The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the social, cultural, and structural factors that contribute to or inhibit alcohol use and abuse in the Army among young males, unmarried or married without a present spouse. Seventeen single, or separated, young male soldiers stationed at Fort Bragg Army Base were interviewed to provide insight into the research questions. Soldiers were largely located through face-to-face canvassing. The interviews, which lasted from 45 to 90 minutes, took place face-to-face and were then transcribed. Interviews were analyzed using grounded theory approach by locating patterns, themes and relationships to come to generalizations. The themes that emerged from the interviews include: 1) stresses of army work/life; 2) social/entertainment use; 3) tradition/brotherhood/entitlement; 4) fear/consequences; 5) impressionable youth; 6) treatment. While the themes which emerged were reported in discrete terms, there was overlap in them. The functional aspect of alcohol use to these soldiers mixed with the impact of social interaction influencing their use served to encourage and further the use of alcohol. The drinking patterns of young male soldiers can be seen to exist on a continuum of either social integration or social stress, in line with Durkheim's conception of suicide, with the existence of being on either end of these continuums leading to excessive alcohol use. The findings confirm Durkheim's conception of social order in leading to unhealthy responses and indicate the Army needs to address the role and impact of the greater social environment in leading to alcohol misuse among young male soldiers.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
Statement of Problem

Heavy alcohol use, including binge drinking, is a serious problem in the U.S. Military. Rates of use when compared to civilian rates of drinking indicate the severity of the problem. Heavy alcohol use is generally defined as having five or more drinks per drinking occasion at least once a week or 15 standard drinks per week for men, or at least four standard drinks per day or eight standard drinks per week for women according to the DSM IV-TR (APA, 2000). Standardized comparisons of the rate of heavy alcohol use in the U.S. military indicate that 16.1% of personnel have been involved in the past month while the same rate for civilians was 12.9%. In regards to young males ages 18 to 25 in the military, the difference, and problem, is more noticeable. While 20% of young civilian males qualified as heavy drinkers, the rate for young males in the military was 29%. Additionally, the rates of heavy drinking in the military have continued to increase in recent years. From 1998 to 2005, the rate increased from 15% to 19%, and further increased in 2008 to a rate of 20% (Bray & Hourani, 2005; Bray, Pemberton, & Hourani, 2008).

Furthering the concern for heavy drinking in the military, particularly among young personnel, is a recent study finding high rates of binge drinking among active-duty military personnel (ADMP) (Stahre, Brewer, Fonseca, & Naimi, 2009). Defined as consuming five or more drinks for men, and four or more drinks for women, within a two-hour period, high rates of binge drinking were prevalent in the military. Among all ADMP, 43.1% engaged in at least one instance of binge drinking in the past month. However, this rate increased significantly to 67.1%
for young adults from ages of 17-25. Alarmingly, 25.1% of underage military personnel (17-20) reported episodes of binge drinking.

Alcohol use and abuse has not gone unnoticed and unaddressed by the military. As early as 1972 the U.S. Department of Defense sought to prevent and provide treatment for alcohol and substance abuse among personnel in all branches of the military through a sequence of policy directives (Department of Defense, 1972). The resulting effect of decreased rates of illegal drug use, which stemmed from a policy of zero tolerance for drugs and rules for maintaining strong enforcement, however, did not affect rates of heavy alcohol use. In fact, though any drug use in a 12-month period among active duty service members declined from a rate in 1980 of 36.7% to a rate in 2002 of 6.9%, the rate of heavy alcohol use maintained at a consistent rate during the same time period with 20.8% of military personnel reporting heavy use in 1980, climbing to 24.8% in 1985, slightly decreasing to 20% in 1988, and essentially remaining at this rate in 2002 (Bray et al., 2003). While these findings demonstrate the success of the military’s treatment of drugs, such is obviously not the case regarding the policies and programs for managing alcohol problems.

While the rate of heavy drinking, particularly among young males is problematic, other populations in the military must also be taken into consideration as rates are shown to vary as a role of military demographic characteristics (Bray & Hourame, 2007). Over 20% of males in the military were involved in heavy drinking whereas 6.6% of females met the criteria. An examination of race and ethnicity indicates that Whites (20%) and Hispanics (22.8%) are almost twice as likely to drink heavily compared to Blacks (11.9%). The effect of education leads to a significant decrease in heavy drinking, as only 8.8% of those with a college degree or more are involved in heavy alcohol use, while 26.8% of those with a high school diploma or less are
involved. The use of heavy alcohol increases up to age 25, with close to 30% in the 21-25 age category involved, then begins to decline as those in the 26-34 age category drink heavily at a rate of 13.9%, while only 7.5% of those 35 and above drink heavily. Being married with a spouse present contributes to significantly less heavy drinking, as only 11.1% were involved. However, being either unmarried (26.1%) or married without a present spouse (21.8%) contributes to higher rates of alcohol use among men. Heavy drinking rates also differed as a role of military service branch, as those in the Navy, Army, and Marines were more prone to indicate heavy use compared to the Air Force. The influence of these socio-demographic variables contributes to a particularly higher risk for those falling into multiple high risk categories.

In a study examining the differences in the problems associated with alcohol use and abuse between men and women in the military, it was revealed that, despite the higher rates of heavy alcohol use among men, women nonetheless demonstrated equal or greater levels of both dependence symptoms and productivity loss when consuming alcohol below levels of heavy or binge drinking. According to the author this finding indicates a need to realize the impact of lower levels of consumption among women in providing treatment for alcohol abuse, particularly in the absence of research on the effects of alcohol on women in the military (Brown, Bray, & Hartzell, 2010).

Questions regarding the characteristics of the population of men and women entering the military have been addressed in studies. Heavy drinking has been found to be a significant problem among recruits entering the military. National surveys and studies demonstrate that a person’s background and current circumstances in life have an influence on the likelihood of adopting a heavy drinking pattern (Midanik & Clark, 1994). In a study following high schools
students into adulthood it was discovered that those entering the military were more likely than other young adults to have been heavy drinkers in high school (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, & O'Malley, 1999). In an investigation of binge drinking patterns among twelfth grade students it was found that those intending to join the military upon graduation engaged in binge drinking a significantly higher number of days than students not planning to enlist. Furthermore, those results were maintained even after controlling for socio-demographic characteristics. Moreover, as the level of binge drinking increased, the inclination to join the military correspondingly increased (Barry et al., 2013). In a five year longitudinal study of Navy recruits it was found that 26% had been involved in drinking heavily before recruitment despite being largely underage (Ames, 2002).

An important and contributing factor to the rate of alcohol and substance abuse in the military apart from socio-demographic characteristics is the impact of combat-related stress on veterans. Alcohol abuse occurs frequently among a significant proportion of combat veterans. In a study of over 88,000 Operation Iraqi Freedom returning veterans it was found that close to 15 percent displayed symptoms of alcohol dependence from three to six months following their arrival from combat (Schumm & Chard, 2012). Other studies examining the role of combat-related stress on veterans link the effects of killing during combat both to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and independently to problematic alcohol use (Maguen, Lucenko, & Reger, 2010).

Cost and Effect of Alcohol Misuse in the Military

The U.S. military has recognized the problem of alcohol abuse as it has been associated with significant losses both financially and in terms of productivity. According to data from
2006 the financial impact of abusive alcohol use cost the military in excess of $1.1 billion each year (Harwood, 2009). The medical costs associated with excessive alcohol use by members in the military leads to a cost of $425 million annually. Furthermore, drinking in excess in the military is estimated to lead to a loss of over 320,000 days of work and over 34,000 arrests each year, with most being for driving under the influence or while intoxicated. The most problematic findings of the available data indicates that abusive alcohol use each year leads to over 10,400 active-duty members in the military being unable to deploy and over 2,200 being removed from service duty (Schumm & Chard, 2012).

Other studies have noted that the impact of excessive drinking and alcoholism has had a detrimental effect on individual and unit readiness. The rate of military personnel reporting one or more consequences of a serious nature such as Driving under the Influence or Driving While Intoxicated was 8.1%. Furthermore, 13.2% reported loss of productivity such as time away from work resulting from alcohol use, and 2.9% reported possible alcohol dependence (Bray et al., 2006).

Military’s Response to Alcohol Misuse

The response of the military to issues relating to alcohol use and abuse has largely focused on the individual through policies aimed at restricting and regulating use (Department of Defense, 1999). While efforts have been made to address drinking and alcohol abuse in the military through the provision of programs and campaigns with a focus on the use of normative and peer influences, little has been done to address greater environmental factors contributing to alcohol use and abuse (Bickford, Ames, & Moore, 2004). Of concern in this regard is the availability and pricing of alcohol on military bases. While research indicates that the use of
alcohol and the associated problems are reduced when the prices of alcoholic beverages are increased, the policies of the Department of Defense, nonetheless, allow alcoholic drinks sold in stores on military bases to be discounted at lower prices than those found in civilian stores (Cook & Moore, 2002).

Recent qualitative studies indicate the need to consider more carefully the role of the military environment and culture in encouraging and furthering alcohol use and abuse (Ames, Baraban, Cunradi, & Moore, 2004; Poehman et al. 2011). In addition to the availability and pricing of alcohol, other contextual factors have been noted to promote drinking in the military: long-standing traditions, ambivalent policy relating to alcohol use and abuse, relief from stress related to work, boredom and/or social isolation, and maturity. These findings indicate the need to consider more carefully the role of policy and environment, particularly relating to alcohol sales, the application of punishment relating to alcohol abuses, housing, recreation, and work conditions, in promoting alcohol use and abuse.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the socio-cultural factors that influence alcohol use and abuse in the military among those found to demonstrate the highest rates of heavy drinking: young males, unmarried, or married without a spouse present. However, while young males overall, in particular Whites and Hispanics, indicate the highest rates of heavy drinking, Black males drink heavily at a rate almost half that of both Whites and Hispanics. Furthermore, in order to sufficiently account for the influence of the military environment on drinking, males who have served at least five years were be included. To meet this purpose, this research explores participants’ beliefs and perceptions of the social and cultural factors in the
military that contribute to alcohol use and abuse; b) investigates the relationship among the social and cultural factors that contribute to alcohol use and abuse in the military; c) provides a structure to better understand the social and cultural factors in the military that contribute to alcohol use and abuse.

Research Questions

The central questions guiding this inquiry are:

1. What are the social, cultural, and structural factors that contribute to or inhibit alcohol use and abuse in the military among young males, unmarried, or married without a present spouse?

2. How do these social, cultural, and structural factors contribute to or inhibit alcohol use and abuse in the army among young males, unmarried, or married without a present spouse?

In order to acquire a sample representing the experiences of young males, unmarried, or married without a spouse present, 17 white, black, and Hispanic males between the ages of 23 to 30 who had served at least five years, and who self-reported drinking in a risky or unhealthy drinking pattern -- five or more drinks per day or 15 standard drinks during a week (DSM IV-TR) -- were recruited from Fort Bragg Army Base in Fayetteville, North Carolina to take part in a face-to-face interview.

The demographic questionnaire collected information about the study participants such as: contact information, age, rank, years in the military, ethnic group, education, marital status, and religious affiliation (see Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire). In order to gather additional information on participants drinking patterns beyond the fact that each indicated a number of drinks consumed associated with heavy drinking prior to participation, the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) was used to collect further information on the extent of the participant’s drinking patterns (Babor, Higgins-Biddle, Sanders, & Monteiro, 2001).
AUDIT is a 10-item multiple choice questionnaire used in order to determine the intensity of alcohol use disorder, is easily scored, has been validated in different cultures, and provides sensitivity for both genders. The purpose of collecting this information was to provide insight into the participants’ drinking patterns and how such patterns influence their views towards alcohol use.

This was a qualitative study using a face-to-face interview protocol and included questions about the participant’s drinking behavior before entering the military followed by questions about their beliefs and perceptions about drinking. Questions concerning participant’s drinking patterns compared with others in the military along with how their drinking is both influenced by and influences others in the military followed. The role of alcohol availability and pricing, housing and recreation patterns, along with work conditions was explored in a set of questions. This research also explored the role and influence of formal and informal policy concerning drinking in the military. The questionnaire concluded by asking participants how they believed alcohol related problems could be better addressed and treated in the military (see Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol).

Significance of the Study

This study aims to contribute to an understanding of the social, cultural, and structural factors and influences that contribute to alcohol use and abuse in the military among those with the highest rates of heavy drinking. The bulk of research on alcohol use and abuse in the military has utilized quantitative methods to examine alcohol use and abuse patterns among military personnel. Although the U.S. military has implemented policies and programs designed to reduce alcohol use, and the related problems among personnel, there has been little strict
understanding of these problems, while the reported rates of alcohol abuse and associated problems persist. The response of the military to issues relating to alcohol use and abuse has largely focused on the individual through these policies aimed at restricting and regulating use, however, little has been done to address greater structural factors contributing to alcohol use and abuse. In recognition of the impact of this level of influence on alcohol use and abuse in the military, there is a need for research in order to gain an understanding of the role of social and contextual factors.

Research in this area has the ability to instruct and guide practice and policy in the military in establishing environments that lead to a decreased rate of alcohol abuse. Qualitative methods of research are suited to the job of investigating social and cultural influences on alcohol use and abuse in the military and allow for an understanding of contextual factors which cannot be gathered through quantitative means.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Rates of Alcohol Use and Abuse in the Military

Heavy alcohol use, including binge drinking, is a serious problem in the U.S. Military. Rates of use when compared to civilian rates of drinking indicate the severity of the problem. Heavy alcohol use is generally defined as having five or more drinks per drinking occasion at least once a week or 15 standard drinks per week for men, or at least four standard drinks per day or eight standard drinks per week for women. (DSM IV-TR). Standardized comparisons of the rate of heavy alcohol use in the U.S. military indicate that 16.1% of personnel have been involved in the past month while the same rate for civilians was 12.9%. In regards to young males ages 18 to 25 in the military, the difference, and problem, is more noticeable. While 19.7% of young civilian males qualified as heavy drinkers, the rate for young males in the military was 28.7%. Additionally, the rates of heavy drinking in the military have continued to increase in recent years. From 1998 to 2005, the rate increased from 15.4% to 18.5%, and further increased in 2008 to a rate of 20% (Bray & Hourani, 2005; Bray, Pemberton, & Hourani, 2008).

Furthering the concern for heavy drinking in the military, particularly among young personnel, is a recent study finding high rates of binge drinking among active-duty military personnel (ADMP) (Stahre, Brewer, Fonseca, & Naimi, 2009). Defined as consuming five or more drinks for men, and four or more drinks for women, within a two-hour period, high rates of binge drinking were prevalent in the military. Among all ADMP, 43.1% engaged in at least one instance of binge drinking in the past month. However, this rate increased significantly to 67.1%
for young adults from ages of 17-25. Alarmingly, 25.1% of underage military personnel (17-20) reported episodes of binge drinking.

The problem of alcohol use and abuse has not gone unnoticed and unaddressed by the military. As early as 1972 the U.S. Department of Defense sought to prevent and provide treatment for alcohol and substance abuse among personnel in all branches of the military through a sequence of policy directives (Department of Defense, 1972). The resulting effect of decreased rates of illegal drug use, which stemmed from a policy of zero tolerance for drugs and rules for maintaining strong enforcement, however, did not affect rates of heavy alcohol use. In fact, though any drug use in a 12 month period among active duty service members declined from a rate in 1980 of 36.7% to a rate in 2002 of 6.9%, the rate of heavy alcohol use maintained at a consistent rate during the same time period with 20.8% of military personnel reporting heavy use in 1980, climbing to 24.8% in 1985, slightly decreasing to 20% in 1988, and essentially remaining at this rate in 2002 (Bray et al., 2003). While these findings demonstrate the success of the military’s treatment of drugs, such is obviously not the case regarding the policies and programs for managing alcohol problems.

While the rate of heavy drinking, particularly among young males is problematic, other populations in the military must also be taken into consideration as rates are shown to vary with military demographic characteristics (Bray & Hourame, 2007). Over 20% of males in the military were involved in heavy drinking whereas 6.6% of females met the criteria. An examination of race and ethnicity indicates that Whites (20%) and Hispanics (22.8%) are almost twice as likely to drink heavily compared to Blacks (11.9%). The effect of education leads to a significant decrease in heavy drinking, as only 8.8% of those with a college degree or more are involved in heavy alcohol use, while 26.8% of those with a high school diploma or less are
involved. The use of heavy alcohol increases up to age 25, with close to 30% in the 21-25 age category involved, then begins to decline as those in the 26-34 age category drink heavily at a rate of 13.9%, while only 7.5% of those 35 and above drink heavily. Being married with a spouse present contributes to significantly less heavy drinking as only 11.1% were involved. However, being either unmarried (26.1%) or married without a present spouse (21.8%) contributes to higher rates of alcohol use. This may result from not having ties to home and family which do not encourage drinking while having more social ties to single males which encourage drinking. Heavy drinking rates also differed as a role of military service branch, as those in the Navy, Army, and Marines were more prone to indicate heavy drinking than those in the Air Force. The influence of these socio-demographic variables contributes to a particularly higher risk for those falling into multiple high risk categories.

In a study examining the differences in the problems associated with alcohol use and abuse between men and women in the military, it was revealed that, despite the higher rates of heavy alcohol use among men, women nonetheless demonstrated equal or greater levels of both dependence symptoms and productivity loss when consuming alcohol below levels of heavy or binge drinking. According to the author this finding indicates a need to realize the impact of lower levels of consumption among women in providing treatment for alcohol abuse, particularly in the absence of research on the effects of alcohol on women in the military (Brown, Bray, & Hartzell, 2010).

Questions regarding the characteristics of the population of men and women entering the military have been addressed in studies. Heavy drinking has been found to be a significant problem among recruits entering the military. National surveys and studies demonstrate that a person’s background and current circumstances in life have an influence on the likelihood of
adopting a heavy drinking pattern (Midanik & Clark, 1994). In a study following high schools students into adulthood it was discovered that those entering the military were more likely than other young adults to have been heavy drinkers in high school (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, & O’Malley, 1999). In an investigation of binge drinking patterns among twelfth grade students it was found that those intending to join the military upon graduation engaged in binge drinking a significantly higher number of days than students not planning to enlist. Furthermore, those results were maintained even after controlling for socio-demographic characteristics. Moreover, as the level of binge drinking increased, the inclination to join the military correspondingly increased (Barry et al., 2013). In a five year longitudinal study of Navy recruits it was found that 26% had been involved in drinking heavily before recruitment despite being largely underage (Ames, 2002).

An important and contributing factor to the rate of alcohol and substance abuse in the military apart from socio-demographic characteristics is the impact of combat-related stress on veterans. Alcohol abuse occurs frequently among a significant proportion of combat veterans. In a study of over 88,000 Operation Iraqi Freedom returning veterans it was found that close to 15 percent displayed symptoms of alcohol dependence from three to six months following their arrival from combat (Schumm & Chard, 2012). Other studies examining the role of combat-related stress on veterans link the effects of killing during combat both to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and independently to problematic alcohol use (Maguen et al., 2010).

In regards to the effects of stress related to everyday life and work in the military, there is limited research available. However, what is available indicates a connection between stress and alcohol and substance use, particularly in young males. The link between stress and substance use among men in the military has been found to be strong according to a 1999 study of both
men and women in the military. The link between heavy drinking and stress was not found to
exist among women, however, it was found to be strong among men (Bray, Fairbank, &
Marsden, 1999). In a 2002 study of active duty military personnel it was found that stress related
to work exceeded stress associated with family life among personnel. Those indicating the
highest levels of stress were 25 or younger; they were those who were married without spouses
present, and women. Those indicating stress at high levels had considerable higher rates of
productivity loss and mental health problems compared to those having less stress (Hourani,
Williams, & Kress, 2006). While this study does not link stress to alcohol use, it does indicate
that those 25 or younger and without spouses present indicate the highest level of stress. As this
demographic category is the main concern of this study and has been found in other studies to
have the highest rates of alcohol abuse, specifically in men, a likely association can be made
between alcohol use and mental health status.

Cost and Effect of Alcohol Misuse in the Military

The U.S. military has recognized the problem of alcohol abuse as it has been associated
with significant losses both financially and in terms of productivity. According to data from
2006 the financial impact of abusive alcohol use cost the military in excess of $1.1 billion each
year (Harwood, 2009). The medical costs associated with excessive alcohol use by members in
the military leads to a cost of $425 million annually. Furthermore, drinking in excess in the
military is estimated to lead to a loss of over 320,000 days of work and over 34,000 arrests each
year, with most being for driving under the influence or while intoxicated. The most problematic
findings of the available data indicates that abusive alcohol use each year leads to over 10,400
active-duty members in the military being unable to deploy and over 2,200 being removed from service duty (Schumm & Chard, 2012).

Other studies have noted that the impact of excessive drinking and alcoholism has had a detrimental effect on individual and unit readiness. The rate of military personnel reporting one or more consequences of a serious nature such as Driving under the Influence or Driving While Intoxicated was 8.1%. Furthermore, 13.2% reported loss of productivity such as time away from work resulting from alcohol use, and 2.9% reported possible alcohol dependence (Bray et al., 2005).

Application of Sociological Framework

Prior to examining the policies and practices in place in the military to address the use and abuse of alcohol, along with the existent social norms contributing to the problem, establishing a frame of reference, from a sociological perspective, provides a perspective to understand and address the problem. The problem of alcohol abuse from a sociological perspective requires taking into account the larger structural features of society which operate beyond the individual -- According to C. Wright Mills (1959) we must look at the impact of public issues on personal problems.

With this in mind, examining the established practices and norms regarding alcohol use and abuse in the military from a sociological perspective requires consideration of factors beyond the seemingly evident structure provided from typical considerations regarding alcohol use and abuse. Therefore, utilizing views and conceptions of alcoholism as a problem residing in the individual only serves to inhibit the appropriate consideration of greater social factors contributing to the problem. However, much of the military’s answer to addressing the problem
of alcohol abuse, as will be seen, focuses on the individual rather than on addressing larger structural features which, if addressed, should serve to reduce the problem.

What is evident from the foregoing information is the impact of socio-demographic characteristics on the rates of alcohol use and abuse in the military. While it is possible to postulate from this perspective on the greater structural causes and factors behind the incidence of alcohol abuse in the military, such an understanding should not prevent a consideration of concerns necessary for the institution of the military to address in regards to alcohol abuse. Rather, such knowledge of the impact of socio-demographic characteristics on alcohol abuse in the military should provide a more meaningful framework from which to consider the military’s policies and practices concerning alcohol use and abuse.

In coming to a greater understanding of the social and cultural factors contributing to alcohol use and abuse in the military a brief overview of the sociological theories useful in this investigation can be meaningful as a preface to examining the data which will be examined. To that end the following provides a brief overview of the theories which will be useful and meaningful in this research investigation.

Giving consideration to the theories underpinning sociology before an examination of alcohol use patterns in the military provides a foundation and perspective for seeing how the larger structural features of society operate to motivate and affect such behavior. With that in mind, a consideration of the major theoretical perspectives of functionalism and symbolic interactionism will be necessary in this case.

According to the classical view of functionalism, that expounded by Emile Durkheim, social phenomena occur to fulfill a social void or need and to establish and maintain social order. This would even apply to events which could actually be considered to be harmful or detrimental
to society. While functionalism’s focus is on the macro-level of society, that is to say on how institutions and common events and phenomena contribute to the overall functioning of society, an interpretation in the case of how alcohol use in the military is functional would provide a more micro level interpretation (Semones, 1990).

A different view of functionalism according to Robert Merton allows for an understanding of how phenomena in society can be both functional and dysfunctional and how the consequences of social actions are not always readily apparent – there are latent functions to social actions. From this point of view the actions and policies of the military towards alcohol use may actually be counterproductive, and an understanding of alcohol use in the military can be viewed as both functional and dysfunctional (Merton, 1968).

A more detailed understanding of Durkheim and his conception of the causes behind suicide allows for an understanding of the socializing influence of the military on alcohol use. At the core of Durkheim’s conception of suicide is the role of the level of societal integration and regulation on the individual. According to Durkheim to the degree the individual falls on either end of a continuum of either integration or regulation the more likely it is the individual will commit suicide in one form or another. This conception can be applied to an understanding of why an individual in the military would be more or less likely to use alcohol and to what extent (Durkheim, 1951).

The theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism asserts that behavior results through a process of social interaction which can only be understood in the context of the group it occurs in (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic interaction is based on three premises: 1) the action of human beings towards things is founded on what meanings are given to things; 2) the meaning given to a thing comes from the social interactions a human has with other humans; 3) meanings
of things which the person comes across are controlled by the person by way of a process that is interactive. This can be summed up by George Mead’s concept of the generalized other: the set of organized information carried by the individual in his or her head concerning what the attitudes and general expectations of the social group are (Griffin, 2009).

**Prevention and Treatment Policies**

As previously mentioned, efforts to prevent and treat alcohol and substance abuse in the military began in response to serious problems with drug and alcohol abuse dating back to the 1960’s and early 1970’s. In 1972 the DoD initiated an alcohol abuse policy based on the recommendations of a task force. Despite periodic updates to this policy it has largely remained unchanged as of its latest publication in 1999 (DoD, 1999). Under this directive alcohol abuse is defined as “the use of alcohol to an extent that it has an adverse effect on the user’s health or behavior, family, community, or the Department of Defense, or leads to unacceptable behavior as evidenced by one or more acts of alcohol-related misconduct” (DoD, 1999 p. 2). Prevention programs are defined by this policy as “training, education and public information activities designed to influence participants to avoid drug and alcohol abuse.” According to these policy guidelines, the particular tasks to be completed include the deterrence and identification of alcohol abuse and dependence that exist on installations and facilities under DoD control; periodic assessment of the extent of alcohol abuse in the armed services; the provision of education and training on DoD policies for alcohol abuse and/or dependency and on effective measures to alleviate problems associated with alcohol abuse and/or rehabilitation for military personnel who abuse alcohol; and prohibition of DoD personnel from possessing, selling, or
using alcohol other than in accordance with laws and regulations, and DoD directives (DoD, 1999).

DoD policies and programs include both alcohol and other drugs. Army alcohol abuse prevention falls under the prevue of the Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP), which provides comprehensive alcohol and drug abuse prevention and control policies, procedures, and responsibilities for soldiers (United States Army Center for Substance Abuse, 2013). The Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Program serves both Navy and Marine Corps personnel in providing support to individual and command alcohol abuse and drug use prevention efforts (Department of the Navy, 2011). Its mission is to support readiness by fighting alcohol and drug abuse. The Air Force calls its program Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) (Department of the Air Force, 2013). The objectives of ADAPT are to encourage readiness and health and wellness through the prevention of and treatment of substance abuse, reduce the negative consequences of substance abuse to the individual, family, and organization, offer comprehensive education and treatment to individuals who experience problems credited to substance abuse, and to return known substance abusers to unrestricted duty status or to help them in their transition in civilian life.

Social and Cultural Factors Influencing Alcohol Misuse

Other important factors which have been studied as contributing causes for the use and abuse of alcohol in the military are the culture of the military workplace and availability of alcohol. Past research on the culture of the workplace has shown that working together in either small, or large groups, leads to the development of shared beliefs and practices which can manipulate alcohol use (Frone & Brown, 2010). Just as in other occupations, the workplace
culture of the military can be a contributing risk factor leading to heavy alcohol use. The culture of the workplace can impact beliefs about appropriate contexts for drinking, particularly rituals with workers either before, during or after work in addition to the behavior of drinking such as acceptable number of drinks, visibly demonstrating the effect of alcohol, arguing with superiors, appearing at work with a hangover, and sleeping on the job (Ames, Grube, & Moore, 1997). Furthermore and importantly, the workplace culture influences personal beliefs about the consequences, either negative or positive of alcohol misuse (Hodgins, Williams, & Munro, 2009).

Studies on the influence of the military workplace culture on drinking norms in different military settings in the Navy have revealed particular factors which influence heavy drinking. Personal interviews with Navy personnel indicated that the influence of drinking routines and rituals in addition to the impact of aspects of the work culture and environment that promoted excessive drinking both during deployment liberties and during work on land bases. For example, young sailors viewed drinking with coworkers during the work week as an appropriate coping mechanism in response to boredom, stress, loneliness, and the absence of other recreational activities. The respondents described heavy drinking (five or more for men and four or more for women on each typical drinking occasion) and binge drinking behavior after work, and especially drinking during liberty deployment, as part of a cultural tradition. Binge drinking was defined in this study as five drinks or more for men and four drinks for women within a two-hour period. On deployment liberty, binge drinking and drinking to the point of intoxication were not necessarily viewed as inappropriate or behavior worthy of punishment, unless sailors were too intoxicated to return to ship at the assigned time. The investigators found that cultural norms for drinking (which were based on the participant’s perceptions about whether his or her
supervisor, coworkers, or friends would disapprove or approve of drinking during shore leave and how many drinks the participant thought his or her supervisor, coworkers, or friends usually had when they drank) during shore leave were significantly associated with frequent heavy drinking, the number of days on which binge drinking occurred, and the average amount of alcohol consumed daily (Ames, Baraban, Cunradi, & Moore, 2004).

In a more recent study involving the use of focus groups consisting of personnel from two Navy and two Marine Corps compounds, the prevailing attitudes and norms concerning alcohol use and abuse were determined to be causative factors leading to excessive drinking (Poehlman et al., 2011). Despite the existence and understanding of policies and rules regarding infractions involving alcohol, personnel expressed knowledge of the prevailing unwritten rule – “not getting caught” – in guiding alcohol use behavior. This ethos combined with issues of maturity, social isolation and boredom, in an environment which provides easy access to inexpensive alcohol, serves to promote the view that the excessive use of alcohol is condoned and allowed. Furthering the disconnect between policy and actual practice is the perception that punishments for alcohol related offenses are randomly assigned, particularly in the context of the large number of individuals involved in drinking. Of particular concern among the factors contributing to an environment conducive to alcohol abuse was the inability of noncommissioned officers (NCOs) to effectively model appropriate behaviors regarding alcohol use because of the repercussions faced by the NCO if an individual in his or her command receives a violation after drinking with him or her. The impact of policies related to housing, recreation, alcohol sales, along with one’s work or occupational environment, have both a direct and indirect influence on drinking behavior in the military within the general context of attitudes associated with drinking in the military.
The U.S. military services have taken several steps in their alcohol misuse prevention efforts to incorporate social and cultural factors into their programs and campaigns, focusing particularly on the use of normative and peer influences. The “That Guy” campaign makes use of humor and entertainment to engage the young audience (United States Army Center for Substance Abuse, 2013). It focuses on social disapproval and short-term negative consequences and pushes a peer-to-peer approach as opposed to top-down influence through the chain of command. The Right Spirit campaign attempts to change social norms and cultural traditions and practices as a tool for changing alcohol use and behavior (Krigbaum, 2011).

The Physical and Social Availability of Alcohol

A cause that may contribute to heavy and binge drinking in young military personnel is both the social and physical availability of alcohol. Alcohol availability has been shown to be a positive risk factor for the increased use of alcohol in the common population (Stanley, Henry, & Swaim, 2011). Alcohol availability in occupational settings has also been shown to lead to increased use (Hodgins, Williams, & Munro, 2009). As an example, the participants who took part in a Navy study stated that alcohol and chances for drinking were readily available both in foreign ports (where the minimum legal drinking age for the U.S. typically does not apply) and on bases in the U.S. On base, beer and liquor are arranged for display at the entrance of exchange post. Underage Navy recruits noted that they could easily access alcohol in bars, in barracks, or in nearby hotel rooms. In foreign ports while on shore leave alcohol was reported to be inexpensive, bars were found close to the location of disembarkation, ports rarely had laws for underage drinking, and a majority of sailors who intended to drink put together groups for that purpose before disembarking (Moore et al., 2007).
Preventing Alcohol Problems in the Military

As shown in the study involving the Navy, factors leading to alcohol use in young adults in the service can include established cultures of drinking that include traditional celebrations and drinking rituals, expectations concerning heavy drinking both after work and during leave, drinking as a recreational activity and to cope, and the physical and social availability of alcohol. Strategies used to prevent alcohol abuse and the associated problems among military personnel, therefore, should attempt to focus on these concerns.

Strategies currently being used to prevent problems with alcohol among service members include establishing and enforcing rules that control the availability of alcohol and pricing, promoting good health and personal responsibility, and deglamorizing the use of alcohol.

While the military has instituted programs and policies in order to reduce the use of alcohol and the problems related to alcohol among service members, examples of which follow, there has not been strict evaluation concerning these programs. Therefore, this area is worthy of research, as formal evaluation is a critical and necessary aspect of any wide-ranging program. Therefore, despite efforts taken by the military to address problems with alcohol, the effectiveness of such programs in preventing or reducing dangerous drinking and the corresponding problems continues to remain unknown in large part.

Implications of Alcohol Use Policies

For several work organizations, a vital strategy for reducing problems with alcohol among employees is the creation and enforcement of policies for workplace alcohol use. These policies assist in changing the aspects of the workplace culture and other social environments that provide excessive and binge drinking. In the early 1980’s the military adopted strict policies
with the goal of decreasing rates of tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drug use (Department of Defense, 1980). Included in these policies were aspects for prevention, detection, rehabilitation, and treatment. An examination of data from surveys taken from 1980 to 1995 indicated rates of illicit drug use to be lower in military personnel compared to civilians, indicating that use policies were working in this respect (Bray & Marsden, 2000). Nevertheless, these differences did not translate to lower alcohol use rates, particularly when taking into account changes in the demographic composition of the military, indicating that the policies for substance use have not worked to reduce alcohol use (Bray & Marsden, 2000).

In a similar study, rates of substance use were compared in young military recruits at a time before they enlisted and then two years after they enlisted, with changes in the rates of use in their counterparts in the civilian world. Analyzing the trends found in these comparisons spanning two decades, the investigators determined that the rates of illegal drug use went down at a greater rate in the recruits in the military than among that found in the civilians, particularly after the military began mandatory routine testing for drugs in 1980. While the rates of excessive drinking correspondingly went down during the past 20 years for both civilians and military personnel, the investigators did not find adequate changes in the rates to show that alcohol policies in the military have been noticeably effective. (Bachman, Freedman-Doan, & O’Malley, 1999)

However, specific policy changes have produced positive effects. Findings on a policy change designed to decrease alcohol use off-base in marines stationed close to the Mexican border indicate the positive effect of setting limits with consequences (Voas, Johnson, & Lange, 2002). Marines who were stationed in Camp Pendleton, California, which is 67 miles from the border of Mexico, were attracted to bars in Mexico because of the low cost of alcohol and the
minimum drinking age set to 18, and many times came back to base with blood alcohol contents (BAC’s) that were high. In reaction, the commanders on base adopted a rule requiring marines to gain permission in writing in order to go across the border. After the rule was put in place, the amount of marines coming back from the Mexican border who were underage decreased by a rate of 78 percent. Furthermore, the amount of marines coming back with high BAC’s (above 0.08 percent) decreased by a rate of 84 percent. The researchers indicate that many aspects of the change in policy may have led to the result. For instance, when marines applied for permission to go across the border they were warned of the likely problems involved, which included the possibility of disciplinary action. As the new rule required such planning and effort on the part of young marines, such may have also worked as a deterrent.

There is research which indicates that alcohol use and the associated problems are mitigated when the prices of alcoholic drinks are increased (Cook & Moore, 2002). The policies of the Department of Defense, however, allow the prices of alcoholic drinks to be discounted to a point below those found in the local civilian stores. The Alcohol Abuse Prevention Strategic Plan of the DoD indicates that alcoholic drinks sold in stores on base be priced at a rate that is no more than five percent under that of the local competitive price, with the exception for states having alcohol control boards, in which case prices can be at a rate no more than 10 percent under that of the local competitive price (DoD, 1999). A review by the Office of the Inspector General in 1997 indicated that these rules were used to establish the price of alcohol in military stores and those customers of military stores gained from further discounts resulting from the stores’ sales tax exemption status. For example, the review found that the prices for alcoholic drinks sold at a military store in one locale varied from 9 percent to 27 percent under the prices found in alcohol stores run by the State. The conclusion of the researchers was that the DoD’s
policy of pricing was not consistent with its policy on maintaining an active-duty force that is healthy; as a result they recommended that alcohol prices in military retail stores be equal to those found in the greater commercial retail market (Office of the Inspector General, 1997).

Implications of Efforts to Deglamorize Alcohol Misuse

The U.S. military has taken steps in all branches to deglamorize alcohol use by making nonalcoholic beverages available at events where alcohol is served and by placing emphasis on the policy of no use of alcohol before or during hours of work. The “Right Spirit” campaign instituted by the Navy calls for the provision of drinking alternatives, the removal of alcohol use from traditional ceremonies, furthering the role of personal responsibility involved in the use of alcohol, and taking notice of the negative effects related to alcohol use (Bickford, Ames, & Moore, 2004). The Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Program gives credit to this program for a reduction of close to 40 percent in incidents related to alcohol use beginning in 1996 and through 2000, and additionally for a decline close to 50 percent for driving under the influence arrests (U.S. Navy, 2013).

A survey of officers in the Air Force who were in attendance at the Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) attempted to determine the extent to which the campaign to deglamorize alcohol use is demonstrated in the norms for alcohol use among ACSC students. The respondents to the survey agreed in general that the environment of the ACSC is supportive of the deglamorization of alcohol but indicated that regardless of the efforts for deglamorization, the attention of students is many times focused on the use of alcohol, there is a focus on the use of alcohol at social activities, and the population of students does not consistently look at drinking as being unacceptable during the workday. Efforts to reinforce the deglamorization
campaign should continue by emphasizing the responsible use of alcohol, supporting the use for designated drivers when needed, and supporting and recommending treatment for alcoholism when necessary (Lyman, 1999).

As noted above, deglamorization is a key element of the Right Spirit campaign. Data from the 2008 DoD Health Related Behavior Survey indicate that the practice of having alcohol alternatives is generally being implemented, but deglamorization is not yet having its full intended effect. In the 2008 Health Related Behavior Survey, over 60% of service members agreed that nonalcoholic beverages are always available at parties. However, about 15% also indicated that personnel are encouraged to drink at parties and social events (Bray, Pemberton, & Hoiurani, 2008).

Prevention Programs

Policies concerning alcohol use in the military place an emphasis on the personal responsibility of each individual. As an example, policies related to alcohol use in the Navy place an emphasis on the responsible use of alcohol or the use of limits which are self-imposed in regards to the place, time, and quantity when alcoholic beverages are consumed (Bickford, Ames, & Moore, 2004). The aim of the Navy’s “Best Practices” program is to bring a reduction in the use of alcohol and other problems associated with drugs found in at-risk personnel by focusing on the responsibility of personnel to understand expectations and policies. The program emphasizes the impact of each person’s behavior on the organization. It encourages those in command to foster positive professional relationships with sailors and focuses on the responsibility of sailors to learn and understand Navy policies and expectations. Other aspects of the program involve the provision for alternative activities in order to engage sailors when free
time is available, the consistent application of discipline as a result of violations, and educational sessions which involve training in drug abuse awareness (Department of the Navy, 2013).

Additionally, a program in the Navy termed PREVENT (Personal Responsibility: Values and Education Training) focuses on providing young sailors with the skills and education necessary to motivate them to behave as personally responsible and contributing associates of the Navy. The results reported by the Navy indicated that sailors attending PREVENT sessions reported fewer episodes of binge drinking in comparison to their frequencies prior to enlistment and demonstrated a greater sense of personal responsibility and awareness regarding their use of alcohol and the attendant consequences (U.S. Navy, 2013).

The Program for Alcohol Training, Research, and Online Learning (PATROL) is a web-based alcohol program for military personnel adapted from two interventions that were originally designed for and tested on civilian populations. The first intervention, called Alcohol Savvy, is a universal prevention program aimed at adults in the workplace with the goal of encouraging moderate drinking and to prevent escalation of alcohol among mainstream populations. The second intervention, called the Drinker’s Check-Up, is based on the principles of motivational interviewing and focuses on assessment of alcohol use, personalized feedback of alcohol use relative to peers, and exercises to encourage individuals to change their drinking behavior (Pemberton et al., 2011).

The interventions were evaluated in a study using approximately 3000 active duty military personnel at eight military installations (two each from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force). Participants completed an initial baseline survey and were assigned to one of three study conditions – (1) Alcohol Savvy, (2) Drinker’s Check-Up, or (3) control – where they completed the intervention materials. Findings showed that at the 1-month follow-up,
participants who completed the Drinker’s Check-Up had significant reductions on several indicators of alcohol use compared to persons in the control condition. These 1-month reductions were maintained at the 6-month follow-up. Unfortunately, there were no statistically significant changes in alcohol use for participants who completed the Alcohol Savvy intervention. This study is important because it provides a scientific evaluation of two possible interventions and evidence that Web-based programs (Drinker’s Check-Up in particular) can significantly reduce alcohol use in the military (Pemberton et al., 2011).

Grounded Theory

In coming to an understanding, an in depth understanding, of alcohol use in the military, analysis of the social and cultural factors contributing to use can best be understood through the use of methods involved in qualitative analysis through the process of grounded theory. As this study will involve the use of grounded theory in coming to an understanding of the social and cultural factors contributing to use and abuse, an understanding of the specific methods involved in grounded theory can be helpful. To that end, the following provides an overview of the methods which will be used in this study.

Grounded theory seeks to generate theory inductively through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to a phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory combines deductive and inductive methods of research for the purpose of explaining a social system by the identification of core and secondary processes existing within it. By a combination of deductive and inductive research methods, social processes among human interactions are examined in order to uncover theoretically complete descriptions about phenomenon, and therefore develop theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Being grounded in data

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which are thoroughly gathered and analyzed involves examining how variables are given significance and meaning in the lives of subjects (Charmaz, 2000) and the creation of progressively richer models and concepts that explain how the phenomenon under examination really works (Glaser, 1978).

Grounded theory is distinctive in beginning from empirical data, openness to enhancement, and stress on the analysis of a simple social process (Stern, 1980). Grounded theory is distinct from other methodologies according to the following: creation of the conceptual framework from the data, not the literature; (b) emphasis on the detection of dominant processes found in the social scene, not description of the entity under study; (c) the comparison of all available data with all other data (continuous comparative analysis or qualitative comparative analysis); (d) modification of the process of data collection according to the emerging theory; and (e) the simultaneous collection and analysis of data (Glaser, 1978; Glaser Strauss, 1967). Strategies of grounded theory include: (a) the simultaneous collection of data (rich data from several sources) and the analysis of data (open or initial coding, the generation of action codes, focused or selective coding, and categorization); (b) category development and refinement (c) the reduction of data and theoretical sampling; and (d) the construction of theory. Further processes which are intertwined with these strategies include memo writing, which involves initial coding the later theoretical coding, and constant comparison.

The grounded theory approach involves: (a) theoretical sampling by which the data are collected, coded, and analyzed while concurrently determining the future direction of the data; (b) substantive coding in which selective coding and open coding is utilized to describe what is happening in the data; (c) theoretical coding through the process of memoing for the purpose of
identifying the core; and (d) theoretical sorting which involves organizing memo’s into an outline for later writing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The conceptual code is the relationship between the data and theory, or rather, the conceptualization of the causal pattern of a set of empirical indicators found within the data. Through the development of the hypothetical relationships among conceptual codes (categories and their properties) which have been produced as indicators according to the data, “we discover a grounded theory” (Glaser, 1978, p. 55).

The four stages of the constant comparative method are further described by Glaser & Strauss (1967). First, events which can apply to each category are compared, according to the rule that comparisons are made with the preceding incidents in the same and different groups while coding an incident for a category. Second, processes and categories are integrated while the unit changes from comparison of event with event to comparison of event with properties of the category. In the third stage, delimiting the theory happens at the level both of theory and categories by the processes of theoretical saturation and reduction. The process of reduction includes the discovery of the underlying uniformities found in the original set of properties or categories that can be constructed into the theory as a smaller group of higher level concepts; and the reduction in the first list of categories for coding. Last, writing the theory comes as a result of the collation of the written memos about the categories, or the major themes of the theory. Because grounded theory is rooted in the data, or the relevant variables, instead of existing theory it allows for the ability to transcend preexisting theories as a result of the constant comparative method, and provides a readily applicable theory (Glaser, 1978). The relevancy of grounded theory is summarized as dealing with “what is actually going on, not what ought to go
on. It gives traction over action; it makes sense, but making theoretical sense of common sense” (Glaser, 1978, p. 14).

Discussion

The response of the military to issues relating to alcohol use and abuse has largely focused on the individual through policies aimed at restricting and regulating use. While efforts have been made to change the social and cultural atmosphere of the military through the provision of programs and campaigns with a focus on the use of normative and peer influences, little has been done to address greater structural factors contributing to alcohol use and abuse. The widespread availability of alcohol and lower pricing of alcohol on base stores sends the message that the military is supportive of alcohol use. Furthermore, while the military provides treatment and prevention activities, to the extent such options are focused on the individual, the impact of larger contributing structural factors is neglected.

