueger, 2006). Modern battlefield equipment in the military today requires extensive training to operate, and significant expertise to

maintain. Even the most physical roles require often grueling training, practice, and expertise with a variety of weapons (Krueger, 2006).

This change in emphasis from troop numbers to troop skill has meant that military recruiters are not looking for “warm bodies,” but people with the physical, intellectual, educational, and psychological fitness to fulfill their military roles (Dobkin & Shabani, 2009).

Moreover, the significant investment of time, money, and training that goes into preparing personnel means that motivation has become a key factor to consider in accepting enlistees (Warner & Asch, 2001). Those with temporary or fragile motivations were less likely to endure the requirements of training, and were more likely to leave at the earliest opportunity, taking with them the investment the military has made in them (Cigrang et al., 2000).

The military must be able to choose from among prospective recruits whose motivations are not only strong, but also highly resilient so as not to waste the significant investment in training given to a recruit who quits even before she/he is qualified (Cigrang et al., 2000). Because the state has a vested interest in the recruitment, those who are physically strong should be preferred. Patriotism is also an advantage. Few studies have been conducted that offer insight on how a recruit’s motivations can provide the drive necessary to complete training and/or their committed enlistment term. These studies produced statistics of the demographics of individuals who were in the military. However, these studies barely, if at all, explored how such demographic and socioeconomic demographic aspects affect an individual’s decision to enlist in military

services. Thus, the socioeconomic aspect of an individual cannot be taken for granted.

Bridging this gap is the purpose of this study.

With the gap of the research being identified, two questions were posed to achieve the purpose of this study:

RQ1: Based on their experience, what aspects or characteristics of a single-parent home contributed to the decision of young adults to enlist in the military?

RQ2: What demographic attributes of young adults affect their decision to enlist in the military?

A phenomenological approach was chosen for this study. Phenomenology is the most appropriate tradition for this study, since this type of tradition seeks to understand a common meaning for these individuals and their lived experiences, being from single-parent homes and enlisting in the military (Moustakas, 2004). Phenomenology is said to be appropriate for studies that uses the lenses of the participants themselves to describe a phenomenon; thus, it is investigating using human experience (Silverman, 2011).

Moustakas (2004) stated that phenomenology is used when the researcher has to make meaning out of the experiences of people to address a particular issue being studied. The lived experiences of the young adults who enlisted in the military will provide the best information on the advantages and disadvantages of enlisting in the military.

Participants consisted of five men and four women selected from a criterion sample that met the study criteria. The inclusion criteria for participants in this research were as follows: (a) individuals who are currently separated from the military by their own accord, (b) individuals who are between the ages of 25 and 35, (c) individuals who

come from single-parent homes, (d) individuals who are high school graduates, and (e) individuals who enlisted into the military within two years of their high school graduation. Participants were male and female veterans who came from single-parent homes and were no longer affiliated with a branch of military service as they were already separated by the time of the interview.

Two assumptions were made to improve the credibility of the participants and the results. First, this research assumed that an individual's demographic profile (socioeconomic status) had a significant effect on his or her decision to enlist in military service. This is due to the findings of some studies showing that demographic profiles are key predictors of military enlistments (Bachman et al., 1987; Spence et al., 2012). Second, this research also held the assumption that these participants with temporary motivation (reasons found in single-parent home structures) may find that the stringency of the military training is a significant factor that can drive an individual to leave as early as the training phase. More often than not, it can be assumed that people would be more willing to stay in the military if they do not have a family that can support their financial and personal needs.

Summary of the Results

The first thematic label, *childhood experiences of individuals with absentee mothers*, was determined from the three themes or invariant constituents. This theme answered sub-research question one: Based on their experience, what aspects or characteristics of a single-parent home contribute to the decision of young adults to enlist in the military? The invariant constituents central to the theme were as follows: (a)

mothers were working full time, (b) grandparents assumed the role of the parents, and (c) received less care, love, and attention. These constituents were mentioned by all participants in the study.