An examination of the problem of alcohol abuse in the military from a sociological perspective requires a consideration of the role of the medicalization of alcoholism. The focus placed on the individual through the provision of prevention and treatment options in addressing alcohol abuse in the military is an indication of the view of abuse as a personal problem to be solely addressed by the individual with appropriate medical care.

An understanding of the process of medicalization, for conditions such as alcoholism, according to Peter Conrad and Joseph Schneider (1998), provides an understanding for the emphasis placed on the individual to the exclusion of other institutions outside of medicine. Resulting from the view that the condition of alcoholism is a deviant form of behavior, the field of medicine through an eventual process assumed the position of sole authority over the
treatment of the condition. As a natural result other institutions in society are excluded from consideration of the treatment of alcoholism.

While the need to provide treatment to the individual should not be neglected, such a consideration should not prevent addressing a problem with the support of other appropriate institutions in society. Understanding the role and impact of medicalization in society can and should provide a useful insight into how the military addresses alcohol use and abuse. Realizing the inadequacy in addressing treatment provided from adopting this conception of illness and deviance should lead to a consideration of how other institutions in society can provide useful and meaningful support in addressing alcohol abuse.

Conclusion

While the rates of illicit drug use have substantially decreased in the military with the implementation of policy changes, rates of alcohol use have only increased. Despite the establishment of policies and the implementation of programs specifically relating to preventing and curbing alcohol misuse, rates of use nonetheless persist and even increase. Considering the inability of policies and programs to touch more meaningful change in regards to alcohol misuse there is a need to look beyond current considerations. The social norms and relations of military personnel operate beyond the individual to guide the management, both formally and informally, of behaviors related to drinking. Such social norms and relations influence the performance and moral of the unit in addition to influencing the greater structural factors relating to military life, which can positively or negatively impact in either a direct or indirect fashion behaviors related to drinking.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Methodological Overview

Qualitative methods of research are well suited to exploring intimate matters and socially constructed phenomena. A qualitative design is best suited for this study for the following reasons. First, the sociocultural factors undergirding alcohol use and abuse are best revealed through personal narratives. Second, qualitative research methodologies enable the researcher to “describe dynamic, constantly changing phenomena without imposing a static structure” Patton, 2002, p. 126). Lastly, qualitative research methods promote understanding of social phenomena from the perspectives of the participants (Glesne, 2006).

Research Questions

Before proceeding examining the research questions again can allow for a better understanding of the methods used in analyzing the data from this research. The following two questions guided this inquiry:

1. What are the social, cultural, and structural factors that contribute to or inhibit alcohol use and abuse in the military among young males, unmarried, or married without a present spouse?

2. How do these social, cultural, and structural factors contribute to or inhibit alcohol use and abuse in the army among young males, unmarried, or married without a present spouse?

Consent Procedures

Initially this study was approved on April 8, 2015 by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Texas. Upon receiving IRB approval from North Texas it was necessary to provide this documentation to the review board which approves research taking
place on Fort Bragg in order to gain approval and access to the base. The process for gaining
approval at Fort Bragg was considerably delayed after initial confusion over the need for
approval from North Texas. On August 7, 2015 the Northern Regional Medical Command
(NRMC) Human Protections Administrator (HPA) provided approval for research taking place
on Fort Bragg until research was complete. The main concern addressed in gaining IRB approval
from both North Texas and Fort Bragg was that specific measures be taken to ensure
confidentiality be maintained. Additionally, volunteers were informed of the right to withdraw
from participation at any time throughout the course of the interview and were provided contact
information in the case of any distress arising. On February 23, 2016 IRB approval through
North Texas was renewed for another year. The first interview took place on November 15,
2015; the final interview was held on September 17, 2016.

Sample Selection

Sampling for this study was guided by the qualitative principles of appropriateness,
which include purposeful sampling and a good informant who is articulate, reflective, and
knowledgeable; and relevance (Charmaz, 2000). In order to achieve this end it was necessary
that diversity was sufficiently satisfied with key constituencies being represented in order to
explore in detail the social and cultural factors influencing alcohol use and abuse (Ritchie &
Lewis, 2003).

In order to acquire a representative sample of young (ages 23 to 30); unmarried, or
married without a spouse present; White, Hispanic, and Black males who had served at least five
years; and who self-reported drinking in a risky or unhealthy drinking pattern – five or more
drinks per day or 15 standard drinks at least once a week (DSM IV-TR), 17 military personnel
meeting the above characteristics were eventually recruited at Fort Bragg through face-to-face interaction and through the distribution of the “Request for Volunteers” form (see Appendix A).

Rationale for Sample

s previously noted, the rationale for selecting the above sample relates to the fact that young males, unmarried or married without a spouse present, demonstrate the highest levels of alcohol abuse in the military. Furthermore, in order to account for an adequate appraisal of military culture and social life, only male military personnel who had served a minimum of five years, but were younger than 30, were included.

Recruitment and Selection of Sample

Canvassing for the interviews took place at Sports USA, a large sports bar located inside of Fort Bragg Army Base, which provided, when busy, a better chance of locating soldiers meeting the required demographic characteristics needed for this study. This location was recommended by the official in charge of research review and approval at Fort Bragg because of its convenience and large size. The “Request for Volunteers” form (see Appendix A) form was distributed and explained to a considerable number of personnel in this process.

My task in locating participants for this study cannot be overstated – it was extremely challenging. The first challenge involved the regular travel of an hour and a half from my home in Durham, North Carolina to Fort Bragg and then back for another hour and a half. The next challenge was finding the best time of the day and week to locate participants. During my first trips to Fort Bragg there were times when I was unable to not only locate suitable participants, but any participants. While I did not keep a running total of all service members, and possible
non-service members approached, a very conservative estimate is that for every 15 to 20 people approached, only one eventually volunteered for the study. This was in large part due to the demographic restrictions placed on participation. Additionally, many who were approached who may have met the requirements for participation either were not interested, were hesitant about talking about personal subject matter, or simply did not have the time. While I found most service members approached to be very friendly and helpful, regardless of eventual participation, there were some who questioned my credentials, which I provided.

The “Request for Volunteers” form (see appendix A) was helpful as a tool in approaching soldiers in giving them something to quickly look over in determining their eligibility and in understanding my research interest and qualifications. For those who agreed it was also useful in providing them my contact information and for me to write down their contact information. For those who did meet the demographic requirements and agreed to volunteer, the next step involved agreeing to a suitable time to conduct the interview either at the Soldier Support Center because of the location and convenience or at location more suitable to the volunteer. While many came to an agreement at that point to a suitable time, some required additional contact, over the phone, in order to eventually set up a meeting.

Procedures

During the initial face-to-face interview contact respondents were first asked to review the consent form (see Appendix D) and raise any questions while I explained it to them. At this, according to the consent form, I especially made sure to ensure participants that their name would be replaced by a pseudonym in order to protect their identity in the final report. Following this, participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix
B: Demographic Questionnaire). After analysis of the questionnaire data was made in order to ensure respondents met the demographic qualifications for participation, which I made clear to respondents at the time I was canvassing, 17 respondents, which consisted of 9 White males, 4 Black males, and 4 Hispanic males, were included in the second stage, the semi-structured interview phase of the research.

At the beginning of the second stage, the face-to-face interview, I informed participants that I would begin audio recording by using two digital recorders to ensure recording in the case one failed. The interviews typically lasted from between 45 to 90 minutes, following an open-ended question format utilizing a scripted interview questionnaire (see Appendix C: Military Personnel Semi-Structured Interview). Fifteen of these interviews took place in a quiet and confidential location at the Soldier Support Center. Two interviews took place at the homes of the respondents, also in a confidential setting. Measures were taken to ensure the interviews took place in a relatively quiet location as well as an area where confidentiality could be maintained. There was either a considerable distance from others or the area was enclosed. In order to ensure that the interviews were properly recorded I used two digital recorders. The technique of memoing was used to note nonverbal communication (body language) and impressions during the interview as rich data are constructed by attention to pertinent details (Charmaz, 2000).

Participants in all interviews were at ease for the most part and freely and willingly provided answers and supporting details to questions and probes. The participants talked freely about their experiences with drinking in the Army and the social and cultural factors contributing to use. They were forthcoming about their experiences as social drinkers and the various causes leading to such. Furthermore, participants provided considerable details concerning their use of
alcohol for reasons of stress relief, to self-medicate, to bond with fellow soldiers, to deal with leaving for and coming back from deployments, and many other related areas. A common remark concerning their reason for drinking was, “Work hard play hard.” Perhaps the most useful question, after questions regarding participants’ background, in terms of getting to the heart of the interview and addressing upcoming questions was: “From your experiences and your observations of drinking in the military, what do you think are the primary reasons personnel engage in drinking?” While questions and probes diverged from this, most essentially came back to clarifications of answers given to this initial question. As a response to answers and probes, the only alteration made to the scripted questions throughout the interviews was to include the question: “How does drinking make things better; how does it improve relations, camaraderie, between you and others?”

After taking part in the face-to-face interview respondents completed the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) questionnaire. At this time both audio recorders were turned off as the respondents completed the questionnaire. The purpose of using this questionnaire was to confirm the admitted (asked generally how much alcohol consumed when approached to volunteer) heavy alcohol use patterns of the respondents, and to generally examine differences among respondents.

Data Sources and Collection

The data sources for examining the research questions included (a) background information collected through the demographic background pre-interview questionnaire, (b) face-to-face interviews with the participants, and (c) data from the AUDIT questionnaire regarding alcohol use.
Research Timeline

The following table describes the timeline of events which were involved in this research process:

Table 1

*Research Timeline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Setting/Participants</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal Review Board Approval</td>
<td>University of North Texas</td>
<td>April 8, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>February 23, 2016 – Renewed for additional year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Review Board Approval</td>
<td>Fort Bragg Army Base under the direction of Northern Regional Medical Command</td>
<td>August 7, 2015 – Under the approval and oversight of UNT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-Face Interviews</td>
<td>Fort Bragg Army Base, Sports USA Soldiers meeting the demographic criteria</td>
<td>November 15, 2015 through September 17, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcription of Interviews</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Ongoing as collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze Data: Review narratives,</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Ongoing as collected – March 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organize data into categories, and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>code by emerging themes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of findings and themes as</td>
<td>Peers and colleagues</td>
<td>Ongoing as collected – March 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they emerged</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection

Data collection occurred in three stages. Stage 1 participants completed the demographic background questionnaire (approximately 5 minutes). Data obtained at this stage was used to determine suitability to participate in the research study. Applicants who met all the criteria of race, age, marital status, and years of service in the Army were included in the sample.

During Stage 2, volunteers participated in a semi-structured interview (approximately 60 - 90 minutes). Each participant was interviewed individually using the interview protocol (see Appendix C: Military Personnel Semi-Structured Interview) as a guide. Upon completion of the
semi-structured interview each participant completed the AUDIT questionnaire which lasted approximately five minutes, the final stage of data collection.

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, which allowed for the incorporation of new emerging ideas. Glaser and Strauss (1967) posit that a general understanding of the phenomenon under investigation as opposed to a theoretical framework is sufficient to initiate grounded theory research. While the scripted interview guide remained largely unchanged throughout the duration of the interviews with the addition of only one scripted interview question, as noted above, the depth and detail of related follow-up and probing questions grew and evolved as data were collected, analyzed, and categorized according to the emerging themes. Both my listening to and transcribing interviews occurred during and after the 17 interviews were complete on September 17, 2016. The last interview was transcribed by the end of November, 2016. The transcribed interviews were approximately 13 single spaced pages, the longest interview was 19 pages single spaced.

While collecting and transcribing this data was an extremely tedious process my initial proposal called for considerably more data collection, as I had initially called for the inclusion of small focus groups of soldiers meeting the demographic characteristics, and a small focus group of counselors involved in treating soldiers for alcohol and substance abuse. The decision to not include these groups was not a result of lack of time or effort, but as a result of the inability to get approval and clearance from the department over such counselors, and in regards to a focus group of soldiers, my decision to not include such a group came after the considerable difficulty I had with simply trying to locate individual soldiers.
While I will describe in detail the specific methods of analysis used in analyzing the collected data, my primary method largely involved listening to audio recordings numerous times for tone and detail as I read and coded the corresponding transcripts. Throughout this process of thematic analysis I transferred codes into categories and subcategories from which I ultimately derived six themes. During the initial steps of analyzing the first transcripts numerous possible themes arose which were later either corroborated or not, or were determined to fall under the later more general themes, through the process of constant comparison and theoretical sensitivity in taking further data into account. During the later stages of data analysis, as data became increasingly saturated to the point no more themes arose, I continued however to find supporting details to confirm and strengthen existing themes.

Methods of analysis involved reviewing narratives, organizing data into categories, and coding them by emerging themes. Through the process of open coding, data were examined line by line in order to identify process and categories. Through constant comparative analysis, data were continuously analyzed comparing each new piece of data to existing data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Therefore, data were fractured through open coding (substantive codes) and woven back together through the process of theoretical coding (theoretical sorting and integration of memos).

Action codes were created, reviewed, and changed by using the constant comparative methodology for comparing each participant’s actions, views, accounts, experiences, and situations; comparing the different participant’s data against previous data by using an approach sensitive to time and then comparing each event with previous events; comparison of data to category; and comparisons of category to category (Charmaz, 2000).
The first step for analyzing gathered data was to do open coding. The goal of open coding was to find, name and categorize occurrences in accordance to specific general attributes or characteristics of a category and then to build the range on which the general characteristics of a construct or category vary, in addition to defining the dimensions of the construct or category. During the process of open coding, the data was deconstructed by each line, then closely compared and examined for differences and similarities. The background ideas that provided ways of understanding, seeing, and organizing experiences are sensitizing concepts, which were used, and action codes were established (Charmaz, 2000). Socio-cultural factors contributing to alcohol misuse data that were similar in meaning or similar in nature conceptually were placed under categories. Looking closely at data for both similarities and differences allowed for fine differentiation and discrimination between categories. The use of open coding proceeded to axial coding; the process of placing data back together which was deconstructed into categories during open coding.

While axial coding, the social and cultural factors contributing to alcohol misuse constructs or categories were compared to subcategories of constructs in order to form more accurate and thorough explanations of the phenomena concerning the perceptions of the research participants of the socio-cultural factors. The subcategories which emerged were used to answer questions concerning the phenomenon of socio-cultural factors contributing to alcohol misuse. Further questions which emerged were created in order to further the impact of explanation and thick description. While axial coding qualitative software was used in order to lay out the construct’s properties, the construct’s dimensions, and in order to identify the interactions, actions, consequences, and range of conditions and the emerging constructs or categories related to the phenomenon of participants’ perceptions of the socio-cultural factors contributing to
alcohol misuse. Lastly, constructs or categories were grouped using relational statements, while simultaneously looking for cues found in the data which denoted how the major and subcategories compared to each other.

Selective coding was the last procedure in the analysis of data. This is the process of refining and integrating categories. Selective coding involved organizing categories around the main explanatory concepts that characterize the main themes which emerge throughout the research. To consolidate the process of coding, techniques such as reviewing field journal notes, writing and relating the stories of the participants to central elements or facets, using diagrams, and reviewing the reflexive journal written throughout the process of gathering data and analysis. When the key concepts were delineated, analysis was refined in order to fill in categories which were poorly developed and in order to combine and integrate categories to validate, extend, or diverge from the conceptual framework through comparing it to data collected throughout the research.

Trustworthiness

Reliability in Qualitative Research

The techniques of confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability were utilized in this study to guarantee trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Demonstration of rigor in qualitative research is evidenced through the attention to and confirmation of the discovery of information, the goal of which it the accurate representation of the experiences of the study participants (Patton, 2002). In order to meet the criteria of credibility attention was given to assure that the transcripts accurately and faithfully provided the tone and words of the respondents and that these views were not altered in the report. In terms of transferability, the
goal is to establish the applicability of the findings to other settings and contexts. Transferability was established to the extent the research details the context of the research in addition to the assumptions behind the research, therefore assuring that the finding can be transferred, or generalized, to other settings or contexts. In terms of dependability, the ability of the research to confidently replicate itself, to gain the same findings if the event were measured twice, was achieved to the extent the research accounts for the changing dynamic and context of the setting of the research and how such changes altered the way in which the study was approached. Lastly, confirmability was achieved through the careful and considerate analysis of data, which attempted to demonstrate openness to appropriately accounting for the influences of any biases and distortions arising in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**The Role of the Researcher and Reflexivity**

In this study, I was a non-participant observer and interviewer. Qualitative research methods are particularly suited for studying complex human experiences. In order to collect data there is a need to have close interaction with the participants in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation from their perspective and allow for “participant-generated meanings” to emerge (Willig, 2001, p. 15). As the researcher, the instrument of data collection, I reflected and reported possible sources of bias and error. In interviewing all participants I attempted to maintain as objective a stance and posture as possible to all the answers and responses. At the same time I always attempted to engage and show interest in the participants and their responses in order to encourage their interest in providing responses as detailed as possible. What I found to be particularly interesting after listening to the
audio recordings of some of the participants is that what I thought at the time were not very productive or informative interviews actually turned out to be rich in details and depth.

In order to ensure that the data was collected and analyzed as objectively as possible I employed data collection procedures which were systematic, and utilized multiple sources of data to increase the credibility of the findings (Patton, 2002).

Ethical Issues

As the researcher, I understand the sensitivity of health-related information and will therefore maintain strict confidentiality of all data on participants. Data collected was not and will not be shared with other military personnel including superiors and any other parties. Only summary information with no personally identifying information was included in the final research report. Prior to beginning the study I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

Initially this study was approved on April 8, 2015 by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Texas. Upon receiving IRB approval from North Texas it was necessary to provide this documentation to the review board which approves research taking place on Fort Bragg in order to gain approval and access to the base. On August 7, 2015 the Northern Regional Medical Command (NRMC) Human Protections Administrator (HPA) provided approval for research taking place on Fort Bragg until research was complete. On February 23, 2016 IRB approval through North Texas was renewed for another year. The first interview took place on November 15, 2015; the final interview was held on September 17, 2017.
In conducting this research involving human subjects there were certain ethical obligations which had to be taken into account. In the case of conducting face-to-face interviews with active duty military personnel concerning their use of alcohol and their assessment of the role and influence of the military’s cultural and social factors in contributing to the use and abuse of alcohol, it was required that a systematic process be followed in order to avoid harm to subjects, considering both the nature of the topic, and the potential for real repercussions for participants. Therefore, perhaps the most important ethical consideration to adhere to was privacy. The participants were assured that anonymity and confidentiality would be strictly maintained and that any possible information which may indicate their identity would be removed. Furthermore, participants were assured that information gathered from interviews would be securely maintained and that no names will be shared with the military personnel (Jones, 1998).

With any research projects involving human subjects, participants must be informed that participation is voluntary and they have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Participants were informed of the purpose and nature of the study along with any possible risks which may arise from their participation. Such risks to participants included psychological stress, such as discussing highly emotional material which may cause anxiety, political repercussions, or legal liability. While the nature of the face-to-face interview in this instance focused on the participant’s views and beliefs on the role of the social and cultural context of the military in contributing to alcohol use and abuse, the interview should cause no harm or distress to participants. However, in the case distress arose, appropriate measures were given to relieve any such harm (Schutt, 2006). Specifically, the consent form provided, and I explicitly stated in reviewing consent, the contact information for appropriate on base counseling services.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this research study was to examine the social and cultural factors influencing alcohol use and abuse in the Army among young males. The following research questions informed this study: (a) What are the social, cultural, and structural factors that contribute to or inhibit alcohol use and abuse in the military among young males, unmarried, or married without a present spouse; and (b) How do these social, cultural, and structural factors contribute to or inhibit alcohol use and abuse in the Army among young males, unmarried, or married without a present spouse?

During in-depth face-to-face interviews, study participants described their experiences, beliefs, and perceptions of the social and cultural factors in the military that contribute to alcohol use and abuse. Before the interview participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire (see appendix B) and following the interview they were asked to complete the AUDIT, Alcohol Use Survey (see appendix D), which is widely used as a standard to determine the level of alcohol dependence.

The research findings reported in this chapter are based on an analysis of the transcribed interviews, notes and observations made during the interviews, and the data collected from the Alcohol Use Questionnaire.

Background

The participants in this study included 17 male soldiers serving at Fort Bragg Army Base. The ages of the soldiers ranged between 23 and 30, with years of service ranging between 5 and 12. Their ranks ranged from Specialist to Sargent First Class. All but two of the soldiers had
been on at least one deployment, with two having been on four, while the remaining having
served from one to three deployments. All of the soldiers were either single (13), separated (4),
or living without a spouse present (1). The racial make-up of the participants included nine
White soldiers, four Black soldiers, and four Hispanic soldiers. The highest education level
attained by the soldiers included two with a bachelor’s degree, one with an associate’s degree, 13
with some college, and one with some trade/vocational training. The majority of the soldiers
came from a Christian religious affiliation (11), one soldier’s affiliation was Islam, and the
remaining five indicated “none.”

Table 2

Male Soldiers Demographic Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>B. Deg</td>
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<td>Hisp.</td>
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<td>Septd.</td>
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<td>RC</td>
</tr>
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<td>Some College</td>
<td>Pr. Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>High School</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Single</td>
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<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>White</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>B. Deg</td>
<td>None</td>
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*(table continues)*
Table 2 (cont.)

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</tr>
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<td>Hisp.</td>
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<td>Single</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Pr. Christ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SPC – Specialist; CPL – Corporal; SGT – Sergeant; SSG – Staff Sergeant, SPC – Sergeant First Class; Ethn. - Ethnicity; Hisp. - Hispanic; Edu-Highest Education; B. Degree-Bachelor’s Degree; A. Degree- Associate’s Degree; Mar. Stat.- Marital Status; Septd.-Separated; Deploy.- Deployment Rel.-Religious Affiliation; Pr. Christ.- Protestant Christian, RC - Roman Catholic, LDS - Latter Day Saint

Table 3

Alcohol Use Questionnaire, AUDIT Scores

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
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<td>David</td>
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<td>Edwin</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hank</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>James</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
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<td>Kent</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lewis</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scoring the Alcohol Use Questionnaire

Scores for each question range from 0 to 4, with the first response for each question (e.g. never scoring 0, the second (e.g.: less than monthly) scoring 1, the third (e.g. monthly) scoring 2, the fourth (e.g. weekly) scoring 3, and the last response (e.g. daily or almost daily) scoring 4. For questions 9 and 10, which only have three responses, the scoring is 0, 2 and 4 (from left to right). A score of 8 or more is associated with harmful or hazardous drinking, a score of 13 or more in women, and 15 or more in men, is likely to indicate alcohol dependence. The above scores indicate that all of the respondents except, for Brian, David, and Mark, who indicate dependence, indicate hazardous or harmful drinking.

Study Findings

The participants contributed varying amounts of information to the themes which arose and comprise the narrative. While some spoke at length about one or two themes, others provided nearly equal contributions on all five themes which arose. As a result, the voices and views of all participants are expressed in this study.

From the gathered information six themes emerged: 1) Stresses of Army Work/Life; 2) Social/Entertainment Use; 3) Tradition/Brotherhood/Entitlement; 4) Fear/Consequences; 5) Impressionable/Youth; 6) Treatment.

While the themes which emerged are reported in discrete terms, there is sizeable overlap in them. Additionally, the responses of the participants to the interview questions many times dealt with more than one theme. In such cases, the data from the interview are described in the area where they seem to fit most reasonably.
As mentioned earlier, the purpose of the Alcohol Use questionnaire, AUDIT, was to confirm the admitted (asked generally how much alcohol consumed when approached to volunteer) heavy alcohol use patterns of the respondents, and to generally examine differences among respondents. The scores of the 17 respondents on the questionnaire ranged between eight and 28. Fourteen of the respondents scored between 8 and 14 on the questionnaire, indicating unhealthy or harmful drinking. Three of the respondents scored between 15 and 28, indicating alcohol dependency. These findings indicate that all of the respondents were involved with excessive use of alcohol. However, with the considerable amount of interview data gathered, I cannot make generalizations between those that scored higher and those that scored lower as the details provided in the individual interviews do not necessarily vary as a result of one's score. Again, the main purpose of using the questionnaire was to confirm heavy use in order to ensure that the respondent would be a meaningful and useful source of information with a greater understanding of the social and cultural factors contributing to alcohol use in the Army than a respondent that did not drink, or perhaps only drank sparingly.

Theme 1: Stresses of Army Work/Life

Without fail, all of the participants spoke of in one form or another the role played by the stresses and strains of work in the army in leading to a heightened desire to drink. While this in and of itself may not necessarily directly be viewed as a distinct social or cultural factor, as it can be considered more a matter of fact in all forms of work, work and home life in the army are inseparable, thus making it a factor that is important to understand and address. The stresses created by work in the army, and the ensuing desire to drink, arose from several factors, including the long and many times unspecified work hours, the feeling of having
little control over what are perceived as arbitrary work commands, having to adjust to the regular periodic changes of leadership, the feeling of being treated like a “number,” being valued not for overall positive performance but being held seemingly permanently accountable for the last mistake or negative evaluation, and to problems with partners and family because of long deployments and being away from home for extended periods of time.

For some of those who did not directly speak of factors related to this theme as an influence on their drinking, expressions of the rigors and requirements of military life and how they cause anxiety and stress leading to drinking were given in some form. The expression that the Army is not for everyone was mentioned in some form or another several times by these respondents.

A description of how just one particularly demanding day in the Army can create stress and anxiety leading to a desire to drink was given by Sergeant Frank:

Tomorrow you’re going to jump out of an airplane at 800 feet with 90 pounds of gear strapped to you knowing full well that a couple of months ago somebody from your battalion has already died doing the same…that’s just like a random Tuesday…you are going to sit in a harness for probably three hours rigged up not jumping, you know the whole day, to take about 18 hours from start to finish, you’re only jumping out of the airplane for a total of fifteen seconds and at the end of it you can get home at two in the morning, then your back to work the next day, probably at nine in the morning.

A message very similar to the above was echoed by others, and more specifically by 28 year-old Staff Sergeant James, when responding to the primary reasons personnel drink.

Hands down to stress…you know I was up at five o’clock this morning, it’s now eight o’clock at night and I’m just going home…I had to skip lunch…I work nonstop and a lot of weekends a lot of the time. So we like to go home and drink to just relax because we’re out all the time… It just kind of makes you relax.

The phrase “work hard play hard” was specifically mentioned by five of the respondents in answer to the question involving the role of stress in leading to drinking, or in answer to the question involving the primary reasons personnel drink in the Army. While this expression and
sentiment will be also addressed under the theme of tradition/brotherhood/entitlement, it is important to mention here insofar as it highlights the rigors and stresses of work in the Army and the ensuing use of alcohol. To these soldiers, “play hard” specifically means the use of alcohol, not in a healthy manner, but in an excessive manner.

The lack of separation from work and outside life in the Army created by living in the barracks around other soldiers, and the requirements of extended and inconsistent work hours, were distinctly noted by respondents as a major factor in creating this influence. In a sense it is not possible to leave work. The role served by drinking to these soldiers was that of momentary escape and relief from what they perceived as an over-controlling and confining environment.

Twenty-eight year-old Corporal Chris, who is separated, stated,

In the military, there is a sense of always being at work, you can’t really get away from the military, it is really hard even right now…it can take you away from those little moments that you are supposed to spend with your family and that in itself can get you stressed out…so that can drive you to actually drink.

When addressing the same issue, Specialist Guy provided a similar answer:

They [civilians] can put that separation between them and their job, when they get off work, they’re off work. You know, they go back to their house and they don’t have to see, if they don’t want see anyone from their work, they don’t have to. Yea, like nomatter how bad a day you’ve had, it’s your world. If you live far enough away you can get away from everyone. You know you don’t have to see those people if you don’t wantto. If you’ve had a bad day at work here, you get off work and you go back to thebarracks where you’re surrounded by everyone there that’s had just as bad a day as youhad, so you really have no separation from it.

Twenty-five year-old Specialist Guy, who lives on base, as most young soldiers do, points out the difference between work in the Army and work in the civilian world by stating that “If you’ve had a bad day at work here, you get off work and you go back to the barracks where you’re surrounded by everyone there that’s had just as bad of a day as you had, so you really
have no separation from it.” A lack of separation from work and from workmates was spoken of consistently from many of the participants.

Leadership was expressed distinctly as a stressor leading to excessive drinking both on the part of those in positions of command and those being in lower positions or ranks. This dynamic of younger soldiers versus older soldiers (albeit limited to 30 years) taking on more command was expressed in clear terms. Specialist Edwin, a 25 year-old White male with five years in the service as a military policeman, noted that

A lot of the times it’s the younger soldiers, they really catch the brunt of things, and you know, they have leadership that either thinks they’re new and they need to be brought into the military in the harshest way possible. Or you know they messed up once…leadership never lets them recover.

According to Specialist Edwin, many new soldiers are not prepared for the harsh treatment the Army accords new soldiers:

I see the people that you know feel like they’re being insulted rather than taught or you know they get yelled at one time and they think it’s the end of the world or something. I see them drinking or giving into drinking more so than the ones that you know already.

For 29 year-old Staff Sergeant James, the source of stress came not from what was perceived as over-demanding leadership, but from the soldiers under his command:

Yeah, and for people at my level that’s a huge stressor, the biggest stressors at my level are the people below us. The soldiers make hands down the worst decisions I’ve ever heard of in my life and then you have to deal with that.

The extent of the repercussions felt not just on the individual soldier having made a mistake or an error in judgment, but on the entire unit the soldier is in, place unit commanders in such a position of frustration according not only to Staff Sargent James, but to five of the higher ranking commanders interviewed. According to these higher ranking commanders, this frustration arises because in large part they are accountable for the performance of the unit as a whole, and when one soldier makes a mistake it reflects poorly on them and the entire unit.
Corporal Quinn, a male with 7 years of experience in the Army provided the most insight into the dynamic created by the hierarchical system of command in the Army on creating stress: “For the young soldiers, it’s about taking what they feel are overwhelming demands from leadership. For us and above, it’s about dealing with the problems caused by soldiers under us.”

Perhaps the strongest statement for how the Army creates stress which leads to drinking was expressed by Corporal Brian (whose score of 28 on the Alcohol Use Questionnaire was the highest of all respondents) who grew frustrated with having to stay at work until 9:00 pm at night on many occasions, and therefore not having the free-time to drink, therefore leading to the need to drink during lunch hours. The corporal went on to discuss his distress: “The Army fucks you daily…they don’t care about you, your family, no one; if you don’t drink the Kool-Aid, they piss on you… pure disrespect they give you daily…you’re only as good as your last fuck up.”

It was not uncommon to hear similar sentiments, albeit toned down, from all of the participants regarding alcohol use and the stressors created by the Army. Staff Sergeant Patrick, noted that, in contrast to college and other professions, in the Army there is “the looming thought of death or danger…which makes us sad for the world in a way that is not acceptable to address…and the way we deal with that is through drinking.” Put more positively, Staff Sergeant Mark, whose score of 22 on the Alcohol Use Questionnaire indicates dependence, stated that:

Personnel engage in drinking because it is an escape from the reality, or, I don’t want to say the horrors, but the pressures of work. It makes people feel good, otherwise people wouldn’t drink. And, it’s a legal one, and it something to help your body and mind get away from what is going on during the work week.

Others mentioned the mundane and boring nature of their jobs in leading to stress. Specialist Kent, in speaking of the tedious nature of his job said, “We are glorified janitors, we are glorified janitors. We will mow the lawn; we will pick up others peoples’ cigarette butts.”
A frustrating aspect of leadership, and more generally the nature of work in the Army itself, as pointed out by two respondents, was the inability to connect much of the work performed to their purpose in the Army. Specialist Nathan similarly mentioned the demeaning nature of having to clean the parking lot in addition to having overly restrictive requirements for maintaining one’s room in the barracks. The mention of this area of work stress was mentioned simultaneously with poor and misguided leadership. At least seven of the respondents spoke of the level of leadership, or rather more specifically, the lack of leadership, in leading to their work related stress. Many perceived leadership to be unqualified and unconcerned for those beneath them, seeing them as being more concerned for their own advancement rather than for individuals in the unit. Staff Sergeant James, in speaking of a commander in Korea, said that a common feeling among his unit after enduring long days of nonsensical and arduous work was to get drunk. However, other respondents did take a more tolerant and accepting view towards leadership, basically excepting it for what it is, and realizing it to be the nature of the Army.

One aspect of leadership pointed out by respondents to be a source of concern and stress was the regular rotation of leadership, particularly at the lower levels where commanders are rotated more often. The frustrations of this ever changing cycle of leadership were noted by Corporal Brian, who noted that by the time an understanding of leadership is gained, leadership is changed. While this may come as a welcome to many, particularly if leadership is not agreeable, the requirement of regularly adapting to new leadership creates stress.

Family problems arising because of long deployments and extended periods of time away from home and partners were noted to be a source of stress in two regards. Corporal Chris responded that he believed soldiers “drink to cope in the military, I’ve often observed it’s because they’re having family problems…more often in the military because they deploy a lot, and
they’re away from their families, and it’s kind of the old joke; oh your wife is going to leave you during deployment, but it actually does happen to people a lot.”

As seen from another perspective, Specialist Nathan pointed out that problems with home and family life (e.g., a commander going through a divorce) of those in positions of command, flow down to those lower in command and lead stressful working conditions. Specialist Nathan attributed an overly demanding commander who required excessively long work hours to the fact that the commander was dealing with marital problems; not wanting or having to go home therefore lead the commander to “take it out” on those under his command.

A source of stress in the Army is the act of simply talking and thinking about the negatives rather than the positives. According to Staff Corporal Chris, while people in general tend to focus on how those in positions of power either make their lives better or worse, this focus is magnified in the Army because of the hierarchical structure, causing soldiers to focus more on the negatives.

It is pretty much like that in the military because we have these people over you that are either messing up your life or making it better, and most people sit here and look at how this person is making my life worse. So naturally we are going to sit here and focus on the negatives more than the positives and within itself you are pretty much setting yourself up for more stress, so you end up going into that cycle of drinking.

While not all of the respondents noted job stress as a factor influencing their drinking, they did note it is as a factor leading others to drink. Those that mentioned it in this regard pointed out the Army is not meant for everyone, and many that join come to realize that what they may have thought about work and life in the military was not in line with the reality of work and life in the Army. In the words of Specialist Kent,

They came in with these wide-eyed kind of aspirations for the infantry or the Army in general, and then it went from here down to here, and they had these great ideas and then the Army just said, oh, here’s your dreams, crashing down.
It can also be noted that while the stress of the job requirements of the Army were noted by all of
the respondents, the use of alcohol as a reaction to this stress by those who felt it influenced their
drinking was not uniformly viewed as a necessarily negative use, but as a type of celebratory use
for having finished the week or a demanding assignment. It is in this case where the emerging
theme of stress relief begins to cross lines with the emerging themes of social/entertainment use
and tradition/brotherhood/entitlement.

Of final, and important note regarding the effects of stress on alcohol use on the
respondents interviewed, is the effect related to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on use.
While this was not the focus of this research it was important to ask respondents if their drinking
patterns were in any way caused from factors related to PTSD in order to understand if such
factors mediated their use beyond the social and cultural factors specifically addressed in the
study. Respondents were asked: “You mentioned earlier the you have been on ___ deployments.
Because of these deployments did you undergo any changes that resulted in the possible effects
of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)?

While three respondents noted taking part in front-line action which involved witnessing
casualties, two noted the effects of PTSD on their drinking habits. Specialist Guy and Staff
Sergeant Mark noted that during the first year back from a deployment their drinking increased
significantly. However, after receiving appropriate counseling through the Army their drinking
diminished. The other respondent did however note that upon coming back from certain
deployments that he went through a transition of drinking more heavily, which eventually
declined. This could possibly be attributed to the fact that he had not been able to drink while on
deployment and the corresponding desire to make-up for not being able to drink, which was
mentioned as a cause for drinking by other respondents.
Theme 2: Social/Entertainment Use

The use of alcohol for social and entertainment reasons was mentioned by all respondents. As soldiers work and live together, they socialize with each other, primarily on the weekends. It must be mentioned that Fayetteville, North Carolina, the town adjoining Fort Bragg, is a relatively small city with a population of just over 200,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The larger metropolitan areas of Charlotte, North Carolina and Raleigh and Durham, North Carolina, are over an hour and a half away. Fayetteville does not have any major entertainment venues, such as professional sports teams, as do the other cities mentioned in North Carolina. Fort Bragg serves over 50,000 active duty personnel, making it the largest military base in the United States. Needless to say, for a large population of soldiers, Fayetteville provides relatively little in the form of entertainment and social events (U.S. Army, 2017).

As was mentioned concerning the theme of stress of work/life, this theme inevitably finds itself crossing over into the other themes. However, this theme was spoken of in clear terms by the respondents. Specialist Hank, stated:

I like drinking with others…and pretty much people in the military are social drinkers. I mean there are those people who after a long week want to go to their rooms, but I can say for the majority, me and others, we are pretty much social drinkers.

Speaking of the lack of entertainment options in Fayetteville, yet the availability of bars and restaurants was addressed specifically by five of the respondents. When asked how he and his peers occupy themselves during free time, which translated into the weekend when answered by respondents. Specialist Edwin stated:

Alcohol is usually involved in one way or another, whether it’s, you know, having a date night, going out to dinner with a group of friends, and just having a beer or two every Friday and Saturday night having a party.
Specialist Hank stated: “There’s nothing else to do here…and we don’t make that much money…the only option if we want to have some fun is to go to a bar or buy a six pack and hang out with some buddies.” In this sense it must also be mentioned that the social/entertainment influence of drinking also relates to the lack of options caused by not having enough money to take part in other options. Three of the soldiers specifically mentioned the effect of what they called the low pay they receive in taking part in drinking as an affordable entertainment option. Two soldiers mentioned the use of alcohol while on leave primarily because they did not have enough the money to go on “vacation.”

Sergeant Frank also stated that he takes part in drinking as a social event, and that he is a “social guy,” but noted that the use of alcohol as a “social lubricant” motivates soldiers to drink and relate to those they live and work closely with:

because some people come into the Army with no life experience, they’ve never had a lot of friends, they never know anything like that, so they come out to this new environment and maybe they decide to start drinking to lighten up a little bit, but for me I never saw it that way, I just saw it as something you do to have fun.

Speaking more in depth into the role of alcohol as a social lubricant was Sergeant First Class Oscar, who stated:

The false sense of camaraderie, you know we are a bunch of guys from all over the country…from all different walks of life…we have nothing in common except for the fact that we decided to join the Army; we don’t even listen to the same music…going to a party in the barracks getting drunk lowers everyone’s guard, and everybody is not as socially anxious and jaded, and able to just get along; whatever is on the radio is what we are listening to, and everything is okay.

Closely related to stating the use of alcohol for social and entertainment reasons was the answer that alcohol use was an answer to boredom and the loneliness created from being away from home for the first time. As mentioned earlier, Fayetteville and the surrounding area are relatively isolated from the entertainment options and venues found in more populated and
metropolitan areas. Furthermore, most of the soldiers at Fort Bragg are not from the area and are therefore physically isolated from their families and friends. Specialist David, who with a score of 15 on the Alcohol Use Questionnaire, barely indicated a level of dependence, noted that being away from home, for the first time for many soldiers, particularly on holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, creates a loneliness that leads to the desire to drink.

Another reason to drink socially related to the small size of Fayetteville and the surrounding area, and the corresponding lack of options to locate what could be perceived as a suitable partner. According to Specialist Nathan, he maintained a closer and more social relationship with his fellow soldiers, who regularly drank on weekends, because he did not find the area offered suitable options to meet partners more similar and agreeable to him. Furthermore, he noted the failures of many of the relationships of those he knew because of this living situation and arrangement, in addition to noting that he believed many of the available suitors in the area were intent on simply establishing a relationship with a soldier only because he is a soldier.

A specific line of questions presented to the respondents involved the pricing and availability of alcohol on base. While this particular concern may fall into the other themes which emerged from the data, it will be included under the “social/entertainment” theme primarily because the price of alcohol, as mentioned, influences its use for social and entertainment reasons. It is a fact that alcohol on base is not subject to the same taxes, and is therefore cheaper than alcohol outside of base for members of the Army. However, when questioned if the difference in pricing led to an increased desire to drink, the universal answer was “no.” In fact, at least five respondents replied that there was no difference in the pricing on base compared to off base. The only degree, to which only one, Corporal Chris, noted any
difference in which the pricing of alcohol on base may affect his drinking, is that he may simply have a little more to buy a few more drinks; otherwise there is no consideration for the pricing. Perhaps Sergeant First Class Adam expressed the common sentiment best when he said, “I just drink because I like drinking.”

It was pointed out by two of the respondents that alcohol is in fact much more available off base than on base. It is true that the stores on base, Post Exchanges (commonly referred to as PX’s), some of which sell hard liquor in addition to beer and wine, are conveniently located throughout Fort Bragg, and near the living quarters. However, there is not the presence of small convenience stores throughout the base on a similar level to the presence of convenience stores throughout the adjoining town of Fayetteville, or most typical large towns throughout North Carolina and similar areas.

The availability of alcohol created by the presence of PX’s on base was viewed as a positive influence on alcohol use by one respondent, Specialist Guy, who noted that not having the convenience of PX’s, which are in walking distance from most of the living quarters on base, would lead to soldiers driving off base in a condition in which they should not be driving at all. He continued to describe the quick outburst by soldiers over the move by a base commander in another base he was previously stationed at, to remove alcohol from base stores on a base. The overwhelming reaction, according to him, led to the policy quickly being reversed.

While not all respondents noted the social/entertainment influence of drinking as a primary influence, when asked to what degree alcohol is involved with their free-time, weekend time, all responded that alcohol was involved in some form or another with others in a social setting. As respondents reported their alcohol use patterns on the Alcohol Use Questionnaire, four out of the 17 who reported on the lower end of harmful drinking and who reported a belief
in the strict enforcement of alcohol use policies on base, also noted their consistent use of alcohol during weekends. Sergeant Frank, when asked on what occasions alcohol is not involved with weekend activities, responded, “When you are sleeping.” Specialist Edwin, who was the only military policeman interviewed, therefore being in a position to enforce alcohol use policies on base, and, according to him, being in a position to be more responsible about alcohol use, reported that it was common, about once a month, to have an entire 24-pack of beer to himself throughout the day at a weekend event.

Although the focus of answers involving social and entertainment options for soldiers almost exclusively involved the use of alcohol, two soldiers, Staff Sergeant Mark and Sergeant First Class Oscar, who compared to the other soldiers interviewed had served among the longest time in the Army, noted the social and entertainment options provided at Fort Bragg which did not involve the use of alcohol. Sergeant First Class Oscar mentioned that the Army at Fort Bragg has recently moved to provide more fun options on base which do not involve alcohol. The remark by Staff Sargent Mark adds more detail to the previous response: “They teach you to work out, go to the gym, you can bowl, whatever kind of physical activity you can think of…you can read, you can study, you can meditate…I don’t think alcohol is the only outlet.”

Theme 3: Tradition/Brotherhood/Entitlement

Of the emerging themes arising from the interviews and data gathered, none were answered in a more definitive and consistent fashion than that of “tradition/brotherhood/entitlement.” Again, all of the emerging themes could not be perfectly placed is discrete categories, and certainly some covered in other categories could be covered just as suitably under this theme, and will be to a degree; however, data leading to the development of this theme
solidly fall and belong under this theme. It goes without saying that the Army is an institution built and sustained on tradition. From the most formal arrangements at the highest levels to the most mundane activities at the lowest levels, there is the background tradition in the Army. How certain traditions influence drinking will be examined under this theme as will the closely related and overlapping, therefore covered together, themes of brotherhood and entitlement. As will be seen, tradition, and how certain activities are carried out, is not permanent. Once established, regardless of how unhelpful and unhealthy, traditions can be difficult to change.

When respondents were speaking of drinking in the military and of the reasons personnel engage in drinking, it was not uncommon to hear in varying degrees that it was simply a part of the culture, or a matter of brotherhood, a way to bond. In some instances the respondents stated clearly that it is just a matter of how things have always been done. “Well, I am in the military, and in my line of work, alcohol and what I do go hand in hand,” stated Corporal Chris, when asked how work in the military differs from work in the civilian world. When trying to sum up his answer to why personnel drink in the Army, Specialist Guy stated, “That’s the thing, it’s such an ingrained part of your life, especially here.”

The answers which brought up “brotherhood” and “bonding” as reasons helped explain why drinking in the Army is a part of the culture. “It’s really just about brotherhood” stated Specialist Kent, when giving his main reason to why personnel engage in drinking. “Alcohol is glamorized in the military just like it is in college and society in general. We talk about it in cadences, when we sing while we run,” stated Specialist Kent in giving his primary reason as to why personnel engage in drinking in the Army.

While the above answers are representative of general and straightforward answers related to the culture of drinking in the military, more depth and details as to why the culture of
the Army influences drinking were given in answers when this topic was further explored. Answers related to brotherhood and bonding are specifically included in and related to the theme of culture and entitlement, because of the degree to which they give personnel the right and excuse to take part in drinking, and drinking on a regular basis.

The extent of the influence of past drinking norms in the Army relies, according to the response given by Sergeant Frank, on how current commanders view the role of drinking in the Army.

I think that drinking in the military…it’s been that way forever and I think it’s going to continue to be that way because deep down I think leaders know that that’s the way their cohesion gets built – guys hanging out together, guys throwing parties, guys just being together...it was that way when they came up in the military – there was alcohol everywhere.

Though similar views concerning alcohol use in the Army in the past were expressed, particularly from those soldiers having served the longest in the sample, as will be addressed, none provided such a link to the more distant past and the reasoning for the continued acceptance of alcohol use, as those of Sergeant Frank:

You’re not going to stop drinking in the military…if you watch old movies about Roman warriors and before there was beer and they’re drinking wine...It’s just how it is, how it’s always been; for some reason when you live some type of warrior lifestyle…or you job is to do something in the military, just how it is.

Though seeming to be a nostalgic justification for drinking in the Army, other respondents gave justification for the importance drinking too -- to the degree it allowed them to get to know and understand those closest to them – fellow soldiers. Answers concerning “bonding” and “brotherhood” provided details as to why drinking has been a part of the Army, and continues to be a part of the Army. The importance of getting to know fellow soldiers on a personal level, not simply because of the close living circumstances resulting from living on base and nearby, but more importantly because of the fact that a deployment can literally happen at a moment’s
notice. For soldiers deployed to combat zones, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, their lives are literally put on the line, making them dependent on those closest to them.

The importance of bonding, or getting to know and building trust among fellow soldiers in the Army, was expressed clearly by Staff Sargent James when asked of the importance bonding to the unit:

The way you have to look at it is, at any given time we can deploy… I don’t want to deploy with bunch of guys I see from nine to five, that I don’t really like, because I don’t really know them. So you want to bond because it takes away, it is not just a number anymore. These people are your family, they are important to you even if Joe Snuffy who goes out and gets a 30% interest rate on his car because he didn’t listen to a single word of advice you gave him. You know, even that idiot is still family and you still care about that person – that is why you want to be able to bond.

The importance of getting to know one’s fellow soldiers, and the role played by drinking together to further this goal, was further explained by Specialist Guy:

So it’s everyone you live and work with, they become more like brothers that anything, it’s a brotherhood. So, I mean…It lets everyone vent and build a little more trust; everyone sits there and drinks, that whole squad, platoon…when you get that call and you are going to go down range, those are the guys that are going to be by your side – So you know how they are…you know them completely inside and out.

Trust building is paramount to these soldiers because of the ultimate cost involved. The role of drinking together is similarly clear to Specialist Guy:

It’s one of those things you’re not going to want to not be a part of because we realize the cost and I think you look at everyone realizing that. So everyone get to know each other very well and the best way that we all get to know each other is through drinking.

The importance of bonding to these soldiers cannot be understated as revealed from the above remarks. The level of confidence placed in fellow soldiers requires that there be a level of transparency, even intimacy, which is not found in other types of working relationships. To Staff Sergeant Lewis, drinking together:

builds that relationship out of work that you need to have a good relationship in work. I mean, that’s why people in offices, they just view their people as coworkers. We have a
job that you don’t want to look at everyone just as a coworker; they need to be your friend, they need to be... You have to think that they’re your brother. So hanging out with them, I mean, why not get to know a guy over a couple of beers or something.

Without this bond built through closely getting to know fellow soldiers, the unit may function, even efficiently to a degree, but “not at the core, it would just be kind of dead,” according to Staff Sergeant Patrick. In order to facilitate getting to know fellow soldiers, it is common for platoons and groups to hold get-togethers such as barbecues where the entire group gets together. Recognizing the importance of getting together and getting to know each other, Staff Sargent James states that he is:

> A huge fan of this, platoon level barbecues, like the whole team gets together, sure some of us may get drunk but we all get together. We hang out; we get to know each other on a personal level, and what happens is when you go to work you end up working better together, you know, you’re closer; you’re building that bond and becoming a family, but obviously, you know, when a bunch of people are together there is going to be drinking involved, so that is one of the ways that drinking brings people together.

There is a clear understanding among soldiers that not everyone drinks, as will be addressed, but there is an understanding that it is necessary, to a degree, to bring everyone under the “fold.”

According to Staff Sergeant James:

> Everyone gets brought in through whatever way; if it’s someone, they don’t really drink much, I mean it’s like going to the gym in the Army, everyone has to do it, like if someone that you know they don’t like to drink a lot, but they’ll spend time a lot of time in the gym, so that’s how we get to know each other.

The importance of relationships formed in the Army, and how they are formed through socializing and drinking together, can lead to a greater appreciation for drinking together. For Sergeant Frank the role played by drinking together, not only in forging bonds, but in establishing lifelong relationships, cannot be understated:

> So we are talking about friendships that last forever that started in a bar sometimes, from guys in the military...No one ever says how did you meet your lifelong best friend that you’ve known for 65 years that you went to Korea with. Well, I was a new guy and he had gotten there two weeks before me and he said, hey, we’re both new guys, let’s go
grab a beer…can you name a time where alcohol, when you’re hanging out was awesome and nobody got in trouble, everyone had a great time, woke up the next morning and said we had an awesome night last night.

While these soldiers have an appreciation for the role of bonding and getting to know those they work closely with, those who may be responsible for ultimately protecting their lives, there is also an understanding that this may lead to the point of wanting to protect, or not turn in, a fellow soldier they may believe has a problem with alcohol. In the words of Specialist Isaac:

You know if you become a close knit group of people you might be more reluctant to report a friend who you notice is continually having a problem because you know what will happen to that friend. Because the bureaucracy, I think it causes, actually causes more problems than it solves.

Because of the bureaucracy of an institution as large as the Army there is an understanding of the subjective nature of treatment towards those believed to have a problem with alcohol, but there is also an understanding that Army has clear policies concerning the use and overuse of alcohol, which are largely followed, according to respondents. While this relates to the theme addressed here to a degree, it will be further and more closely addressed in upcoming themes.

In addition to the importance of bonding to soldiers is the importance of presenting oneself as an “Alpha Male.” Because of the nature of the Army this can, and should be included under the theme of tradition, brotherhood, and entitlement. The nature of work in the Army calls for competition. This competition, according to respondents, extends beyond work. In the Army “you are supposed to be the man’s man. You are supposed to go out, you are supposed to drink, you are supposed to get in fights, and you are supposed to be ultra-manly,” states Staff Sergeant First Class Adam. While not expressed in such direct terms, other respondents noted and confirmed how the competitive nature of the Army extends beyond work to the point of wanting to show others competence in their ability to drink as much as others. “It’s just, it’s a part of
who we are; everyone’s always trying to outdo each other, everything is competition, it’s so ingrained into one’s mind…every part of life with this in the culture of competition,” remarked Specialist Guy.

The theme of brotherhood, tradition, and entitlement must also include mention of the nature of work in the Army and the oft mentioned phase “work hard, play hard.” As mentioned previously under the theme of stress of work/life in the Army, the demands of work in the Army create a strong justification to enjoy the time away from work as much as possible. As mentioned, the phrase “work hard, play hard” was specifically mentioned by five respondents in their reasons personnel drink. The extent of this reasoning among respondents is such that not only is this a saying, it is an accepted way of life. Specialist Edwin, in explaining the public perception held of drinking in the Army, made it clear that while drinking is a part of the Army culture, there is a clear separation between in and work:

When it’s time to do work, we’re there to do work. When we have our time off is when we party, but when it’s time to do business, we do business, and I think that gets lost on the public a lot.

Perhaps the most outstanding picture presented of the traditional use of alcohol in the Army given by respondents is that of the annual Grog. The Grog, according to respondents, is an annual ceremonial ball in the Army in which attendees of age are expected to drink from a massive container containing a concoction of many randomly mixed alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. Because this is a voluntary event which soldiers are in fact required to pay for, it was not presented by respondents as an event that is particularly important or influential on their view of drinking in the Army. However, it is a traditional event in which soldiers mix with those higher and lower in rank, and the impact of seeing drinking, and drinking of hard liquor, as an accepted
and expected activity was pointed out by respondents to be a source of influence on drinking in the Army.

The combined influences of tradition, the need to establish a sense of brotherhood in the Army, and other mentioned influences work to create a sense of entitlement among soldiers towards drinking. There is the sense that “we put our lives on the line for this country,” therefore we deserve, and others know that we deserve, to drink, remarked Sergeant First Class Oscar. While this was not spoken of in direct terms by other respondents, as in they have a right to drink, it was clear in their remarks concerning drinking in the Army. While this sense of tradition and brotherhood gives soldiers a sense of entitlement, the Army has taken stronger measures in recent years to ensure soldiers drink more responsibly.

Theme 4: Fear/Consequences

When respondents were specifically asked how the enforcement of policies related to alcohol use in the Army have changed during their time of service, the answer, particularly noted by those having served the longest, was that enforcement was much stronger. By stronger, respondents specifically noted that alcohol related offenses, particularly involving DUI’s and domestic violence, or for being inebriated at work, result in certain termination, being “chaptered,” from the Army. The reasoning for this change, again commonly noted, was because there is no longer the war to deal with in Iraq, and also Afghanistan, and there is a need to downsize the Army. While some respondents noted this change going back to as far as 2006, others noticed the change more recently. Before this change in enforcement it was not uncommon, according to respondents, to have committed not one, but two or possibly more offenses related to alcohol use before action would be taken to remove a soldier from the Army.
Removing soldiers from duty because of alcohol related offenses is an easy and effective means of downsizing the Army stated Sergeant Frank:

Around two, three years ago they literally put the hammer down and it was one offense and you’re gone. I think…change commands way up high that changed the policy. And also when they’re trying to kick you out of the Army for any reason at all, and trying to drink and drive is a great way to do it instead of just cutting jobs, they actually have a reason.

It must be pointed out that soldiers are strictly tested for drug use on a regular basis, sometimes once a month according to respondents and a finding of prohibited drugs in one’s system is treated just as strictly as an alcohol related offense. In comparing the treatment of substance abuse offenses related to prohibited drugs, compared to the past treatment, Corporeal Brian stated that if “you piss hot you’re out, you’re chaptered out.” Because of the strict prohibition of drugs and the strict testing, the use of alcohol as the drug of choice is obvious, as it does not remain in the system as others drugs do, according to Corporeal Quinn. As a result of the strict prohibition of illicit drug use, the use of alcohol is viewed by Specialist Edwin as the go-to drug of choice because of the severe consequences for drug use.

It’s kind of what most people are doing. You know nobody’s doing you know drugs or anything else like that; a lot of things you can do in the civilian world you’re not allowed to do in the military…So I mean like around here it’s kind of like the only thing to do at a party…you can’t do a lot of things. So I mean drinking it just kind of what’s around here to do…you know tons of bars and everything else and liquor and beer is sold and literally every gas station and every store on and around base…So it’s what everybody does.

Despite this remark, the prohibition of illicit drug use did not cause concern among other respondents as a factor creating excessive use of alcohol. However, the stark consequences of committing an alcohol related offense – losing one’s job – has brought soldiers to the realization, in the words of Specialist Nathan, that “We police ourselves with the fear of punishment. Punishment is what has changed my ways from then to now.”
Generally this change in enforcement was accepted for what it is, and in fact seen as a positive move, as viewed by Sergeant Frank above. Remarks pointing out that the Army is not easy, is not for the weak, requires a strong body and mind, is not for everyone, as previously mentioned under the theme of “stresses of Army work/life,” indicate the general mindset and acceptance towards stricter enforcement of alcohol policies. In reaction to these changes it was noted that there is a need to drink “smarter,” according to Corporeal Brian. While Corporeal Brian, stated that it is necessary to drink “smarter,” other respondents particularly pointed out not drinking and driving. Respondents also made it clear that the required blood alcohol limit for drinking and driving on base are not the same as the requirement when not on base. On base there is a strict prohibition against having any alcohol at all in one’s system when driving, according to Specialist Edwin.

However, drinking “smarter” to these respondents, particularly Specialist Guy and Corporeal Brian, did not mean drinking less, and in their view did not mean drinking less on the part of others in the Army. It just meant where and how alcohol was consumed was altered, and that precautions, particularly using a taxi or having a dependable designated driver, must be taken. To Corporeal Brian the most important thing is to have a dependable ride or taxi when going out to drink. To Specialist Guy, the reaction to stricter rules since he has been in the Army has caused more drinking to take place in the barracks:

I mean it’s changed. It’s just now everyone’s going to stick around here instead of going out…Or they’re just going to bring more back to drink here, you know every time. They’re still going to go to drink, they’re still going to drink the exact same, they’re all just going, now they’re going to go behind closed doors where no one can see it.

Other respondents gave consideration to what they perceived as negative consequences created by the use strict enforcement of alcohol use policy to remove soldiers from the Army.

According to Staff Sergeant Mark, the most significant difference resulting from this increased
enforcement is the denial of the role of rehabilitation and the ensuing loss of good soldiers. He says,

I feel like when I first came in, people would get in trouble with alcohol, whatever, and they would get rehabilitated and retained in the Army, in the military, and learn their lesson and move forward. Now I feel like people make one mistake and you’re done, you’re getting kicked out. That’s it, there’s really no rehabilitation…I mean there is, but after that you’re kicked out.

Other soldiers noted other consequences in addition to the ultimate consequence of losing soldiers. One of the consequences of the stricter enforcement of policies related to alcohol use is the possible reluctance of lower ranking soldiers to speak with commanders over them concerning possible problems with alcohol and drugs, for fear of the repercussions faced. With the realization that the Army is more concerned with removing soldiers for violations of alcohol and substance abuse policies, than with dealing with problems on an individual basis, this is of real concern according to Specialist Guy.

Another consequence mentioned concerning stricter enforcement is the possible reluctance of unit commanders to address possible alcohol related problems in a meaningful manner, concerning the repercussions extending to the entire unit if a member of the unit is demonstrating a problem with alcohol. The individual reflects on the entire unit to a degree according to Specialist Edwin, and mistakes made by one individual may cause concern that the unit as a whole has a problem. This was added to by Sergeant First Class Oscar, who recalled how a member of his unit who drank heavily, and was known by command to have a problem, but was not referred to ASAP or officially addressed for having a problem, likely for fear by command that the unit would be looked upon negatively. According to Respondent Oscar, this soldier later incurred a DUI and was chaptered out of the Army.
Seen from another angle, the consequences of losing a valued member of the unit, because of the commission of an alcohol related offense, particularly one where it is possible for a unit commander to look the other way, can be just as undesirable to the unit. According to respondents such valued members of the unit make the unit look good because they increase the unit’s overall P.T. score (Army Physical Fitness Score). While a view similar to this was held by about half of the respondents concerning the subjective treatment of individuals violating alcohol use policies, almost as many held the view that the Army treats all individuals equally in this regard, without any consideration for favoritism or looking the other way.

An understanding of the role of the Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) in treating problems with alcohol and substance abuse was clearly understood and explained by respondents. An individual having committed a minor offense (i.e.: the first-time being at work while under the influence) related to alcohol or substance use is subject to being assigned to ASAP. During this assignment the individual is required to remain completely sober and drug free. If not the individual is subject to appropriate discipline and being chaptered out of the Army. It is also understood that if an individual is assigned to ASAP by a commander he will have a negative record which will impact their future career trajectory in the Army. However, it was also explained clearly that if an individual self-refers to ASAP the implications are not the same – the individual is not viewed negatively and the possible future implications for one’s work record are not the same.

In addition to the role of ASAP in treating alcohol and substance abuse problems in the Army is the role of the weekly safety brief, as also spoken of clearly and explicitly by respondents. The purpose of the weekly safety brief, given at the end of the week by unit commanders, as it relates to alcohol use, is to advise soldiers on the appropriate use and misuse
of alcohol, in no uncertain terms. Put more clearly, the purpose of the weekly safety brief is to make it exceedingly clear to soldiers of the ultimate consequences of committing an alcohol related offense, and, knowing soldiers are going to drink over the weekend, what specific precautions they must take in order to avoid possible trouble.

From the perspective of those respondents who give safety briefs, the first sergeants, the safety brief is their opportunity to inform soldiers that not only will an alcohol related offense damage the individual, but will reflect poorly on the entire unit and the commander in immediate charge. Furthermore, the commander, or sergeant in charge of the unit, will have to spend a considerable amount of time dealing with related paperwork and be required to bring the entire unit in according to Staff Sergeant James. When giving safety briefs, Sergeant Frank states,

I guess on the weekends I give them enough leash to hang themselves, but before they do I say, “Listen, you’re not going to ruin my career by drinking and driving -- It’s your career. I’m going to give you the safety briefing and tell you not to ruin my weekend and ruin your weekend. But in the end it’s ultimately I’m not going to babysit you…because once you drink and drive, it’s over for you. You’re going to be on extra duty, your military career is over; they might take your benefits because they’re chaptering you, I mean the only person you’re screwing is yourself, so don’t think you’re going to spite anybody by going out and drinking and driving, because you’re not, nobody cares.”

While the safety brief is seen as an opportunity for commanders to ensure that those under them make wise decisions over the weekend concerning drinking, it is viewed in part by soldiers, as revealed by the first sergeant above when telling his soldiers that he is not there to babysit them, as overly controlling treatment. Specialist Nathan spoke of the treatment in these words:

Every single weekend, over and over and over…it’s a dead horse and they have a baseball bat that’s specifically designed to beat that dead horse, and it’s got nails in it so it’s really effective…they just beat the shit out of this dead horse…for 30 minutes on Friday…and we’re like, “Oh God not again.”

According to Specialist Nathan, while the safety brief is very detailed and effective in informing soldiers of how to drink responsibly, it gets to the point where soldiers start to ignore it because
of the repetitive nature of it.

Theme 5: Impressionable/Youth

The Army relies on the admittance of youth, many of which are younger than the legal drinking age of 21. The atmosphere and environment of the Army creates, according to respondents, a perfect storm which influences drinking to excess among young and impressionable young males who are still in the process of emotional development. Put simply, the Army is “the biggest fraternity” there is, stated by Specialist Guy. And while soldiers are limited in the amount of alcohol they can have in their room in the barracks (which is not adhered to according to respondents) there is always somebody drinking in the barracks according to Sergeant Frank. Furthermore, the Army is made up largely of youth from lower to middle class where drinking heavily is more prevalent according to Sergeant First Class Oscar.

To be put in this environment stated Sergeant First Class Oscar, who professed drinking heavily before he entered the Army, was “like putting a weed in a pot of fertilizer.” While most respondents did not report drinking heavily before entering the Army, most reported being thrown into an atmosphere where drinking to excess becomes the norm. Furthermore, respondents noted that alcoholic drinking, drinking to excess, is common among most soldiers in the Army. To be placed in this environment, at this age, is different from being placed in other environments, even college, according to Specialist Kent, who stated:

You’re an adult so act like an adult, but its complex because you’re 18 to 23. That’s a huge emotional development period. And so to grow up in this, in the military at that age, is a lot different from growing up in other environments. Yeah, I mean when I was that age I mean I was in college so those sorts of stresses weren’t on me so I can’t even image what is going through the minds of these kids. I joined when…I was 23…and it’s up to the older guys like me to be the adult when things are getting a little stupid, adulting.
This above view was confirmed by Sargent Frank in his remarks:

I think you’re asking a question and you have a perfect storm of, of a place, if you could pick one place where alcohol is going to be in the world you’re going to pick a bunch of, I mean if you could pick…one demographic you’re going to put it with teenage to mid-twenty’s single, single highly intense, full of testosterone men...

This view that the demographic that largely makes up the Army influences drinking behavior was added to by Specialist Isaac: “the demographic by which I’m surrounded, by a bunch of dudes working a blue collar job” leads to more drinking.

The impression of drinking left on young soldiers in the Army as a result of the environment is undeniable according to most respondents. However, the outward push and pressure to drink, coming in direct terms from fellow soldiers, does not exist. When asked if they ever felt pressured to drink, all respondents uniformly agreed that they had not. Respondents even noted that they have friends who hang out with them but do not drink. Specialist Kent even joked that not having someone drink would mean more beer for him. Additionally, respondents noted that a person not drinking would serve as the designated driver. However, the need to be a part of the group was expressed in strong terms, as expressed in previous themes.

Theme 6: Treatment

When asked what the Army can do to better treat alcohol problems three distinct answers were given -- there was the answer that the Army is currently doing the best it can do, or that it is a ship which cannot be turned around in short order but which needs repair, or there was the answer that the Army needs to address the problem on an individual basis.

To those who answered that the Army is currently doing exactly what it needs to do, a common response, as given by Sergeant First Class Adam, was “The Army is actually addressing
the problem in the most professional way you can. They give you leeway and then they give you…if you don’t follow regulations, plain and simple.” The view that the Army needs the strongest, most disciplined soldiers, therefore those who may have a problem with alcohol do not belong, was expressed also by Specialist Hank. Furthermore, the Army has many programs to help and assist soldiers with not only alcohol related problems, but many others, according to Sergeant Frank. And, according to Frank, when joining the Army, “They don’t ever say anywhere in your contract that if you join the military you got to drink. They don’t say that. It’s a choice you make when you get here and some people chose not to.” The recognition that the Army provides adequate support was furthered by Specialist Edwin: “The military has fantastic programs for literally every issue you could possibly have. It’s just that a lot of people don’t take it seriously.” Just be responsible was the sentiment expressed by these and other respondents.

The view that the Army has problems in dealing with alcohol problems but is not in a position to deal with them was also furthered by respondents. It’s the “nature of the best” according to Staff Sergeant James. “You don’t turn a ship around” stated Specialist Edwin when asked of how the Army could better address alcohol related problems. At the same time these respondents noted that alcohol related problems could be better addressed. The extent to which these respondents noted the need for the Army to better address alcohol related problems was best answered by those respondents who noted the need to better treat the individual – to better take into account individual circumstances.

Many soldiers answered that there is a disregard and unconcern for the individual in an environment where many are more concerned about moving up in rank. Respondents answered that, in order to better address alcohol related problems, commanders must be more concerned
for the soldiers under them. Corporeal Chris stated that those in charge simply “have to be actively involved in your soldier’s life and you have to pay attention to how personality changes that can easily be a dead giveaway for substance abuse, alcohol, suicide, so on…” Similarly, Specialist Nathan believes that there is far too much focus on the negative in the Army rather than the positive. He said, “The focus should not be on the bad things but should be on the positive things. Benefit the guys that do good things rather than punish the bad guys for doing bad things.”

While Respondent Staff Sergeant Mark noted the role of the safety brief in conveying important information about drinking responsibly, he did not feel they offer more meaningful information about the consequences of alcohol abuse. Rather, the focus should be more educational, similar to the two day program called Primed for Life, which he was familiar with from knowing soldiers who had attended the program. Rather than provide this program only to soldiers who have been referred, this program should be a requirement for all soldier stated Staff Sergeant Mark.

Correlating Respondents’ Scores from Alcohol Use Questionnaire with Interview Responses

As covered at the beginning of this chapter, the respondents’ scores on the Alcohol Use Questionnaire indicated that all of the respondents either drank in a harmful or hazardous fashion, or in the case of three respondents, in a dependent fashion. While many of the soldiers spoke at length about their use, and excessive use of alcohol during the week, but primarily during the weekend, their scores on the Alcohol Use Questionnaire, while high, did not necessarily indicate such use. Conversely, during the face-to-face interview, respondents commonly indicated that they were primarily social drinkers, however, their scores, while on the lower end of hazardous
or harmful drinking, indicated drinking more excessively. Taken as a whole it is possible to see such responses as mediating each other given the size of the sample. It should also be noted that the face-to-face interview questions did not address some of the questions addressed in the questionnaire. Lastly, a tendency to perhaps not see oneself in an unfavorable light may have led to lower scores on the questionnaire compared to detailed responses given in the face-to-face interview.

Summary

Taken together the themes which emerged from the interviews indicate that problematic drinking in the Army will not be easily solved and addressed. However, it is also clear that the Army recognizes that there is a problem and is doing something about it. How effective the measures taken by the Army are believed to be is answered in the themes. The theme of stresses of Army work/life was addressed in the most detail and most emphatically by respondents. From the hierarchical structure of the Army, the long and demanding work environment, to the inherent dangers of the job, respondents provided a considerable amount of information on this theme. The themes of social/entertainment use and tradition/brotherhood/entitlement, while similar in ways, were spoken of in distinctly different ways by respondents. To these soldiers the social and entertainment value of drinking, and drinking together, is needed in an environment where there are few other options – Fayetteville is not a large city and is more than an hour and a half from the large urban areas of Charlotte and Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill. The theme of tradition/brotherhood/entitlement gives soldiers good reason to become familiar with fellow soldiers considering the inherent importance of knowing someone who may ultimately save one’s life, and to these soldiers drinking together serves this purpose very well. Furthermore, the
inherent dangers and risks soldiers take in training, and in serving deployments, gives them justification for their drinking behavior. However, as covered under the theme of fear/consequences, the severity of the repercussions for incurring an alcohol related offense work to halt excessive and dangerous drinking. But, unintended consequences were pointed out which may serve in fact to allow problematic drinking to persist. The demographic makeup of the Army and the impressionability of young males in an environment such as the Army were pointed out to be a dangerous combination leading to excessive drinking by soldiers under the theme of impressionable/youth. Lastly, respondents largely believed either that the Army is currently doing all it can to address alcohol abuse, or that more concern needs to be given for the well-being of individual soldiers in the demanding and hierarchical work atmosphere of the Army.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the socio-cultural factors that influence alcohol use and abuse in the Army among those found to demonstrate the highest rates of heavy drinking, young males, unmarried, or married without a present spouse. The sample consisted of 17 young, male respondents, of whom nine were White, four Hispanic, and four Black. Both White and Hispanic males indicate heavy drinking rates that are almost twice that of young Black males in the Army. While this difference in rates of alcohol use among these race and ethnic groups in the military is noted, only respondents who indicated heavy drinking, as indicated by a score of eight or more on the Alcohol Use Questionnaire (see appendix D), were included in the sample, in order to ensure for knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. Furthermore, in order to sufficiently account for the influence of the military environment on drinking, in addition to having an informed respondent, only males who had severed at least five years but were younger than 30, were included in the sample.

Research was conducted using semi-structured, face-to-face interviews (see appendix C for interview guide) with 17 male soldiers, who additionally completed the AUDIT alcohol use questionnaire (see appendix D) and a demographic questionnaire (see appendix B) prior to the interviews. This chapter reviews, examines, and discusses, in light of the relevant literature, the findings of this study. Additionally, this chapter examines the implications of the findings for the Army and larger military. This chapter ends with suggestions for future research.

Discussion

Two fundamental questions guided this research:
1. What are the social, cultural, and structural factors that contribute to or inhibit alcohol use and abuse in the Army among young males, unmarried, or married without a present spouse?

2. How do these social, cultural, and structural factors contribute to or inhibit alcohol use and abuse in the Army among young males, unmarried, or married without a present spouse?

The research questions were answered by themes which emerged from the interview data, and were described in detail in Chapter 4.

Theme 1: Stresses of Army Work/Life

Researchers agree that stress related to work plays a role in alcohol consumption. However, how stress operates in leading to alcohol consumption is not exactly clear. Specific research examining stress related to work in the Army, outside of a close examination of post-traumatic stress and alcohol use is lacking. The available research in post-traumatic stress, which is not addressed in this study, indicates a clear and certain connection (Schumm & Chard, 2013). In fact research indicates that it is alcohol use itself that leads to further stress, and a vicious cycle which leads to further alcohol use and stress (Nagle, Rani, Indubala, & Pradhan, 2009). From this understanding of stress, the respondents in this study, all having indicated heavy alcohol use according to the AUDIT questionnaire, it is not completely possible to separate their conceptions of stress from work and life in the Army and their alcohol use. However, to the degree they gave explicit and specific details concerning their ordeals related to stress and their ensuing desire to drink, such information is useful in understanding the role of stress in the Army in leading to alcohol use. However, despite the availability of considerable research, a link between stress and alcohol and substance abuse, particularly in young males, has been found to be strong, as noted in Chapter 2 from a study in 1999 (Bray, Fairbank, & Marsden, 1999).
While all respondents noted a role played by stress in leading to drinking behavior, both the factors causing stress, and the significance varied. The inherent demanding nature of the job, the career itself, was pointed out to be a well-known proposition which should be clearly understood by those in the Army. However, according to the explicitness of other comments on the causes behind stress and drinking, there is real concern for factors which can be better addressed.

Lack of Communication

Perhaps the most common thread running through the respondents’ discussions on stress leading to alcohol use, besides the just mentioned inherent demands of the job, was the lack of clear communication on the specific requirements of work on a daily and ongoing basis – the irregular work hours, the relation of duties to work purposes, and the evaluation of work performance. Research from across different disciplines indicates the positive role of positive communication and interpersonal relationships on job satisfaction and reductions in stress and burnout levels (Ray & Miller, 1991). Furthermore, the research indicates the need for clear lines of communication between both co-workers and supervisors; co-workers need to better understand and assist each other, while supervisors need to better understand job requirements and increase beliefs in personal control.

The hierarchical work structure and the separation of roles and duties in the Army was noted by respondents as an inherent impediment to the positive flow of communication, both in respects to information going down to subordinates, and to information being relayed to superiors. The indication that leadership was good on the part of Specialist Guy appeared to have a strong connection to the ability of leadership to effectively and appropriately
communicate with those above and below. As pointed out by respondent Specialist Guy, when leadership is good, communication is good, and moral is high, there is not as much drinking. The unknowns created by poor communication create fear on the part of commanders in not having a full understanding of their roles, and this inability is additionally passed down and experienced by those under their command. Those who noted the specific need for a better understanding and treatment of individuals on the part of commanders were alluding to this in a respect.

Regardless of the source of stress, to the extent the use of alcohol serves as source of relief, it can be seen to serve a practical and functional purpose. From this perspective, functionalism as understood in the classic sense provided by Emile Durkheim provides insight into how an activity can serve a useful purpose, not only to the individual, but to the Army and greater society. However, such a conception is not useful to the degree that such use of alcohol is excessive and unhealthy. This functional/dysfunctional aspect of alcohol use will be further explored in the upcoming themes.

Role of Social Interaction

Additionally, regardless of the explicitness of individual explanations for the stresses created from the requirements of the Army, there was a definite unifying theme behind dealing with stress with alcohol, both in the largely universal response given by the sample for stress as a primary reason to drink, and in the ultimately work-related nature of the causes leading to stress. From this unity found in the responses it is apparent that dealing with stress with alcohol use is in large part a socially motivated and accepted response. To a large extent, the reason of stress given by soldiers can be seen as a justification for drinking regularly. More clearly, however,
and this will be repeated in the upcoming themes and further explained and expounded upon, this reason given by soldiers can be seen as a reflection of both what they believe to be a primary reason for drinking regularly, and what they believe others believe to be a primary reason for drinking regularly. The influence of the individual on the group and the group on the individual only serves to further reinforce the need to drink in response to stress.

The role of social interaction in shaping and influencing the appropriateness of drinking as a response to stress, as just mentioned will be explored in detail in the upcoming themes, as they lend further explanation and justification for the role played by social interaction. How this relates to and is explained by the theory of Symbolic Interactionism and more specific related theories will be addressed in greater detail upon examination of the upcoming themes.

**Theme 2: Social/Entertainment Use**

Many of the respondents believed that the primary motivation for drinking was for social and entertainment reasons. The reasons related to social and entertainment use of alcohol fell into four general categories: 1) a lack of or disinterest in other social and entertainment options; 2) as a social lubricant; 3) an answer to loneliness and boredom; and 4) the affordability relative to other options. These reasons combined created a strong impulse to drink in a social fashion, or as an alternative form of entertainment to these soldiers. To these soldiers drinking serves as a reasonable affordable replacement for social and entertainment activities not involving alcohol in which they would be able to take part in given a different location or set of circumstances.

*Social Lubricant*

A closer examination of the social and entertainment reasons given by respondents for
drinking indicates that, absent the alternative allowed for by drinking, and more specifically
drinking together in a social fashion, respondents would not be as inclined to interact and
socialize together. While drinking for these reasons does not necessarily exclude drinking in
isolation, the assertion was made by respondents that to them drinking in this fashion involves
drinking with others. The assertion that alcohol use serves as a “social lubricant” demonstrates
this point well. From this perspective alcohol use allows soldiers to get to know each other in a
way in which otherwise they would not. Drinking can be seen to serve the dual purpose of first
lowering inhibitions, and then allowing soldiers to comfortably socialize and communicate.
Furthermore, alcohol use serves as a useful recreational activity in the absence of options that are
available and affordable. Alcohol use gives these soldiers a sense of satisfaction, a sense of
contentedness, which allows them to be better functioning members of the Army.

From the above perspective it appears that the social use of alcohol provides a useful
function to soldiers, to the Army, and the larger society. In other words, alcohol use is functional
to this subculture and the larger culture, agreeing with the classical view of functionalism, as
expounded by Emile Durkheim. To the degree that alcohol use allows for recreation and
entertainment in a healthy manner, it serves a positive function (Semones, 1990).

However, for the segment of soldiers who’s social and entertainment use of alcohol
serves as an answer to loneliness and boredom and is more likely to be carried out in isolation,
such a positive functional view cannot be held. For this segment alcohol use can be seen to
result from an insufficient bond between the individual and the larger group of soldiers the
individual belongs to – egoism at the individual level. For such soldiers, alcohol use ensues
because of the loss of the previously held bonds of home and friends which may have provided
more appropriate norms for alcohol use, and to the newly acquired, but weaker, relationships to
the Army and individuals in the Army, which have not instilled a sense of appropriate alcohol use, or anomie. While Durkheim spoke of egoism, the loss of appropriate attachments to society, in relation to larger structures in society, viewing it on a more personal basis, in relation to smaller institutions and structures in society, allows for an understanding of the importance of social bonds at all levels of society (Durkheim, 1897).

However, for those who use alcohol for social and entertainment reasons not in isolation, at the point where alcohol use becomes abuse and is beyond a healthy level, taking such a functionalist perspective does not become useful. As noted (AUDIT questionnaire), all of the soldiers in this study indicated harmful or more serious alcohol use. Furthermore, the considerable associated costs of excessive alcohol use in the Army, as provided in Chapter 2, indicate how harmful and damaging alcohol abuse is both in terms of personal health and overall cost to the Army.

Lack of Alternative Activities

While it was noted by respondents that Fayetteville and the area surrounding Fort Bragg do not provide sufficient opportunities for entertainment, it was also noted that there are activities on base and off which do not have to involve alcohol use – lifting weights, fishing, hunting, meditation, and similar recreational activities offered on base for soldiers. However, there was overwhelming consensus among these soldiers on the use of alcohol for entertainment and social use on a routine basis on the weekend. To an extent these reasons given by soldiers can be seen as a justification for drinking regularly. More clearly however, these reasons given by soldiers can be seen as a reflection of both what they believe to be the reasons for drinking regularly, and what they believe others believe to be the reasons for drinking regularly. Because
drinking is so commonly celebrated among soldiers on such regular occasion to the point where it is glorified, it becomes furthered reinforced as a socially acceptable and valuable activity to the individual. The concept of the generalized other in symbolic interactionism, as understood as the set of organized information carried by the individual in his or her head concerning what the attitudes and general expectations of the social group are, clearly makes this point (Griffin, 2009). While the role of symbolic interactionism will be detailed and explored further in examining the upcoming themes, because, as mentioned over and over, they are not discrete, and help in understanding each other, it is important to make clear that symbolic interactionism fully appreciates the fact that humans are by nature social and inseparable from the group they live in, and each is shaped by social interactions understood only in relation to the other (Blumer, 1969). To the point that drinking was explained as a social event, and given additional supporting reasons related to drinking socially, it was legitimized both as an event for the individual and the greater group.

Theme 3: Tradition/Brotherhood/Entitlement

Of the developed themes, the theme of tradition/brotherhood/entitlement most clearly assists in coming to an understanding of the deeper meanings of drinking to these soldiers – the theory behind their drinking. The unification of these three categories into one theme arises from the similarities in the differences. Overall, the similarity is found in the sense of importance of the activity of drinking to the respondents. Separately, “tradition” most clearly represents the role of the passed down nature of drinking in influencing drinking. “Brotherhood” represents the role played by drinking together in bringing fellow soldiers together, allowing them to bond together. “Entitlement” represents the overall sense of having a right to drink given the
combination of the above factors of “tradition” and “brotherhood” and from the fact that the inherent nature of work in the Army calls for and allows for the right to drink.

As with the “social/entertainment” theme, drinking under this theme serves as a useful and meaningful tool to soldiers, to the extent it allows them to bond and form meaningful relationships which extend into the workplace; allowing them to become more effective in their positions. To the soldiers who directly spoke to theme of “brotherhood,” there was almost an imperative nature involved in the act of drinking with fellow soldiers. Two soldiers, Specialist Guy and Staff Sergeant James, specifically stated how important it is to get to know soldiers with whom they might have to go on deployment, and how important the role of drinking together is in the act of “brotherhood” – which is closely and personally getting to know such soldiers and “looking out” for each other. To these soldiers “brotherhood” literally means coming to know and care for fellow soldiers as brothers, and outside of the bonds formed from drinking together, such is not possible.

Again, as with the previous theme of “social/entertainment” use, alcohol use under the specific theme of “brotherhood” is seen to serve a positive function, but only up to a point. To the degree alcohol use with fellow soldiers serves the positive function of allowing positive bonds to form which lead to better work performance, such use is useful and meaningful to the individual and the unit, if not carried out beyond an unhealthy limit. Again, this can be seen as the application of Durkheim’s conception of functionalism, albeit on a more personal level. The same assertion concerning the positive and functional use of alcohol can be made for the categories of “tradition” and “entitlement” to the degree such use is not unhealthy and provides for a better working environment in terms of the individual and the unit (Semones, 1999).
However, even when alcohol is used in a healthy manner (in certain instances) under the consideration of this theme, there are valid considerations to be made for unintended consequences. It is possible that forming strong bonds with fellow soldiers may influence one’s likelihood of trying to help a fellow soldier who has developed a problem with alcohol use given the negative implications of an alcohol related problem on a soldier’s career. According to Specialist Isaac, when “you become a close knit group of people, you might be more reluctant to report a friend who you notice is continually having a problem because you know what will happen to that friend.” Robert Merton conceived of such negative consequences related to what may appear as an outwardly positive activity, giving them the name, latent dysfunctions, in his 1968 work, *Social Theory and Social Structure*. Furthermore, according to Merton, activities can be both functional and dysfunctional, which is highlighted in this theme that can function both positively and negatively.

However, it is apparent with the addition of this emergent theme that there is more to be considered in taking in the drinking patterns of these soldiers. Consideration of a functionalist perspective with this theme, as with the previous, is not useful or meaningful at the point where alcohol use becomes excessive and abusive. The addition of this theme to the previous, and with consideration of the upcoming themes, makes this more apparent in terms of the social and cultural nature of the themes.

The positive association of drinking together and forming positive social bonds serves as a powerful reinforcing agent for further drinking to these soldiers. This is overwhelmingly evident in the assertion that drinking together ultimately serves to protect and save one’s life in the event of a deployment, as it is through drinking with fellow soldiers that one is able to establish and strengthen a bond strong enough to carry over into the battlefield. While not
creating as such a strong and positive association with drinking, the specific categories of “tradition” and “entitlement” work in a similar fashion in that drinking is associated with positive reinforcing social messages which work to strengthen and perpetuate it in individuals and the greater group.

A consideration of Symbolic Interactionism, according to Herbert Blumer, allows for an understanding of how individuals are closely bonded to the society they inhabit and how each is formed by social interactions understood through terms of others (Blumer, 1969). Symbolic interaction is based on three premises: 1) the action of human beings towards things is founded on what meanings are given to things; 2) the meaning given to a thing comes from the social interactions a human has with other humans; 3) meanings of things which the person comes across are controlled and changed by the person by way of a process that is interactive. This can be summed up by George Mead’s concept of the generalized other: the set of organized information carried by the individual in his or her head concerning what the attitudes and general expectations of the social group are (Griffin, 2009).

Humans, and soldiers, do not simply react to circumstances, events, and situations in a direct fashion because they are able to think, but instead provide meaning to these circumstances, events, and situations. Human behavior and action are characterized by these means which are formed through interactions taking place with others and self (Burke, 1980). In order to adequately and appropriately understand drinking in the Army, it is necessary to understand the social setting in which it takes place, and the individuals which influence one’s actions, and vice versa, how one influences these individual’s actions.

A more detailed theory providing insight into how these soldiers form drinking patterns through interaction with each other is offered by Sutherland’s differential association. While this
theory addresses deviant, criminal behavior, it more specifically addresses the nature of conformity (Lernert, 1967). First, drinking behavior has, in many respects, been glorified and deemed as appropriate, even to the point of being necessary in the context of the Army (as reported by respondents). Because of the glorification and normalization of drinking in the Army, a large segment of young male soldiers adapt a drinking pattern largely because of the cultural and social relevance which has been given by the society. Drinking behavior is initiated and continued largely because of the positive and affirmative experience offered from those surrounding them. As definitions in favor of drinking and drinking heavily become more excessive than definitions in favor of not drinking, drinking behavior becomes more prevalent. The continuation of drinking, and drinking heavily among young soldiers, has become a problem as a result of the continued glorification and celebration of drinking by members of the Army, and for its widely accepted use for socialization, entertainment, stress relief, bonding, and traditional purposes.

Theme 4: Fear/Consequences

The factors spoken of serving to inhibit, and/or alter, the drinking behavior of the soldiers in the sample fell under the theme of “fear/consequences.” Unlike the other emerging themes addressed to this point, this obviously concerns factors inhibiting, rather than promoting, drinking behavior. However, unlike the other emerging themes, this one, while appearing to be straightforward, is more nuanced in its influence over drinking behavior. Fear and consequences to the soldiers in the sample meant that drinking behavior must be carried out in such a way as to avoid leading to trouble with the law or at work.
The ultimate factor leading to fear among these soldiers was the loss of one’s career or rank as a result of an alcohol related incident. This was made clear by Specialist Nathan: “We police ourselves with the fear of punishment. Punishment is what has changed my ways from then to now.” However, the knowledge to these soldiers that the Army has become stricter in its enforcement of alcohol use policy did not necessarily mean that they drank less, only differently according to respondents, and differently did not necessarily correspond to drinking in a better, more healthy manner.

It is absolutely necessary to examine the possible causes behind the responses given under this theme in light of the other themes examined. The fact that the soldiers in the sample were as inclined to alter their drinking behavior rather than curtail or halt their drinking behavior in light of the severe circumstances speaks to the abundance of positive definitions they are provided in their social environment for drinking. Sutherland’s differential association theory is useful in examining this behavior as it gives priority to the influence of social factors and learning experiences. If differential associations provide more definitions in favor of an activity over another, then the one with more favorable definitions will prevail (Lernert, 1967). The weight given to alcohol use for social and entertainment reasons, for a source of stress relief, and to serve as a means to form strong bonds with fellow soldiers provides this abundance of positive definitions for alcohol use to these soldiers.

However, it was also clear under this theme that many of the behaviors resulting from the strict enforcement of alcohol use policy were contrary to the intent of the policy and enforcement. While it was noted by respondents that responsible actions were adopted in response to the strict enforcement of alcohol use policy it was also noted that certain adaptations were made which were actually counterproductive to responsible alcohol use. These included
(1) a greater reluctance of individuals to approach their commanders with concerns about alcohol use problems for fear of repercussions; (2) a greater likelihood to drink in the barracks or at home, and to drink alone, for fear of a drinking and driving violation and the consequences; and (3) a possible greater willingness on the part of unit commanders to “look the other way” when a real problem exists, knowing of the negative implications for both the individual and the unit.

These negative consequences of a policy and action actually meant to deter alcohol use speak to Merton’s conception of latent dysfunctions (Merton, 1968). Furthermore, despite the noted consequences, the Army’s alcohol use policy and its enforcement does serve a positive service and function to many, inasmuch it is functional. However, inasmuch as a corresponding negative service and function is provided, it is dysfunctional. Merton additionally provides support for how such an incident can be functional and dysfunctional at the same time for the same group.

Theme 5: Impressionable/Youth

The young age at which most males enter the Army is an age in which they are continuing to mature and develop. It is an age in which they are susceptible and vulnerable to the influences of those around them, and the “messages” around them. Needless to say, for males entering an institution the size and scope of the Army at a young age the pressures to adapt and conform are significant. However, such young males do not come in as blank slates as they do bring their own beliefs, values, expectations, and norms – they bring their own way of doing things with them. Nonetheless, many young males in the Army come from the same background and bring many of the same values and norms.
While many of the respondents noted that they did not drink heavily before they entered the Army, there was a general consensus that drinking was acceptable and not viewed negatively in the Army. Therefore, the impact of many young soldiers with previously established drinking habits, in addition to those who may not have an established drinking habit, but have positive views towards drinking, coming into an environment where drinking is an accepted and valued part of life, serves the purpose of reinforcing and strengthening the role of alcohol use as a normal and accepted part of life.