The second thematic label, *adolescent experiences of individuals with troubled homes*, was determined from the three themes or invariant constituents. This theme answered sub-research question one: Based on their experience, what aspects or characteristics of a single-parent home contributed to the decision of young adults to enlist in the military? The invariant constituents central to the theme were as follows: (a) struggles the family conflict, (b) engages in drug abuse and alcoholism, and (c) works for personal needs.

The third thematic label, *motivations of young adults to enlist in the military service*, was determined from the four themes or invariant constituents. This theme answered sub-research question one: Based on their experience, what aspects or characteristics of a single-parent home contribute to the decision of young adults to enlist in the military? The invariant constituents central to the theme were as follows: (a) have a stable income to start a new life, (b) evade the family conflict, (c) avail college education through military benefits, and (d) analyze perceived financial success in military service.

The fourth thematic label, *identified personalities of young military service members*, was determined from the four themes or invariant constituents (Table 4). This theme answered sub-research question two: What demographic attributes of young adults affect their decision to enlist in the military? The invariant constituents central to the

theme are as follows: (a) emotionally and materially deprived, (b) rebellious, (c) optimistic, and (d) impulsive.

In summary, four themes have emerged: (a) Young individuals raised by absentee mother were more likely to enlist in the military service, (b) Troubled homes predict the desire of the young adults to leave their homes, (c) Evasion from the family conflict and financial stability were motivations of the young adults' enlistment in the military service, and (d) Deprivation from human basic needs influences the decisions of young adults' to enlist in the military. These are further discussed in the next section vis-à-vis relevant literature.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to Literature

The theoretical framework of the study is the theory of self-concept whereby the self is seen to be the central ingredient in human personality and personal adjustment. The themes of the findings in this study revealed that the family plays an important factor in ensuring that the self is nurtured in addition to what is given by nature to individuals as human beings. The theory is applicable to the findings because the findings revealed that financial stability, peaceful environment, and support from mothers to their children played an important role in how the participants perceived themselves. The lack of these factors would have detrimental impacts to the students and young adults. Mothers are often more relevant in the emotional strength of the young adults because they are the ones who raise the children at home.

Research Question 1: Based on their experience, what aspects or characteristics of a single-parent home contributed to the decision of young adults to enlist in the military?

This expected finding is congruent with the result of a study (Spence et al., 2012) that young adults who come from alternative home structure, specifically single-parent homes are noted to be more likely to join the military as opposed to going to college. Part of this trend is attributed to either the lower socioeconomic status of single-parent homes or the lack of parental involvement in adolescent lives (Spence et al., 2012).

Moreover, research has shown that single-parent homes, social isolation, and socioeconomic status are key predictors of military enlistment (Bachman et al., 1987; Spence et al., 2012). In a much similar result, Kleykamp (2006) suggested that economic benefits that accrued from enlistment can also provide motivation to join, such as social mobility for disadvantaged minorities, steady employment, civilian-equivalent jobs, and educational benefits.

Furthermore, others may choose to enlist as a means of breaking away from financial inadequacy at home, or perhaps due to a lack of opportunity; or even simply from the persuasiveness of recruiters (Hagopian & Barker, 2011). Of the potential motivations, breaking or moving away from problems and difficulties that exist in enlistees' home lives is one of the common concerns, which often include unstable and/or alternative homes, social isolation, and even abuse (Spence, et al., 2012). In cases where enlistment was motivated by a desire to move away from home rather than to the military, it was made clearer as to why one has chosen enlistment rather than other

civilian options such as college. It is to be noted that it is more difficult to leave the military after enlistment because not everyone would have a progressive and stable life to go back to.

Research Question 2: What demographic attributes of young adults affect their decision to enlist in the military?

This supports the findings of some studies showing that demographic profiles are key predictors of military enlistments (Bachman et al., 1987; Spence et al., 2012). In their studies Bray et al. (1990) showed that the interaction of aptitude and ethnicity indicated higher probabilities to enlist in the military for those who belong to the group with lower aptitude as measured by tests given them prior to enlistment in the military. They also support the finding of the current work. This probability significantly decreased as the aptitude level increased, with the decline rate higher for Black Americans than for their White counterparts (Bray et al., 1990). No other minority groups were measured in this study. In another study, Baker (1985) seemed to support the findings of this study as he found that young job applicants do not have enough preparation from their family or school to allow them to decide wisely in their occupation.