Again, Sutherland’s differential association can be used to understand how the existence of social influences which provide more favorable than unfavorable definitions for a behavior leads to the acceptance of one behavior over another. Differential associations are not just matters of learning actions, but also of acquiring the motivations, attitudes, and rationalizations for behavior (Lernert, 1967). George Mead’s observation that social interaction is a reciprocal process highlights the reinforcing nature of young male soldiers with previously established favorable definitions for drinking coming into an environment rich with additional favorable definitions for drinking (Mead, 1934). How young soldiers act in terms of drinking behavior determines how others treat them, and this in turn feeds back into how such young soldiers then treat them back.

While an understanding of the drinking behavior of soldiers under the theme of “impressionable/youth” provides a similar understanding of the impact of social interactions and motivations evident under previous themes, it does lead to a better understanding of how social interactions leading to alcohol use in the Army is a two-way process – how young soldiers behave influences how others treat them which in turn influences how they treat them.
Theme 6: Treatment

All of the three categories of answers respondents gave in answer to how the Army could better address and treat alcohol related problems placed a focus on the individual, at least in the short term. The answers: the Army is currently doing the best it can do; there is much to do but the nature of such a large institution prohibits meaningful change outside of a much extended period of time; the Army needs to better address the problem on an individual level.

While the role of the safety brief was also covered under the theme of “fear/consequences” as it serves to instill fear of the consequences of excessive use, its role in understanding the cause behind alcohol use will be addressed here. The safety brief was noted by respondents as the one outstanding measure used by the Army to proactively deal with and treat the abusive use of alcohol. The ASAP was available for the soldier with a problem with alcohol, and other campaigns related to marketing and public awareness (That Guy) publicly informed soldiers of the dangers of drinking and driving and alcohol related problems. The safety brief ultimately stands out as a significant measure utilized by the Army to reduce alcohol use and the related problems.

The aim of the safety brief is to make the consequences of poor decisions concerning alcohol use exceedingly clear to soldiers. The purpose of the safety brief as seen from the perspective of soldiers on the receiving end was in part to ensure that commanders provided adequate cover and excuse for themselves and the greater Army in the event a soldier makes an unfortunate mistake involving alcohol use. Regardless of the depth and detail of the safety brief, it is not meant to serve as a form of “treatment” for alcohol use and abuse in the Army. The safety brief is the primary means through which the Army addresses alcohol use and abuse.
The forgoing discussion of the safety brief, in addition to the overall emphasis the Army places on the individual to address an alcohol related problem, as evidenced from the three categories of responses to how the Army could better address alcohol related problems, points to an overall emphasis the Army places on the individual to address behavior indicating alcohol use and abuse. In other words, the Army is not taking full responsibility for alcohol use and abuse, and perhaps is not in a position to do so.

The concept of medicalization can be applied to the Army’s treatment of the alcohol use to the degree the Army makes alcohol use a problem of the individual and does not move beyond that in addressing the problem. As evidenced from the safety brief, the outstanding measure noted by respondents as a means of addressing alcohol use, the onus is squarely placed on the individual to make responsible decisions. To the extent the Army provides counseling (ASAP) and marketing campaigns aimed at informing soldiers of the dangers of alcohol use, or more specifically the consequences of offenses related to alcohol use, the focus still remains on the individual. The recognition by respondents that the problem of alcohol abuse is both an individual problem and one in which significant time will be required to change is a recognition of the sociological nature of the problem: in the short term, absent greater support provided by not just the Army, but the greater society, the problem can only be addressed on an individual level.

However, such a situation should not prevent an attempt to better understand, in order to ultimately change, the root causes behind alcohol use and abuse in the Army. The problem with individualizing and medicalizing behavior is that it removes alternative sociological explanations. Constructing the problem of alcohol use as a problem inherent to the individual
obscures the reasons behind why using alcohol might be viewed as an entirely rational reaction to the circumstances of life in the Army (White, 2009).

The process of the medicalization of alcohol use in the Army can be observed as occurring as a result of the problem of alcohol abuse first being defined as a behavior which is nonconformist, deviant, and thus under the purview of the medical field. Having conceptualized alcohol abuse (which in light of the regular use of alcohol in the Army can be said to be a matter of fact, as a medical problem) squarely place responsibility on the individual and not the Army, or the greater society. Lastly, while alcohol abuse may relate to social factors, such factors are ultimately ignored and ultimately given biological and individualistic explanations (White, 2009).

A greater understanding of the influence of individualizing and medicalizing problems such as alcohol abuse can only serve to bring greater awareness of the overall causes, and then solutions. It is apparent that the Army has a problem with alcohol abuse. It is also apparent that the Army can take more proactive and active measures to reduce alcohol abuse. However, before real and meaningful action can be made it is necessary to understand the deeper causes behind alcohol use and abuse.

Policy Implications

Considering not only the role of the Army, but the role of the greater society in instilling and maintaining beliefs concerning alcohol use, positive change towards reducing excessive alcohol use in the Army can only be viewed as a considerable proposition. Nonetheless, considering the extent of the problem, it is certainly necessary to look beyond current considerations.
Of immediate practical concern can be the matters addressed relating to the Army’s alcohol use policy and its enforcement. The most significant point conveyed by respondents relating to the enforcement of alcohol use policy was the uneven and subjective treatment of soldiers believed to have come to work under the influence of alcohol. This was attributed in large part to the severe consequences faced for having committed such an offense and for the additional negative implications brought on the unit of which the offending soldier is a member. While there was a noted need among respondents to treat soldiers on a more individual basis, in a situation such as this, the unfortunate message conveyed is that some can get away with coming to work under the influence of alcohol if they are viewed in a more positive overall light. In this case measures should be adopted to ensure the fair and equal treatment of all soldiers in order to avoid sending the message that improper alcohol use can be gotten away with under certain circumstances.

Related to the above consideration for the fair and equal treatment of all soldiers is the concern for the soldier requiring counsel and guidance upon coming to realize that he or she has a problem with alcohol. As it is the soldier’s immediate commander to whom he or she is most likely to seek guidance, there must be a strong level of trust placed in such a commander, realizing the severe consequences for alcohol-related problems. While it may not be possible to require commanders to be understanding and impartial in all situations, additional provisions can be provided to ensure the soldier indicating a problem with alcohol seeks help when needed without fear of potential consequences. It should be noted that respondents recognized the importance of ASAP in providing individual treatment and the confidential nature of treatment, particularly if the soldier voluntarily enrolls. However, because of the demands enrolling in
ASAP places on the soldier (commitment to remain sober and attend counseling on a regular basis) there may be an initial reluctance to seek help in this fashion.

While it was noted by respondents that the Army has increasingly moved towards providing more programs and recreational activities for soldiers which do not involve alcohol use, realizing the overall abundance of options involving alcohol use, both off base and on, necessitates that such options not only be available, but that they be actively promoted and utilized. The reasons of “loneliness” and “boredom” given for alcohol use particularly highlights the need to both provide and promote such activities.

The above concerns, while important to address in light of the problem of alcohol abuse among young, single, male soldiers in the Army, pale in comparison to the greater concern created by the influence and impact that socialization has on such soldiers. The normalization and glorification of alcohol use in the Army, from the homes many of the soldiers come from, and from the greater society, creates a formidable obstacle to overcome in altering and reducing behavior towards excessive alcohol use.

However, such does not mean that the Army cannot make more worthwhile efforts to reduce the hold of the overall positive image associated with alcohol use. To that end the Army’s “That Guy” campaign, which makes use of humor and entertainment to engage young audiences, focuses on social disapproval and short-term negative consequences and pushes a peer-to-peer approach as opposed to top-down influence through the chain of command (United States Army Center for Substance Abuse, 2013). This program was specifically mentioned by Staff Sergeant Mark as an effective program which should be put to more extensive use.
Similar programs, as previously noted, in the other branches of military serve the same purpose in deglamorizing alcohol use and focusing on responsible use. It is imperative that such programs be expanded and utilized, not only by those soldiers most at risk, but additionally and importantly by the chain of command, as the importance of establishing and fostering positive relationships, as indicated by respondents, is of paramount importance in addressing and changing alcohol use patterns among young soldiers. Therefore, such programs should not only be designated for those most at risk, but for those in positions of command, those in positions to confidentially address soldiers about concerns for alcohol misuse.

While the role of traditional activities associated with alcohol use, such as the grog, cannot be denied as factors involving and influencing alcohol use to a degree, it was the more informal activities that were noted as influences of alcohol use by respondents. To the extent such activities take place outside of the immediate confines of the Army, such as off-base, and on-base bars on the weekend, it becomes more difficult for the Army to control and monitor. In this regard it is necessary that the Army, as previously mentioned, provide meaningful alternatives to soldiers, and most importantly opportunities to congregate on weekends and other times which do not involve alcohol -- it is necessary that meaningful and relevant activities which do not involve alcohol use and which soldiers find interest in be provided on a regular basis. Furthermore, it is necessary that such activities be group and unit based – activities which allow soldiers opportunities to get to know those both on their level, and those above and below them, in as close and personal terms as possible.

To the extent the Army provides such meaningful activities specifically not involving alcohol use, and at times when alcohol use is expected -- is the norm -- the greater the opportunity to alter and positively change attitudes towards alcohol use as a means of
socialization, stress relief, and in dealing with the factors of loneliness and boredom in a healthy
and productive manner.

Lastly, while considering the need to be as prepared as possible considering the
possibility of deployment there is a definitive need to ensure that soldiers are rigorously trained
and prepared for action; however, such should not preclude the establishment of policies and
procedures to reduce and eliminate stress related to work and life in the Army. There is a need
for more research into how the work environment in the Army interacts with the social
environment to create and increase the desire to drink.

Altering the held notions of alcohol use considering the previously held and currently
held notions of alcohol use in this situation provides a considerable barrier to change. However,
in light of the overall consequences and considering the raw numbers related to alcohol abuse in
the Army, it is incumbent on the Army, and the greater military in general, to be more proactive
not only for the health of the immediate Army and military, but for the health of the greater
nation.

Future Research Implications

This research study attempted to increase understanding of the social and cultural factors
influencing alcohol use and abuse among young, single, males in the Army. Previous studies
have indicated the success of programs focused on changing the behavior of the individual.
However, little focus has been given to the impact of the greater structural features of the Army
and beyond on drinking patterns. The qualitative case study methodology used in this study
offered a detailed examination of the experiences of 17 young male soldiers with alcohol and
situations under which they typically used alcohol.
While this study indicated the considerable influence of social and cultural factors on the drinking patterns of young males in the Army, further research is necessary, as this study represents a start in many ways for a larger and more detailed examination into the role of social and cultural factors on drinking in the Army, and the military. First, a future study should include a larger and more diverse population in order to exam how social influences to drink vary over time and across different groups. Furthermore, while programs addressing the drinking behavior of individuals are offered and provide a useful and meaningful tool considering the extent of the problem in the Army and military, to the extent programs provide a greater focus on the broader institution of the Army and the military, more research and examination into the effectiveness of such programs is needed. And, research is needed into how such programs address the themes addressed in this study: stress, social and entertainment use, bonding, brotherhood, and tradition, and the impressionability of young soldiers.

Realizing the differing reactions to the Army’s alcohol use policy and its enforcement it is necessary that further research examine in greater detail the mentioned consequences and how such consequences can be better addressed and treated. In considering the more specific factors of stress and the impressionability of young soldiers it is necessary to exam how the social environment exacerbates and moderates these factors, and how the Army, and the military, can better address and provide support for the problems created by these factors.

Limitations

A strength of “qualitative methodology is the inductive, naturalistic inquiry strategy of approaching a setting without predetermined hypotheses…understanding and theory emerge from fieldwork experiences and are grounded in the data.” (Patton, 2002, p. 129). A limitation
that arises from this however is the difficulty of setting aside personal biases that may be inherent in the individual researcher and approaching the fieldwork with open-mindedness. “What people ‘see’ is highly dependent on their interests, biases, and backgrounds. Our culture shapes what we see, our early childhood socialization forms how we look at the world, and our value systems tell us how to interpret what passes before our eyes” (Patton, 2002, p. 260).

In order to address such possible distortions that arose from my involvement with the research participants I used data collection procedures which were systematic and used multiple sources of data in order to increase the credibility of the results. Additionally, I used peer debriefing with a team of disinterested peers and used a reflexive journal where I recorded thoughts, decisions, questions and insights related to the research.

A final limitation of the study is the ability to generalize the findings to the wider Army and military population. However, the interviews conducted with these 17 young, male, single, or separated soldiers do provide a cross-section of opinions, views, and knowledge that can assist in informing the continuing efforts to understand culture, climate, and social issues concerning alcohol use in the Army, and military.

Conclusion

The effect of social influences and learning experiences leaves an indelible mark on how we perceive and interact with those around us and the greater world. While the themes which emerged from this research diverged at places, ultimately they came together in fundamental ways. An understanding of Symbolic Interactionism, as discussed earlier, provides a solid basis from which to understand the role of social interaction in all of the themes examined.
Symbolic interaction is based on three premises: 1) the action of human beings towards things is founded on what meanings are given to things; 2) the meaning given to a thing comes from the social interactions a human has with other humans; 3) meanings of things which the person comes across are controlled and changed by the person by way of a process that is interactive (Blumer, 1969). This can be summed up by George Mead’s concept of the generalized other as the set of organized information carried by the individual in his or her head concerning what the attitudes and general expectations of the social group are (Griffin, 2009).

A more detailed theory providing insight into how these soldiers form drinking patterns through interaction with each other is offered by Sutherland’s differential association. While this theory addresses deviant, criminal behavior, it more specifically addresses the nature of conformity (Lernert, 1967). First, drinking behavior has in many respects been glorified and deemed as appropriate, even to the point of being necessary in the context of the Army (as reported by respondents). Because of the glorification and normalization of drinking in the Army, a large segment of young male soldiers adapt a drinking pattern largely because of the cultural and social relevance which has been given by the society. Drinking behavior is initiated and continued largely because of the positive and affirmative experience offered from those surrounding them. As definitions in favor of drinking and drinking heavily become more excessive than definitions in favor of not drinking, drinking behavior becomes more prevalent. The continuation of drinking, and drinking heavily among young soldiers, has become a problem as a result of the continued glorification and celebration of drinking by members of the Army, and for its widely accepted use for socialization, entertainment, stress relief, bonding, and traditional purposes.
However, despite the significant effects of social interactions in the Army, and beyond, leading to the acceptance of alcohol use on a regular and excessive basis, to a degree alcohol use can be viewed as a practical and functional activity for soldiers. To the degree alcohol use with fellow soldiers serves the positive function of allowing positive bonds to form which lead to better work performance, such use is useful and meaningful to the individual and the unit, if not carried out beyond an unhealthy limit. This can be seen as the application of Durkheim’s conception of functionalism, albeit on a more personal level. The same assertion concerning the positive and functional use of alcohol can be made for the themes of “social/entertainment” and “stresses of Army work/life” to the degree such use is not unhealthy and provides for a better working and living environment in terms of the individual and the unit (Semones, 1990).

In certain mentioned cases, such as drinking excessively alone because of loneliness or boredom, the application of Durkheim’s conception of egoism, as earlier discussed, can be utilized to understand the causes behind such unhealthy use. In this case the use is a result of weak and uncertain bonds holding soldiers to the unit, and the Army.

Robert Merton’s conception of latent dysfunctions provides additional support for a functionalist approach to understanding the effects of the Army’s alcohol use policy and its enforcement (Merton, 1968). While in light of the need for greater control and regulation of alcohol use such policy and enforcement is necessary, to the extent such policy and enforcement possibly exacerbates the problem, greater understanding is needed. The mentioned negative consequences, or more specifically latent dysfunctions, included (1) a greater reluctance of individuals to approach their commanders with concerns about alcohol use problems for fear of the repercussions faced; (2) a greater likelihood to drink in the barracks or at home, and drink alone, for fear of a drinking and driving violation and the consequences; (3) and a possible
greater willingness on the part of unit commanders to “look the other way” when a real problem exists, knowing of the negative implications for both the individual and the unit.

However, while an understanding of drinking behavior in the Army from a functionalist perspective is useful in understanding the motives behind use, and reactions to specific actions taken by the Army to curb use, beyond this it is not useful in understanding the role played by social interactions and how they work to influence both positive and negative behaviors of the individual and group. Only with a greater understanding of socially motivated behavior supported through an understanding of symbolic interactionism, as specifically elaborated in Sutherland’s differential association, is it possible to get not only to the greater cause, but more importantly to an understanding of the real and meaningful answers to address the issue.

While an understanding of Emile Durkheim’s conception of functionalism supports an understanding of the functional role of drinking to these soldiers, his conception of suicide can be utilized to capture the interaction of the various supporting theories examined in this study. While drinking behavior and suicide may not appear at first glance to be related, upon further consideration the connections between the factors leading one to end his or her life and the factors leading soldiers to take part in drinking, and drinking excessively, can be seen to be closely associated. Why these soldiers take part in drinking, as evidenced from the themes, follows a range of social motives. Under Durkheim’s conception of suicide, suicide follows a range of four general social motives. To the degree the individual is not overly influenced by one of these four motives, the individual exists in a healthy state. The same can be said for soldiers, particularly young soldiers, when making decisions to take part in drinking. However, the nature and demands of the Army create such a situation where it is difficult and challenging to not be overly influenced by such motives.
These motives, according to Durkheim, exist on two dimensions: stress and integration. In terms of integration, the egoistic person is socially isolated while the altruistic person is overly integrated into society to the degree that individual identity is lost. In terms of stress, the person facing anomie deals with a sense of normlessness and lack of norms to control behaviors, while the person dealing with fatalism faces the consequences of being over-regulated in society (Durkheim, 1951).

The Army seems to have a conflicted attitude toward the use of alcohol. On the one hand, the Army encourages use of alcohol to deal with stress and to create the tradition, brotherhood, and entitlement. It is a cheap and affordable entertainment readily available on the base. On the other, it uses fear of consequences to control use of alcohol so soldiers can still perform their duties.

When young recruits come into the Army, the Army needs to break down or diminish their social ties to groups (family, friends, and organization) outside the Army and create new ties and loyalties to their comrades in arms in the Army. Living together in barracks, doing everything together in terms of their daily lives -- sleeping, showering, jogging, training, doing their work, as well as socializing -- can build that community bond. Alcohol can be used to a greater or lesser degree to facilitate socialization and bonding.

On the integration dimension, young recruits may go through a process of becoming egoistic as their ties to family and friends in the community are loosened due to distance and lack of free time to call or visit. The loosened ties with family and friends are replaced through the drinking behavior with buddies in addition to group living to the point where the recruits swing to the opposite extreme and become “altruistically” or overly integrated in the group of Army buddies to the point where they are willing to risk their lives to save their buddies in combat.
On the stress dimension, young recruits initially do not know the norms for behavior in the Army. They are trying to figure out what they are supposed to do, how they are supposed to behave. They are “normless” in the sense that they do not know what the norms are. The Army is stressful to them because they do not know what they are supposed to do. The Army, through drills and training teaches them the norms, emphasizing how they must depend on each other in combat, to the point where they become “fatalistic” in Durkheim’s terms. Their behavior is regulated by group norms; they do what the group does without really thinking about. They follow the norms to drink too much when in a social situation because it is part of the socialization experience that they are “entitled” to because of the risks they take with their very lives in combat. Even the act of covering for buddies who may be getting into trouble is a part of the “watching each other’s back” behavior they are expected to learn. While encouraging drinking on the one hand, the Army discourages over-doing it to the point where they cannot do their job and protect their buddies. They use security briefing to instill fear of the consequences of abusing alcohol. But the Army is not likely to prohibit use of alcohol because it is useful in the integration process.

Lastly, an understanding of the limited focus provided by solely addressing the individual, without concern for the greater structural features influencing the individual, is necessary in order to move beyond current limiting understandings towards better treatment. While it is necessary to provide treatment, support, and resources to the individual, to the extent such a viewpoint inhibits and prevents an understanding of the larger structural factors at work in leading to alcohol abuse in the Army, such a perspective is unproductive.

The behaviors and actions of soldiers towards alcohol are seen to be influenced in many ways both by their background and by the social influences present in their lives. The use of
alcohol, from the perspective of all of the participants in this study, involved at once a single cause -- stress, social, tradition, “brotherhood,” and “bonding,” -- and, the multifaceted influence of the just mentioned factors. Consideration of the combined influence of these causes, these largely “social” causes, and background causes, provides for an understanding of the impact on young male soldiers in the Army.

Furthermore, there is an undeniable functional aspect to the use of alcohol for young, male, single or separated, soldiers in the Army. There is an undeniable role played by the social impact and influences of both individuals and the “institution’ on alcohol use by young males in the Army. Given such a background of influences it is apparent that use is both encouraged and furthered. Such a background tells that when multiple and multifaceted reasons for drinking exist, drinking will both persist and be furthered. Such a background indicates that, despite the existence of consequences – even severe consequences – if overriding value is given to use for functional and social reasons, use will prevail.

In fact, the existence of severe consequences serves to recognize the overriding influences presented by functional and social uses for alcohol by ensuring and providing as much safety under the circumstances as possible. The theories examined provide support for the social role and nature of the factors leading to such use. Absent the greater social and structural factors present in the Army there can be little doubt that such use and abuse would not exist on such a scale. Examining the data indicates that the confluence of real and practical reasons for taking part in drinking, both on an individual level in terms of serving to promote a “healthy” and meaningful relationship with fellow soldiers, and on a greater level in terms of providing for an overall more satisfied Army, and the corresponding and reinforcing social aspect of drinking,
serves in a circular fashion to continually promote drinking in the Army, particularly among such young males.
APPENDIX A

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS
Participants are needed to take part in brief face-to-face interview, or a focus group, both lasting no more than an hour to an hour and a half.

Are you: Male

Single

White, Hispanic, or Black

Between the ages of 23 to 30 with 5 or more years of military service

Drink alcohol regularly

If so, then your help is needed to assist in examining the social and cultural factors influencing alcohol use in the military.

Your identity will be kept strictly confidential, with your name replaced by a number in the eventual final report. Upon completion, you will receive a copy of the final report.

This study is being conducted by Rollin Short, a Ph.D. student in sociology at the University of North Texas, and has been approved by Fort Bragg and the University of North Texas.
APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE
Military Personnel Background Information

1. Last Name _________________________ First Name ___________________________

2. Mailing Address ______________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

3. Phone number(s):___________________________    ____________________________

4. E-mail address ______________________________________________________________________

Demographic Information

1. What is your date of birth? ____________________________

2. What is your rank in the military? ____________________________________________

3. How many years have you served in the military? _______________________________

4. How many deployments have you been through? ________________________________

5. Ethnicity origin (or Race): Please specify your ethnicity.
   - White
   - Hispanic or Latino
   - Black or African American

6. Education: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.
   - High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
   - Some college credit, no degree
   - Trade/technical/vocational training
   - Associate degree
   - Bachelor’s degree
   - Master’s degree
   - Professional degree
   - Doctorate degree
7. Marital Status: What is your marital status?
   • Single, never married
   • Married or domestic partnership without spouse or partner present
   • Married or domestic partnership
   • Widowed
   • Divorced
   • Separated

8. If married, how long have you been married? ________________________________

6. What is your religious affiliation?
   • Protestant Christian
   • Roman Catholic
   • Evangelical Christian
   • Jewish
   • Muslim
   • Hindu
   • Buddhist
   • Other: ________________________________
APPENDIX C

MILITARY PERSONNEL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW
**Introduction:**

What you share in this interview will be kept confidential. You may be identified in the study report in a way that will not reveal your individual identity, such as by your rank. I will be tape recording the interview to try to make sure that we have an accurate record of your views and I will also be taking a few notes for the same purpose. Do you agree to allow me to tape-record this interview? I will also ask permission to take notes during the interview.

**Interview Information**

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**Military Personnel**

**Background Information**

Can you tell me a few personal things about yourself, where you are from, your age, rank, education background, and why you chose to enlist in the military, how many deployments you have been on, and any other interesting things about your background?

Can you describe your drinking before you entered the military? How often and on what occasions did you drink?

How old were you when you first started to drink?

What role did your family and religious background have on your drinking?

How would you compare your drinking with your peers and others in the military? When do you drink? How much do you drink? Where do you drink?

**For those who are separated or not currently living with wife:**

Are you currently single, separated, or living apart from your wife?
If separated or single, ask the following:

How long have you been separated or living apart from your wife?
Please tell me how being separated or living apart from your wife has changed your drinking patterns?
If you were to go back to living with your wife, how do you think your drinking patterns would change?

*Influence of Military on Drinking*

From your experiences and your observations of drinking in the military, what do you think are the primary reasons personnel engage in drinking?
Will you describe what influence your peers and others around you in the military have on your drinking?
You know, a lot of people have the idea that drinking and certain parts of the military go hand and hand. What do you think about drinking and alcohol use in the military?
Have there been occasions when others around you were drinking, or wanted to drink, but you did not? If so, how did others make you feel?
How do you view your peers and others around you who do not drink, or who do not drink socially with others?
Have you ever felt the stress and strain of your work in the military led you or others to drink excessively?
How does drinking make things better; how does it improve relations, camaraderie, between you and others?
Suppose I was a new recruit in the military who wants to fit in. What would you tell me in regards to drinking and trying to fit in?
How do the factors related to work in the military combined with peer influence work to influence drinking?

How do you and your peers in the military occupy yourselves during your free time, or down time? How often and to what extent in alcohol involved with this time?

How do you think influences in the military to drink differ from influences to drink outside of the military?

**Effect of Pricing and Availability**

How does the pricing and availability of alcohol on base influence how much you, and others, drink?

Have you ever felt you drank more than you would have because of the pricing and availability of alcohol on base?

**Effect of Deployments and Combat on Drinking**

You mentioned earlier that you have been on ____ deployments. As a result of these deployments did you undergo any changes that resulted in the possible effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

If yes, how have you dealt with these effects?

Tell me how your drinking patterns have changed before, during, and after the deployments you have been on.

**Alcohol Use Policy and Enforcement**

What is your understanding of the standard policy concerning alcohol use in the military?

What is your understanding of the enforcement of policy concerning alcohol use and abuse?
Now that we have addressed formal policy, the law, concerning alcohol use in the military, what is your understanding of informal, of unwritten rules, regarding alcohol use and abuse in the military? In other words, how do you police yourselves in regards to alcohol use and abuse?

What is your understanding of the repercussions faced by those who have been officially reprimanded for alcohol related problems?

Do you feel punishment for offenses related to alcohol are evenly applied to personnel?

How do you believe alcohol related problems could be better addressed and treated in the military?

What should I have asked you that I didn’t think to ask you?

Closing the Interview

Thank you very much for your time and participation. I will be transcribing this interview and providing you a summary of the interview, for clarification and/or further input. Would you prefer that I provide your copy through e-mail, postal mail, or both?

Researcher’s Interview Notes

Comments about the conduct, tone, progression of the interview etc.

Was the participant comfortable and forthcoming, reticent, hostile, etc?

Were there interruptions or other events that changed the pace or effectiveness of the interview?

What are my feelings and perceptions about the person I interviewed and the interview conduct, tone, progression, etc.?

What else occurs or emerges as a result of this interview?

Comments on interview protocol

What problems were encountered? Is there anything I would possibly change before using this protocol again?
APPENDIX D

FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM
Before agreeing to participate in this study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

**Title of Study:** The Social and Cultural Influences of Alcohol Abuse in the Military Among a Sample of Young Males in the Army and Marines.

**Investigator:** Rollin Short, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Sociology.

**Purpose of the Study:** You are being asked to participate in a research study which seeks to gain a better understanding of the social and cultural factors which influence alcohol use and abuse in the military.

**Study Procedures:** You will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview that will take approximately an hour to an hour and a half. The interview will be audiotaped.

**Foreseeable Risks:** There are no foreseeable risks involved in this study.

**Benefits to the Subjects or Others:** Possible benefits of this research include contributing to a better understanding of the social and cultural factors contributing to alcohol abuse in the military. This information could be used to identify, address, and modify social and structural factors influencing alcohol abuse.

**Compensation for Participants:** None

**Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records:** The data collected from the background questionnaire and the interview will be compiled into a report and your identity will not be revealed. I will replace your name with a pseudonym during coding and in the final report to insure confidentiality. The digital audio file will be coded with the pseudonym and will be kept secured in a locked file cabinet. I will be transcribing the audio files, and they will not be used for any other purpose without your written consent. At the conclusion of this study, the
audio files will be kept in a locked filing cabinet for possible future analysis. The confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study.

**Review for the Protection of Participants:** This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

**Research Participants’ Rights:**

Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- Rollin Short has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

__________________________________________________________

Signature of Participant                                     Date
For the Student Investigator or Designee:

I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the subject signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the participant understood the explanation.

__________________________________  ____________
Signature of Student Investigator    Date
Interviewer: Thank you, I’ll just read from the script since it's the first time am doing this, ah coming up here. Is that okay if I refer to you as?

Respondent: is fine

Interviewer: Ah! okay, can you tell me a few things about yourself. About where you are from, your age, rank, education background why you chose to enlist in the military, how many... you have been on... and any other interesting things about your background. we can look at that.

Respondent: yeah, so I'm thirty years old,.....ah my family, I came from a really broken family, ah! such as we moved to California, getting away from the life in Oregon. Ah! I enlisted in the army because of the fact that... I was very angry watching as things have happened. Played out there is not a whole lot of Americans who would believe in patriotism as I do. Soo! when I joined the army, well I joined in the third process.... and do what I needed to do to...people that threatened to...since then I became.... I have had three long deployments, all over fifteen months. Ah! ah!....... there is not really a whole lot of background. other than ah! I do this job out of patriotism. .. of what I do. Since being in the army, I have received a bachelor’s degree in science of political.....it’s out of George military college. I had to do everything online. They offer everything online. Lot of the stuff that I do is ..... that is... in a nutshell.

Interviewer: ok! thank you. Tell me about your drinking before you entered the military and on what occasions would you drink.

Respondent: Ah! before I joined the army I really didn’t drink because I was only the age 21.soo!

Interviewer: and you were at home then.....

Respondent: Yeah! growing up at home and that really .. beyond....

Interviewer: so! was it when you got in to the military, did that introduce you to drinking?

Respondent: Yeah I mean..

Interviewer: obviously

Respondent: I grew up in a family that would drink, you know, for special occasions

Interviewer: interesting all of them were....

Respondent: Yeah! let’s just say, not everybody in the family was.

Interviewer: Okay

Respondent: My mum raised me as normally but...

Interviewer: okay

Respondent: but that was about the extent of it
Interviewer: okay. so you are you more of kind of a .......

Respondent: yes

Interviewer: I ran across some woman yesterday. I was here yesterday and there was barely anybody. everybody said " that girl, that girl!..... is ok. so how old were you when you first started drinking

Respondent: Um! when I first started drinking I was 21

Interviewer: Soo, this is it, I think you have kind of talked about it. What role did your family's religious background have on your drinking?

Respondent: I mean, as far as family goes, I mean I do come from a family of alcoholics. they take it to their extremes relationally I grew up when they don’t want you to drink, they don’t even want you to have caffein.so I kind of rebelled against that but that's not exactly who I am. Ah I think today I know what limits I can take drinking.

Interviewer: Okay, so was it on your dad’s side, or...

Respondent: No! no! that was all on my mum's side.

Interviewer: oh your mum's side, that's interesting

Respondent: No! not on my dad's side

Interviewer: Oh! okay, that is interesting to find out. so how do you compare your drinking with your peers and others in the military?

Respondent: Ah! I mean, my drinking with my peers is probably much not long apart, if you keep it to the weekends, ah that’s pretty much where we stay, we try to at least, we work out five days a week. At least, so I would say my drinking isn’t any further ahead than anybody else's. now there are guys that drink a little more than I do, on likely....

Interviewer: Yea! I can imagine. so, you say when you do drink, about how much do you drink?

Respondent: I mean it can vary between one a weekend. I can put away a six packet a night, I could. go further along depending on what crowd I am with. Ah but I’m probably not going to drink more than 6packets a night on a weekend. And usually when I do drink, it is going to be at my house but I would go out and watch football during games and drink.

Interviewer: Good. okay, so you said you are separated.

Respondent: Yes

Interviewer: Ah! okay. so how long have you been separated?

Respondent: I have been separated for little over a month now. Ah! there is a whole lot behind that. From thing that go from, Ah. domestic abuse on her part where she was arrested to
arguments that ... those things you can’t put up with, and not at one point has alcohol been brought up in these arguments.

Interviewer: Mmmh! okay. well so how has this month, ......you drinking patterns, um! am guessing it has, how things change now that you are separated.

Respondent: Ah! my drinking patterns haven’t changed at all. Ah am a .... focused type of person and drinking doesn’t affect my job, affect how my promotions and other things go. So that’s why it hasn’t affected...it hasn’t changed. I say hasn’t affected my lifestyle but it hasn’t affected how I operate day to day life.

Interviewer: so, I guess so have addressed this question.so If you were to go back to your wife(laughs)if that happens how do you think your drinking patterns would change?

Respondent: No if was to go back to her, it would...it would escalate severely

Interviewer: okay, okay it would have the, it would have the opposite effect.....

Respondent:(interjects) yea yea! if had to go back to her I would completely start drinking more.

Interviewer: okay, well you have been in the military for elven that’s years that why I kind of did m demographics for find you because I want people who have had experience, I don t know if someone who not been in the military has experienced the culture. Mmmh! from your experience of drinking among the military, what do think are the primary reasons why personnel engage in drinking?

Respondent: Ah! most personnel engage in drinking because it has been a culture of .... that’s what you are supposed to do. you are supposed to be the men’s man. you are supposed to go out, you are supposed to drink, you are supposed to get in fights, you are supposed to ultra-manly type of, ah . it’s more of how you engage with other people. You are supposed to be the alpha man.so these people will go out and drink like this…, that’s .... in the army.

Interviewer: So does…..are you saying the military encourages …

Respondent: NO. the military, is the biggest discouragement in trying to keep guys from putting themselves to that far edge. ah you know... you need to drink to be a man, and the alpha man. Ah , the army has a completely different, mindset which behind this is we try to give guys safety guide to think ahead and give them, not really what not to but how to think in a positive nature. "Hey buddy, when you go out, go out and drink responsibly. You know that's what you're looking for to bring a well-rounded citizen of the united states and shouldn't be someone that sits there and goes and gets drunk and then start driving. You know that's the biggest thing that you tried to discourage against

Interviewer: well okay. Just to get a little more depth on detail what influence do your peer and those around you have or your drinking.

Respondent: on my drinking. ah! you know the biggest thing is everybody tries to look out for themselves. This is an organization that tries to ensure the safety of every single person because
at every given time, we can even go to work so you need to have every possible person available
to go and fight every enemy that fights against America. so peers …..even try to put themselves
in a position to be able to influence whether it’s your drinking too much is affecting your work, it
could be determinant of how many people I have in my front mission

Interviewer: …….. where your peers wanted you to drink too much or you felt if you didn’t drink
you would....

Respondent: There was a culture change between 2006 and now when the army tried to change
how people ah! say or think about things, such as you used to.....everybody wanted you drink as
much as you could, we wanted a man that could drink twenty-one shots through the night and
stuff like that. now its people try to.... to make sure guys don’t into trouble. Especially seeming
people are going to DWI factor that we have now, people getting kicked out....so I think that’s a
more positive effect than it was a few years ago.

Interviewer: well you know, a lot of people have the idea that drinking and partying in the
military go hand in hand. so what do you think about drinking and..... in the military?

Respondent: when you have a type of personality as going to drinking and taking it too far at
times, but at some times I think that the army is conducting it in a level headed way in which
they are reducing causalities whether it’s in the military on in civilian life because, you know
five years ago you would have guys going out to drink killing a family of four and you know we
don’t have that anymore. You don’t have guys trying to do that to that extend. you can... I mean,
you are here doing your study in Fort Bragg. Ah! there is a board here on.... that shows the DWI
for the last week. you will get how many guys got DWIs. All of them are between...... because
that is what you can on military... and point 1.1. so guys who are up here will make it a DWI but
how many are causing ...... not as many as you would think. so that I think is the biggest... that’s
a big win, ah! guys shouldn’t be getting DWIs....you know.

Interviewer: Alright, Mmmh have you been in occasion when other around you are drinking and
you wanted to drink but you didn’t?

Respondent: No no, I would never say it like that. Other people drinking has no effect on how I
want to drink....

Interviewer: okay, so when other were drinking didn’t make you feel......

Respondent: No no

Interviewer: how do you view your peer and other around you who do not drink. Who do not
drink socially who do not...

Respondent: so! I mean was here tonight when you found me doing this interview, I’m with a
guy that doesn’t drink. I don’t make him drink, I don’t think any differently with how their
consumption of alcohol is. Ah! I mean guys that drink as long as they can control themselves.
that’s the biggest thing I have always been worried about. Ah! I’m always worried that guys are
going to take it over board and do it .... you know.
Interviewer: well okay, what about a new recruit in the military, how does a recruit fit in and what would you tell me with regards to drinking, with regards to fitting in?

Respondent: I will the same brief that I did in .... they come in my .... if you are not over the age of 21 you are not allowed to drink its federal law, um as for guys who are over 2. I look at their alcohol consumption. If they say I drink for... I’m not going to be concerned with stuff like that. ah! if you want to go and drink with 100dolar over the weekend or on one night....................I’m higher ranked I’m going to say things that, I’m going to look out for my force and how my team operates.

Interviewer: so how do influences from the military differ from influences to drink outside the military?

Respondent: Ah! I think if you look at the college demographics, ah people start drinking as a hazing measure, method, ah obviously you are an older person so, it is little bit different for you but the 1920 demographic, it pushed for drinking overboard. whereas now the military is not focused on people trying to drink.10 years ago ag I could say yes. You were forced into drinking and into being a men's man.

Interviewer: So from when you came in you have seen a big difference

Respondent: Yeah yeah, its.... from then and now

Interviewer: really!

Respondent: Yea

Interviewer: You do see... there are a lot of figures out there that say......

Respondent: oh yeah, it is going to be a problem when you look at who it is a problem for...... who drink so much. Still there are guys who don’t go and get the help that they are supposed to get. You know PPS sort of thing ah! but you are going to see a big fall out next year because either the people dropped out of the health that they needed or they killed themselves from drinking. I mean all laid out there for you.

Interviewer: okay. on the base you know .. you have.. you pay reduced rates for things ,

Respondent: yah!

Interviewer: does alcohol fit in there, how  does the pricing and availability of alcohol ......how much you and other  on the base drinks?

Respondent: pricing of alcohol definitely is a cheaper price on the base but, um you ran into the same area with...yeah its cheaper, it’s easier to get and you have to be 21 to drink it on the base. Ah you...that has a Guinness book of world records for highest sales in one day.

Interviewer: really?
Respondent: so, yeah if you look it up .... ah

Interviewer: where is this

Respondent: Its ......if you. Take a left its about 3miles down on your left hand side. Ah! Guinness book of world records three units came back from deployment on the same day. ah but , I mean alcohol doesn’t, it’s cheaper here, but is it...it’s not like anybody is making you buy it. It is just at a lower price.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt like you would drink more than you would have  because of the pricing and availability?

Respondent: No, no, it has never come to, because it’s easier to get it. its.. it’s something that I would continue to do. I just drink because I like drinking .

Interviewer: okay, alright, so how do you and your peer in the military  occupy yourselves during your free time, down town, how often and to what extend is alcohol involved at this time?

Respondent: Alcohol can be involved in this time usually at night time, ah a lot of times with me and my friends will go out , ...boarding skiing, on the boat couple of day time activities and when we want to relax, we sit down and have some beer and have a good time but it’s not going to change , it’s not going to really change the fact of how I live my life .

Interviewer: Ah have you ever felt distressed, stress and strain of your work in the military that caused you to drink more than you would have or others

Respondent: No

Interviewer: um distress and constraints  that other have felt ..... 

Respondent: No military is always having stresses, as it is in real life. ah its always going to have stresses and it’s not going to lead you to drinking more than normal. Ah! I think what a lot of people see is the 1percent, we talked about the 1percent in a bad way, of oh they make too much money but in the military you got the 1percent drinking and that’s how I honestly feel

Interviewer: okay, ah so you have been on three deployments?

Respondent: Yep

Interviewer: And because of these deployment , were there any changes that resulted in , you know  DSDs,stress or anything like that?

Respondent: No absolutely not, I have had my opportunities .....and that hasn’t made me to drink more. Its ... deployment is a deployment. the minute you talk about it, going for  deployment, they shouldn’t expect for any of these things to happen to them, ah! seeing dead bodies and having to kill people because that is what the country is asking of us. It’s...it has never affected my drinking, it has never made me drink more, I have never had nightmares, I have accepted that from day one. there are some people who don’t, yeah so that is a big change.it is a big change in
peoples thought process I don’t feel that it has effects on me because I was prepared for what I was going to be. I think there is a lot of people who join the army because the think it’s going to be glamourous than its going to be call on duty. So that’s why a lot of these people fall into be having to drink a lot because they get into things they didn’t expect would happen. Ah I expected to see dead people, I expected to kill people, ah it has never affected how I’m going to drink and is has never cut me off in doing what my country need me to do.

Interviewer: Oh okay, ah! ah! so you said no to that.

Respondent: Yea

Interviewer: Alright, so how did your drinking pattern change before and after this deployment, so ... okay that’s if it has. Your drinking hasn’t changed before, during or after deployment? Been pretty much the same.

Respondent: No,

Interviewer: So okay, you talked about policy changes, cultural changes.....

Respondent: yea

Interviewer: so what is just add some detail to that, what is your further understanding of the state policy concerning alcohol use in the military?

Respondent: You have to be an adult. Ah! if you ... not going to use in an adult manner and you abuse alcohol, drink and drive, you put other people’s lives at risk, the army is going to do something about it and that is to chuck you from the military.

Interviewer: okay, so what about the enforcement. there is policy then there is the enforcement of the policy. ah! how have, you have been here 11years, so what is your understanding of policy.

Respondent: It is kind of much ... so the enforcement now is much stricter, it used to be oh! I have a drinking problem, I need to go the army's substance abuse program ASAP 

Interviewer: Yea and people would go and nothing would happen. Now,...you drink at any point of time in those programs, you are getting kicked out of the army..... kicked out of the army because they failed to meet the standards. They would like to change their thought process and it is a good thing because if people don’t use alcohol as adults.

Interviewer: Are the under age or they...

Respondent: No they are over age, there is a zero tolerance, if you are in ASAP and you drink you are out of the army and... and I pushed for it because if alcohol has become a problem for them, and they will not. they don’t conform to what we want them to conform to, because it runs your life, it affects your work and so I agree with those thoughts a hundred percent.
Interviewer: Okay now that you have talked about .... the laws and alcohol use in the military, what is your understanding of substance abuse in the military. In other words, how do you police in regard to alcohol abuse?

Respondent: I mean, to police myself?

Interviewer: or others and your peers and you talked about that earlier...

Respondent: It’s very easy, you go. Bring other things up, you bring that to the side.... if they do not conform to what you want to do and it becomes a problem, then you bring it to the formal way. and a formal way could be, as long as you are of sound mind and judgement. Listen ...you, do you need to do this, if you do not do this then there will be consequences. And 99percent of the time that will lead you into problems and you are under written rules go away. Guys understand that they can jack ass and they start doing what they are doing.

Interviewer: So what is your understanding of the, the, -again you touched on this-the repercussions faced by those who have been officially reprimanded for alcohol related issues.

Respondent: Soo anybody that has been officially affected, such as they are in ASAP, well really if they are in ASAP they have been officially reprimanded, in a way the might have identified it as being a problem. If they continue to go down the alcohol road, they out of the army. Hats plain and simple there is no option. the army has zero tolerance.

Interviewer: okay, do you feel the punishments for offences related to alcohol are legally applied, are fairly applied to personnel?

Respondent: Yes, they are fairly applied

Interviewer: Lowest to the highest

Respondent: Yes, there is common judgement used by commanders, NCIOs and anyone in between just trying to help that soldier. If they don’t perform, they deserve to leave.

Interviewer: Okay, well, do think there is better way, how do you believe alcohol related problems can be better addressed and treated in the military?

Respondent: The army is actually addressing probably in the most professional way you can. They give you a leeway and then they give you .... if you don’t follow the regulations, plain and simple.

Interviewer: Alright, Ah! Is there anything, okay you can add that I should have asked you but I did not, concerning alcohol in the military, the culture of alcohol, influences of alcohol in the military.

Respondent: So I don’t want you to ask me this because I already have my own opinions formed up, what you need to look at is, where does alcohol fall in line with the army sexual harassment assault in response program or the SHARP program. Ah I think that you start .... your first interviewee, you start asking other people where that fall you going to have a very hard reaction
from males and females. ah! because the sexual harassment or SHARP program .... of army scrutiny and on a national level, ah ask how many women have been drinking when they have SHARP coupons...Sexual harassment response Program. Ask question falling in line with that and I think that your, your paper you are about to write, will have a whole different meaning. Ah I can tell you 100 percent that these complaints from the weekends, are because of alcohol.

Interviewer: Are the part of the women in the military

Respondent: Both

Interviewer: My focus is particularly acute on the males .so.

Respondent: Okay That’s fine but that’s......about it and find out where they stand in that forum, I haven’t had a problem with it because I have not fallen into that trap but that one thing you might want to look at jus for your dissertation

Interviewer: yes, alright, thank you, thank you very much Nick for making me get off the ground here (laughs) and sort of letting you know, this is going to be transcribed and I will have your information, I can provide you a summary with it and updates with it. And now that you gave me your email...and I will give you my email too so if you have any questions about it, ah! this is it right here, I’m going to give that to you. Ah if you know anybody that could, you could him that email, that could be a great asset, that would be great help if you know anybody, who has fallen in that demographic, that would be great. Ah! just one more thing, you come number one, ah this is just, I know you have pretty much given me this information as it is, because this just a quick.... question is you can take a minute to do that, and this is to have, to go look at alcohol abuse among participants.

Respondent: Standard drinks, outstanding, I like it, well that you asked a question I know the answer to.

Interviewer: Can I close the interview? Thank you very much, I appreciate all your time and your patience.
Interviewer: I think we are ready, my name is Rollin I feel that should be official, today is December 29th 1915, 3.30 military time that would be 1430…

Respondent: That would be 1535

Interviewer: 1535

Respondent: 1530 right now.

Interviewer: Do you all talk in this military time, you get so used to it that you say it like normal time and I am speaking with. can you tell me a few, tell me about yourself; your name, where you are from, your background, your age, you know those things that I have already asked you, your rank?

Respondent: I am originally from Miami Florida, I grew up in Southern California, before I joined the military I lived in Atlanta Georgia, joined the military in 2010 actually January 2010 it has been six years for me here I was stationed in (01.08) Alaska before I was deployed in Afghanistan in 2011 to 2012, I came back NPCS in 2014, took on the fourth rank, married, separated right now, two kids.

Interviewer: Why did you choose to get into the military?

Respondent: Childhood dream, something I always wanted to do once I was grown up, serve my country do all the cool things you always seen in the movies

Interviewer: How old did you say you are again?

Respondent: I’m 28

Interviewer: Did you go to college before this or have you done any college?

Respondent: I actually went to Trade school and I actually have certification in business office administration that is pretty much the extent of my education

Interviewer: How many deployments have you been on?

Respondent: Just one

Interviewer: To Afghanistan?

Respondent: Yes

Interviewer: How long was that?

Respondent: Twelve months

Interviewer: A year, okay did you see any…..

Respondent: Interesting stuff?
Interviewer: Yes, the action?

Respondent: I mean I engaged the enemy, came across a bunch of dead bodies and stuff like that but I mean nothing that was too traumatic, you know most people think that is traumatic I mean I am probably more used to it because of my upbringing and stuff like that but it is what it is.

Interviewer: Was your family; was anyone in your family in the military or something like that?

Respondent: My step dad was in the military before I was born so I wasn’t really exposed to the lifestyle but I mean just the area in which I have grown up, a lot of violence and stuff like that so it was just that

Interviewer: It was Miami….

Respondent: Yes Miami, Southern California.

Interviewer: Any other interesting things about your background, where you are from?

Respondent: Not really, I meat it is pretty much cut and dry.

Interviewer: Alright what about talking about the cultural, the social cultural environment of drinking in the military, what about before you got into the military, can you describe drinking for you outside the military?

Respondent: Before I joined the military, I joined the military when I was 22 so I did drink in high school, I used to drink after high school but after my son was born I actually stopped drinking all the way up until 2014 in which I just picked up the habit again more so just because a bunch of weird stuff was going on in my life and I was like picking up some products and hanging out with certain people which is not really a bad thing but……

Interviewer: Before you got into the military, how often and on what occasions would you?

Respondent: Mostly two or three times a week and it was really nothing too crazy I mean I was actually in a real serious relationship so I couldn’t really get it was just a couple of weeks pretty much, a couple of beers here and there before bed and just whenever I hang out with a few close friends I drink with them but nothing really too crazy better than in high school because I mean in high school I was a whole different animal

Interviewer: How old were you when you first started to drink?

Respondent: I was fifteen, fourteen something around there summer of my I believe going into high school or between going to high school or freshman and sophomore years somewhere around there.

Interviewer: Was it normal for, you said you grew up in a Hispanic environment, was it normal?
Respondent: Me growing up in an Hispanic neighborhood and also a heavily African American neighborhood as well it was pretty much the norm, you know every time I go to a friend’s house, he would just bring it out, it was like a cultural thing, something like that in a Hispanic environment was not really a big issue or people don’t make it into a big issue.

Interviewer: Kind of like your social environment, did your family or religious background have any, what impact did that have on you?

Respondent: That actually made me stop drinking for the time, pretty much I actually stopped drinking but sometimes life happens and you just fall back into certain things

Interviewer: How would you compare your drinking with your peer and others, how do you compare your drinking with your friends and your peers?

Respondent: Well I am in the military and in my line of work, alcohol and what I do go hand in hand.

Interviewer: What is your line of work?

Respondent: An infantry man

Interviewer: Infantry

Respondent: I mean drinking has been in the military culture ever since military was a thing or even fighting or conflict was a thing so it is pretty much the culture and it’s

Interviewer: With infantry men?

Respondent: With infantry, military itself I mean.

Interviewer: Compare that with what are the other fields in the military, would you say that it is more prevalent among infantry men or what?

Respondent: In the military itself it is a big thing, it is a cultural thing so but with infantry in itself being most people especially guys that come back from combat and get down and dirty in the trenches and stuff, they kind of lean towards alcohol to help with a lot of their issues per ce so I mean that is why it is part of the culture in terms of….

Interviewer: I will touch on when I get to that, before I get to that let me, so when do you drink and how much do you drink and where, you know when, where, how much, those questions?

Respondent: When do I drink, pretty much it is when I am relaxing like when me, Mike and a couple of friends are here and we are just hanging out I mean after work with a couple of friends people buy a couple of beers, usually weekends that is kind of the norm so I mean….

Interviewer: Friday Saturday you don’t have to go to work then
Respondent: Friday, Saturday you want to have a bit of fun just to unwind pretty much, that is pretty much how it works unless like some nights or weekdays when we are like let’s have a bit of fun and we just let loose and we party, go to work the next morning do PT and….

Interviewer: You still young and you say you can handle it

Respondent: Yes it is starting to wear off but hey…..

Interviewer: How much do you drink on weekend nights?

Respondent: I honestly don’t know

Interviewer: Is it like six or twelve?

Respondent: it depends, if we are drinking beers I can have at least ten or eleven, the whole twelve pack but it all depends

Interviewer: Yes like how late it is

Respondent: Lateness doesn’t have anything to do with it, we have actually sat here and drunk till seven the next morning so I mean the time period really doesn’t have anything to do with it, it is more so a social….

Interviewer: Social?

Respondent: If we have run out and the store is closed or what have you so it varies on different variables so…..

Interviewer: Is it only with other guys I mean do you ever kick back and watch a game by yourself?

Respondent: No I mean I either go to a bar and stuff like that or house parties here and there, I have a couple of events here where we invite a larger crowd of people versus just a couple of friends and stuff like that.

Interviewer: Okay, you mentioned you are separated?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: How long have you been separated?

Respondent: Three years now.

Interviewer: Three years, and you have two children?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Do they live here?
Respondent: No they are actually in Atlanta.

Interviewer: Do you get together often?

Respondent: I actually go and visit them on Thanksgiving.

Interviewer: How old are they?

Respondent: My son is seven my daughter is five

Interviewer: I have a five month boy, he is going to be six in February I stared late, he will be six in February and she will be two in May.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: So that, this and other jobs keeps me…..

Respondent: Keeps you busy.

Interviewer: It gives me a headache. So you have been separated for three years, how has it being separated changed your drinking pattern?

Respondent: I won’t say me being separated is what changed my drinking pattern I would say more so the drama that came after being separated especially with the battle with my kids and stuff like that, child support and me dealing with her and her neediness in regards to her trying to get over me on regards to certain things it gets very frustrating and irritating so I mean that usually that can cause nights of drinking but I mean it is not as bad as it once was.

Interviewer: If you were to go back to living with your wife, how would that change your drinking patterns change if you went back to that lifestyle?

Respondent: How would it change, I would probably drink more to be completely honest with you.

Interviewer: Okay take your head out of that, what if you got into a happy relationship

Respondent: In a happy relationship I am sure I would drink a little less and be more of a strategized drinking habit versus this ‘hey let’s drink tonight!’

Interviewer: Okay from your experiences and observations on drinking in the military, what do you think are the primary reasons, like you had mentioned earlier, that people drink in the military, why is it this culture of drinking in the military?

Respondent: One of the biggest things is stress relief that is one of the biggest things; a lot of guys are married, they have kids, going through divorce, just got back from deployment, they have all these other issues that are going on so it is just more of stress but I mean then you have the fact that most of the people in the military are young, anywhere between the age of seventeen to twenties or thirties, in their thirties they will actually just sit here and socially drink, those that aren’t married they actually go out and socially drink just to have fun really because you are
confined to this work environment you wake up at six o’clock in the morning and you are off to wherever they tell you to go till you get off so just that freedom of being able to have that option.

Interviewer: Are there any other aspects in the military, I guess you don’t have a lot to compare to like if you were working in the corporate world or other professional jobs, do you think there is anything about the job itself?

Respondent: Honestly it all just depends on how one handles stress I think that is the biggest thing, it depends also on the level of the corporate ladder you are at can actually waiver how stressed you are, I mean you can actually compare the two because one most corporate jobs you are away from your family a lot, they demand a lot of hours and time from you just like the military you are away from your family, it demands a lot of time from you so that your job interferes with your personal life a lot, it can take you away from those little moments that you are supposed to spend with your family and that in itself can get you stressed out especially if you actually care about your family so that can drive you to actually drink you know just because you want not to feel that feeling, you know what I am saying.

Interviewer: Okay, what influences do your peers, those peers close to you, what influence do they have on your drinking?

Respondent: Just partying and having fun pretty much, I mean we don’t drink so much over stress coz I mean we try to avoid drama which arises so what we do is more of go out and have fun because we had a stressful week or a stressful day or what not

Interviewer: Do they give you an excuse to drink, your peers?

Respondent: I am a self driven person like….

Interviewer: Okay, we mentioned the idea that drinking and the military go hand in hand you know it is just a part of the military, it can’t be separated from it, I am just asking you to kind of expound on what you already said I guess, what do you think about drinking and alcohol use in the military?

Respondent: Well, I mean it is the only legal drug that you can do in the military so I mean most people take advantage of what they can get away with without you know putting themselves in other situations so that they end up getting themselves kicked out of the military pretty much.

Interviewer: Is drug testing a part of regular security for all personnel?

Respondent: Yes pretty much

Interviewer: It is not just for those who are in ASAT?

Respondent: It is usually done across the army once a month

Interviewer: Once a month?
Respondent: Well they like do a random selection of the people so it is not everyone who gets tested once a month but mostly it is done when we are about to go for leave or immediately after leave or some major event or they feel we are going to do a drug test so really it can happen at any moment.

Interviewer: Interesting, that is something I never thought about I usually thought that if you are referred to ASAT or something like that you are going to be tested but across the board….

Respondent: Is subject to be tested

Interviewer: Is subject to be tested once a month, in reality how often does it happen in practice?

Respondent: I mean every two or three months it depends on the situation.

Interviewer: So if they find marijuana or any other drugs that they are testing for in your system you are screwed?

Respondent: Pretty much

Interviewer: But if they find alcohol?

Respondent: They don’t test for alcohol because I mean everyone drinks

Interviewer: I see your point, okay, have there been occasions where other people around you were drinking and you didn’t want to drink?

Respondent: Yes

Interviewer: Okay, how did the others make you feel?

Respondent: Again like I said I am a self driven person so I will sit here and make up my mind not to drink tonight.

Interviewer: Have you been around someone who was not drinking and you and others were drinking and now that you were drinking you and the others, did you ever you know?

Respondent: I have provoked or tried to provoke several people but I mean again most people are like no I am not drinking tonight

Interviewer: So you respect that?

Respondent: You know you try and tell them to try one but they are like no I’m good for now and I am like okay alright, enjoy your night however way you want to.

Interviewer: Alright, how do you view your peers in the military who don’t drink socially with others?

Respondent: Everyone has their own way of having fun
Interviewer: So you just look at it as this….

Respondent: I mean I can’t really judge because I was actually one of those people who didn’t drink and my friends were like ‘Hey, you should come join us, drink with us and hang out’ and I was like ‘No I am going to sit here and hang out over here and talk with these people and what not, you can enjoy yourselves’

Interviewer: Okay let me put it like this, suppose I was a new recruit in the military and I was trying to fit in, what would you tell me in terms of hanging out in regards to drinking and trying to fit in?

Respondent: Well, when I was at a level where I could actually sit and freely talk and hang out with the (20.01) guys I mean it was war so on a level of ‘Hey dude you should hang out with somebody so you can come hang out with me, do you drink’ I mean hey most of the guys drink so I mean either they have drunk before the military or the military opened their eyes up to the concept of drinking or they have always wanted to drink but they were never of age to drink so most people actually want to drink so it is rare that you will find those guys that come in that are not open to drinking.

Interviewer: You talked about stress in the military life, do you see that affecting others and how and when and how much they drink?

Respondent: Oh yes again my career path is I would say one of the most stressful and the most demanding.

Interviewer: What is the most stressful thing about it?

Respondent: For one time away from the family that is pretty much one of the biggest, you are always in the field, always training, always on deployment and so on and so forth so that is one thing, time away from family that is automatically stressing, dealing with people that, the conflict between your personal life and work I mean we spend a lot of time at work so we don’t really get to spend so much time on our personal life so a lot of the things on our personal lives kind of have to be swept under the rug or put at the back because the military demands so much time from us so that within itself actually can be very stressful

Interviewer: Is that appreciated in the military, your personal life, I mean do they have respect for you know?

Respondent: No not really in our line of work no because they demand that time from us

Interviewer: So if you have kids that are sick or wife or family issues going on?

Respondent: No you got to stay here and do what you got to do, it is pretty much exactly what it is you can easily try to work around it, you can work with your leadership during your stay here to work around the work schedule or something like that but q lot of times it is more along the lines of you will not be able to do that today or this week or perhaps for the next month so don’t make any plans especially when we go on training rotations to other states or other countries and stuff like that.
Interviewer: I could see that causing more problems, you have an issue and someone tells you ‘No you can’t go take care of that, if you do that, you are out’?

Respondent: It is not more so you are out it is you can’t do it, period like you don’t really have

Interviewer: No appreciation and that would make you more furious and more likely to drink, again how do you think influences in the military to drink are different from influences outside the military?

Respondent: Well in the military, there is a sense of always being at work, you can’t really get away from the military it is really hard even right now I am at home and we are talking about the military you know it is, and then on top of that I am a leader, I have soldiers under me so this thing rings or I get a text message work so it is really hard for me to actually sit here and get away from being a soldier like even talk about at night, like at 1 am in the morning a soldier calls me or a guy above me and tells me I need this done and I actually have no choice but to actually get it done because I need to take care of my soldiers or someone above me if they need me to do something so the military is always there, surveying around you, clocking and that is it.

Interviewer: Kind of my experience with my career and working at night, the more I can separate that job from my home, the happier I am.

Respondent: it is one of the reasons I don’t live on post, I have to have that separation, I don’t even involve my family like when I was actually happily married I was like, no you are not involved in the military I don’t want you talking to the other wives, if you talk to them it will be more military related because that is my life, it is not your life I have two totally different parts of my life and I want to keep it that way.

Interviewer: One of the things I have learnt about is the pricing of alcohol in the base stores and the lower prices compared to outside, the deduction of the taxes

Respondent: There are no taxes and the prices are at least two to three dollars less than your civilian retailer stores

Interviewer: So it is considerably cheaper on base than in any store down the road?

Respondent: Yes

Interviewer: How much do you think that influences you and others in the military?

Respondent: For me I save money and everyone loves to save money especially since the army does not pay as much so that is a plus especially if you want to….

Interviewer: Does it cause you to buy more than you would normally or is it just straight regardless?

Respondent: What usually causes me to buy more is just other, how much I want to enjoy my night, who I am hanging out with, what type of social event I am going to what have you I mean it is never really, because I can buy a twelve pack and just hang out and I drink here and I will
still be content with buzz that I get but if I end up going out I will probably grab like a 24 pack or depends on what type of event I end up having like a barbeque here I will end up buying like four 24 packs so it just depends on what is going on.

Interviewer: Just expounding on that, ever felt that you drink more than you would have because the alcohol is so cheap or available or accessible or?

Respondent: No price does not really determine whether I will drink or not like…..

Interviewer: If you want to drink you will spend as much as you want or as much as you can?

Respondent: Yes but I don’t just sit here and go for top shelf things or you know like…..

Interviewer: So you mentioned you can’t have that separation from the military but what about your away time, your free time I guess, other than drink, how else do you, how do your peers in the military occupy yourself in your free time, down time, leave time, when you get leave and those things, how often is alcohol involved?

Respondent: Well leave I mean, alcohol is pretty much the thing because you have so much time so most people go home and they end up drinking pretty much every night because they can, not because they want to but it is just there because they have that freedom and when you have that freedom where you don’t have to worry about being called in or someone calling you because of this or whatever it is just pretty much hey, and then you know most people are young so when they go back home especially in the summer or the winter break when everyone is out of school or off work or whatever I mean

Interviewer: Just the lack of an obligation, the freedom from an obligation.

Respondent: Yes

Interviewer: Again I feel like I am repeating myself but it is good to get a little deeper and you have talked about the stress, the strain, is there any other aspect besides just the job itself that, maybe leadership, command, structure?

Respondent: That one I means there is always going to be an issue with your command team or your leadership because it is either they are not catering to your needs or their views are not the same as yours or you just feel that you are not being treated fairly or equally so those are always going to be issues for me because you end up getting a new company commander every year you end up getting a new first hand so pretty much every year you get a new opportunity and your leadership is always changing so you get to deal with different personalities even with lower soldiers you are always dealing with new people

Interviewer: So politics?

Respondent: Yes there is a lot of politics, revolving around politics, learning people, trying to see what they like or don’t like so.
Interviewer: So is that something that most people talk about or argue about?

Respondent: I mean that is what most of the soldiers talk about period, I mean you sit here what do most people in the US talk about, their leaders, the next president, the senate, the congress, judicial system, they are always worrying about people are doing to mess their lives or what they doing to better their lives and it pretty much like that in the military because we have these people over people over you that are either messing up your life or making it better and most people say ‘look at how this person is making my life worse,’ or ‘look at how this person is making my life worse.’ So naturally we are going to sit here and focus on the negatives more than the positives and within itself you are pretty much setting yourself up for more stress so you end up going into that cycle of drinking.

Interviewer: So that cycle of leadership change and all, I can see if you had a corporate job and you have the boss but here it changes every year

Respondent: Sometimes it changes even twice a year or three times a year because you have different levels because you have your immediate chain, you have your team leader, squad leader, platoon leader in your platoon those are people that you usually see on a daily basis and then from there you actually have your first sir, your XO and your CO and that ids a whole different leadership bracket then you go to your battalion commander, your battalion XO and battalion sir major it is also a whole different bracket and then it continues to climb all the way to the President of the United States in which he has a lot of influence in the military in itself so I mean there are those levels intertwining and intermingling coz they all demand some things from you.

Interviewer: So just the change itself I could see it causing stress and tension you mentioned earlier that you were on deployment in the Afghanistan but you talked about not being affected by that too much, can you say much about that, unfortunately most of the soldiers get PTSD

Respondent: I would not say that I was not affected I mean there are things that affect me, I am a little more cautious, more aware of certain things, more in tune with my surroundings but more of my biggest things is that I knew what I was getting into when I got into the military, it was not a blind thing, I did a lot of research on guys who had gone to the location which I was going to before I went because I want to know about the atmosphere I was going to be in and on top of that I also tried to lead a completely different lifestyle so my time over there is my time over there and my time over here is my time over here, it still affects me to some degree but I left Afghanistan in Afghanistan so what happened there is going to stay there and what happens here is going to stay here so I try not to stay here and have them mix, I try not to let Afghanistan to affect my personal life so much

Interviewer: Change?

Respondent: It is like I have put that block there

Interviewer: Is that like a defense mechanism or something so that you don’t remember it, something you don’t want to deal with?
Respondent: No I mean I can deal with it, it is just that I don’t want people to look at me differently because of that so I don’t really talk a lot about Afghanistan, I don’t sit here and…..

Interviewer: Did it affect your drinking?

Respondent: The only time it affected me and more so my drinking is more so when I am remembering buddies that I have lost or buddies that have gotten injured and stuff like that it has never got to the point that I went overboard so I wouldn’t say it really made me like want to drink more it is more of drinking in respect not sitting here drinking because I am stressed about it or I am depressed about it

Interviewer: Okay what is your understanding of the, what is the standard military policy about drinking in the military? What is the law in your understanding?

Respondent: The biggest thing is actually not drinking on duty so if you don’t come to work intoxicated that is one of the biggest things, your free time is your free time that the army gives you to go and do what you do but on the biggest part it is making sure that you are not drunk or under the influence of anything while in uniform that is pretty much the biggest thing, it is not being under the influence during your duty day or when you are actually operating.

Interviewer: What is your understanding of the enforcement of this policy?

Respondent: I have been forced to enforce the force here a lot I mean because there are actually some individuals who come to work intoxicated so I had to react asap that is writing cautionary statements in regards to the situation, there are actually soldiers who have been retracted from the army because of their problems with alcohol or substance abuse.

Interviewer: Yes but how does it work, favoritism?

Respondent: He is right; a lot of people actually get away with it

Interviewer: A lot of people can get away with it but some won’t…..

Respondent: He is right; a lot of people actually get away with it

Interviewer: (36:42)

Respondent: Yes you are right, I mean……

Interviewer: I can sit in my office all day drinking booze all fucking day during duty hours and they won’t do anything (37.01)

Interviewer: So there are unwritten laws?

Respondent: I mean that is how it is in the military you are either in the good old boys’ club but if you are not in the good old boy club you don’t get taken care of, you have to sign in and put your time in so that people can actually look out for you or you are not going to be taken care of and that is pretty much it with the privates and guys who have just come in, they are going to
be a little more strict on them because they have not put their time in for others to be lenient towards them

Interviewer: Having been in the military for?

Respondent: Six years now

Interviewer: Six years and we were looking for people who have been in the military for more than five years so you have been there for long and you have seen how things have changed from the time that you joined the military to how they are now regarding the standard policy

Respondent: I have actually seen alcohol been banned on post and being banned in the barracks, I witnessed the ability for soldiers to sit here and enjoy themselves here in the barracks with the amount of alcohol they can actually have, I have witnessed some leaderships allow underage soldiers come to their house to drink because they don’t want them getting in trouble or they figure, you are going to drink anyway so I would rather you sit here and drink with me watching you but I meant the policy in itself I would say it is more of the unwritten policies that have changed the most because the policy itself, the army policy with alcohol has not really changed, it has been what it is

Interviewer: It has been the same rule

Respondent: Exactly but the unwritten policy is what actually changes because certain people force certain things to be in force so that being said people are more strict, people are a little more in your face regarding, no you should not be drinking, you come to work drunk we are going to sit here and take appropriate actions or send you out of the army.

Interviewer: Why is that, what has been going on during this time you have been in the military?

Respondent: One the war in itself has died down, when the war was actually more focused we overlooked a lot of things; we overlooked alcoholism, substance abuse, DUls, domestic violence, guys getting arrested for fighting whatever there were a lot of things that were overlooked because we wanted to keep our numbers up but now since the army is actually downsizing, there are using each and every tool to get guys out of the military and alcohol is one of the most easiest ways to do so, guys get DUI that is very easy a civilian is going to get you, we are going to get you because we can do that.

Interviewer: Who is it from above that is putting in more and more pressure, are you in a position, like are you who commands a leadership position, are you being told from above to…..

Respondent: Once a DUI is actually in progress there is nothing I can do because DUI is pretty much the paperwork is started so pretty much paperwork to strike the soldier from the army, that is automatic, it takes the grace of God for that to happen, I have only seen a DUI getting bunched once since I got here and it was a very good friend of mine and the only way that happened is because he had a letter of recommendation from a former cardinal and that is what helped him, other than that there is pretty much nothing you can do unless you know someone up there, if you don’t know a cardinal, a lieutenant or a lieutenant major, a lieutenant cardinal or above,
there is not much you can actually do to have anything overlooked but I mean little small incidents like a guy didn’t show up to work because he was hung over and he slept because he was drinking, that can be overlooked ‘hey dude make sure that next time you are sitting here and you don’t drink too much the night before or use your cut out time or use the amount of beers that you are allowed to have or you self refer yourself to ASAT which is like a self confession like ‘hey I messed up, sorry I fucked up but I am trying to take myself to ASAT’’ but if you end up becoming commandant referred there isn’t much you can do because the next time you will find yourself in a situation where the commandant has to be involved you are pretty much getting chaptered off the army.

Interviewer: Getting what?

Respondent: Separated from the army

Interviewer: What is that term again?

Respondent: Chaptered

Interviewer: Chaptered out of the army, okay, so policing has become stricter

Respondent: Yes

Interviewer: Because of the numbers you believe?

Respondent: No definitely it is because of the numbers from 2014 the army has been pretty much been sitting here trying to downsize and the DUIs have been their biggest focus, DUIs, alcohols I mean I have actually seen guys before these policy was actually enforced these guys had actually like three DUIs and since this is a new era, one DUI and you are out, I have seen staff that have been in the army for fifteen years, others for sixteen, seventeen years, getting chaptered out of the army because of one incident.

Interviewer: What about policing yourselves and your peers and your friends, how do you police your selves, those that are equal to you, those you socialize with?

Respondent: That is a little bit easier because those are friends and you can probably say ‘hey dude, that is probably enough for you’ or maybe they get completely (44.33) and you are like ‘hey dude, it is time to get to bed’ and you get them to bed or you have a buddy who comes to work intoxicated, you ask them ‘hey dude you have a problem, what is going on?’ and most of the time guys will talk to you if they have a problem because they see you on the same level, they see you as an equal and it is much easier for them to talk to someone on their level than to talk to someone higher than them or someone lower than them so it is fairly easy compared to talking up versus talking on the same playing field.

Interviewer: Okay, anything else to add about how the unwritten rules have kind of changed in the military you have said they are being enforced more strictly?

Respondent: Everything in the army is pretty much cut and dry I mean there are underlying clauses to a lot of laws and policies because one person can read this policy in a certain way and
another person reads it in another way and they kind of conflict with each other but depends on how you play with……

Interviewer: But just mention on how some people can come to work drunk and wasted while others can’t get away with it

Respondent: Yes I mean he is right I have actually come to work drunk and my leadership actually knew that I showed up drunk but at the same time I mean that is part of the culture, it is the culture of things there are times my leaders would actually come in intoxicated or there are times that…..

Interviewer: Or with an incredible hangover

Respondent: Yes and I have had to sit in and look out for them or cover for them because they have done it for me or just the fact that we all look out for each other, we will try and take care of each other but with some people getting away with it, it is never usually the direct line supervisor that does that, it is more so someone that is above them, someone that by military law has no choice but to sit there and say something and do something about it especially when it is at that low level and they don’t want that trait to be the norm so they have to sit here and set an example but at my level and above they can easily go and ask ‘what’s up, are you alright?’ and they can go ahead and kind of overlook it because it is kind of hard especially if you have a good leader and they have seen you go through a certain situation then you showed up intoxicated but it usually doesn’t happen at the leadership level often it usually happens at the lower level because the leaders don’t want to sit here and pretty much throw away their career because of alcohol

Interviewer: So there is a double standard?

Respondent: I mean there is a double standard all over the army; all over the military there is always going to be that

Interviewer: My question is, is punishment for offences, does it evenly apply to personnel within the army?

Respondent: Everyone falls under the same judicial code, Uniformed Military Justice, the law falls under that, the thong is it just depends on who is actually going to enforce that on who, like I can enforce it on someone lower than me but I can’t enforce it on someone higher than me and it takes someone higher than me to enforce it on someone else who is higher than me.

Interviewer: How do you believe, the alcohol related habits that later become problems can be better addressed or treated in the military?

Respondent: One of the biggest issues across the board would be not only alcohol but drugs themselves, a lot of times soldiers have; it falls in the line of leadership. If you are a good leader you are always going to sit in and pay attention to your soldiers, you are always to go and ask them ‘hey how was your day, how is life, how is your husband, how is your boyfriend, how is your girlfriend, how is your wife, how are your kids, how was your weekend, what did you do, you have to be actively in your soldier’s life and you have to pay attention to how personality changes that can easily be a dead giveaway for substance abuse, alcohol, suicide, so on and so
forth and all these other financial issues, whatever the situation may be and that is one way of
one way of mitigating the issue with over usage of alcohol or over usage of substance or guys
going to commit suicide or what have you so I would say more so being actively engaged with
your soldiers and been actively engaged with the people around you because at the end of the
day, it is a family, the military is a job but when you got o another country and you are out to do
things that don’t really guarantee your safety you have no choice but to sit here and look out for
the person to your left and right and make sure they are well fenced so that they can make sure
you are well fenced too so it is pretty much about us looking out for each other.

Interviewer: What about the bigger picture, the institution itself, just the cycling of the
leadership in and out, the stress of that, what about the structure of the military, can it be
changed?

Respondent: The structure of the military on the inside and the outside, just got to sit here and
take care of the soldiers to have Congress sit here and take care of the soldiers, people within an
institution taking care of your soldiers because they are fighting for you so if you are sitting here
and taking care of your soldiers and you are making sure they are not overly stressed, they don’t
have financial; issues because they are getting adequate pay, you should be looking out for the
people who are fighting the people who are kicking people’s doors and doing ungodly things to
people so with that being said it just really boils down to taking care of the soldiers that is pretty
much exactly what it is.

Interviewer: Okay

Respondent: It is like if you scratched their back they are going to scratch your back in return

Interviewer: So that could kind of take care maybe more institutionalized I don’t know how
you made this being a more understanding leader, I don’t know how you institutionalized that
but you said that the leadership change that happens every year, can that be changed, can it
change in any way if things like that were changed?

Respondent: The only way that would change is more so the idealism of leadership because I
mean you have all these different individuals that are coming in with their different leadership
styles but if you have a standard of what, how you should go about leading because of the
delicacy of the delicacy of the organization because you have these new guys that have come in
and you have to adapt to them, not them adapting to us because they are in a higher level of
ranking we have to sit here and adapt to them versus them adapting to us so if it was more along
the lines of them adapting to us then they would be a little more understanding it would actually
be more of a transparent situation like we understand you and you understand us versus us being
forced like 1000 dudes being forced to sit here and get to know this dude or these two dudes and
work on their level versus them working on our level so that in itself would automatically add
stress because you have us getting used to this set of leaders and it works or it doesn’t work and
we are hoping we something else but in the sense that it actually works and we like how it works
then this new guy comes in and changes everything around and we have to get used to what he
does and it may or may not work so now there is that ‘I miss cardinal such and such or I miss
colonel such and such because everything worked so smoothly with them now we have to sit
here and get to know Cardinal Johnson because it is time for him to sit here and take charge of
our battalion that is what I was saying if they actually took that leader to our level versus getting us on their level it would actually be a bit smoother and that should mitigate a lot of friction causing stress because to soldiers they are stressed because of leadership or leadership style.

Interviewer: Do you, what kind of impact on the stress related drinking would that have?

Respondent: I mean like my company for example we actually just switched our first Sire but he is actually a bit more strict than most so he has started off soldiering a little different from what most soldiers are used to because he came from an old battalion so how he looks at things is not how these new guys look at things and it automatically just brings morale down so once we actually switched from that first sire to another one who was a little more lenient and understanding the stress and the morale have changed for us there to be a little more relaxed and a little more understanding, things have actually run a little smoother so soldiers are not sitting here drinking and going out partying like when he was actually in charge we had guys going a wall, we had guys getting into drugs because of that stress but now that the stress levels are actually less guys aren’t sitting here going out, drinking and doing all these crazy things as much as before so that shows that change in leadership can actually affect how a soldier acts or how he reacts at the back or in his personal time because of the stress level.

Interviewer: I think we have exhausted that topic but that is the point, to exhaust it

Respondent: Yes

Interviewer: Is there anything I could have asked, anything that should be addressed, and anything that you can think of that I have brought up?

Respondent: I can say that there are a lot of people usually who have issues in their lives before more so even like childhood situations and it kind of pushes over to that as well or certain things in the military spark that and they kind of dig more in the psychological situation

Interviewer: Yes a lot of people in the military actually were drinking in their regular past

Respondent: I mean it is just that, I have realized that a lot of people did not start alcohol in the military, it was not a military thing, military just gave them more of an excuse to, I mean a lot of issues before the military

Interviewer: A lot of issues that were above anything, it can be.

Respondent: I think that is pretty much it

Interviewer: Thank you very much; we have talked about an hour believe it or not.

Respondent: Really.

Interviewer: Yes thank you very much for taking part, I really appreciate it and like I told you we will transcribe this and I have your email, I will get this to you, so I appreciate your time. Let me sign off.
Interviewer: Oka, Well I think we're going now, today is January the 25th of 2016.

Respondent: Yes, army specialist

Interviewer: let me just get to the point here and tell me to start off from the beginning. Tell me a few things about yourself you know things or he started talking about where you're from, age, rank, education background what made you enlist in the military.

Respondent: I'm from Charlotte North Carolina. So just right up there here no I guess you're here. I left for the Panthers Oh yes well I'm not a fan just went over and I was actually moved around a lot with my family so I actually am a Giants fan but my last few years before joining the military Charlotte was my home, I call home. Now, I'm 23ad I have been in the military for 5 years, military police. I really I did R.T.C. through high school or Jr O.T.C. for I school and I always enjoyed the things that we did I like the things we did and the structure of the military and thought it would always be a good start point and I really enjoyed it. I would further my career and if I didn't I knew it would be a good start point for another career elsewhere.

When I had one of the opportunities to do something good for my country and the only way that I knew how was joining the military.

Interviewer: How many deployments have you been on?

Respondent: I have not been deployed I would have been on three deployments coming my unit all three were transferred to another unit a month or two before our early date. They were canceled be given to another unit and I actually have a buddy of mine that I went to high school with is in the National Guard and military police unit and his unit actually picked up one of the ones that we were supposed to go on.

Interviewer: any other interesting things about your background. Yeah you said you you're from Charlotte but you moved a lot, a Giants fan.

Respondent: Yeah I moved around the town and I was born in Jacksonville Florida. I moved to New York when I was 3 to be with my biological father. I spent two and a 2 and half years in New York, moved from New York to Concord North Carolina, lived there for a couple years to fourth grade and moved to Dallas Texas really lived in Dallas for 2 years and so you know North Texas.

Interviewer: Yes, so you know Texas?

Respondent: lived in Dallas for a couple years moved back up to New York with my father and my sixth grade year and then I moved back to Charlotte moved around a few times in Charlotte. So I went to eleven different schools growing up and my senior years I took a few college courses and I think in one or two courses they're qualified as college credits since I've been in but I've kind of focused way too much on my military career per se than being able to do college and I've taken opportunities for a lot of things that didn't allow me to really focus on college when I probably should have the right. I do have I think the last time I counted it up at University of North Carolina at Charlotte. They had accredited me 28 credit hours to get about a year
Interviewer: what were you studying? Or was it just general things or that?

Respondent: I really haven't decided on a field of study when I joined the military. I really enjoyed the law enforcement side of my job. Yes but saying it and the interest. I do enjoy it and do I want to have a full time career in IT and college path and it no I don't I enjoyed it while I was and I learned a ton. I learned how to talk to people better how to communicate more efficiently with people how to learn people and everything else and you know I enjoyed that portion of it but I don't want to follow it. So right now I'm kind of a month or way out of the military for a spinal injury that I luckily or unluckily obtained.

Interviewer: So you said luckily or unlikely

Respondent: the doctors have never been able to figure out what it is but actually like today during work, the muscles in my lower back started twitching and I couldn't get him to stop. So it's been it's been a rough year with my injury trying to figure out what it is and everything else I have about one month and a half left in the military and while I still have no idea what the injury is about so I'm going to be starting from square one. When I go be a civilian Come on trying to figure it out

Interviewer: But for all your medical bills since you are here will be taken care of

Respondent: yes

Interviewer: Okay, let’s get to what we're talking about. Describe your drinking before you entered the military.

Respondent: I didn't didn't want to drink and I was never raised in a I mean my biological father drinks but it was always. my biological father he could definitely be considered a functioning alcoholic in the days that I did work with him when I got older and could work. He spent most of his days paycheck at the bar after work so drinking before I joined the military was always seems like a negative thing. so I didn't drink before I joined the military. No not at all

Interviewer: I don't know did it have something to do with your religious upbringing or just believe your family but

Respondent: I mean it wasn’t really a religious thing. my family is religious. We went to church every Sunday I was a volunteer Sunday school teacher for third grade boys but with my grandmother being Sicilian she came over here from Italy at a very young age drinking to her was seen as an entirely different outlook than drinking for the rest of the family so I mean to our family. It was nothing to have wine at the dinner table right or something like that but I wasn't raised in a house where people would just come over with you know beer come over with a few fits of liquor and have a party. It was just you know a casual thing where you had a glass of wine again or another glass . it was healthy drinking.

Interviewer: and there I guess that's a good factor. So then how old were you when you when did you first start to drink was it is it if you got into the military or directly or?
Respondent: it was more of a gradual thing. you know I Had a lot. I have a Most of my friends that I hang out with there they're all very conk drinkers and then they get wild when they drink but nothing that's ever caused legal issues or anything else of that nature. So like they know how to take care of themselves in the in the right way rather than you know the people that just get absolutely ridiculous and destroy stuff and you know whatever but you know I was comfortable around those people. So I had you know just tried drinking more so than just having a glass of wine at dinner or a beer or dinner and I've never hit a point of just ridiculous intoxication I've never blacked out or anything else like that but I think probably around 19 was when I started drinking but we always you know did it in one location

Interviewer: right

Respondent: because you know we were all underage and then I wasn't a legal thing to do but it was kind of like a you know I thing everybody did and I was comfortable with doing it because I was around people I knew I could trust and you know we stayed in one location for the evening I would have maybe a six pack and then I'd cut myself when I initially started drinking and now I can handle a little more but it's rare that I I go beyond a six pack or you know three or four glasses of liquor or whatever.

Interviewer: Okay, So we very kind of talk about the role your family and religious background played in your drinking. How would you compare your drinking with your peers and friends in the military?

Respondent: I probably drink less than most of my friends in the military because I'm usually the responsible one out of the group. So there are one or two times every now and then where somebody does get out of hand. I'm usually the most sober out of the group to try and take care of everybody and I mean that I can understand that role in and when I go out with certain groups of people I know they expect you know if they get a little too out of hand or they took more than they thought they did they know I'm going to help them and I'm going to take care of them so I usually don't have more than enough to get past a decent level of where I know what's going on.

Interviewer: So when you drink with your friends, when you're just out on weekends?.

Respondent: Yeah I usually don't drink during the weekdays I mean I have before when my back is really bad because medication never works muscle relaxers didn't work the pain relievers never work. It's a risk. It'll take a shot of whiskey takes care of it every time. So you know I have I keep you know one bottle of really good whiskey and as my favorites the single barrel Jack Daniels six dollars off so I have one glass every now and then when my back is too bad for me to really get rested to sleep just to help the pain go away. So I can sleep and that's during the week as during the weekends.

You know I'll go out with my friends all of us then play pool so we'll go out have a few beers. Or I'll have a few drinks. We'll play pool call a cab here. Usually it's in Charlotte. Since you know at home is so close and I had a I have a girlfriend in Charlotte that goes to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

So usually I go home to visit her during the weekends and there is tons of bars out there.
Before I started dating her though I did hang around fabled long and I just started dating her about a year ago so I mean for a while I did hang out here and the Big Apple. Like I Told You really big apples of my nice pool bar and drifters kind of rival of ours are really nice for us so we usually go there to play pool with them. We have a few drinks while we're there. We'll play for drinks. You know whoever wins the game the other person has to buy the drink of their choice and such.

Interviewer: So how much do you drink, is it on the go of the weekend

Respondent: Over the weekend or on in like one sitting?

Interviewer: yeah, One sitting and over the weekend

Respondent: in one sitting. If I'm not going to be the you know responsible person or the D.D.L. whatever I usually drink liquor because beer if I try to you know get a good buzz off the beer I usually wind up buying more beer because it fills me up more than it gets me you know feeling good. So I'll probably have in one sitting maybe half of the fifth of liquor. So four drinks or five drinks maybe

Interviewer: on a weekly basis or you do that most weekends?

Respondent: Yes most weekends and I know a lot of the times I am D.D. just because you know my girlfriend doesn't get to drink that often and she enjoys herself when she does so I mean I'm usually DD.O over the weekend that is designated driver You know. So when I am the designated driver and I know we're going to be at a location for a long period of time I'll have a beer or a drink and that's only if I know we're going to be there for you know three hours and what's the most.

Interviewer: Is it for a week or on a weekend when you're not the worst?

Respondent: if it's a party weekend on one day I'll go through twenty four pack of beer, So that means that like if we started you know the pool party or whatever it ten o'clock in the morning to one or two o'clock at night. You know I get through at twenty four back by myself.

Interviewer: is this like once in a year?

Respondent: once every couple of months because me and my friends all work a lot and we get we all even civilian side they have jobs that require them to work a lot . And that's what M.P.'s even on a normal week will work fifty to sixty and we never have a week that's less than fifty hours. So I mean you know the phrase work our party hard. So I mean we enjoy our time off and we try very hard to enjoy our time. So when we are off and we are able to you know the late l back in kick back party with each other and everything else we do so I mean liquor wise I might go through a whole weekend if you know you from party and I might go through a handle maybe a little more than that, a handle is five fifth's. It's good bit liquor. But I enjoy whisky more than any other form of alcohol, I love whisky.

Interviewer: So you are single but you have a girl girlfriend so you're not separated or divorced
Respondent: No, am very particular

Interviewer: Has that changed your drinking patterns I mean your girl ow does he influence that?

Respondent: she has an implicit really it all. I mean she agrees with the majority of my views on drinking. I mean she when we have the night to be able to you know have to ourselves and we have the ability to the money to or something like that and you know we'll have a night out where we get to drink. she enjoys wine a lot more than anything else. So she'll go through a bottle of wine in one sitting if I let her. So I mean she enjoys her drinking a little more than I do but she keeps it to you know maybe once or twice a month

Interviewer: and you said your sister is a bartender?

Respondent: yes

Interviewer: OK All right let's get to what really this is about

Interviewer: what do you think from your experience and your observation of drinking in the military? What are the primary the main reasons personally people engage in drinking?

Respondent: I know in in my unit in particular

Interviewer: you mentioned work

Respondent: like yeah because I mean we are in peace. So we do see a lot of you know people drunk and people acting out when they get drunk and everything else and a lot of the times when I get a chance to really you know talk to the people. One of the reasons why I love my job so much is because I'm not the bad guy that shows up put somebody in handcuffs and you know throws him in jail or whatever. I actually get to dive down and help somebody. So I mean if I get the chance. You know while I'm filling out paperwork form or whatever and I go you know to talk to them about what happened that night you know I can help them see it from a different light. And you know try to make sure even if I can help them

I mean this this. Some people you just can't help but there are some people that they really take in when they get to that point where they know they're in trouble. They're really listen and you know that's when a lot of people try to make a change but a lot of them don't know how to so you know a lot of people they drink because of certain things that happen to them whether it be on deployment or here on I know a lot of times I have like I told you have an issue with crowded places. I can't stand in lines. I can have people stand by me so I have to stand like off to the side of the line even at like Wal-Mart or something like that I had an issue happen when I was working on horsemen and long story short I have my own gun from my hip pointed at my head I don't I don't do people standing behind me.

I was about to ask is it okay to talk to some soldiers who have been on the point and how it affects them yes it does

Interviewer: you mentioned you have not been on any deployment?
Respondent: yeah and I mean different things affect people different ways and a lot of people there only turn to for forgetting what happened or dealing with what happened for whatever reason is alcohol. And it's not the healthiest thing for them to do but it's the only way they know how to deal with things. And you know they go for one they go for another and then from there it is all downhill until you know they have no idea what they started drinking for but they're having a good old time and sometimes you know people can take care of themselves when they're you know drinking though just you know relax chill out somewhere or whatever and sometimes when they drink they're trying to forget everything that happened that week. They're getting while they're trying to cut loose and they just get a little too crazy but for the most part they're the people that I've talked to it's either trying to forget something or that was their only way of dealing with whatever issues they were having

Interviewer: are these soldiers?

Respondent: Yes they're all

Interviewer: is that a reason why they want to drink

Respondent: trying to forget or trying to deal with issues that are currently going on.