Limitations

This study had five limitations. First was the participants' attitude about disclosing personal information and their willingness to cooperate in introspective and reflexive questioning may have affected the outcome of the research. Most, if not all, participants appeared to share a lot of their personal experiences, but one individual was rather guarded and closed to sharing experiences in depth/detail. The second limitation

dealt with the age range and war era when the respondents served, as all participants were between the ages of 25-35 years old. When recruiting for participants, there were a number of individuals who met all criteria except for the age, as a number of interested people were older than 35. The third limitation that came into play was the fact that the participants were individuals who had served and were now separated. There was no examination of individuals who were in the process of enlisting or seeking to enlist. There was also no examination of enlistees who dropped out of basic training. A fourth factor limiting to the study was the process in which participants were recruited (via social networks and listservs). This was a limiting factor because there were other means of contacting participants; nevertheless, these two chosen media were highly frequented by the target population of the study. In addition, this was also limiting because possible participants may not have been accessed due to lack of communication. Finally, the fifth factor that affected the results of the study was the fact that the study was limited to individuals who had joined the military coming from single-parent homes.

Recommendations for Further Research

As the limitations have been identified in the previous section, it would be insightful for future researchers to consider the following recommendations:

1. Consider expanding the topic discussed in this study. Only the motivations of former military personnel coming from single-parent homes have been explored in relation to military enlistment. The study found that single-parent homes are more likely to send a young adult to military. Considering other

external factors of motivation for military enlistment would contribute more to a parallel search.

2. Widen the scope of the participants. In this study, only participants who met the criteria enumerated above were considered and accepted. While an increase in the number of population sample would contribute largely in the exploration of the motivations for military enlistment phenomenon, changing the sampling method level of the participants might also yield positive effect on the study. It is to be noted that the best population to identify on who to focus recruitment efforts on would be those who are still in the military.
3. Finally, consider the other demographic information of the participants. For one, their age could be altered. For another, their location could also be changed. These two will surely make the findings of the study more generalizable.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The importance of the family or the influence of the mother on possible military recruits was highlighted by the first theme. It was apparent from the results of the study that the single-parent home structure has no real structure. The parent was most often found working a lot outside of the home with the children learning to take care of themselves while living fairly independently by the time they were teenagers. So it is very important to always focus on the value of a supportive, attentive home because unsupportive, inattentive homes might have negative impact to the youth. A supportive home would provide more options for young adults if they feel they have a home to go

back to. The implications for positive social change of this research include the importance of going to the very core of the society—the family.

Positive social change can only be apparent if there will be positive changes to the most basic unit of the society. A positive social change to the family and family members is a good indication that there are positive social changes influenced by this study. It is to be noted that this study is capable of igniting development from the level of the family, whereas better standards for parents, especially single parents, need to be implemented to help initiate/increase awareness of how they are raising their children. In turn, this can cause a great wave of positive social change to society as a whole by determining factors that can potentially cause disconnect within the family structure, or understanding the sense of belonging that children desire, such as what is found in the military culture.

In addition, the social change impact from this study can further assist in offering insights to integrating new recruits into the military. This can help military professionals, recruiters, families, and potential recruits alike. Military professionals and recruiters can look to develop and/or use tools that can further assess one's ability to sustain the military lifestyle. Pre-enlistment information and trainings can be structured to provide interested individuals with a view and perspective on what the military culture entails. With this being said, families and potential recruits may then be offered the opportunity to truly decide if the military is the best choice.

Summary and Conclusion

In summary, four themes have emerged from the study and they include: (a) Young individuals raised by absentee mother were more likely to enlist in the military

service, (b) Troubled homes predict the desire of the young adults to leave their homes, (c) Evasion from the family conflict and financial stability were motivations of the young adults' enlistment in the military service, and (d) Deprivation from human basic needs influences the decisions of young adults to enlist in the military. Given these expected results, implications for positive social changes were generated. In particular, programs and curriculum related to the issue at hand were recommended. It was also argued that with these expected findings, both the society and educational enterprise will benefit. Research was recommended to expand the topic and the participants for a deeper comprehension of the phenomenon being studied.

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Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in Military Enlistment Study

- Volunteers are sought for participation in a doctoral research study. The study will investigate/examine how the single-parent home environment, together with other demographic attributes, such as age, gender, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status, affects a young adult's decision to enlist in military services.
 - If you are an independent adult, from a single-parent home, between the ages of 25 to 35, currently separated from the military, and if you are interested in being a part of this study, please complete and return the following form to:
[REDACTED]@waldenu.edu
 - All information will be held in strict confidentiality.
-

NAME: _____

Street Address: _____

Telephone: (____) ____ - _____

Apt. or Suite # _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail Address: _____

Appendix B: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study on the affects of the family structure on a young adult's decision to enlist into the military. The researcher is inviting military veterans who are between the ages of 25 and 35 years old, currently separated from the military, and who were part of a single-parent home at the time they enlisted into the military to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Jada A. Philips, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to examine how the single-parent home environment, together with other demographic attributes, such as age, gender, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status, affects a young adult's decision to enlist in military services.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will first be asked to:

- Complete a brief questionnaire via e-mail to assure you meet the criteria for the study (approximately 5 minutes)

If your responses to the questionnaire show you meet the study's research requirements for age, military enlistment time frame, and current separation standards, you will then be asked to:

- Complete a about two hours for a one-on-one interview with the researcher in a private setting (approximately 1 hour)
- Be audio recorded in the course of the interview

- Interview will take place in a private, comfortable setting (i.e. researcher's private office). For those who are not in a commutable distance, teleconference options are available (i.e. Skype).
- There will be a debriefing that will take place after the interview to talk about the study and your experience in the study.
- Participate in a second, follow up interview (about a month after the initial interview) to review the responses given in the first interview and validate all information given is accurate (approximately 30-60 minutes)

Here are some sample questions:

- During your childhood, how can you describe your family life and your home?
- What are the values that you have learned during your childhood years thorough your family/home?
- What aspects of your childhood life can you say have contributed to your decision to join in the military?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. You will not be treated differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomfort from talking about sensitive personal issues and experiences, such as psychological stress or becoming upset. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing. A list of professional referrals will be provided to all participants.

Participants can learn the results of the study to find out how the family structure may or may not play a role in the decision to join the military and if so, why. If the family structure does indeed play a role in one's decision to join the military and the reasons/themes are noted, then participants can gain a better understanding of themselves, their self-concept.

Compensation:

There is no compensation provided for participation.

Privacy:

- Any information you provide will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, while the electronic media will be stored on a protected flash drive: All information will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by keeping it in a locked cabinet, while a password will be required to access the data kept on electronic file. Further, numbers will be assigned to each case, avoiding any possibility that participants can be identified. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.
- All information will be held confidential and privileged unless there is suspicion or you report that you have neglected or abused a child.
- All information will be held confidential and privileged unless you report suicidal or homicidal ideation, intent or plan in such that the researcher believes you are dangerous to yourself or to someone else.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone or text at [REDACTED] or e-mail at [REDACTED]@waldenu.edu. If you want

to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is [REDACTED]. Walden University's approval number for this study is 08-18-14-0226982 and it expires on August 17, 2015.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Appendix C: Study Brief Questionnaire

You have indicated an interest in participating in a research study on the affects of the family structure on a young adult's decision to enlist into the military. This brief questionnaire is part of the research process. Please complete and return the questionnaire to the following e-mail address: ██████████@waldenu.edu. All questions are optional. If you choose not to return the questionnaire that is acceptable, and you will be removed from the list of volunteers. If you complete and return the questionnaire, you will be one of the individuals considered for inclusion in the study. Even if you are selected to participate in the study you will still be able to withdraw at any time.