Interviewer: how can you just describe them. But what about the influence your peers have in and what influences do you know one of them?

Respondent: usually if I hang out with a certain group of friends. I know that I'll probably turn more than usual and it's only because I know that they drink at a higher level than I do they'll take in way more than I'm used to and you know a lot of the times if I don't have the money I'm not going to drink but there are certain friends that I have that have the ability to buy me drinks and you know it's always been you know kind of understood that if somebody buys you a drink you can't say no man you go ahead and drink it. It's kind of like a good thing you can turn down. Yeah you can't turn down a free drink especially if somebody is offering to you

Interviewer: Is that a norm?

Respondent: Yes it is a sign of respect like you did something for them that they really appreciate So they're buying you the drinks for the evening and you don't want to be rude to them and turn it down and a lot of times it's you know you're in the atmosphere you're already you know feeling buzzed and you just don't feel like saying no. Usually if I'm influencing anybody it's usually to you know cut them off at the level they're at because you know with especially with us being in a military police unit we get ridiculed a lot more for acting out an infantryman or an engineer gets in trouble for drinking it's usually you know they either get in trouble with their unit where they get in trouble. The M.P.'s But I mean it's kind of like just a unit controlled thing when the M.P.'s get in trouble for drinking it's usually taken a lot for them in regards of punishment because they take drinking in our unit a lot more serious.

Interviewer: I would imagine that there's any area of the military where drinking is handled seriously that is it. Because you have to deal with people that get in trouble for drinking
Respondent: yes, I mean every unit has its bad eggs that you know go above and beyond to do what they know isn't right and we just we get taken down a lot more and it's more of like a group thing. So if one person you know does the wrong thing and somebody else was there and knew better and could've helped them and we get ridiculed a lot more for that. So I mean I'm usually the one to try and get somebody to stop drinking. If they if they get to a good level where I know that they're feeling good. But they're not you know getting sick at a risk for their health. I get them to stop before they get to that point

Interviewer: I know you're subject to testing. Drug testing a lot on regular basis and as M.P is that schedule stricter I mean every month random

Respondent: it's anywhere from a ten percent fifty percent on a percentage thing and the commander in the first sergeant dictated so nobody knows when it's going to be nobody knows how many people it's going to be you are allowed by the Army you're required to do one hundred percent testing here. Our unit usually does anywhere from three to five a year so I mean I don't know if other units do that because I mean drug testing is usually not like a highly talked about discussion around post but I know for our unit in particular we usually do three to five hundred percent test and

Interviewer: you said a hundred percent, what does that means ?

Respondent: everybody in the unit gets to take it everybody and they do it like on a rotational basis they do you know marijuana or T.H.C. methamphetamines cocaine and then they do a rotational basis in the lab. That's only known by the lab for what they're testing for so they test for the big ones. Every time and then they test for a few smaller drugs on a rotation basis because they only get you know one cup from us so they can't test for everything out of that one cup

Interviewer: But they don't test for alcohol? now knowing that they test for all these other things you can do alcohol. Does that matter lead to alcohol being the drug of choice? Because it is the drug not have detected in your system

Respondent: yeah but I mean you know most of the time a lot of our leadership. You know checks on us. You know and everybody knows because everybody hangs out with everybody. So everybody knows how much somebody drinks and you know as much as everybody likes to go out and everybody likes this most of the time at least in my unit. Everybody looks out for each other. So if they think somebody is drinking. You know every single night everybody. You know in that person every night his you know buying a new six pack my new fifth of liquor or whatever and they're drinking every single night. They're drinking to complete access over the weekend or something that usually it's brought to somebody is attention and that person tell you you know if you're going to do something you can talk to somebody will sign you up for a sap which is the substance abuse center here and I mean most of the time. Everybody's helped before they reach a point of it is unhealthy

Interviewer: that is questions I'm going to get into. So your peers haven't and so it's normal. If someone buys you drink and it's customary disrespectful to turn it down. Do you see people buy drink for others to excess?
Respondent: Not that much because I mean most of the people in the military don't make you know it but they don't make bank to try to be able to afford a tremendous night on the town but if you can see some of the higher enlisted or the officers go out. No drinks for you know whatever and it depends on your level of the access. I mean in my experience here I've never seen somebody buy somebody else enough drinks to get them completely just destroy. Our unit is definitely very keen on knowing your limits and knowing somebody else's limit and always helping the other person if they're you know in really deep trouble.

Interviewer: Do you know what if there's someone who doesn't normally drink a lot is normal for somebody to encourage you to have a few

Respondent: is normal for somebody to encourage you to have a few. If they don't drink period like they just do not like drinking. They they don't agree with it. It's never really. I've never seen it really pushed for that person a drink. I mean and I've seen other people from other units. You know come to parties that we're having and they push it for a little bit but then everybody else is like hey man who doesn't drink those are like yeah. It's usually pretty respected around here isn't that right in your what you've seen people of and there was none that

Interviewer: you know a lot of people have the idea that drinking and the military certain parts go hand in hand.

Respondent: I would definitely agree with that.

Interviewer: What do you think about drinking and alcohol abuse in the military?

Respondent: I would definitely agree with that and it's a joke around us now. But it's actually you know a legitimate thing that you know most people don't come into the military not to form some form of drinking habit and whether that habit least done healthy things or whether that habit is just you know having a couple of drinks every other night or something like that most people I would say a little higher than ninety percent of people come into the military and develop some form of habit of having alcoholic beverage whether it be for small things or because everybody did it.

Interviewer: So for the person leave me with tendencies that could be unhealthy drinking will do anything that could exacerbate it going worse and that problem being in a city like

Respondent: I would say yeah because I mean I've seen units where you know if I have met a guy in reception which is the where we in process in a Fort Bragg before we're given a unit that we're going to and. Where we were there for maybe a week and I met this guy talked to him for a couple days we went out to a bar. He only had like one or two beers. He said he wasn't really a big drinker and I hung out with him about a year later and we had hung out in between that but about a year later I had really realized that I mean he had formed a horrible drinking that was drinking every other day if not every day and would get drunk every day before you go to bed he would never go out to eat unless he was drinking he would skip going out with us on a few occasions because he didn't have the money to because you know already bought alcohol out all but I guess it in in our unit it's really taken care of a lot but you know a lot of the units around post I've seen people go from you know not really drinking that much to they getting absolutely trashed every night that they can
Interviewer: okay, have there been occasions when others around were drinking and you did not want to drink? And if so how did they make you feel.

Respondent: Yeah there was a visit. You know usually at least you know every other month. Whenever we do have parties and stuff like that. You know me and my girlfriend usually switch off on who's feeding or you know we pick straws or whatever when I'm with just a group of my friends on Tuesday for the evening and as soon as that person is picked there straw of being D.D. or that person has been decided on for D.D. for the evening. Nobody tells them you have to drink. Nobody pressures them to do anything that person is left entirely alone for the evening and it is kind of gets a little you know crappy when everybody's playing drinking games and you're the one drinking water and other guy. Up instead of beer.

Like I went to a party to watch the Green Bay game a couple weeks ago it was a friend of mine for later birthday and I had already agreed with my girlfriend that I would be D.D. for the evening were playing flip cup and which isn't a game where you have to they fill the cup maybe about a quarter of the way with beer and there's a team on one side of the table and a team on the other they start on one end each of the beer but the cup down on the table and try and flip it so where the lip of the cup lands on the table the D.D. is we're drinking water instead of beer but I mean nobody really it was like a funny thing it wasn't really like a you know you suck because you're not drinking beer it was more like a yeah OK water drinker you flip the cup correctly because you're not drunk like the rest of us

Interviewer: But what about when you really didn't want to when you're out with others that were very you didn't. For whatever reason. During that but an occasion.

Respondent: I mean you get asked a couple times you know I'm sure you really don't want anything you sure you really don't want to strain. You know come on do you want to strain you know.

Interviewer: Okay, cool

Respondent: And then you know they ask you a few times but then after you know two or three maybe four nos. you are left alone.

Interviewer: How do you look at your peers and others around you who don't drink socially with others

Respondent: who don't take socially would know that. I usually. I mean I never really dive down into why they don't. But you know from my background it's usually you know either a religious preference personal preference or thirty for the evening. So you know if I ask them. Hey do you want to drink and they say no. I usually just leave it at that after that you know the people you want to hang out with I mean you know. Whether they drink or not you know if I like them as a person and I can have a hold a conversation with them they can have a good time. You know whatever they don't mind you know playing a game of pool or they can listen to music and relax watch T.V. and relax. You know whatever you were doing for the evening if they if they can have fun or whatever. I really don't mind you know you can drink you can not very you can do whatever you want as long as you know you're having a good time with everybody. Yes The whole point of you know getting in a group having a party or whatever is just to have a good
time whether you're drinking or not you know everybody wants just wants to relax and have a
good time.

Interviewer: okay, All right. Suppose I was a new recruit in the militar here and trying to fit in.
What would you tell me in regards to drinking and trying to fit in?

Respondent: me personally if you were having a party. If you want to come. You're welcome to
come if you don't you don't have to if you want to get to know people and meet people. I would
recommend you going. If you don't feel comfortable with drinking make sure you establish that
from the very beginning because usually if you seem hesitant about you know whether you want
to drink or not people are probably going to bug me more so if you don't want to drink put that
out from being in clear. Yeah no I don't want to drink especially if somebody is already drunk
and you're really hesitant when you're answer they're probably going to bug you a little bit more.

Interviewer: OK, how do you think the influences to drink in the military differ from others out
there in the work places? the arrangements in society.?

Respondent: You know having alcohol is kind of the norm in the military so I mean like I said
the majority of people drink in the military. So if you go out with a group or you have a party or
whatever. It's kind of what most people are doing you know nobody's doing you know drugs or
anything else like that a lot of the things that you can do in the civilian world you're not allowed
to do in the military whether it's from going on having a bonfire and shelling out to you know
having like a parking lot party or whatever or brag you're not allowed to be in a parking lot
anywhere after a certain hour. So I mean like around here it's kind of like the only thing to do at
a party. You can do a lot of things you can't go out and do a lot of things. So I mean drinking is
just kind of what's around here to do this you know tons of bars and everything else and liquor
and beer is sold and literally every gas station and every store on and around host. So it's what
everybody does.

Interviewer: I'm going to get to that next

Respondent: so in the civilian world. I was never really pressured to drink. I haven't been
pressured to drink in the army but it's just kind of like a norm. So I guess people just either
adaptor they feel like they're not going to be able to adapt because they don't because whether
people are pressured or not a lot of the times they put pressure on themselves to want to adapt
and they just naturally you know blend in with the atmosphere around because they feel like if
that's the norm then I you know if I'm going to fit in. I need to drink and whether there were
pressure or not because I wasn't when I got here and that's the reason why I was comfortable
enough to you know start having alcohol because I was never the pressure to do it

Interviewer: okay, you mentioned price and availability. What about the A bit pricey on base
here how do you think you know the duty free.

Respondent: Not exactly really free tax free. A lot of the a lot of the people say it's tax free the
P.X. and the military own stores to charge their own taxes but they do not charge state tax
Interviewer: so you do get away with state tax which in North Carolina is this point zero seven
nine percent of the tax writing of a stand.
Interviewer: What are the price in superhero base that is if you.

Respondent: Yeah the pricing is a little bit cheaper you know is that if you know.

Interviewer: How does that influence you to drink?

Respondent: Like I had explained earlier, I have pretty expensive taste. I actually like to enjoy. You know the things that I drink others you know they'll buy you know two twenty four packs of P.B.R. which I think is absolutely disgusting and other people will just drink it because it gets them drunk at some point. So I mean with it. I don't think the price really affects anything. Honestly if they are going to drink. They're going to drink during It is something you know they might get you know something that's a little more on the outside of base expensive because they can afford it here but if they're going to drink. They're going to drink.

Interviewer: Well let me ask, have you ever feel you drink more than you would because of pricing and availability you mention it's available all around here too.

Respondent: no I mean usually they're going to mean is it cause you never drink or usually have are intent on having a party or I intend on going to a party or whatever. Even if it's you know in Charlotte at home or here on post. The only benefit to me is that I don't have to drive this far but I know when I usually go to a party I bring my own things to drink and if somebody asked me if they whoever's running the party asked me I'll go out and buy alcohol. A little bit more alcohol to share if they say you know I don't have anything but for me it's just a short drive you know I have more time to do whatever instead of driving to go get it.

Interviewer: How do you and your peers in the military occupy yourselves during your free time and I know kind of covered this before your down time but just extended. How often and to what extent is alcohol involved?

Respondent: off time usually in the afternoons Friday and Saturday afternoons. Alcohol is usually involved in one way or another whether it's you know having a date night going out to dinner with a group of friends and just having a beer or two to every Friday and Saturday night having a party. I'll call usually involved in the night time on my weekends but a lot of the times we'll go out you know fish on the lake all day and have a bonfire night or when it gets cold or we usually just have you know play video games or something. Throughout the day and relax and then a night. Will you know have a get together we'll go out to dinner or whatever. I don't have a very you know ecstatic lifestyle on my weekends. It's usually either. You know going to somebody else's house and something having it a little kickback going out to dinner and usually alcohol is involved in one way or another when we're

Interviewer: now getting back to what you talked earlier about why let some of the people you deal with as MPs drink and how about you too I mean have you ever felt the stress and strain of your work in the military that you needed to drink led you to?. You know and I think leverage on that

Respondent: I've seen a few people gets a really down point where you know they like I said people think that drinking is their only escape from a lot of the things that go on and I've seen that happen quite a few times for me personally like I said my and my spinal injury. I might have
a class every now and then just to be able to help me get to sleep my specific stressors job related
have never really caused me to drink but I have seen a lot of the people that when I first got here.
My unit had just gotten back from a deployment and I did I did witness a lot of them drink a little
more than that and they claim that they used to before they went on deployment and then a lot of
them actually got into a little bit of trouble when they got back because of how much they drink
and the things that they did when they got back because of their specific cases of stressors that
they would be on our on my unit's last appointment we did have a double amputee and one
soldier was lost and apparently a lot of the guys were really close. So it did cause a lot of them to
drink a little more than they usually did but for me personally.

Interviewer: OK So with one of these I mean even when you run into people. One of the day
you know to explain why do you hate them. You know I've been drinking and in this case and it's
you know it's work it's just situation. You know many here it's played a big part on this. Yeah the
situation with drinking in here I mean what are exactly these stressors in the military.

Respondent: I mean a lot of the times between long work hours and a lot of the time it's the
younger soldiers they're really catch the brunt on things and you know they have leadership that
either thinks that they're new and they need to be delved into the military in the harshest way
possible. Or you know they messed up once in their leadership never lets them recover from that
one mess up and a lot of the times it's problems at home with their spouse female and male you
know people get married young quite often in the military and it causes a lot of them to be really
stressed out at home and they think their only way of you know being less stressed that home is
to you know have a few drinks and those few drinks every night turn into you know drinking
every night a lot and it causes fights it causes arguments and causes more stress so they drink
more and it's just been a downhill slope in a lot of cases tween you know having somebody that
irritates

Interviewer: so you mean I is all about leadership?

Respondent: you know a lot of work you know you're in your leadership here takes you. They
don't treat you fairly in your mind or from what your understanding is leadership and yet it is
your ship and problems and all and you know issues that you dealt with either in your personal
life or on the deployment really big when I talk to people about why they're here and usually
with the younger newer people in the military problems and home leadership.

Interviewer: But these problems at home because of the military deployments, you are on
deployment, they wait so long. Separation etc

Respondent: Yeah I mean you know it is separation Yeah and a lot of the times the issues are the
spouse being unfaithful because they're gone all the time you know their work all the time or
whatever and I'm not saying that the service member is a complete saint in that either but you
know a lot of people they get married too young. They don't know how to be married. You know
that they're not they're worried about themselves more so than they're worried about a
relationship with somebody else and not many of them understand that they're there in that
mindset. So they think that everything they say is right. Everything the spouse is wrong and you
know arguments cause the drinking and then you know they're there at work all day so that when
they come home. All they do is pick her and argue so that causes more drinking because they're
away all the time so they never really have the chance to communicate and that communication goes downhill then drinking starts and then everything else from there is just it's a sign. It's a cycle of really bad one and it's very common here

Interviewer: you mentioned you haven't been on a deployment but you have a situation you know when you're done you know and it happens. I mean it's you know it's affected you know you know what is that what led you not wanting to be around crowd?

Respondent: yes.

Interviewer: after that incident did that affect you in any way I mean

Respondent: it affected how much you know I when I was willing to explore new places. So you know if my friend wanted to take me to a new bar the just opened up for a new pool hall that just opened for a house party that you know one of their friends was throwing it affected greatly where I went. So if I thought there was too many people at a party I would stay a lot of times I would even walk in if I knew that the bar and or bar that we were going to was usually a busy place I wouldn't go even goes as far as affecting what stores that I go to like we have three Wal Marts around here and two of them are usually always entirely packed shot always at one where their buddy. I'll drive farther away to go to the Wal-Mart as he has a slower one. So I mean it affected how much that I go out to drink. So I would honestly probably say that since that incident actually turned less

Interviewer: OK. I was going to say that it did because if you're less social settings like that. I guess you have a good understanding of the policy and alcohol abuse in the army.

Respondent: the policy I mean it in a wide view it's as long as you're not intoxicated at work then you're good. If you have the possibility of being recalled for any reason you are usually put by the commander on the drive status which means you're not allowed to drink and if you break that you get in trouble with the command. That's not usually M.P. enforced. But if you show up intoxicated the M.P.'s get called we give you a breathalyzer to give the commander a general overview of how intoxicated they are and then it's the command decision.

Interviewer: so do they just tell them to go home?

Respondent: no they can do that but they usually charge them with being intoxicated but it is an C M J charge rather than a North Carolina statute or a federal military charge

Interviewer: do they get referred to Esap?

Respondent: yes usually commander referral to asap is different from self referral. If you think that you have an issue which Asap has their own rules on what is too much drinking and it's usually like more than I think three drinks in a setting more than seven drinks in a week. I can't remember the numbers exactly so I don't want to cause them to you in the wrong but they have their own setting and I did have a friend of mine that was commander for he was pulled over for suspicion of being intoxicated. He blew a zero point zero two which was entirely legal but he was twenty. He was two weeks away from turning twenty one. So the cops did him a favor and you know call this command and let the command deal with him rather than charging him
illegally and it being a deal while on this record when I see you just say you know it's wrong. Regardless of the fact it was illegal. So they called his unit and his unit told him his unit charged with underage drinking. He was commander referred to Asap he had to go to a required course for substance abuse.

Interviewer: So what about what's your understanding what about the enforcement of the policy in there. See for some of the policy. What's your understanding of enforcement of policy turning up for use and abuse and how in the differences of course and how widely differs. You know what I mean

Respondent: I think a lot of the times it's enforced very strictly but have you been in the unit for a long time and everybody knows you the leadership knows you very well on a personal level you're more willing to get to talk to. More so than charged right away. Usually if you're newer to the unit or you know you're a stand off you do everything by yourself.

Interviewer: Yeah

Respondent: and you know it's not people are less willing to help you out. So that's political and a lot in a lot of ways. Yes but a lot of the times people try.

Interviewer: They don't because as soon as you report something here comes your company your squad here in whatever they go on the radar.

Respondent: Everybody starts with you start watching so there's like this morning to sell for ten. You know so you report you want to look out for people human force policy but at the same time you want to ensure oversight on you want to enforce it on your level just so you know if if I were to get you know into an incident and my squad leader was there to help my squad leader would try to deal with me deal with me Internal internally rather than you know my company commander or hearing about it. My company commander having to do something about it. So I mean it's kind of political but at the same time. Everybody has a mindset of trying to deal with it like at the lowest level so that you know nobody wants the entire unit to look bad. And if one person does something messed up everybody around them starts to think that unit is just bad like you only you so in a way want to protect you

Interviewer: Do you think that leads to problems with people should be maybe dealt with internally?

Respondent: I do really. yeah in a few cases yes it has happened a lot of the times when somebody deals with somebody on a personal level. You know they feel like that person really you know cares. So they're hell they're less likely to do it but I mean like like it's an earlier there's a bad egg and every you know a lot of the times that person thinks you know I got away with it I can continue to do. And they continue until you know something drastic happens they get charged with something or they get arrested or something of that nature and it gets passed the point of helping people and it was like I said at the very beginning. There's some people you can in the some people that you're never going to be able to and there's very few of those but I've seen in the case of
Interviewer: this kind of extending this. So a lot of enforcement of policy starts out kind of like informal policy like he will with it at the lowest level lowest level. So just elaborate on that a little bit. How do you police yourself. I mean how do you know you he said didn't build this internally is there anything else you can add to that about how people do it and talk a little bit more about you know the differences in treatment of some you know somebody maybe favor. He's more respect and smear versus somebody who's new or somebody who's kind of just live a long life

Respondent: A lot of the times if you've been in the unit for a while you know how things work in your if you're favored it's more because you benefit the unit in certain ways and they don't want to lose that they usually instead of you know just courage in you from doing anything good for the unit anymore and charging you with something they usually try to talk to you personally that way you know if it seems better to that person if you talk to them one on one rather than like here's a piece of paper saying that we're getting you in trouble for doing what you just did right there. You know so yeah then they're going to usually resent years. They're usually going to resent the unit for that and you know they stopped doing the things that they were doing to benefit you know the unit. So you know if somebody's scoring a really high P.T. score. They raise the the company average in how good that company is a P.T. you know they'll quote unquote favor that person more so than the person that you know just barely passes everything doesn't really tried throughout the day is just there to be there doesn't remember things that they're taught doesn't qualify well with weapons you're not treated as favor as the first and it's really benefiting everybody in the unit. So you know if this person does really well at everything they're probably going to be treated drastically different than the person that everybody feels like is just there to be there and doesn't really care about anybody.

Interviewer: and if you begin to those people you see them on manners you know these people that you've seen get in the straw poll or have problems?

Respondent: I've seen and take advantage of that with alcohol issues now but I have seen them. You know do things in a normal soldier probably wouldn't do you know they would leave work without telling anybody and just see if they can get away with it or you know they get sent to like a promotion board and they fail on purpose. You know they give they are given you know a slight chance to feel like hey I can actually do something and they go to an airport extra weapons qualification or they get sent to a driving course to see if they can you know past driving a certain vehicle and they'll fail on purpose or they will try. They won't give any effort and you know they get ridiculed for it a lot and I've seen that one or two times affect their drinking but with a lot of the people that don't try. You know they're aware of the fact that they're not trying but there are those few people that you know are in world that don't put forth any efforts I feel like things should be given to them and it causes them to feel disliked because they didn't put forth any effort. It didn't get given to them and they get ridiculed for and they might drink a little bit more but most of the time those people are kind of off to themselves anyway and they don't do any social anything especially drinking.

Interviewer: What's your understanding of the repercussions faced by those who've been officially with me for up to date?
Respondent: right now most alcohol related incidents get you kicked out of the military if the M.P.'s are called for any alcohol related incident. You are recommended for Chacon and if you are not any benefits of the unit. If you are you know a really good P.T. person. If you just are not a physically in shape person you can't do anything good for the unit you're not in you need can't shoot you can't work properly with what that unit does whether it's M.P. If you can't work the road. You haven't done anything in particular that shows that you can do your job professionally usually get removed from the military but if you have a case for you, you have an opportunity to go in front of your commanding officer and fight your case like hey I made a mistake because I was drunk but you know if I go to East just poses a range of problems if you have to drive.

Now for DUI and domestic or fighting yet incident while intoxicated those automatically separates you from whereas others. Whereas other example for all you know you can get a commander for Asap. And if you go through the course and you know your professional. Your job you know usually or you're kept a living good standing with a lot of the times they won't kick you out of the military but they'll demote you in rank they take away some here pay for a small section of time and I know that some people they've had their pay cut in half for a couple months and I mean we don't get paid much to begin with. So they get their pay cut in half and they get put on extra duty where you work from I think it's like four or five in the morning until eleven o'clock at night including weekends.

Oh yeah. And I've seen people get put on that for up to thirty days and then you know other times it could be as simple as just going to Asap and you know you're good and other times it's chaptered out of the military right. So another hot in here.

Interviewer: how have things changed just in the five years in your time. What did you see change in terms of punishment and written policy in your time:

Respondent: usually depends on the commander because I've had five commander since I've been here and each one of them handled things differently. There were some that had zero tolerance for our bomb and some that were willing to give you a chance to prove yourself afterwards. So I've seen people get in trouble and just get completely kicked out for an incident that could result in being kicked out or could result in you just you know doing the thirty days of extra duty and then I've had commanders that are willing to work with you and you know ‘hey’ explain yourself what happened. OK. This could have been avoided. This is how you could have avoided it. Let's solve this problem before it becomes a real problem in could affect the rest your life and they're willing to help you and like it. Like I said earlier it's really been in the leadership. You know you. There's a lot of the times in the military when you have really good leadership and there's times when she you have leadership there really doesn't care and if you. There's this leadership that has a gray area and it's leadership that are black and white

Interviewer: I understand that a man changes on the basis of a yearly basis or is it just a pit. It's all dependent on big army.

Respondent: I mean it depends it could be every month and once a visit there are usually these periodic for lower level leadership. You never know. I mean some people catch orders randomly Some people ask for orders and you know where they're going to leave so that I don't even know the lower you are in love you.
Interviewer: The more you usually are you?

Respondent: Yeah tell rotating basis higher and higher level rotates lower than lower level soldiers the form below like myself and below are usually moved around a lot and then as you get higher in the ranks

Interviewer: your specialist.

Respondent: Yes, specialist them below so privates and specialist are usually moved around a lot more. So you get a lot more leadership and then as you get higher in the ranks you not only have less leadership but they move around a lot. I've been moved around in my unit a lot. I haven't moved from my unit since I got here but I've been moved around between platoon squads and everything else and then on top of that we've had higher level leadership changed in a now

Interviewer: Is this is a rotation of leadership create not knowing what the expectations are for going from one to the other than having a baby having a legs on it and having a strict on this is how level of stress is created and you and others as this matured this year is this the story?

Respondent: a lot of this aren't just you know causes of strong Oh I mean a lot of this arms at the very beginning. You're really stressed out because you have no idea. Yeah a lot of the times you have leadership that when you first get to them they're really hard on you and then they lessen and there's some that will never listen up and then there's this some that just you can tell from the first day you mean REALLY DON'T CARE. And you're going to have to do the majority of the work yourself you're not going to have any guidance and most people that have you know been in for more than six months to a year they kind of have been moved around enough where they know that. So within the first day of meeting their new leader. They know what kind of leader they're going to be and what their role in that leader's position is going to be so at least in our unit I've not seen a cause and the long lasting extra stress and long lasting meaning not more than a week they might they might be stressed out for the first week and then after that it kind of lets because they understand their part and what that leader is about. So once they get that grasp the stress just isn't there. They can be strict all the time but they understand that they're going to be strict all the time and they kind of expect what's coming in

Interviewer: what about you mentioned earlier some people you still live in you talk with them. Not if they related to you. Hey this is going on the scale here that that seems to be a regular conversation here how can people hear what is it that they hear behind their over you know it's just something you hear normally, is this a normal thing?

Respondent: I mean yes I mean that

Interviewer: they feel like they're being treated unfairly work for the normal thing to hear from people that you encounter?

Respondent: Yes a lot of people don't have thick skin so and a lot of people don't think about what they're saying before they say. So those two things being matched together never go well and with leadership being overly critical to that one person and then not having the thick skin to realize either this person trying to help me or just blow it off and causes them to be actually
stressed out because I think they're being criticized all the time at work you know being this in the leadership roles you have in the military is that your film liberty.

Interviewer: You know people in leadership positions. Obviously we have in the military you know sergeant in that but are they given liberties this is the kind where they suspected this to be almost immediate their demands. I mean it's not a part of the military life is that when then him in demeaning. I mean is it just the nature of the command?

Respondent: Yeah drugs are in there and then it's really of age off of that and having young people come in who maybe didn't come. It's really not was a part of the military be and weren't ready to deal with and it's really based off your command structure and because they're like the first sergeant of a company is usually like the overall things that out of how he sets the tone for most of the sergeants and above in the unit. So you know if he's one of the really direct kind of people that is used to if you yell at them they'll learn or if you're harsh on them they'll learn eventually then that's comfort that's the kind of leadership that use really. Develops in that company. If you have one that's more of a talk to them instead of yell at them and that's usually what leadership will breed in that company. Every now and then there's NCO or a first sergeant that's a little different than that and they'll do both. You know you'll get talked to the first couple times and then after that you. You know nations get yelled at. Yeah. Either that or they have a line that you cross and there's a pet peeves that they have so you know if you are dealing pull ups right they may just talk to you about work on your pull ups but if you can't run correctly then they're going to just going to completely destroy you in running so I mean there's just there's lines for certain and NCO but for the most part if the higher level leadership is a certain way it breeds a lower level leadership to be the same way

Interviewer: do you think those that are coming to the military are ready to not have the skill as he said don't have a thick skill. Do you see them kind of what's over. I don't know what I'm thinking of a me kind of fold into this.

Respondent: I guess fear and give in to drinking to do a little more than most because like I said most people think that the system way of getting rid of their problems and so a lot of the times I see the people that you know feel like they're being insulted rather than taught or you know they get yelled at one time and they think it's the end of the world or something. I see them drinking or giving to drinking more so than the ones that you know already yelled at me cool. I'm going home at the end of the day

Interviewer: do you, I don't know how many. You say you wouldn't get from I mean you've seen in your things are these are people you see get in trouble in trouble with the was just a sign to get the message that maybe you know

Respondent: I've seen a few in my unit get referred ASAP for issues that they were having I've seen a few get in trouble. We have a person in Maine or right now that it had just recently gotten a DUI but because it's my job I definitely see a lot more from other places get in trouble and I mean overall because we deal with everybody on Fort Bragg not just you know everybody outside of our unit we deal with people within our unit too but we have tremendously a lot less. I mean way fewer people in our unit get in trouble and other I guess around the grave. You're right and I mean it happens everywhere. I mean being empty gives you.
Interviewer: how do you believe I'm talking to some of the things you talked about and I hope related problems can be better and addressed in the military?

Respondent: people to take it seriously. I mean the military has fantastic programs for literally every issue you could possibly have. It's just that a lot of people don't take it seriously because they either think they're drinking this whole thing they do know it's the culture and people should stop messing with it or it is some people are legitimate alcoholics and a lot of people just don't take it serious or they don't feel like it's an issue. So they don't take it seriously

Interviewer: so he says it's like going on a so you have these fantastic.?

Respondent: Yes but people don't take them seriously. So they don't work not to yeah. And so I mean like and it's not just with alcohol. They have programs for. You know sexual assault and or you know depression and all these things that the majority of the people in the military at one point or another come across to they have amazing programs to deal with and people just don't take things seriously and honestly I think the military in my opinion I think the military has gone about as far as they can really go with a lot of the programs and because people don't take them seriously. They just they don't work and

Interviewer: what about the command structure and they mention this causing too much stress and strain among personnel and how he does what he should not be changed to cause less of these problems and does the I mean if you want to if you if there were something about this you know the command structure in place and that you could change that would you know this you know that would like to hear. I mean for level of you and others in that that would come up with a change where how he could change?.

Respondent: Could it be changed?, I don't know I mean I know it's your Rochus I mean it's just doesn't change yeah I mean I have some things that could be altered. You don't turn a ship around you know and I guess it's the same as I was saying before with people taking seriously it and if leadership doesn't take it seriously. Nobody else in that unit does. So if all levels of leadership took things more seriously, then the lower level would take things more seriously. I don't think it could be pushed more. I mean we do quarterly training and you know that already dives into training that we do with other you know aspects of our job so I really don't think you could you could train anybody more. I don't think you could push on anybody more initiation people don't take it seriously and so you just have to change the mind mindset and mindset and there's nothing not necessarily about the way things are structured as it is things would work flawlessly everyone took it so I mean it comes down to the mindset of you can change the mindset and you know program is going to work and a lot of not good things that I can look at be done to make things be taken serious I mean is it really something that can be done or is I didn't think of one. I mean I mean people come from all different ethnicities backgrounds religious backgrounds. You know some people grew up in a house full of alcoholics and they just think that's the norm. So that's what they do in their daily life. They don't think that's an issue. They is never going to be able to change a person's entire thinking on life with a program in the military. You're not going to be able to do so right.

Interviewer: So it's this is overwhelming. This is you know you know young males coming into the military being around all these people that it's a time when the jury is in this in these
situations as you mentioned where you have the boy to get married young. That creates stress Mansura kind of creates some stress. It's just a big cycle that can be turned around overnight and nothing to change you would have to do over. I hold it in you would NEVER military

Respondent: people learn a lot of things in the military if they allow themselves to but a lot of people come in come into the military knowing the exact same amount as the plan they left the military and I guess also mindset. So it's just it's is it's one of those things that I really don't think unless you know you find a way to adjust somebodies mindset based off of their upbringing. I really don't think it they can change. I mean I give props to the military for the programs that they have up and running. A lot of the things that they do but if people don't take them seriously. There he doesn't want to command structure specially the one of the benefits is that yes there exists here. Then it just doesn't work and if you have a situation where you want to internally police or so and so it's not even really applied.

Interviewer: How good how could it be more evenly applied things that you could just say

Respondent: yeah this is the nature of dealing with people.

Interviewer: Anything I should have asked here that I didn't ask you were some on your mind on this line of questioning and I need to say

Respondent: no

Interviewer: they have covered the gambit there trying to and trying to exhaust every day and years of preaching patience with you know your phone but thanks for everything he's done and I could get to ask you some more questions but I think I just keep recovering old ground from stuff right here.
R: All right. Today is January the 29th 2016 at fort Bragg, speaking to... So just so we can set the background here, and to know kind of where you're coming from, can you say a few things about background, talk about yourself, where you're from? Age, rank?

B: I was born in and I moved when I was about four to It's right on the border of I joined the military, signed my papers when I was nineteen and ended up getting in when I was twenty, and I've been in the army for five years and I've been in Fort Bragg the whole time. Besides airborne school and rangers school.

R: So right out of high school?

B: I did two years, well, a year and a half of college, I wanted to play college baseball. I was playing college baseball.

R: Where did you go to college?

B: A in , in .

R: and they have baseball there?

B: Yep, we played our home games in . There's a minor league stadium in later on

R: and you're...you're your age, again? I'm sorry if I'm repeating myself.

B: I’m 25

R: and your rank?

B: Sergeant

R: Sergeant…and you're an infantry man?

B: Yes.

R: And why did you choose to enlist in the army, the military?

B: Because my dad's a New York City fireman, my uncle is a new York city fireman, and so was my dad's best friend and he was killed on 9/11 and that made me very angry as a kid September 12th, 2001 is the day I decided to join the military.

R: Wow, wow. I know that’s changed a lot of people, um, I haven’t met anybody who has that happen...has, have your feelings changed about the military since the time you've been here?

B: Nope

R: you still strongly believe in what you're doing?

B: Well if you have a 12 year grudge you don’t really forget it.
R: How many deployments have you been on?

B: one.

R: When was that, how long was that?

B: we got back in September, we were there for nine months, January to September of this last year.

R: Um interesting, you're from New York and that's it. I find it interesting and I say that because I’m here from Texas. Any other interesting things about yourself?

B: I don't think so.

R: Okay, you're about to get married?

B: Yep

R: Alright, well as I said before I'm interested in looking at the culture of drinking in the military and social influences. But what about you drinking before you went in the military, can you describe your, how often and on what occasions you drink?

B: I played a lot of sports in high school so I mean sports teams I played on had parties, friends I knew had parties. I mean it was, I didn't, I didn't drink until I was, I guess I mean I started drinking when I was, I had my first beer when I was sixteen I guess, I wouldn't even call call it a beer, it was one of those Smirnoff, you know, like Smirnoff ices, just one of those when I was sixteen, so that was like my first actual drink and just being, playing sports in high school and things like that. And here you have that core group of friends. I mean you guys party together you do almost everything together so that's I guess how it started

R: In your family, I mean I know you said you didn't start drinking until you were sixteen and your family background, did that have an influence on your not drinking until that time?

B: Um, a little bit. My parents were…they were strict, they weren’t super strict I just didn't feel the need for it at the time, I just didn't really care for it. It was a something that wasn’t introduced to me yet. So I mean I mean, my parents drank, things like that, but it wasn't…I mean, they never let me drink socially in the house or anything so I never, It wasn’t something I was, it wasn’t something I was brought up on.

R: Okay, um when you came into the military, I mean, how would you compare, how would you compare your drinking with your other peers?

B: With my other peers?

R: like when you came into the military, and then you know now in the military, how would you know, where do you drink, how much you drink, when you drink?
B: Um, it's probably about the same, if not a little bit more now that I'm in the military, you feel more freedom, like in high school and I guess in college is about the same, but in high school you got to go home, things like that. I mean now you have a little more freedom so you come out on certain nights, you didn't go out in high school, things like that but I mean, the atmosphere still the same if you I mean for me at least, just playing sports and I have a platoon of guys you hang out with, things like that. You got good friends.

R: So how would you define your drinking now? I mean to others in the military. I mean it's both present now. Yes, I was trying to go back. I mean, when you first came in the military, did you pretty much, you know, was it pretty much the same? Did the military really the influence you?

B: Did I drink the same way? No no no I drank the same way.

R: so how would you describe your drinking, you know, weekends?

B: weekends if I have a day off the next day I'll drink that night and, any time there's a chance to drink

R: When you drink how many or how few or how much, it's going to range?

B: It's kind of a tough question to answer because a lot of the nights we we get pretty drunk, you don't really count. You know what I'm saying? It gets up there.

R: Yeah Ok, is that like a once a month thing, or?

B: way more than once a month

R: Twice a month, on the weekends?

B: out on the weekends? I mean when it's football season here every weekend, including Sunday.

R: Yeah. So you live close by here within walking distance of here.

B:Yeah.

R: You're able to do that, no problem, without worrying. And it's good to you know how things are changing the military, so you have a lot to think a lot more about. That's you know because you've been in for a lot of things…so on the, what about the months on the week days it's pretty much a no-go, or it's pretty much like?

B: Yeah, I mean on the weekdays, on the weekdays if I got to wake up and do P.T. I mean I don't really go out and drink. I got to be up early anyway, I'd rather feel good for P.T. not saying that I haven't drank on the night before I go to work but I don't drink as much. I mean, I usually don't drink and if I have it's not as much. So you're so you're about to get, to you're single. So how has being almost married changed things?

B: Not at all, me and my fiance have been together for four years, she knew me before the army and she knew me all through the Army so she she's never seen a change. So she knows it.
R: does she live here on fort bragg?

B: she lives in New York.

R: OK I see. OK from your experiences and your observations, what you've seen in the military drinking, what do you think, it's getting to the heart of it now, one of the prime, primary reasons you engage in drinking, to take part in it, one of the reasons—

B: for me personally or as a whole?

R: Um what are the main reasons, and maybe some other reasons?

B: for me?

R: for you. Absolutely. For You

B: For me it's just, I mean they said you've got a group of guys and when everyone's drinking, and I mean not for me personally, I've always been a social guy but certain people they go out and they drink and it acts as like I guess you know I heard it described as a social lubricant. It makes people, because some people come in the Army with no life experience, they've never had a lot of friends, they never know anything like that, so they come out to new environment and maybe they decide to start drinking maybe to lighten up a little bit for me I never saw it that way, I just saw it as something you do to have fun. I don't need it to have fun but it just makes things funner, because others funny. And sometimes it makes other people funner, you don't think they're a very fun person and I think it builds that relationship out of work that you need to have a good relationship in work. I mean, that's why people in offices, they just view their people as coworkers. We have a job that you don't want to look at everyone just a coworker, having to be your friend they need to be, you have to think that they're your, they're your brother. So hanging out with them, I mean, why not get to know a guy over a couple beers or something

R: so it relates to the closeness of the bond you have here.

B: Yes

R: So speaking about that, what influence, so going into that a little more, what influence do your peers and your friends in the military have on your drinking? I mean it's going a little more into the what influence.

B: I mean maybe if I'm not doing anything and I think planned. Maybe I'm not going to drink that night but if someone calls me and says hey, you want to come out and have a couple beers at this place I'll say I'll go. I mean it's, we will go out and drink I mean and vice versa if I'm doing something and they're not maybe doing something that you give them a call and they're not doing anything they'll come hang out with you

R: other than specifically social drinking like there is you know, are there other reasons why people drink in the military?
B: It might take a little bit of pressure off a long week. I mean we do deal, we deal with a stressful job whether it's going to the range or even just day to day life, maybe someone gets yelled at and they have a really bad day or they, they fuck something up and they're like oh man it's a shitty day today and they want to blow off some steam and they throw cold beers back and they go to sleep.

R: What's stressful situations military kind of lead to that and what's different between what goes on here in the military and then the outside world that would be OK need someone to move a little personal to a reason to drink?

B: tomorrow you're going to jump out of an airplane eight hundred feet with ninety pounds of gear strapped to you knowing full well that a couple months ago somebody from your battalion has already died doing the same thing and that's just like a random Tuesday going to sit in a harness for probably three hours rigged up not jumping you know the whole day to take about eighteen hours from start to finish, you’re only going to be jumping out of the airplane for a total of fifteen seconds at the end of it you can get home at two in the morning up your back to work the next day, probably up at nine in the morning

R: I could see how that could cause a lot of anxiety

B: and if you do win that lottery and you do come out on top and you're Okay, yeah why not drink your victory beer.

R: You seem to mention how, about having the shitty day, what is shitty about it?

B: Well I mean I like jumping, so I don't really look at it, I know some people get it that way like a mess.

R: I'd say a more typical day.

B: I don’t know, um… maybe they forget a piece of equipment somewhere and they have to do, they get smoked, not, they have to do pushups or something and they get yelled at from the council, it gets put on paper that you messed this up on this day blah blah or maybe they just don't like one of their leaders. Everybody is different. Marching today isn't the same shitty day as somebody else.

R: Okay, so a lot of people that drink in the military go hand in hand

B: Cause they do

R: What do you think about alcohol use in the military?

B: Oh yes, I think it's I don't think it is I mean individuals make it a problem because they go out and make stupid decisions, but responsible individuals and drinking in the military, I think I don't think there's a problem. I don't think it should be, I don't think it should be monitored as much. If you get a DUI everyone hears a grown man, you sign a contract to the United States government that says you’re going to fight for this country, it’s a pretty grown man thing to do, but if someone drinks and drives, they should just get kicked out. There's no need for everybody else in
the army have to sit through all these griefs about being an idiot, everyone knows drinking and
driving is wrong, don’t do it. I think that drinking in the military, it's been, it's been that way
forever and I think it's going to continue to be that way because deep down I think leaders know
that that's the way that their computer gets built guys hanging out together guys throwing parties
guys just being together even if guys aren't drinking or should be drinking around and I think
deep down I think they make all these rules for people who get it do you wise but I think deep
down they know because it was that way when they came up the military there was alcohol
everywhere. They know and was even more prevalent when they were coming up to the ranks.
They used to act they used to come out of the field in their company probably in beers form or
something and it was it's not that way for us. So when we get off work, we go and buy our own.

R: So drinking in the military, for you from your experience of service to straight lines and also,
you know helps you know deal with that little stress.

B: Yeah.

R: Tough day. You see that you see some people maybe not, fortunately hasn't you believe you
see something over the edge to the point where you know this is not a healthy way to deal with
the stress in the military.

B: I've never personally seen somebody get to a point of each other like alcoholism. You know
they're just constantly drinking all the time I've never personally seen it. I know people some
people do get to that point but there's multiple programs in the Army that will help you with that.
I mean does it happen. Yes. Does it happen soley because of the military? Maybe not, you know
there could be terrible home life there could be a million other factors but I have never
personally seen somebody get to that place I'm not not to say that it has never happened. I just
never seen it firsthand

R: What about the pressure others put on you to drink, have there been occasions when others
around you were drinking you didn't want to make you feel or maybe when there were no if I tell
you that we didn't want to drink?

B: I mean you always kept some ribbing like you know someone's i got like a drink. You know
like you know like playful like joking around but will never force someone to drink. I mean like
I said we're all grown adults I mean if someone doesn't want to drink they have their reasons and
that's perfectly fine. I mean you know we're not saying they can help us if they want to drink
more beer for the rest of everyone else. We don't we don't—

R: how do you look at your peers who you know you say it helps you chemistry kind of you have
a lot of my friends that you know life in his hands on. I mean how do you look at those who don't
drink if they don't?

B: I know they they might not drink socially but they still hang out socially to guys hanging out
with the other day he was appearing and he was just sort of and he just drove me so I mean he
doesn't drink a lot either. He drinks once in a blue moon really with us. But he's always hanging
out every time a barbecue is out there and you know just as he doesn't want to drink doesn't make
that person he's don't want to hang out with us doesn't like the same drink or whatever new
recruits in the military come here. You know you know you want to fit in.
R: What would you tell, what do you tell them you wouldn't tell if you were really wanting to fit in regarding, you know, a kind of socially bonding.