Name: _____ **Date of birth:** _____

Language: Fluent in English? ___ Yes ___ No

Military Status (check): Active (___) Separated (___) Retired (___)

Separation status (check): Honorable (___) General (___) Other than honorable (___)
Dishonorable (___)

Do you come from a single-parent home setting: ___ Yes ___ No

Did you graduate from high school: ___ Yes ___ No ***If not, obtain GED?** ___ Yes

Did you enlist into the military within two years of completing high school? ___ Yes ___ No

Branch enlisted: Army (___) Air Force (___) Navy (___) Marine Corps (___) Coast Guard (___)

Branch component: Active (___) Reserve (___) National Guard (___)

Marital Status: Single (never married): ___ Single (not currently married): ___

Committed Relationship ___ Married ___ Divorced ___ Widowed ___

How do you prefer to identify your ethnicity/race: Caucasian ___ White ___ Black ___

African American ___ Hispanic ___ Latino ___ Chicano ___ Asian-American ___

Japanese-American ___ Chinese-American ___ Pacific-Islander ___ Hawaiian ___

Native-American ___ (Tribe _____) Other (please specific): _____

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

1. During your childhood (0-10 years old), how can you describe your family life and your home?
 - a. What are the values that you have learned during your childhood years through your family/home?
 - b. Please cite specific instances that you think defined your childhood family life.
 - c. (If any) What aspects of your childhood life can you say have contributed to your decision to join in the military?
2. During your adolescence (11-17 years old), how can you describe your family life and your home?
 - a. What are the values that you have learned during your adolescent years through your family/home?
 - b. Please cite specific instances that you think defined your adolescent family life.
 - c. (If any) What aspects of your adolescent life can you say have contributed to your decision to join in the military?
3. During your adulthood (18-present years), how can you describe your family life and your home?
 - a. What are the values that you have learned during your adult years through your family/home?
 - b. Please cite specific instances that you think defined your adult family life.
 - c. (If any) What aspects of your adult life can you say have contributed to your decision to join in the military?
4. During what stage in your life have you finally decided that you will enlist in the military?
 - a. Before enlisting in the military, what were you busy with?

- b. What made you decide to enlist in the military?
- c. Can you please recount your experience/journey towards your decision to enlist in the military?
- d. What aspects of your personality can you say contributed to your decision to enlist in the military?
- e. How did your social circle/environment contribute to or affect your decision to enlist in the military?
 - Parents
 - Siblings
 - Friends
 - Community
 - Peers
 - Others?

Appendix E: Codes Identified Through Peer Reviews

	Questions	Code
Participant		
#1	Life 0-10	Painful, confusing, unloved
	Values	Family, relationships, hard work
	Enlistment	Grandfather was veteran, bad things happen to vets
	Life 11-17	Out of control, no security, survival, do your best
	Values	Take care of yourself
	Enlistment	Military = good life, income, stability
	Life 18+	Authoritative parent, teach hard work & doing your best
	Values	Hard work
	Enlistment	Income, security, place to live, way to prove self
	Personality = enlist	Personal strength, determination
	Influences = enlist	Desire not to be like peers
#2	Life 0-10	Good times, happy times
	Values	Hard work pays off & gives benefits
	Enlistment	***
	Life 11-17	Hectic, emotionally taxing, was a loner
	Values	It's ok if you don't fit, be yourself
	Enlistment	"plan D" if nothing else works out
	Life 18+	Trying to find self, trying to socialize more, a bit lost
	Values	Family is always there for you
	Enlistment	Way to get back on track
	Personality = enlist	Personally ambiguous so military was a way to find self
	Influences = enlist	Friends were stagnant, military was her way to progress

(table continues)

	Questions	Code
#3	Life 0-10	Rules & structure, then few rules & little structure
	Values	Save \$, live simply, value what you have
	Enlistment	Decreasing emotional connection to family
	Life 11-17	Conflict, fights, no structured home life
	Values	Hard work, self-reliance
	Enlistment	Wanted direction for life
	Life 18+	Lives separate from abusive spouse; but stable home for kids
		Be independent, live simply, take care of yours kids
	Values	Steady income, education, new start on life
	Enlistment	Independence, desire to succeed at something
	Personality = enlist	Recruiters gave her choices and hope
	Influences = enlist	
#4	Life 0-10	Absent mom, unreliable dad; but okay with grandmother
	Values	Honesty, be yourself; if you need something, ask or work for it
	Enlistment	Wanted to travel, see new places
	Life 11-17	Rough: G's death, p's divorce, being rape; on the streets, used drugs; but ok in school
	Values	Courage, being driven
	Enlistment	Wanted to get out of city, learn self-defense & strength
	Life 18+	Came out as gay, joined Reserves & found "family;"
		relapsed, cleaned up, went active duty & got back on track
	Honesty, loyalty, defend the weak, hard work	
	Values	Need to get away, drop toxic people & situations