B: I would tell them to form friendships and everything but I would also tell him don't do anything that you think would get you in trouble. Like if you're if a company commander stand right next to you. And you're about to do something you think they tell you not to do it don't do it don't do something stupid have all the fun in the world that you want. I mean the military offers a lot of great opportunities and a lot of fun things, I said about that airplane to do stuff like that and have fun on the weekends I mean it's your life but don't do something stupid to ruin it. Especially if you want to stay in the military don't jeopardize, some people come in with the idea they want to stay in twenty years right away so don't jeopardize that for one night of, oh I went out with my buddies and I thought we could drive, you know and that's what I would tell him and more importantly don't ruin my weekend because if you get a DUI the whole companies come and tell you some stupid shit like that you're not just screwing you're screwing everybody.

R: so even in five years, and you mentioned that you know you get to the government for instance you know how you, get an offense, even a minor offense maybe now compared to five years ago. You know what it was like when you first came in?

B: It wasn't one offense and you're gone. It was really dependent on what the offense was if you were to actually charge the DUI things like that. I mean I wasn't there for what it was like, drinking and driving didn't matter. But it was I mean they still cared like you know still a big deal but around two years two three years ago they really put the hammer down and it was one offense and you’re gone. I think was what so many change commands way up high that changed the policy. And also when they're trying to kick you out of the army for any reason at all, and trying to drive and drink is a great way to do it instead of just cut jobs, they actually have a reason.

R: How do you think drinking influences the military, and how does it differ from other parts of life other parts of society, how do you think drinking in the military is different from drinking in, I don’t know…

B: I mean it’s different. like put it this way, after this interview is over, where are you going to go?

R: home.

B: Okay, I'm not, I’m going to go back to the barracks where I live with all my friends. It's almost like a college dorm. You know. So there's and also some people, I mean I don't know I don't really get homesick, some people might get homesick. The fact that they don't go. So they guy you know that those dudes in those barracks and in your company they become an extended, I mean some guys live at home but I think the guys in the barracks like, they really become your extended family.

R: That's what it is they are your family and you take these them they visit you on leaves you see this is something. Yeah in saw so many of these people put together in one place, and you come home from work..
B: and you know, you come home from work and you go to your barracks or maybe just a hallway if you and your friends, so I mean when you get bored and you have a bunch of energy. I mean.

R: So it's just an environment

B: Yeah, they environment that it's in

R: What about the other influences, you know pricing on military bases all...taxes are lower other things are lower. How does this affect, how does this influence theory or the available pricing availability?

B: I think that no, no matter what they price it on base so much you're going to be able to drink anyway. I mean the pricing doesn't matter, to matter what the price of gas is people so you drive their cars and if they raise it on on posters going to go off and it doesn't the pricing has no has nothing to do with it. It's more of the environment than it is the price all drink a feeling that I'll drink of six dollars you know if you were I say OK if people are going to drive twenty miles and bring home half I'll drink a six dollar bottle of beer in New York the same way I'd drink a two dollar beer in north carolina.

R: All right well have you ever felt I mean, have you ever felt you drink when you wouldn't because the prices are right?

B: I don't think that's a question probably doesn't pertain to me because when I came down here everything was cheaper than New York. Everything was cheaper. It just in the state of North Carolina right. Not even on base I don't even notice the price change from on base to Carolina because I was still so blown away that cheap everything was just in North Carolina.

R: So maybe that, I mean, does the pricing help?

B: I mean yeah, I mean you get your beer for cheaper but the same time every year there was a car they just drive off post to go get their beer bring it back.

R: How often and to what extent is alcohol involved in your down time on the weekends?

B: On the weekends, a lot, during the week my downtime is usually consumed by just getting ready for the next day and playing videogames and getting some sleep, but on the weekends I mean it's a pretty, pretty common staple weekend I mean during the summers we grill out. In the barracks or at outside of the barracks we could play cornhole and drink and hang out and that night.

R: So on what occasions is alcohol not involved?

B: when you're sleeping. I mean it's it's a pretty common thing. I mean, usually I mean it ends up being there so that people, people do it

R: just like you say, the environment or something and some of the guys, the young guys
B: Yeah, even if you’re not drinking, somebody else is drinking. There’s never a time where it just doesn't happen. There’s someone in the barracks who is drinking.

R: Let's go back to the stress and strain military, about the stress and strain of military life whether it be you know having a bad day at work, jumping out of a plane. Or maybe the command structure or other things going on at what point do you feel that this has led you to drink?

B: it would probably have to be other people I love my job. I've already reenlisted, I reenlisted when I was overseas in Iraq. That was my second reenlistment, and I like what I do. I don't I don't drink because I get stressed I drink just because I like to have fun, but other people join the army or any military branch and they hear your story.

R: So you, you're higher than a few others?

B: Yeah, also under a lot a lot of people

R: but you don’t have to deal with command coming down on you?

B: Oh no. As I mean if it comes down on us, probably it's harder because we're in charge of those guys, but at the same time it's a welcome responsibility if you like when you do you care about what you're doing you know that you know that this bunch. A lot of people join the military and they realize it wasn’t for them. So that's the people you usually see complaining about a lot of things, stuff like that. I mean I’m not sure the guys drink more because they don't, because I love my job and I probably drink more than those guys do. But I mean it really I mean it's I think it's really just the free time because the army. I mean you're off at five you get off at hopefully five, maybe so like today I got off at six thirty, because they're doing testing and stuff so I think it's just a fact that you have free time to do what you want for yourself that people turn to drinking

R: but what about you know people come into this environment you know who have to work on things have a tendency towards drinking at home, may have an alcoholic tendency in them? I can't speak to that, but if you’re thrown into this environment and maybe you shouldn't be in this environment because you have this condition?

B: they should definitely talk to someone because it's, the army is a job that is in the right place at the right time in the right uniform, you’re doing the right thing. So I mean there could be people that are hiding their alcoholism completely. So if they do have those tendencies and they feel it's sort of spiral out of control, they should definitely talk to somebody because not only you don't know you're put your career in danger and yourself in danger. So that's without them I think listen you need to talk to.

R: Have you had that talk with any of your peers?

B: No I haven't had that talk with any of my and my friends as I said I like to drink a lot and I drink socially but I also know during the week that there's no point in really drinking. So I mean if someone is drinking every single night and start to really mess up at work you might have to talk with that guy and send him to a program.
R: You know, so you mention your drinking patterns haven't changed before, during or after the military?

B: No, pretty much as I said the Army wasn't super culture shock life change for me because the time I was five years old I was playing on a team where I had a coach who told us what we needed to do and I was working towards a team goal, it wasn't about me, it was it wasn't all about me I had to work for a team to make sure the team accomplished a goal, so the army was not foreign to me I knew what needed to be done. My dad was in the military, my uncle has been in the military, a lot of my family has been in the military. I mean they weren’t in their career long, but they did their four years and they got out, so I already knew what this was about and I've played sports my whole life, multiple sports over the years, so I knew what this was exactly.

R: So what is your understanding of the standard policy on alcohol, the use and overuse and policy on alcohol related offenses?

B: I know you can't be drunk on duty. I know you can’t drink twenty four hours before a job. I know to not drink and drive one hundred percent. I know if you're involved in something that involves domestic violence. Pretty much any alcohol related incident you’re going to be in a lot of trouble, drinking and driving and domestic abuse are probably the big ones.

R: Has this policy in the time you've been here, has this specific policy itself changed?

B: I mean when I first came in, I mean were there with their rules any different. I think I think when I first came in. It was two alcohol related incidents and you were done and then they changed it to one.  I think that was the only real change, everything else they take very seriously but like I think it was one thing it was one, two DUls and you're kicked out and then I think now it’s just one.

R: What about the enforcement policy, what is your understanding or how do you see how getting even worse is you know, so how do you enforce that. How do you as a sergeant enforce, deal with deal with those who you can tell are drunk, maybe if you had that situation?

B: I've never had anybody show up for duty wasted, like drunk, no. now I could tell that they probably drank the night before but they're, I know they're not drunk, I know they're not still drunk I know they just didn't sleep too well, I mean guess what, you're going for a run. You're grown man you know you have to do P.T. tomorrow. You're coming for a run, I mean going for a run hung over is not fun but I've never had anybody actually like actively drunk on duty ever, like that’s the thing, everyone always thinks that it's like we're just always rampantly drunk, a lot of dudes, they're responsible just when they're off, they like to drink like there's, that image is skewed I think to the public, they think that, Oh we're just, cheers, beer foam everywhere, we're always partying. When it's time to do work, we're there to do work when we have our time off is when we when we party but when it's time to do business, we do business and I think place I think that gets lost on the public a lot

R: is there a difference though in the end in how you and someone else who had to deal with it, with the higher commands have you seen a difference from the policy? How much how much does it differ?
B: I don't think there is, I don't think that there is a difference in the policy. Do I think it could enforce me, or certain people would enforce it differently given the chance, yes, I think certain people wouldn't force it differently depending on who that soldier is and things like that but have ever seen it enforced one way or the other? No I've always seen it cut and dried. But do I think it could happen? Absolutely. Yeah.

R: What if one of they were soldiers that were important to the unit and played a big role?

B: it could go two ways though, that’s the thing

R: and what if there were a soldier who was, you know, kind of a slacker.

B: Exactly. I mean, but I said at the same time it goes both ways, you could have a commander. That's where it's really up to he's in charge, and you can have a commander that says this guy is a good guy for the unit. Let's ease up on him or you the commander, say he's a brand new commander and he's trying to say let people know he's in charge, and says you know what this guy's good P.T., he’s done all this good stuff… dropped from the Army. I want people to know that I'm in charge, I’m not playing around. I said it all depends on who's in charge, and they can either ease up on him or they could hammer that guy you know hard and then make a point

R: So there are written rules and there are unwritten, the unwritten rules for how you police yourself. How do you, you know, hey you know tell someone who's an equal to you are right and so they don't have to deal with those unfortunate consequences of street consequences. How do you how do you police yourselves?

B: A lot of the times I don't see a lot of guys under me at parties, the guys are usually equal in rank so I don't see them a lot but we do safety briefs every, every weekend where we don't drink and drive don't do this don't do that, some dude from whatever got this, this happened, but I tell my guys every single weekend is, don't ruin my weekend. I'm in charge of you and no matter what happens. So you have to come back to work to me on Monday. So do not ruin my weekend. And they take that for what it's worth, they read between whatever lines those are and they don't ruin my weekend.

R: Do you ever go out socially with them, drink with them?

B: if we had like a company function, I would be around them. I mean if we had, like I said if we had a company mandated function I would but it wouldn't be good for me to just… if we did as a squad building a vent, yes but I wouldn't go out with members of my squad individually because any kind of

R: right right.

B: It sets that, the yeah you know. Yeah.

R: So you don't put yourself in the situation and they probably don't want to put themselves in the situation with you because well yeah yeah.

B: you can be friendly with them but you're not supposed to be their friend.
R: So you don't ever find yourself in that situation where you find yourself, you know, you're supposed to drink with equals, but see now it's different if I say hey we're doing a squad cohesion thing for you, he didn't think it's all go as a squad, we'll all go out together. Just what you say, and I'll buy the first, the first pitcher whatever. We’ll hang out and we’ll talk about how the week when things like that, doing it as a squad wouldn't be a bad thing because in there's no favoritism. But I wouldn't do it individually, just hanging out, like oh hey P.F.C. in my squad you want to go watch the football game this weekend? No. Because then say that kid is a good soldier and he ends up getting promoted for reasons all his own he's just a good soldier, he gets promoted, then they're all like I know how that guy got promoted, he went out with Sergeant whatever on the weekend. So it just doesn't look good.

R: So you say you're in a position to, you know, tell people you know how they need to how they behave, how they should handle themselves, how long have you been in this role?

B: I got promoted to sergeant November 1st, 2013. This past November, this past November was two years.

R: Do you see, I mean in the way you approach that, do you see yourself different from how it was when you were lower in rank, or did you approach it differently when you first came in?

B: I, when you're a leader you take leadership things from everybody that's ever been in charge you. You kind of pick things and you kind of I guess say if you're like an author, you read a million books you like somebody’s writing style here, you don't like that. So you kind of mix and match your leadership style by matching things you like and don't like, so I tell my guys how things are going to be, but the same time I guess I on the weekends I give them enough leash to hang themselves but before they do I say listen you're not going to ruin my career by drinking and driving. It's your career. I'm going to give you the safety briefing tell you not to ruin my weekend and ruin your weekend. But in the end it's ultimately I'm not going to babysit you. I'm not going to make sure you don't drink and drive I can't be with you at all times. It's your decision to take that key and put it in the car and drive home when you know you're wasted, so I guess I do tell them what they need to do with the same time also let them know they're grown men and I think that works too. I think a lot of people in the army talk to people that are below them like their children sometimes and then they take it as, oh screw that guy, as if sometimes you just hear you're square with the guy you say hey don't fuck up this weekend and then we can all come in the next weekend or the next week and wait for the next weekend. You're only going to have as many weekends as we can because you don’t fuck up, because once you drink and drive, It's over for you. You’re going to be on extra duty, your military career is over they might take your benefits because they're chattering you, I mean the only person you're screwing is yourself, so I don't think you're going to spite anybody by going out drinking and driving because you’re not, nobody cares.

R: It's a strong message around here. So speaking of that, what are the repercussions faced by those different levels of alcohol related problems, from coming to work intoxicated…What are the repercussions?

B: coming to work hungover, you like might get smoked, have to do pushups for a little bit just to make you feel like shit so you probably won't do it again. Drinking and driving, you're
probably going to get shattered. Unless you end up blowing a breathalyzer and for some reason the breathalyzer is broken, and you don't get charged with DUI you just get reckless driving or something

R: do they wait for the process to go through court?

B: they do sometimes but other times they don't. Some people do wait for that other people say we have a zero tolerance policy of drinking and driving. I don't care if you didn't pull over. You still do something so that's kind of I guess commanders discretion I guess. And then it goes all the way up to if you're drinking or even if you're not drinking then you have a domestic violence incident, usually it happens with alcohol involved and there are some quite a lot of very many and that if you're convicted of a crime of domestic abuse, you're not allowed to handle a firearm and in our line of work, guess what it's all firearms. So if you're charged with domestic violence and you can't handle a firearm. You just got yourself kicked out together for one night

R: if they begin to have these repercussions since the time you've been here from the time, why haven't they changed? Have they changed quite a bit, in that you mention why have they changed?

B: They've changed because I think the army believes that the harder they come down on the individual it's going to change the actions of many. I've never changed my drinking the whole time I’ve been in the military because I have a certain set of values and a core group of friends good enough also is another big thing that I mean will say in the craziest most ass backwards world ever. This would never happen because I would I hate drinking driving, I think it's the stupidest thing you could ever do because it's the most one of the most selfish things you can do because that motherfucker driving a car never dies. It's always somebody else, but I'd say I'd die for some reason I said hypothetically, If I was going to go out and drink and drive, I've a couple friends who would probably smack me cross the face and be like, you're out of your fuckin mind if you think you're driving like, you also have to hang out with people who aren't going to be like oh no man, you're definitely good, it'll be so much easier than calling a taxi. I have friends that know, and that do plan on staying in, that's the, if you hang out with the hate the Army you're probably intend to make more bad decisions because they don't care about their careers, but if few details people who are dedicated the same thing you are going to make better decisions because I have friends that I know they would tell me I'm doing something stupid, and I'd tell, I would tell someone. Hey I'll fight you before you get that car, you're not getting in that car.

R: So this is this kind of healthy behavior, I mean is it instilled in you, being around others around you knowing the repercussions?

B: I don't, I don't know if it's, been in the military or helping others and I think it's just having a sense of looking out for your team

R: And yet at the same time you find an irony like that here you are in this environment that once you drink you know that's, that's encouraging alcohol use. And then they're saying don't do this, don't do that, don't do something stupid, I mean do you find those in opposition?

B: I mean that’s just the army though, I mean you think about it, that's exactly the rules of engagement. They tell us you're trained to kill, you're a killer, and they tell you, okay, you can't
kill this person if he's doing this to, you know kill this person you're doing that thing, that's what
the Army's based off.

R: I have things, you mentioned earlier, are stricter now. And I think you've mentioned earlier
that you know that sort of means to wean the army, slim down the army. So do you believe that's
the reason why it's become stricter?

R: I think that's a loophole, I think it's just coincidence. What I really really think it's become
there is because more and more people have screwed it up because I think I mean I really just
think it goes back to how you were raised as a kid, I mean you know right and wrong whether
you're drunk or not I don't care how drunk you are and care what you think is is it I mean you
have a certain set of morals and your follows morals, one beer fifty beers, and I'm not talking
about morals like you have sex with a chick that you don't think is attractive or whatever, I’m
talking about morals like I have a chance of potentially killing someone by getting in this car. I'm
not going to do it, so I think that starts at a young age and I think a lot of people aren't really told
consequences because their parents don't care where their parents told them that they're not to
worry about consequences because they're important and they're entitled to whatever they think
they're entitled to, but I think that's why they always had to become stricter because more and
more people think that to test the rules without consequence. They grew up, they grew up in
consequence free environments where if I got an A in class, I got the A, but if I get an F. My
teacher gave me an F, you know. You know, there's no, there's never any any blame placed on
the individual and it's not you did this wrong you did that, and I think growing up that way.
Growing up being told, oh it's not your fault it's your teacher's fault, they must not like you, that
never instills Yeah you know it's not my fault I didn't do this wrong and the more things you're
told you didn't do wrong. The more things you think you can get away with and it didn't used to
be like that back in the day, kids used to be disciplined by their parents. And to come in the army
and drill sergeants put their hands on you if you acted up, drill sergeants just punch you in the
face and so they knew they knew what the chain of command was very early on. Just like I mean
I'm not saying, I wasn’t beaten as a kid but like I knew my dad was hit in the back of the head if I
was doing something wrong. I knew early on. I'm doing some wrong going to pay for it so I just
I think this account about accountability. It's about personal accountability is why they have to
to get stricter because these people think that whatever, that whatever town they came from
wherever they are, their best friend became a cop or whatever they get let off the hook every
time they're drinking driving or they're going to pull the oh it's OK I'm in the military card.
You're just like everybody else. So I think that's why the military had to get stricter because more
and more people are coming in from consequence free environments

R: So it's known among people that it's problematic but at same time it's a big part of the social
environment.

B: I'll be clear about that, have I ever seen someone get so drunk that they were almost couldn't
function? Yes. Have I ever seen drink so someone drink so much that it on a regular basis
inhibited their ability to do their job? No

R: but there are problems, I mean it does it exist here.

B: Oh absolutely.
R: When someone does have an alcohol problem, how are they dealt with?

B: It's not like a witch hunt. It's so they're there to help the guy because I mean if they can, if they can help before anything gets out and that's where they want it that's where they want to stop it. There's a program called ASAP, Army substance abuse program. They don't want to send a guy to asap after he's already drank and drove. They want to send a guy there before he does so I mean I'm sure some people think about it like oh I got sent to ASAP, some guys might welcome it. Maybe, maybe the only thing they're waiting for someone to tell them they have a problem, because that's I mean, I've seen alcoholism before in my life and sometimes the only thing you need is someone to tell you, hey you do have a problem and not even to say that you have a problem that for you, you have this problem say it's OK you have this problem. I'm going to bring you in show you are not the only one with this problem.

R: Besides ASAP, looking at the bigger picture of the military, what can the military do to address this since it's just maybe, for me it's just a part of the culture. What can be done better in the military to better address these alcohol problems?

B: what I would say is don't change anything with alcohol. Don't put any more restrictions on it but if you're drinking and driving just automatically discharging from the military, no benefits. Don't hit a million little nails hit one big nail, instead of punishing everyone and make him sit through his briefs about drinking and driving, everyone knows it's wrong and they're always going to know it's wrong

R: I mean there's always a there's a command structure where one person—

B: There is one thing it's the entire thing civilian police they don't care about that that the police reports still going to go up. So once that comes up it should be up to the army to just make sure that person gets kicked out. I've never like I said, I'm sure it does happen, but I've never seen an uneven enforcement with it and every enforcement that I've seen with drinking and driving has been right on par with whatever policies in effect at that time.

R: Outside of OK, I mean if ASAP needed to refer a solider with a problem what you know about what you've seen about people?

B: they offer AA meetings, they have things like that. Like I guess to like the chaplain assistant or to our chaplains, they put up a Flyers but I mean in case you don't want to enroll yourself in ASAP you just do it and outside program and get help through that, in case you don't want to put yourself in the system of asap I guess

R: even if there weren't an ASAP, or it wasn’t around, that I'm around me how can I know how could this story. I mean how could let's get the organization of people in there to mean that the things that are conducive to drinking things that are conducive to leading someone who is on the borderline alcoholic, or who could become an alcoholic range of me probably should be and to begin with, what could be changed about the arrangement, do you know what I’m saying?

B: I know what you're saying and I don't think there's a way to change it, I think you’re asking a question and you have a perfect storm of, of a place if you could pick one place where alcohol is going to be in the world you're going to pick a bunch of, I mean if you could pick, If you if you
look at it a beer glass or a glass of beer and you can put it with one demographic you're going to put it with teenage to mid twenty's single, single highly intense full of testosterone men. That's where if it's the best, the next person if it is probably the middle aged man on the couch watching football. But since since the sun has been the Sun since it's been glowing people have always referred beer to the middle age part of you know I mean the middle mid twenty's late teens party and especially when those teens and those middle aged twenty year olds are told you're part of the best military in the world you are the best at what you do this is this that…you have that sense of a jump out airplanes you just came back from a jump it's two in the morning on a on a Saturday morning. You jumped on a Friday and now it's Saturday morning. I did a fucking airplane guess what I'm invincible. I'm going to go out number and drink tonight. Why not go for it. Who cares.

R: So you're saying OK so you have this structure here that punishes those who do cause a problem, it’s okay…

B: there has to be some enforcement because you can People are just endangering the welfare of others for no reason. Yes there has to be some structure but I think is do less briefing on the enforcement and just do more enforcement. I think that short of declaring every military base a dry base, you're not going to stop this problem and I and I mean I call. It's called problems or talk about it as a problem but I don't see it as a problem. You're not going to stop drinking in the military even if you watch old movies about Roman warriors and before there was beer and they're drinking wine. It's just it's just how it is how it's always been, for some reason when you live some type of warrior lifestyle or and your job is to do something in the military just how it is

R: so do you do you think there are some, I mean we've talked about the some people believe there are some ways, alcohol related problems be better for us that aren't currently utilized?

B: I mean they, they have, there's a ton of programs like there's the boss program for single soldiers they send us on trips there's, there's a place like this you have to come in and drink you can come in those guys are playing ping pong drink and it's it's a choice. Joining the military was a choice. I mean it's I mean I know when they don't ever say anywhere in your contract and if you join the military you got to drink that they don't say that it's a choice you make when you get here and some people choose not to, some people but I mean everyone always says it's a the problem the military because it's it's already a group that's been wrangled in together, but at the same time it's very easy to poll the military because already all wrangled up together. No one ever says oh my goodness I can't believe all these football fans all they do is drink because it's hard to get all those people together. It's easy to take polls of guys in the military because you know where to find them. if I went to every bar on a Sunday and said How much does beer influence your life on a Sunday when you're watching football you get the same answers only from the military. It's just no one holds those people because they aren't you like we are where in the military and it's because they have more off time we don't have a lot of time so I guess we party a little bit maybe at times harder than other people do but like I said no one ever walks into a bar and says how prevalent is alcohol in your life. No one cares. But just as we wear a uniform. We wear a camouflage uniform we go to work and we're already all together. You know, no one cares what the guys in Office Max are drinking right, or the workers at Target drinking too much? No one give a shit. They just want to if they want to poke the bear, that's all they want to do.
R: Okay, so is there something I didn't even talk about that could've been talked about question if it brought up any kind of that relates?

B: The next person you should definitely ask them what time in the military do you remember that you were drinking and you had a great time, I think because everyone's focus is on the terrible terrible things and it's always it's always a small percentage but there was to a percentage out like four percent of soldiers last year got into a fatal car accident. All right that means ninety six percent of them didn't nobody ever asks. Hey you were a team. No one ever. No one ever asks the soldier. Hey were you a timid kid in high school and had no friends and you came to the military and you had a couple drinks and you feel closer to these guys you’ve ever had your entire life? Why is that. Well one night I decided to go out when I wasn’t going to go out, my buddies from my platoon I was the new guy they grabbed me up to go to the bar and I've been friends with these guys for forty years. No one ever asked that question. So we're talking friendships that last forever started in a bar sometimes from guys in the military and no one ever asked that question. No never says how did you meet your lifelong best friend that you've known for sixty five years that you went to Korea with? well I was a new guy and he had gotten there two weeks before me and he said hey we're both new guys let's go grab a beer. So in I'm not saying I mean I know your paper is not about that, but to look at it objectively I would say the next person you ask say at the end just be like Can you name a time where alcohol, when you're hanging out was awesome and nobody got in trouble, everyone had a great time, woke up the next morning and said we had an awesome night last night.
APPENDIX I

JANUARY 31, 2016 INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT
R: All right today is January 31st, 2016 here on fort bragg and I’m talking to , okay so let me set this thing up a little bit, um so you know where do you come from, um a few personal things about yourself, your age, rank, how long you’ve been in the military, why you chose to enter the military, education background, those kinds of things

B: um I’m originally from Kentucky, I’m twenty five, been in the military five years, been on one deployment, did little bit of college there a couple years college, I got a family, I’m the ninth generation in my family to enter the military you know so it's kind of expected.

R: you grew up in Kentucky?

B: Yes

R: what part of Kentucky?

B: Lexington, it’s the brunt of the state so about about eighty miles out of Cincinnati.

R: do you come from a big family?

B: not too bad, I’ve Only got sister and she’s younger than me, and a bunch of cousins.

R: and you’ve been on one deployment, was that to Iraq?

B: Afghanistan

R: And how many years ago was that?

B: that was in 2012, so four years ago now

R: So your rank is a specialist, an infantryman, what does that involve?

B: that depends, it involves a bunch of things and it depends on what you know where you are with it. I was on machine guns, so I’ve been a gunner, a team leader, I've been on assalt squads pretty much anywhere and everywhere, depeding on what they need, I’ve been a driver, literally everything

R: So you pretty much you got into to the military right after high school?

B: I said No I did a couple years of college and then after that I kind of got burned out of college a little bit and then joined the military

R: okay, well talking about the culture of drinking in the military. Can you describe your drinking before you entered the military, how often, what occasion?

B: well I was in college so mostly on weekends. Before I got any other party and stuff like that pretty much would drink about every weekend.

R: Not much different from the military?
B: Yeah it's a lot different from the military actually, I mean with the military, It's very much a part of it, for a while there I don't so much as right now, but for a while there we would drink about every day and we would get off work and start drinking, on the weekends drink constantly, um Anytime they have any kind of function with military town balls, cookouts, every time we do one of those, yeah it's very much a part of the military.

R: Yeah pretty much it's like the biggest fraternity. It's the biggest frat.

B: Oh yeah pretty much it’s like a big frat. It’s like a 400,000 man frat, the weekends is when everyone's always going now.

R: so getting back to contrast with military, how old were you when you started to drink?

B: I’d say about 19, regularly drinking

R: is it a big part of growing up in Kentucky?

B: Yeah yeah it's a very large part growing up there because like you got all of the bourbon distilleries around there, my family made moonshine. So I grew up on that, I grew up on moonshine. For us drinking is just a normal part of life as a family and I mean my family made moonshine, on my dad’s side, my aunts mom, she makes homemade peach schnapps.

R: so is this something you do with family or something and you make money, or both?

B: it’s for both, the peach and the wine we make for family but everything else that way they pretty much make family, the shine, the shine they make for family but we also sold some of it on the side, a lot of people got a really good moonshine businesses, they’ll sell it anywhere.

R: so does this create any problems with the family, or anyone who drinks in excess?

B: really having grown history and not really, more of that's mostly around Christmas time. Everyone gets together and they bring out you know bottles of peaches that have been sitting there for about ten years. Nice and nice and stout, and then a couple of cousins will have a few too many, or a lot too many, and can't really get up out of their chair only an hour in

R: but nothing like your steady life, mom and dad that kind of thing?

B: No nothing like that

R: so I'm going to ask you what role has your family's religious background may have had an effect on you here I know a lot of people from the south, you know the southern Baptists.

B: well yeah I mean my parents are Baptist, um southern Baptist, and on my dad’s side a lot of them were Presbyterian. Yeah I went to a Baptist college back home my hometown Georgia a couple years ago, and went to a southern Baptist convention, and yeah it was the same way. Don’t have any alcohol in the room, don't do it but it never stopped anyone and never stop.

R: you wonder if it just makes something worse
B: Oh it definitely does. Yeah I mean any time you do anything like that you tell him Don't do it. It's going to make it worse, it gives them this challenging, this challenge of not getting caught and how to get away from it. Like, they didn’t want it in the room in the building or anywhere out there on campus, but that never stopped the fraternities from going out running keggers and get so drunk that they've thought it would be a good idea to take all the mattresses out of the fraternity house and then jump off the four story on a mattress

R: yes, so everything has it’s problems, so how would you describe your drinking with your peers in the military?

B: I mean I guess as I've gotten older I've come to tone it down a little bit. So I'm not quite on par with all the other guys, yeah and I just you know after a while you kind of realize you got to kinda tone it back a little bit. I mean I still did every day, just not as much as a lot of the newer kids they don't as much now, but when I first got in, yeah. I've kept up with about all of them, and we drink, it wasn’t uncommon to drink a twenty pack a night.

R: And this is straight beer?

B: Usually you have beer and your whiskey. It really all depends on the person a lot of people drink beer, a lot people drink for the alcohol, most people would be about the same, it averaged out about a 12 pack a night, and on the weekends, the weekends is a lot more just cause we don't have to get up and go to work in the morning, but I mean the reasons why we drink, a lot of different ones, like here and I don't know if it’s just the army or not because I've been all I know is this post, I've been here for my entire career, um little bit of a stressful situation. You don't really get a lot of warning for anything

R: even on the weekend?

B: oh yeah, I've gotten calls like eight thirty in the morning you know polls like already. Sometimes you get some like little warning with everything. A lot of chain of command don't seem to understand a lot of stuff. So a lot of it, and just the distresses of the job, like especially where we hit a training cycle we’ll be gone, I mean we had it were we’ve been out 8-9 weeks at a time and like we'll come back up like on the weekends for briefing and everything else we've got to do, refill the trucks everything. Like you’ll leave Monday morning about eight. You know you’ll get back in the unit about five-six, probably get off work probably around eight-nine o'clock if you're lucky

R: So you tell me you’ve toned it down during the week, the week days?

B: Yeah like on the weekdays, I’ll have a couple during the week, not a huge amount it’s more social than anything during the week, if we go eat somewhere I might have one or two. If we get off work we might go have two or three to deal with everything from the day, more than anything is just taking an edge off.

R: so you’re single?

B: yes
R: have you been married?

B: no

R: so that hasn’t played a role, you don’t have somebody to you know to tell you that you know you don't have stuff here, slow it down, yada yada. That’s why, for those that are married they have a totally different dynamic, you know you have a little bit of the freedom.

B: Well I mean to a certain extent, I used drink with a bunch of other people as well because we all knew each other and it was all guys. We had all been on a deployment together so we, all of us have kind of grown closer with combat and whatever else. Yeah I mean on the weekends we used to go out with married guys, and that was months ago and I’ve seen him in the course of three or four of them, in the course of a week or so and we can go through 130-140 beers like it’s nothing

R: what are the primary reasons personnel engage in drinking in the military?

B: Umm I mean it varies a lot of it, dealing with the stresses from work to comradery, fitting in, and everyone drinks so we all sit and drink together and I mean that's how we always that's how we're going to get to know each other. I mean we used to do that a lot especially with the new guys by that the first thing that we get stuck on the weekends that's all we do is we would have beer parties where everyone just gets out there bring whatever you want to drink. Everyone's got different stuff out there. It all just kind of goes around sit out there play beer pong, blast music make everyone around angry and get to know all the new guys and I mean that's just one of the things we always did. That's a big thing. It's just it's comradery, and chilling with your guys…a part of it's dealing with everything from deployments, losing friends, things like that, a lot of people are going to drink for that, I mean I know I used to. those are the biggest ones you know really have a lot of, some people just it. That's the thing, like it's such an ingrained part of your life especially here

R: so in the barracks, for people under 21, living the barracks, how do soliders police others who are underage with drinking?

B: according to your chain in command, chain of command says they're not supposed to drink anything like that. If you're under twenty one when you're not there you have to lock up all the alcohol in your room, so it has to be secure. Has that ever actually been followed? No I mean there's no difference. Really it's just they can't go out of town and drink

R: so I guess there are underage drinkers?

B: oh yeah, you get a lot of them and I mean that's just that's just come down with it just being a part of the job, but not really part of the job. It's a part of life. The people under twenty one, they’re not supposed to drink but everyone does,they just have people go get liquor for them, or if their roommate is over twenty one. if they're under twenty one and can’t go get alcohol when it comes time on the weekends and everyone is partying, they aint got nothing to worry about. You’re not getting ID’d anywhere.

R: I think there’s kind of this rule out there…
B: yeah, you say you're twenty one, you are 21

R: so how does stress and strain from the military effect your drinking?

B: that’s the thing, especially for people like me who are single, like this is not a 9-5 job, it’s a 24/7 job, it dominates your life. So you'll get to work at 5:45 in the morning, go and do PT, go into work at 9 and you'll be there until whenever. If you're, usually most people get off by 5 but that's not always the case, I've been at work till eleven at night before, 11 at night, midnight. The stresses at work, I mean it's a high stress environment and you got so many moving parts, stuff comes down it can be totally random They may tell you you know we've only got this this in this very day and then you get all that done all the. the only real exception to that is when there are when you're on like. G.R.F or anything like that. That's a little bit different, I mean people are still going to drink on GRF too. I've seen it too many times to count, or if you're on outsource. So you're the guys who are pushing up to your right to operate at that point in time when that happens then you'll get a standing order from your commander, or whoever telling you can't have more than a certain amount of drinks because of the recon. Does it always get adhered to? No, not in the slightest but there's also, it gets adhered to more than it doesn’t, but for the sole purpose of if you get caught in and they actually do recall you're in for something like that and you are drunk, you're done you're out

R: so how has the policy changed from five years ago till now?

B: oh Yeah it’s changed a lot but that’s because the war is over and they don't bother, with a war over the army downsizing, it’s tightened up a lot but as far as like just on the weekends at random, usually you won't have too much of a battle about getting called in and I mean it can happen. Most of the time if they didn't call you in for something like that...Usually by the time you get when you get off work on Friday, usually you’re pretty good. That's not always the case but most of the top stressors of those rules, they're not going to pull you into doing something like that. They’ve kind of tightened down on that a lot as far as like just randomly calling you back into work for no reason. Usually if there's like something some kind of detail that happens over the weekend that they know about they're going to tell you about it and they are talking about that on Friday. I mean is it going to stop anyone from drinking, no, but most of the time people mostly find by the time they say they have not also sober up and that's where..it’s just changed a lot like this like I said with drinking so much a part of the culture, most people have figured out by now how do just about everything drunk and go to work anyway, it helps with the stress and I know a lot of people who’ve done that, and I mean don't get up to that's much more it's going to be coming getting to that you're right they just because they're saying you know when you're here. Everyone's got but something just I mean that's when someone starts drinking because all this other officer was trying to get most of this will sound so much. I could have a couple trying to ask someone else if they want beer or whatever. Everyone always has a blast. You know having the best beers in the world and in the freezing cold in that order. So it's one of those unspoken things so they you know couple people sit down have a few beers or people go by turns into a party and said everyone drinks together the things we turn into and there's no way you're not going to drink. Nothing. It's just it's a part of who we are everyone's always trying to outdo each other everything is competition, it's so engrained into one's mind there and every part of life with this in the culture of competition is huge there and that's what You know I did have people I think I did yeah I mean for me. I mean. Well you got a place having to peer pressure to
put it down to it's peer pressure when you see everyone else when you're drinking. You're not
going to like more or less become outcast from everyone else especially when it's guys in your
squad and you're with the guys you work with all the time and you pretty much live with most of
the time like it's something. If someone really doesn't want to drink, they're not going to force
them to I mean no one is going to hold you down or forcibly make you and most of the time it's
not too often. That's that's a part of it in a specially when you're looking at it with where I'm at
with my future, once again it comes down to competition in order to everyone's part of each
other. It's a huge Brotherhood like a gigantic, It's a huge family. That's what it is. Yeah So
you've got that everywhere. You're looking at that kind of that sort of personality type. So no I
mean it's one of those things you're not going to want to to want to not be apart of that because we realize
the cost and I think you look at everyone realizing that. So everyone gets to know each other
very well and the best way that we all get to know each other is through drinking. Let's just talk
pretty much, like I've had a few guys before that who didn't want to be apart of everyone else. It's
not that they don't drink it's just that they don't want to drink as much and they don't like dealing
with a lot of the obnoxiously drunk

R: does anyone treat the obnoxiously drunk any different?

B: for the most part you don't really, do not really treat people that different. You just don't
invite him out to parties or everything like that where they know what's going on, where you
know everyone's going to be a retard. Most of the time I mean everyone gets along just fine. I
mean you know I have a few people that don't but that's not because of drinking, and I mean if
they don't want to drink that's their choice, they'll still come out and talk about see everyone hang
out for a little bit up until everything gets completely crazy.

R: what are these different stressors like in the military environment?

B: I mean for that it really depends on leadership and the flow of communication, and for the
most part is usually non-existent because no one really knows what's going on and that's what
makes the whole little bit of chaos come full circle that like no one ever really knows what's
going on the people up higher tell people down lower something but to a certain point, and those
people tell lots of people below them and you keep going. So they have something come through
that they might have been told about nine in the morning that had to be done by 2. You know,
early in the afternoon they might know about it but as it flows down through the next thing you
know it's one o'clock, two o'clock, two fifteen you're going over something and we need this
huge thing done in forty five minutes. I don't care how you do it, make it happen. It's always
either you know like this has to be done at this point before you go home until it's done, but it
depends on the flow of communication. Now whether that message makes it all the way down
through all ultimately depends on leadership. If you get a leadership that actually you know you
got a good flow of information through there. It's usually not as bad as I mean there's always
random stuff that's going to come out but most of it slowly to play with this is you know it's
brought to you or a reasonable way out of this round that this is just yeah well it's like it's one of
those things where you know if you're getting told about something half an hour before it has to
be done that they've known about seven hours before they ask you, and you have a couple
moments to get that all kind of flowing back the way that they want it to so for that it takes a
little bit of an adjustment that it just appears usually pretty stressful because they want it done a
certain way everyone else is used to doing and they're used to doing it another way to with make
sense to them that person or that person's want to do might not make sense that but that's what
that person has done and then are going to give you a choice if you've got a good chain of
command and you've got an established system going through and most of the ones you're going
to see changing back frequently are going to be officers... usually your commander will stay will
stay there for about a year, year and a half maybe, platoon leaders about the same and we tend to
be about the same for staff sergeants are about the same all your higher command and some are
not happy about change. Charting the road back to that when you've got everything green and it's
all workable certainly you've got a guy you've got guys that are all meshed together. If you do
everything the way they know exactly when it's going to change down below to see what's going
to throw a wrench again everything down there has a very you know...it changes around.

R: do you see the effects of change, stressors?

B: Yeah I mean you'll see a lot. I mean yeah definitely effects. I mean when you get your normal
shifts you have to deal with the day to day and then you throw in even bigger wrenches and then
another wrench down at the bottom. Yeah, you're going to see a lot more people drink alcohol

R: do people use things besides alcohol?

B: Yes you'll see a few people will switch to shut up do things other than alcohol. But for the
most part you don't like that's not something that's usually condoned at all due to their strict drug
testing, it happens on a regular basis. I mean there are always going to be a few people there who
do it, like most of those people you learn those people very quickly because it never lasts
because they're just, you know, those people just don't last. Most people just end up drinking
more, because everything else is banned pretty much, just like even though Spice is considered
legal outside it's still banned here. So there's always people who are in trouble but most people
it's most people just for one thing more they're just going to drink more than usual around things.

R: do you ever see improvements when morale gets better?

B: Yeah like when things change, morale improves, you don't see as much drinking. I mean
there's always going to be things changing, but there aren't many good ideas or efforts put forth
by command to improve morale.

B: Whatever the officers and all the higher echelons of the chain of command think is going to
help out morale usually hurts it, like their idea of morale is hey let's go out, let's take the entire
brigade out on a five mile run Monday morning, which that translates to now instead of having to
be to work at 5:45 five now I've got to be to work at 4:30, to be to work at 5:30 to start the run at
6. So their idea of a morale booster is something like that or like hey let's go training, let's go out
to the field more. So that's less time than anyone has.

R: How is drinking segregated in the military, is there like a natural order with it, like you don't
do this you know?

B: there's supposed to be, up until you get to, really It's like squad leaders and above, everyone
below that drinks together, as far as what the army says as far as like fraternization goes, NCO's,
everyone like that they're not supposed to do it with a lower rank and they're not supposed to
hang out with anyone like that, a lot of squad leaders and people like that, they usually ignore

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that just because it's supposed to be a family, everyone that's enlisted once you get like certain above you are commissioned officers. Technically commissioned officers aren't supposed to drink with them. usually you won't see platoon sergeants drinking with those guys, other than it's a ball or something where everyone's together the entire time but usually you'll never see you'll never see Officers drinking with those guys. You'll see officers drinking with squad leaders, people like that, if you've got a good squad leader, it doesn't matter he'll drink and joke with all of them just because that's what everyone does once it's out there and it builds a comradery it's one of those kind of like it's one of those unspoken ways, like everyone is together in this. But you see a huge break in this , between officers and enlisted guys, officers won't drink with enlisted guys, so you see a huge break in there, so it's good and it's bad, but at the same time you're looking at life from the lower life, from a lower point looking up that way. It's like having someone think they can do better than everyone else. So you got a guy that you know the only thing that he's got to him is a four-year degree and this. An officer is supposed to lead these guys, supposed to be better than all these people and you look at a lot of guys, like in my old unit when we got back in, yeah like that break was really big here but you're talking about an entire platoon of combat veterans and then you know that have actually seen combat, they've actually done this before that are supposed to be listening to a dude and the only thing he's got in his name is a four year degree and it's fresh out of every basic officers that, and you see breaks in there but most of that comes down to your policy, or teaching that new P.L. have a better now as it goes on, but now you see more officers get treated a little bit, well officers get treated a lot different, and that goes back to how everything's downsizing and you're not going to have as many lower enlisted guys that are a lot like that a lot of companies and all the guys that have been there for a while are being promoted, moving up or they're getting out so a lot of the new guys coming in are fresh, just they've never never seen anything. And for that, in that instance, it might work but for the most part it's a huge it's a it's a huge gap, and so what that comes down to is you know that officer doesn't really connect to awfully well with his guys which, so he doesn't see, you know how his decisions affect them and you can't exactly just go up and tell an officer that what he's doing is stupid. You know, if it's his bright idea for an eighteen hour work day, it's retarded, it's just completely idiotic and then you're getting in the legal trouble with the army, you can't tell him at all. I mean if you've got a good one, some of them will listen, a lot of them won't, and you can't really just go there and tell him you know this bright idea he just came up with all this going for a week doing something that we could literally do in the afternoon on our field is stupid, you can't really tell that, now all the enlisted guys together, we tell that to each other all the time to let you think this is completely yourself and your squad leaders. If you've got a good squad leader, they'll sit there and tell them they're retarded, um If you don't have a good squad leader, It's more focused on getting himself promoted, he's just going to go. So whatever that comes down to as far as drinking is concerned, this is the only outlet you got. So everyone will sit there and then tell what they wish they could tell the guy

R: how does hanging out with your buddies in the military make things better, like I don't know how does that make your life, your work environment, how does that makes things better overall?

B: so it's everyone you live and work with, they become more like brothers than anything, it's a brotherhood. So everyone's drinking with their families. Everyone just sits there, you know it lets everyone kind of act crazy together and builds a little bit more trust and it's one of those things where everyone just kind of sits and does that together where everyone you know will sit there
and they'll drink during that whole squad platoon, all those guys working together. You know when you get that call going to go down range, those are guys who are going to be by your side. So you know how they are separate, you know how they are completely inside and out. Yeah I mean that's a guy that's going to be, ultimately it's going to be responsible for watching your back and he's going to be responsible for watching yours. So you know them completely, just inside and out, so if you know something you wish you never knew everything haha, so yeah you think of that and think about that times eighteen people that know more ultimately about your own self even than your family does. I mean it's a closer bond and that bond comes from everyone in the field together, just all of that and it comes time when everyone gets off work, everyone goes out and loosens up together so that's one of the things it comes down to, you know that if you get out of town, go out of town drinking, someone does something stupid, you make the wrong person at the bar angry, you're not out there by yourself you're out there with eighteen other guys, and no matter how much you might make yourself look like an idiot, they're still going to have your back right. And so that's one of the things that's why when I was growing up in the army, it was always encouraged that everyone should drink together and not alone, you don't go out alone, everyone goes out together.