(table continues)

	Question	Code
	Enlistment	Courage, fearlessness, need for challenge
	Personality = enlist	Need to be different than family & peers
	Influences = enlist	
#5	Life 0-10	Stressful (parental divorce), conflicted (w/mom)
	Values	Honesty, independence, self-sufficiency
	Enlistment	Dad thought military was honorable
	Life 11-17	Dad died; rebellious, conflicted (w/s-dad); athletic
	Values	Independence, hard work
	Enlistment	Wanting to be part of something bigger, need to prove self "Great;" independent; productive & successful,
	Life 18+	Integrity, perfectionism; learning to trust
	Values	Positive active duty = desire to be career military
	Enlistment	Hard working, determined, needing a challenge
	Personality = enlist	Dad had promoted it; maternal family was supportive
	Influences = enlist	
#6	Life 0-10	Steady, reliable, teamwork, responsibility
	Values	Responsibility, hard work, education is important
	Enlistment	***
	Life 11-17	Family unity; academic success
	Values	Hard work & determination pays off
	Enlistment	***
	Life 18+	Stable, mutually supportive
	Values	Hard work, money management
	Enlistment	Military was a way to pay for school

(table continues)

	Question	Code
	Personality = enlist	Work ethic, being reliable, desire to help others
	Influences = enlist	Brother's positive attitude about military
#7	Life 0-10	Inconsistent, numerous moves; religious family; isolated from family gatherings; struggled in school, picked on by peers; felt stupid
	Values	Family matters; money is useful
	Enlistment	Saw military as "cool" but didn't see it as a personal fit
	Life 11-17	Chaotic, parents fought, mom threatened to poison kids; resentment against mom; didn't understand relationships; uncomfortable in own body (body dysmorphic d/o) Hustling, intimidation
	Values	Desire to get physically fit, to belong somewhere
	Enlistment	Reactive emotions; disconnect from dad; suicidal thought &
	Life 18+	risk-taking Work hard, enjoy life, don't waste time; integrity w/self &
	Values	others; keep learning & growing; resolve conflicts, don't let your demons get the better of you To be a part of something bigger
	Enlistment	Tenacity, stubbornness, selflessness
	Personality = enlist	Family mostly supportive
	Influences = enlist	
#8	Life 0-10	Lonely (mom deceased & dad alcoholic)
	Values	Work hard to earn your keep
	Enlistment	Military would be only way to go to college

(table continues)

Question	Code
Life 11-17	Unsupervised; reckless behaviors
Values	Self-reliance
Enlistment	Maybe something new to do
Life 18+	Married & divorced; dad died; medically discharged from military (5 years); sister lives with him & he's just now building a family (GF is pregnant)
Values	Patience, tolerance, don't be reactive
Enlistment	Saw a recruitment poster & thought "why not?"
Personality = enlist	Impulsivity
Influences = enlist	Uncle (a vet) was supportive
#9 Life 0-10	Sheltered by mom (a hard worker); deserted by dad; personally reserved
Values	Responsibility
Enlistment	Fascinated by military stuff as a kid
Life 11-17	Conservative home, poor school performance; rebellious behaviors, used pot & alcohol at school
Values	Live life day to day
Enlistment	Liked to watch military movies
Life 18+	Unstructured before enlistment, just smoking pot, drinking & going to college to satisfy mom
Values	Learned responsibility, honesty, loyalty, & don't be a slacker from the military
Enlistment	Needed a change, college wasn't interesting
Personality = enlist	Thrill seeker, adrenaline junkie; likes new, fun things
Influences = enlist	No one was supportive, & mom was against it (fearful)