R: how do you look at your peers who do drink alone?

B: You'll see it to a certain extent, usually you won't see it as much, like the ones who drink alone when they try to ultimately, you know people will try to drag them out of it or get them to go and drink with everyone else. If they don't want to go, ultilmate we’ll get you to come out. Yeah I mean unless you live off base it can be kind of difficult to, especially when a like company where you've been there for a while, everyone knows each other, because it's one of those things like everyone jokes together. You won’t really see a lot of people drink alone. And that's one of those things, It's more towards more, more combat people see that kind of stuff, when you see people that have like personnel jobs or like a an office job and go drink alone, yeah they're probably going to know if you're going to stay and drink but you're looking at people in like combat arms, because at the end of the day, everyone has to watch out for others. If you don't have each other's back you know usually, like everyone doesn't know everyone, or how everyone's going to react, we'll just pop off, you’re going to have a palooza.  So yeah it's very much a thing that everyone drinkers together. You might have to drink you like you might not drink with all thirty- forty people in your platoon or more but you have a group of people that you'll sit there and do everything with and that's one of those things where like if you don't, you're going to get it, it's coming. Like they’re going to drag you out until it just comes together a lot, like most of the ones you'll see won’t really drink, or they’ll drink by themselves at first. And that's when like this seems to get there. That's when everyone drags them out.

R: So what happens to guys who don’t drink? How do you build the trust?

B: um the minute everyone gets off work instead of like immediately starting to drink, I want to meet the guy or something like this, drag him out, and we're going to find out what that guy likes to do I want to do some stuff that way you know once again that he's coming.

R: suppose I was a new recruit to the military who wants to fit in, what would you say to me in regards to drinking and trying to fit in?
B: don't drink yourself to death on the first night. Don't try to keep up with everyone, that’s not going to work, just go out with the guys in your squad and have fun because they are fun to work with. You figure out who not to drink with and who you rather hang around, and avoid the people who want to start fights .. you find him out pretty quick. Everyone's got each other's back at home and when you go out. Don't stay here, go out with the guys. Everyone's going to learn about each other you know everyone's going to be fine

R: what happens to the guys who are kind of shy, I mean do they fall by the wayside, what happens to guys like that?

B: they won't fall by the wayside, I mean or eventually, whether or not someone is a huge introvert or I mean whether they like it or not they're getting in. Eventually people are going to be with them if we're going to be around them if they don't want to go out and drink with everyone I would still find someone to be with them, but eventually everyone gets brought in through whatever way, if it's someone they don't really drink much, I mean it’s like going to the gym in the army, everyone has to do it, like if someone that you know they don't like to drink a lot but they'll spend a lot of time in the gym, go to the gym in the afternoons

R: comparing drinking to the outside of the military, how do the influences to drink differ?

B: I mean from what I've seen from my civilian buddies, none of them drink as much as me, at all. You know, they can put that separation between them and their job, when they get off work they're off work. You know, they go back to their house and they don't have to see, if they don't want to see anyone from their work they don't have to. Yeah like no matter how bad a day you’ve had, it’s your world. If you live far enough away you can get away from everyone. You know you don't have to see those people if you don't want to. If you’ve had a bad day at work here, you get off work and you go back to the barracks where you're surrounded by everyone there that’s had just as bad of a day as you had, so you really have no separation from it.

R: So the environment and everybody else around you makes the drinking worse?

B: yeah yeah I mean it does make it worse, cause going to make something really. And this is the only way you're really going to get away from everything like military wise, you're going to have to go out to like probably like Southern Pines, you're going to have to go like close to an hour having to get away from anything like that. Cause this is a military town. You get off work you go up to town you're going to run into people, you're going to run into the military people. The post is so big and there's so many people here, there's no way to escape it short of going like this and like an hour more out of here, and that's the only way you're going to get away. It's something it's in every aspect of your life as long as you're in, there's no way of changing that.

R: So everybody says a little bit little cheaper to buy alcohol on base than the outside, is it a little cheaper than the outside?

B: it’s considered cheaper, like the two cheapest things on post are alcohol and nicotine compared to the outside world, like those are the two cheapest things in town relative to the outside.

R: how does that influence how much you or others drink?
B: I mean it doesn't really change it a whole lot because I mean regardless it's like it's always going to be there like it's not going away and I mean yeah sure it's like everybody in Alaska, I had a buddy from Alaska and he said being up in Alaska and your station there at the post he was at the post commander up there decided he was going to try and ban alcohol from the post needed to get the companion tired but the backlash from that was so bad that it only lasted about six weeks. So I mean, he can ban it on post if he wanted to but it's not going to stop anyone from drinking just the seven drinking in some place where it's safe where they're not going to get in trouble. But then they're going to go out there get lit and then get in trouble. Because at the end of the day they have to have an outlet for all this stuff, for all the stupid stuff they have to deal with

R: Have you ever felt that you drank more because the price or availability on base?

R: Um not really, but I mean it's better that they have it here where you know, everyone can go ahead and get it. Most people have a P.X. within walking range, so they're not going to do stupid things like trying to go get more, because I mean they do have restrictions on how much you're supposed to have in your room. Are those extra restrictions ever really adhered to? No, I mean especially not on the weekends, definitely not on the weekends, which even the restriction itself is what's causing more issues. It causes more problems than it does good, because the whole idea from the chain of command is hey, we're not going to condone drinking even though it's a part of everything, and it's a part of the actual like the town ceremony when they do Italian balls and everything like that, it's an ingrained part of the ceremony and of all the heritage and tradition and everything that goes into the ceremony like it's a part of it, but since the Army, well it's more of the federal government with the stance of taking up against alcohol than anything else, so whenever the Army decided they won't condone it, so they try to go with the whole policy you when you live in barracks only thing you can have is either a twelve pack of beer a piece or a bottle of liquor or a bottle of wine. That's going to last most people about two hours.

R: so it creates problems within itself?

B: well I mean it's not really so much that, as far as it’s going to create problems a problem is going to make you know someone likes to drink beer, if someone prefers a beer over whiskey, or over any kind of hard liquor girl and they only get a 12 pack, that’s going to last them like I said about a couple hours. They’re going to be like oh shit I'm out of beer, I really need to go get more, but if they start but if you get off work at eight, nine o'clock at night on Friday the post is closed. Next thing I know It's eleven at night. Hey it's eleven, I'm out of here, I need more, but they're only a 12 pack deep. They're going to drive out and go get more beer, because it’s not going to stop them and then they’re going to get a DUI. Now there used to be a twenty-four hour P.X. and that one was great, and then they closed it down

R: So drinking and the military go hand in hand?

B: yeah, I mean they really do, most people he said like depending on how much is planned for that day or whenever you really get off, because they tell you that you have to go to the gym on your and drink. So most people what they're going to do when they get off work, eat, go the gym, come back and start again. That's really what most people do. That's really what a lot of us do. It's just a part of life. Yeah but then you have quite a few people that know that because they
don't have the time they'll start drinking first and then go to the gym right afterwards which presents its own health risks. I mean you go to the gym lit and try to go and lift heavy, and you’re out at the gym, so is everybody who’s watching you. Yeah that's going to present its own health risks.

R: So can you tell me about the stress and strain, like I talked about the dynamics of the commands and various things that changed in the system here, what causes you or others to drink heavily?

B: the big thing is that they missed out with the family. So you'll get a good bit of downtime, for that reason to go spend time with families everything. However if your higher echelon has family problems at home and doesn’t want to go home, he’s going to keep the whole company there, so while the higher chain of command may you know say hey, everyone's gone, I don't want anyone here past like fifteen hundred three talking afternoon just with our families. You got a first sergeant who’s having a fight with his wife, anything like that or just recently go through a divorce and want to be home yet. You know whole company staying here till eight thirty at night because they don't want to be home and since I'm not going to be home, I don't know where else to go. So you're going to be sitting there like at eight thirty at night literally doing nothing and like literally yourself so perks of being there. Just because your chain of command doesn't want to go home yet, you know everything like and down and there's nothing else to take you get other guys of course, so it's like you just sat here and wasted five hours of my time. It's like you know I've literally been here for five hours for nothing and you can't go and tell the guy you know can't go tell him. His purpose here just as a reason for going to be, like I'm the first sergeant and I can do whatever because he's been in so long. The worst they can do is force them to retire. And then you’ve got some guys or you know Yet you have first are going to want to go home early and they can give us our major like like used to have like it was our gates our major day. His idea if you got the least it seventeen hundred five o'clock in the afternoon that you considered an early and then we can either work till nine ten. Just because he didn't want to go home because he was fighting with his wife

R: so what do you do when you get off, where do you go, and do you drink when you get upset, like a pity party?

B: Yes pretty much it's not so much a pity party as it's a drink and that's where everyone is a bit have been pretty much it's everyone, just so you're trying to just start thinking about how stupid chain of command is, because at the end of the day they really don't care about people and they make that very very clear, and then that's the time where everybody just goes and vents and says what they wish they could without getting in trouble or getting kicked out

R: you’ve mentioned that you’ve been on one deployment, and you know based on some you know things that trip you up, that’s changed the way you look at being in certain situations, being on base, have you had type of situation happen to you?

B: Yeah, I mean you do, and that’s where…he did and that's one of those things where…we had we had a lot of fire fights on our side and we had three guys in my platoon that got killed, guys that I knew really well. So for that one, It's one of those things where it's more of like getting everyone together, you know more like building a family thing which you don't really see so
much anymore except for from the guys from the other guys, some of the older guys, and it's one of those things where it's like you're very much like make these guys know like make it all make them. You know, this is very much a family, and the worst thing for you isn't dying, it’s knowing that someone that you were responsible for died and you have to come back with it because that's something that you're going to live with for the rest of your life, and those guys you learn, you get closer to us and everyone becomes a family, so like everyone like everyone sticks together and that's the biggest thing. It's one of those things where it's like you there's really like there's no bond stronger than our bond formed in combat. There really isn't. And for the guys you went there with like originally, you know your first new guys are going to be a little of the outsiders and that's what a lot of my guys that I’ve been there with did, alienated those guys a little bit. Just because you know we went down the last time we got close to all these guys and then we buried three. You don't want to go through that. And part of me saw that, too, like these new guys who are coming in, they're apart of the family. They're part of the Brotherhood. You know and you bring them in and I mean obviously they're going to have to earn their stripes and once they were in that place, there’s no difference, you know it's all a family.

R: Has PTSD effected you at all? (1:15:09)

B: First I did like the first probably the first year I did really bad

R: do they make you go through a screening when you get back?

B: Yeah they do. I mean they force you to but since you're forced to give most people they're going to tell you they're going to whatever they want to say with you. Yeah they're going to tell whatever they want you to be left alone. So they can go and go off and deal with it with their brother's family like no family and everyone. Kind of deal with it. Everyone kind of deals that you get and that's the thing and like after the first year it was bad. Like I definitely self medicated. I’d drink. I probably have a couple shots in the morning before I went to P.T. come back and have another two or three shots. Then when we got off work I’d drink. And a lot of us did that, and I did that for about a year and then I realized you know what am I doing myself. Isn't it really did start start to affect a lot of stuff like a lot of us were drinking to function. That's what it came down to and eventually you can’t keep doing that, some people get out of it, some people don't and for the ones who want to get out of it you try to help them, help the ones that don't and I mean everyone’s still going to drink, that’s still going to be there. Yeah you know I mean it's almost like you don't really see what you're doing until it’s just too late and I didn't see it in myself at first like my team here, someone noticed me and me and him are real close and he finally saw it and was like What are you doing to yourself you know, and like no one really noticed it really except for him, like all of us were doing it, his whole company, everything all of us were doing it, and like the whole company like my squad leader was just as bad as he was at the time like he was having problems with his now ex-wife. So he was drinking just as much as the rest of us all of us were and the Army's way of dealing with it is forcing you know force training and sticking everyone in five hour long power points slides. Yeah I say here. Yeah well it was like suicide prevention, drinking and all the drug stuff and all the P.T.S.D. stuff and all the stuff that's like their bright idea fixing it is literally to sit the people in there for for five hours and me sit there and look at our lives for five hours and you can't we can't anything like that which makes people want to drink even more, like you literally forced us to sit here for this for five hours you know for hours on end and go through all the slights like you sit there and lecture us
about what's wrong and you got some which ended up there. It's fresh out of O.C.S. sitting up there lecturing people, or you've got some brand new person or someone that no one knows who has the experience that wasn't there with everyone sitting up there telling you hey I don't do this like you know and all this other stuff like that just makes people more makes it worse because at that point in time everyone’s just going to ignore him because he wasn’t there and everyone's just going to rely on the people around them who are trying to do just as much as they before seriously you know if you have seen people take them right now and it's spiral out of commission that's something which will happen.

R: so you have seen people take that in the wrong direction?

B: Yeah I mean I've seen a lot people get kicked out, but like I said like when I finally figured it out we tried to bring in a lot of people around, and a lot of people came around but some of them didn’t. And it's different with each person like some people spiral out so much where they don’t even…think it will lead to a lot of other things. Like I’ve seen people drinking that just won't stop, won’t be talking to anyone, and they get pulled over coming in the post on a Saturday on a Friday night or two o’clock Saturday morning and they will point you out. And at that point in time, now you're done. It’s over. Like there's no two ways around here and it’s hard to get them to stop drinking.

R: so when you got back from that deployment…things have changed? And when your company reunites after being away does that cause more drinking?

B: yeah this idea of the Brotherhood hasn’t changed that you know you're in this town. And well yes and like just because everyone was there together sort of get together and everyone, and yeah everyone self-medicates, okay that's what it comes down to never want something get and then also tell stories, all the stories about it. So there. Look at the good times and the good times and all the fun going on. That was just I mean it doesn't take away from the family or from that aspect of everything being in a family but it will make you drink more

R: so what's the standard policy on alcohol use in the military?

B: most of theirs is don’t, now if you self-refer yourself to substance programs like ASAP because you realize you have a problem, It doesn't look good on you but it doesn’t look bad. They can do something called a commander referral, that’s only if it just seems you have a problem. they call the commander referral because basically your whole company forces you to go. And when you get a command referral, that’s pretty much referring you…like they're going to get you help here for you, but your career is pretty much gone. You know they’re disappointed because you couldn’t see yourself and the fact that it got so far out that your command staff had had like had to force you to go to ASAP.

R: So what about the enforcement of policy, concerning alcohol use, to what extent are there differences in the enforcement?

B: Well I think it’s really on a case to case basis. Now they have a standard set and it's not really like set around alcohol use. It's a thing about not getting caught, and that’s always been the biggest thing in the army, they always tell you something's wrong when you're not supposed to do something, and the only time you’re going to get in trouble for it really is when you get
caught. that's one of those where you don't really see that too much until you get your higher ranks. Like for someone who’s like an E7, E8, E9, or like a major, Colonel people like that because they've been in so long. Usually those are the ones you're going to see, like I said it goes by a case by case basis. Now they kind of tried to change that a little bit now but when someone's been in as long as those guys have to deal with fifteen twenty years in the works, yeah like the most people can do is force someone to retire, there’s nothing they can do.

R: what if someone up high gets a DUI?

B: like if it’s a first sergeant, sergeant major like that, they’re usually going to sweep it under the rug, it looks bad on here, it looks bad on the army, it looks bad on the command staff, from battalion, brigade, level, because when you've got someone that high up in all this I suppose, they’re supposed to be telling you, you know like don't go and do all the stupid stuff and then he turns around and does the exact same thing actually it looks bad. So usually they just sweep it under the rug and pretend like it never happened but now, the same guy but he’s a brand new private or something like that and he's getting kicked out with a dishonorable discharge and he’s pretty much done.

R: In the time you've been here from the first day until now, how much have things changed in the course of the policy, enforcement of policy?

B: Um they’ve gotten a lot stricter on it just because with the downsizing. That's the biggest thing, with the downsizing and the war over they don't need as many people, So you know that guy that he might be horrible, like back here like he might be a terrible solider, drinks too much, does a bunch of stupid stuff, but he’s great with a gun… when I first got in, they're going to keep that guy around because they need him..now, that guy's gone.

R: so was it a slow process to change this much?

B: From what I saw with it, it wasn’t really that gradual, like it was kind of starting to when I was getting in, but the ones that they were really going after wasn’t so much on the drinking side, they were going really bad after the drugs, and that went straight from the drugs to alcohol and then it switched quick. Because like the policy has been in place but they didn't really enforce it so much because they needed the people

R: so are punishments evenly applied?

B: once again that goes on a case by case basis. The only ones that they are really kind, I mean honestly the ones with greater meaning are the ones that are higher up because they know that the worst they can do to that person is force him to retire because he's got to get more or less likely to be able to see what he's been in a long enough you're looking at you. It's like twenty years until you start getting to know you can't take the time what you've been in for twenty years. You can't take because you start signing that contract. So the only way he gets out now is by putting in a retirement packet. So what they're going to do with them at that point is they're going to force him to put in a retirement package, they’re just going to force retirement.. but for someone who hasn’t reached that point…You're done, because they can actually still get those people unless they’re up so high that getting after him looks bad.
R: has the policy of one and done effected things since you've been in?

B: I mean it's changed. It's just now everyone's going to stick around here instead of going into it. I think. Or they're just going to bring more back to drink here, you know every time. They're still going to go to drink, they're still going to drink the exact same they're all just going now they're going to go behind closed doors where no one can see it.

R: what problems does drinking behind closed doors present?

B: So I mean the problems… that that's going to I mean ultimately that's going to come down to comradery and you're going to have that and then they're also not to trust the chain of command

R: so let me say it like this, how do you police yourselves?

B: Honestly the best way we do that is, and I mean it’s made things a lot easier now and stuff like that, or someone can just you know, I mean that's a thing you're going to tell them before they go out and ultimately you can’t trust your chain of command, they don't have your best interests at heart and they're looking to kick people out. So don't give them a reason, like if it’s not worth it, like it used to be that you could trust the chain of command to actually have your back, because like when I first got in that’s the first thing he always told us, you know boys will be boys. So if you're going to drink here, I'd rather everyone getting drunk here where they're not going to cause trouble and you're not going to get into any trouble like if you get into like if you’re loud and obnoxious in the barracks I'm not going to say anything because at least they're not out now causing trouble. Now that’s better than being they're loud all were out there so you can trick or live without it. That's what's going down there is like you can't, If you can't even drink where you live now, right here without getting in trouble, that sucks. That’s what it’s coming down to, you can’t trust your chain of command like you can tell them you’re going out in town and they're going to look like that old song writer we had the same one that's what he always said he was like that was what he would always tell us if you're going to rock the town. You've walked out with three to five people so that if you so that we all get in trouble out of town you have each other's back and if I have to come and bail people out of jail, that's what I’ll do, that's what our old chain of command would always say. So this was about 4-5 years ago, when the chain of command which they actually cared about the guys and actually had their backs, and would tell them this and actually mean it. And that’s what he would say, You are watching each other when you're out there if something happens when you're out there, I've got your back here, and now it’s like don't go do anything stupid, if you do anything stupid I'm kicking you out

R: have you seen any improvements?

B: not really honestly, because when they send someone to ASAP to watch Power Point slides, and that comes down from the disconnect between the people that want these classes to come through and the people that they're having to teach.

R: I mean are they informative classes?

B: not really honestly more than anything it's a check a box thing on the chain of command, so that when someone gets in trouble with they can say, well hey we showed you this class, we did
our thing. I did that and I guess it's a whole thing if they're playing a game right. That's all they are, they're not really informative with the means of like the changing of policy. They don't really inform anyone of the change of the policy. Because it used to be that the Army's master policy overall was soley for DUls, it was soley, like if you got arrested you take this class. And they amended it to where if you got arrested for your second DUI, you’re a felon, which they didn't tell anyone about anyway. When they changed the policy, they didn’t mention the change, you kind of had to find out on your own, and then after that happened they didn't which again then it came down to if you get arrested for any alcohol related incident at all, then you’re gone. So it went from DUls to if you get arrested for public intoxication, they didn’t use to really care about it, like it looked bad but they weren’t really concerned about it because you weren’t a risk or putting anyone else at risk. Right now it's literally anything and they’ve just tightened down on everything else, and it’s not so much a misinformation thing, you know they tell us not to do this, like they can say you know we counselled them on this, we showed them all this stuff in the class.

R: If that's what it is, how do you think military problems can be better addressed in the military?

B: Honestly the biggest thing is going back there and having each other's backs and that's I mean if they know that someone's going to have their back and that very first in actually cares about it, like it’s about the dynamics. So instead of making it harder, making it stricter, like you have to show these people you have to show the people and you actually have to build that trust back up. That's the biggest thing is it's a complete total lack of trust. It's a loss of trust, because you know these people say that they're going to have your back, and they’re going to help you with all this stuff, but at the end of the day if something happens you're done and they release you of the job. So you have a total lack of trust. So if you’re having an issue, you have something going on, I mean I know as far as I go I'm not going to talk someone out just about if I've got an issue. Yeah like if talking about this to you means my career is over, that’s not right. You know. So they're going to have to change that, they're going to have to go back to they're going to have to rebuild the trust but the problem is is that the higher echelons don't see that they've lost the trust of the unit, it’s either that they don't see it or that they don’t care. They don't trust people up there and they don't want to stick around long enough to give up their spots and the ones that are on the way up right now most of the ones, their focus is so much on getting higher and higher they forget about the people who are in actual charge. Take care of the guys, like you've got that disconnect it's only getting worse.
R: All right. Today is June 6th, 2016, it’s about 5:30 at Fort Braggs, and if you will give some background information on your age, where you're from and those things. Tell me a few things about yourself where you're from I get your age rank education back or ground, then why did you decide to get into the military and, and then jump into maybe how many deployments you've been on other other interesting things about yourself.

D: Sure, sure. I'm 29, I'm from California. I've been in almost about five years, a little over, but I came in as a specialist which is an E4, I went to college from 05' to 09'. So I got my bachelor's degree in history. So that's why I came in with max rank for a Joe

R: What is your rank again, E5?

D: E4.

R: Which makes you…

D: A specialist.

R: And what do you, I have to ask because there's, there's like a million jobs here

D: Eleven Charlie, eleven series is infantry so eleven Bravo is just straight infantry, just rifle or machine gun whatever I'm eleven Charlie which is a mortarman, so little mortar to be just fired off. So I'm those other infantry guys. That's what I do now. So airborne infantry mortars.

R: You don’t jump out of airplanes?

D: No I do jump out of them, airborne infantry. A buddy of mine was asking me about that earlier. It's like, so you actually jumped out with that shit? like yes yes I do because when you jump out you've got the rucksack, it's like hanging from your harness just like right there between your legs and then you've got a weapons case on your side and your left side with your rifle and your M4, and then for mortarmen you can put the bipod in there and then another guy puts the cannon in is, so you can jump a sixty millimeter, the other ones you can't. But anyway unless it's an 81, you can do door bundle...um, deployment wise, I've not been on any combat deployments. But my last unit, I was at Europe, I was in Europe with the hundred seventy third Airborne Brigade and U.S. Army Europe, they are all about...It's dog and pony show. It's a dog and pony show. So they are all about showing the department, the Army, guys look what we're doing. Don't put us on the chopping block. We're still useful. So they're trying to make themselves look useful to higher command you know so they don't get put away because you know the whole nation is in a really bad economic and fiscal disaster right now. Same with the army. So they're trying to cut everything trying to save money do what they can. So U.S. Army here is trying to save itself. So when I was over there. We did a lot of foreign rotations, right before I came to Bragg, I was in Turkey for two months. We also did a rotation to Romania, so we trained with Romanians, and did a rotation to the Baltic, well I went to Poland in 2015 for about two or three months, and we stayed Donia Radamisto for a week and this was June, June 2014, and since it's so far north. The sun doesn't go down until way late, so its past midnight like zero one and the sun was like still light out. You don't need nods you need a flashlight. It's crazy.

R: So you've been around.
B: Yeah OK. And even after I left the unit kept doing a bunch of stuff like they've trained they went to Spain they were in Greece. Some guys went to Jerusalem, Israel...

R: So I guess you’ve seen, you know, I guess you seen drinking in a number of environments in the military so you know that.

B: Yes yes.

R: So how long have you been at Fort Bragg?

B: a year now. OK So you've been here.

R: Where did you do you that training when you first…?

B: infantry, basic training for infantry. We all do it at Fort Benning other, other jobs non-combat arms they go to other bases like fort Jackson, bunch other places but for infantry we do OSIT which is one station unit training, one station unit training, we do it all at Fort Benning, Georgia.

R: How long were you there?

B: It's like fourteen weeks.

R: and then you were moved to?

B: yeah and then you get sent off to your post

R: Where was that?

B: I went to Italy. Oh OK, well to be fair I did OSIT and did my basic training and all that and then I went to Rask which is Ranger selection. I tried out for Rangers but the Rangers are crazy. So I bombed the P.T. test to get in there and they're a bunch of nut jobs so I said no, but anyway so I did basic and then you go to airborne school which is also at Fort Benning That's three weeks and then you do Rangers I said fuck that. And so I was in holdover for almost a month and then from there I went to Italy.

R: So why did you decide to get into to the army?

B: when I got out of college in 2009, Everything was going downhill like all I saw on the T.V. on the radio was just all these Americans who've been working at these jobs of theirs for almost their entire lives and they were just getting laid off. So the recession happened...and so I was a history major and it was kind of like, well you know what what's what am I supposed to like that they won't teach your research and yet they won't hire these people that have been you know in the in the Job Core, you know actually with hands on technical skills for decades. Why the hell would they hire me? So for three years, I was just kind of bumming around and then I was like you know what I'm going to go to the only organization that is actually going to hire somebody and give them some sort of credit for their college degree. So I went to the Army. You know everybody else I'd known, like two of my friends, they went to the Marines. When my cousin, he went Air Force, So I was like I'm going to keep it simple. I was going to go army. You know I
would sit around for a couple years just bored and so I wanted a really active job where I was
moving around a lot. I wanted to be boots on the ground. So I said What the hell, go Army
infantry and jump out of fucking planes.

R: OK so it had nothing to do with your family being in the military now, you just wanted to get
a job?

B: Yeah I wanted to move myself forward you know get out of my slump and go to the next
chapter in life. They're

R: OK now to get into the heart of it. Talk about your drinking before you entered the military.
How often, you know, and on what occasions do you drink?

B: Well I was in California. My dad's a big wine guy so I drank a lot of wine. I wouldn't say I
was a drunk or an alcoholic before the Army but you know I did I drank a healthy amount but I
never got sloshed I just got a good buzz you know just felt good drinking but I never you know
like a lot of these guys you see they just get completely sloshed, completely hammered. That's
not me, and I had my I had one incident in college right drank too much and I ended up you
know. So after that I just kept my drinking to a very healthy, healthy level. So you know, just
every couple of days. Nothing crazy, just a beer here, a scotch or a wine. Whatever. Before the
military, I drank a reasonable healthy amount.

R: how old were you when you first started drinking?

B: The first sip of beer I had I was thirteen. It was just the foam, it was really gross so I didn’t
have any, and then I didn't have alcohol again till I was seventeen when I had scotch. So I'd say I
was really more seventeen when I started drinking but it really didn't pick up till I was in college
so around more eighteen-nineteen.

R: So did your family or religious background have any input or effect on your drinking?

B: So it was my dad you know who gave me my first beer when I was thirteen. Then after that
introduced me to whisky.

R: So yeah, I take it your dad wasn’t Southern Baptist.

B: Nope haha, his family was very religious, Catholic or Christian or whatever you want to call it
but he broke away from that and just you know they're so out calls out call just have a beer relax.

R: So how would you compare your drinking with your peers and others in the military such as
when and where how much you drink and those things?

B: I would say that there's a reason why we have weekend safety briefs when it comes to
commander says Hey. Guys Be safe over the weekend, don't drink and drive don't blah blah blah
because it happens, like you're in bragg, there's a whole eighty two days thing and
there are signs around here they'll say you know it's been forty something days since the last
alcohol incident...and alcohol is a big problem in the army, military in general. So there's a lot of
guys that overdo it just like there's two guys in my company. One guy in my company in the last
five months have had a DUI, so just seeing how the Army is and seeing how I drink, like regular soldiers their level of drinking is up here like drinking excessively on the weekends. I'm I'm down here. You know and I'm a lot of older than them.

R: Has it changed, was there a time when you first came into the army, how is it compared to when you first came into the Army?

B: Alcohol has always been pretty big problem for the army even before I joined. So it's it's been the same when I was in Italy. There were alcoholic related incidents like that like hookers and whoever you like beat up by drunken soldiers you have soldiers beating up soldiers at clubs. So they can get, they can get pretty bad. You know I mean the army has its own A.A. program called ASAP.

R: Yeah yeah and I'm very sure aware of it. Yeah so. So when you drink, when do you drink? I mean is it on the weekends, after work and you know on days after work?

B: On weekends. It's on the weekends. I'll go and get it like two six packs and then maybe have a couple over the weekend but it's not all the time you know I'll go out with friends or just go out like some place in town and drink, But folks that I hang out with shared kind of the same consumption that I do with alcohol, just keep it, keep it healthy keep it same don't don't overdo it. You know.

R: how many beers do you have on the weekend or throughout the week, not just beers?

B: on the on the weekdays because work is really crazy and you can't get dehydrated Otherwise you are going to like blackout.

R: I'm amazed, I go to these Express stores how many people are walking out with Gatorade, and I'm like what's the deal with Gatorade?

B: energy drinks. There's certain products that Army soldiers especially have to rely on and that's…yep. cigarettes and energy drinks. That, and alcohol. Like I said so yeah. So I mean you know those companies make so much money. But your soldiers need something to blow off steam. When you see, I read this article a couple weeks ago that I think it was somewhere in the department offense, they want to limit the use of you know, dip and other tobacco products by increasing their prices on army posts when they can, it’s the stupidest thing. It's like hey guy, you're not in the field. You aren't doing the stuff that we're doing. You're some old fuck that's just mandating rules. It's like you don't know what regular soldiers go through so I mean personally I think tobacco like all those tobacco products are a crutch but I mean soldiers need it to get through the day and I can sympathize with that, I'm sorry what was the question that we were talking about like I was just saying?

R: I mean, so you have about a six pack on the weekend?

B: yeah it'll last me like a weekend and then maybe the next weekend so I don't drink a whole lot maybe like five beers or the most on weekends. I mean sometimes if I'm like with a buddy, like last night, but he really really needed to talk about some stuff so he knocked back like a six pack and I had about like nine almost twelve beers. So it varies on what's happening there.
R: But I feel like I get what you're talking about, I mean you have issues and stresses and strains in the military and so you know alcohol is that go-to, you know. So speaking about that, from your experiences and your observations of drinking in the military, what do you think are the primary reasons personnel engage in drinking?

B: When we do stupid shit out in the field, when work just gets completely stupid, when senior leadership gets stupid when I say stupid I mean when...when it's stupid as in when things are happening you go, why the fuck are we doing this...this is retarded...just you know so if we come back from like a two week long field rotation, or field problem and dude's... all right I'll give you an example of the field problem that we had last year, uh, we went to Georgia for a week and a half...this was in August a good chunk of our battalion... heat cannon....yeah it’s heat exhaustion, heatstroke... like dudes were going down

R: sounds like somebody is not taking precautions.

B: There, there were precautions taken out like the B.C. town commander we did this fifteen mile run march at the end of the training, and this was after a bunch of dudes had already gone down during live fires. So we do like bounty exercises and it's I mean it's already the middle of summer in Georgia. You know eighty degrees. You know, dudes are pounding with weapons and they're just dropping left and right. So people are already going down during regular training and then B.C. wants to do this fifteen mile rock march in Georgia through this, through sand. It's one thing to march on pavement, but when you go through sand. Yeah. And so dudes were just dropping left and right during the rock march, and the FLA's which are, it's like medical trucks to pick guys up. They ran out of them for old people going down that had to go last. So it's that kind of training and just that happens in a field where guys are like you know what we get back, I'm drinking and I don't give a fuck

R: Do you feel like somebody is abusing their authority or something, or doing something out of the norm?

B: Well the command has the authority to say what happens during field training. You know or when we're in garrison when directives come down and we have to do layouts or other things during the week. So it's not really an abuse of authority it's just a good idea fairy going, hey let's do this. Oh yeah that's a great idea...it's when higher command gets these great ideas and they put it down and you know it's our job to execute but the same time they're not taking into account other variables and yeah they're not taking into account what the soldiers have to put up with what we have to do

R: besides work and besides, you know, crazy things coming out of that, can you think of any others?

B: Well my buddy last night he was having some relationship issues. So he was drinking. So I went over to chat with him. Make sure he was good...uh, relationship issues, working stupid field problems, stresses with life.

R: how is it different on a military base in the Army base than it would be outside in real life I guess I'll get to that too. We have a bunch of males. You know young males in here. How does that make things different doesn't different from being a civilian?
B: Well it’s hard to say because when I was a civilian, I didn't really see, I wasn’t with people that drank a whole lot. They didn't get stupid drunk. So why civilians drink? you know, they got their own issues

R: what influences your peers in the military and other peers in the military have very little you know their influence how much they drink, and particularly your peers?

B: it's really just, you’re doing whatever in your room, after the weekend during the weekend. You just like, you know, whatever your buddy calls you up and says, hey man let's hang out, have a couple beers so it's really just a social thing and then if people take it to extremes…they'll take it to extremes and over drink

R: What do you think about drinking and alcohol use in the military?

B: I have to think about it. I say that there's a lot of people that drink responsibly. But it's always, but it's always the problem Childs that always, make it always publicize it, always get the attention and they make it bad for the rest of us. So guys get DUI’s or start fights or cause violence or get pulled over by the M.P.’s those are the ones that always make it bad and make programs like asap come into existence Yeah. So you know I'd say a lot of people drink responsibly but it's always at least a good number of other people that just take it over the top and it's really unfortunate

R: Have there been occasions where the others around you were drinking and you didn't want to drink and I mean how do they how do they make you feel?

B: Oh you know if I'm the D.D. I'm not going to drink but if I'm with my other soldiers and I'm with my other guys my petition and we're at like a barbecue, we're going to be drinking. You know it's just it's just to relax it's just to blow off steam. So I never feel that soldiers pressure each other. I know I've never felt pressured. I've never pressured other soldiers. So it's not a peer pressure thing it's really just like hey man, you want to just chill out and just blow off steam just have a good time.

R: but how do you look at peers and others around you who don’t drink socially around others?

B: you know, the only people in my company who I haven’t seen drink are Mormons, there to warn everybody else. So yeah. But everybody else I know, everybody else I know drinks but there's always somebody there to take care of them like their wives or a buddy. So there's always somebody responsible holding back and just you know making sure that they can drive others back home you know

R: So you’ve never been in that awkward situation, you’ve always felt accepted?

B: Yeah, it's just that I've never felt never felt like other soldiers have been kind of bullying me into drinking. I've never seen it happen. It's I don't know if that's a perception that civilians get but that's that's not something that happens it's really just about brotherhood, and just enjoying each other’s company and just relaxing.
R: but have you ever felt stressed and then you mentioned you talked about it or tell you get into a little deeper. How does the stress and strain of work in the military cause you the need to drink excessively at times?

B: How does it cause me to to?

R: Or what's going on with the stress, of the stresses of what's going on with military, work life military, what causes you to want to have a drink some time than necessary?

B: it happens you know you just get really stupid weak just it's hard to describe the inane sort of things we do in garrison you know it's one thing to say hey we're going to out to feel problem and we're going to be you know shooting or jumping and that's, that's a feel problem. That's easy to describe you know have guys running around and downing wildly as a mortar. We'll have our fixed position back here with our mortar guns their tubes up dropping rounds, but in garrison we, eleven series, we are glorified janitors, we are glorified janitors. We will we will mow the lawn, we will pick up other peoples cigarette butts, we will pick up all this garbage and make the place look nice. It's like called Area beautification, it's like well these guys aren't doing anything else we may as well have them

R: is that the unit you're in or ?

B: it's the entire army.

R: Yeah yeah. Is it the nature of the structure of the army. I mean people are so, so they're not in their number or they're just they're just in personal and let you to know the number itself?

B: I mean when command needs something done. It's like well let's get our boys there they go sweep and mop, it's one thing to sweep and mop your work area but then it goes to lawn, cleanups, I didn't join to pick up. I didn't join to pick up other people's garbage and all that and I just I really you know really it's so weird

R: Yeah I guess you have a different mentality I mean come in with you know your degree.

B: So yeah, I wanted to, I don’t know how else to put it, but I wanted to do good things I wanted I wanted to help, I wanted to write and I was let down every day.

R: And coming in here kind of sets you up to every disappointment and you see that but you know you just step by step ?

B: something like that, every guy you get any other dude talking, they will say that they came in with this wide eyed kind of aspirations for the infantry or the Army in general and then it went from here down to here and they had these great ideas and then the Army just said, oh here's your dreams. *crashing sound*

R: See you get that feedback from your buddies that you know I am really thinking to a GI Joe you know save the world. Oh yeah we ran things on it, and you get here fine oh I'm just here to do your paperwork and sweep the floor. You do the same thing every day.
B: we rant and piss and moan a lot and it's always the same thing like well you know when I joined, so I could kill Hodge, kill ISIS and all those fuckers. But here I am mopping and doing room inspections

R: I added there necessary things that have to be done.

B: I mean. Oh yeah I mean I mean this is the huge base like this would be operating on a name so yeah no you know you got to clean up your house you know you know you don't shit where you eat. So you got to clean up where you live

R: how does drinking make things better, how does drinking improve things, how does it make things better and not only that, how does it improve your relations among comradery

B: Um it mentally detaches you from the stupid shit that happens during the workweek. You know you just get that you get that buzz and you just don't think about work and work. it's just, it's relaxing you know forget about the week when we get together and I get together with my guys you know and we're drinking just like have a good time we just forget about we can just talk about other things, like hey man did you see that girl? Yeah man I had a great time for OK cool. Hey let's go see a movie. OK. So anything we do outside of work drinking or hanging out or whatever it's, it's to get our minds off of work

R: the disappointment that you believe this work has become for you, is that true for others?

B: I mean if you're less of that. Yeah yeah definitely.

R: suppose I was a new recruit in the military, who wants to fit in…what would you tell me in regards to drinking and trying to fit in?

B: If you're new recruit, if you were in my platoon, my mortar section, first we make sure that you're of age. Like if we go out socially to like a restaurant we want to be able to have alcohol while you want to be able to have alcohol because we are responsible about that you know we'll go out sometimes. And so some of our guys are like eighteen or nineteen or twenty it's like well you're just going to have to have strawberry lemonade. But if we're at like a barbecue just at some guy's house just you know having a good time just drinking seven a good time but if you were a new recruit, we'd have you come out with us. Yeah to restaurant, barbecue. You know just to kind of hang out, the joint as company, chitchat.

R: OK so it seems like from what I can see you have a bond between yourself and others in your group that it's kind of different from the bond outside of the military and so this bond. I mean you have since kind of the two terms of drinking I guess is a two way thing. I mean they work both ways.

B: Yeah it's just to, just to relax. Just relax. I mean you'll hear dude say like bro I'm getting stupid fuckin shit faced this weekend and that's after like a really bad week so I don't plan. I don't plan

R: what I want else about work in the military talk about. You know, the command structure. You know, you mentioned earlier about how the commands come down. They don't make sense
which causes stress and strain and what is it about that, you know these commands coming down in the structure from that coming down. That's going on that creates that in terms of the structure that you're familiar.

B: dissemination of information is lacking. So when higher ups has things that need to happen or they get information, somehow it doesn't always get down to us, it's supposed to be like Reaganomics where everything trickles down but then it doesn't and some people get information at the last minute and that shit is just…and then other times It'll actually, one actually gets information at least in our in like a guy like call tomorrow and we get this at like twenty one. Like all right cool. I'm going to sleep in. Dissemination of information when we're told certain things and then information changes we don't like change. You know we like to know what's going on a lot of times we don't know what's going on. We don't know what's happening. The next day unless we're told on times we're not told just like our rights are.

R: So just the randomness, the unstructured nature, not knowing from day to day to day.

B: Yeah exactly. Yeah we don't know what's happening. The next day, like this last week, this last Friday, we were told our guys were going to be heading out next Friday and we're going to do a field problem from Friday to that next Saturday. It's about a week. It's like all right. Yeah but a necessary thing that really that happens a lot in this unit especially is training will start on a weekend and it's like why not just do the work week Monday to Friday why can't we just train then, you're going to take away like a whole weekend and a half from us? It’s shit

R: and then yeah and then on top of that, you know that you said it’s not that information about wives and I'm sure you know, oftentimes you don’t know the explanation of what the purpose really is

B: and there's always some official directive for why certain training events happen like command wants to test out a certain new piece of equipment like for communication devices and that's all well and good. I mean US US Joe's down there. We don't use those devices but it's a shit show and training happens which you keep an eye on here.

R: How do the factors related to work in the military you know working with bind with that here influence combine when you get together. When your peers. Start talking about complaining about you know work. How do they work to influence drinking?

B: before we continue, I want you to make sure for your class when you report this make sure that people don't get peer pressured, I just want that to be clear. People don't get peer pressured.

R: Yeah it's just, that's not a good. I think yeah yeah I guess I should think of a better way to put that. Yeah. Peer pressure. Yeah it's not really peer pressure.

B: I don't think you said Peer pressure. I think I just I think I read that between the lines when you're talking about it

R: I said peers, and I combined peer influence
B: It's all good. It's all good. I just there's, there's a disconnect between civilians and the military and when I talk to civilians about it, I don't want them to I don't want them to get the wrong idea and get a negative connotation when we talk about things… nobody gets peer pressured. It's it's not like that, but comes to complaining about work and drinking. It's just you know you get together and you can even talk about anything, you talk about life, what's happening at life because I think civilians get this wrong idea about the military that what they see in the movies you know he's like really like stoic serious kind of types. I mean no, we're regular people you know we’re just regular guys and gals we've just gone through the same shit

R: does that I mean, does that kind of lead to overdoing it?

B: I mean, it can if people feel like it. I think it just it's all depends on on the guy or girl who wants to drink if they want to overdo it and get stupid drunk that's on them but if you're with friends and you feel comfortable with them, you're going to drink with them in you're going to have a few too many but it's about it's about risk mitigation. There's an actual worksheet the Army has official forms da forms. D.D. forms. There's a form for risk mitigation. It's called CMR form, it's called composite risk management. I don't know the exact number but there's an actual form for it and we talk about that during our safety briefs. Alright guys risk mitigation, and so we talk about that. So the risk mitigation you know who's going to be the D.D. who's going to you know if you get too drunk, do you have someplace to sleep instead of driving back home you know like when I was with my buddy last night, I brought over those two six packs. He drank a bunch. I drank a bunch. He went and slept. I went and slept and I didn't drive back to my room till this morning so let's….you play it safe. You always watch out for each other you know somebody is drinking too much and they're about to go to their car. It's like hold up. Let's wait another hour just walk around. Get some more food in ya, and yeah don't do anything stupid. So it's about just checking each other, make sure nothing stupid happens

R: is alcohol involved during your free time, during your weekend time, downtown time, I mean is alcohol regularly involved to what extent is a home on average and involved during free time?

B: Well for me I drink on the weekends because I know I'm not doing anything on the weekdays. I try and hydrate a lot because you know we've got to wake up at five thirty to get to P.T. so I always get like some vitamin water. Whatever, trying to hydrate but it comes to weekends I mean if I'm out and about with friends get a meal. I buy a beer or glass of wine, or whatever, it's just that even though I was civilian I was out and about people I get a glass a beer or glass of wine. So this is it's a sign to have nothing crazy.

R: Again it's been talked about already, how are the influences in the military to train different from outside civilian like you said when you were in the military

B: the military just crushes your soul and you're just you're forced to drink. It's like you know what like It crushes your soul and you know, I will definitely talk to some other friends be like this and you should talk to this dude. Because he’s doing Sociology, talk to him or rant away as they vent. Yeah it's the military, the Army. I mean if they didn't want all these when I talk about the army I talk about higher command like battalion level and in some cases brigade and division level if they didn't want all these alcohol related incidents they would maybe get, they would do what you're doing right now to talk to soldiers on an individual level, like okay, how is it going
there, private? Let's talk, and that doesn't happen a lot you know there's supposed to be... so if command really wanted to reduce all these Alcohol related incidents they would talk to soldiers, you know they make sure their command actually cares. But the consensus among everybody is that you know what they just really don't care about us. They just they just consider us numbers

R: has that changed from the time you entered the military to now, have you seen a change in treatment policy in the treatment?

B: when I was on my last unit we did quite a few command climate service. Just check the command climate surveys our surveys given to soldiers both Joes and ceo's to see how they're feeling about the unit and how they being treated. I haven't seen that here now is back in Italy U.S. Army Europe is operates differently there detached from regular U.S. Army they just they operate differently. So when I got to the States, things were a lot different. And I can see that in this division. I've been here a year and I haven't seen a single survey on that. So but the same time it's also like Hey guys, you're eighteen. You're an adult so act like an adult but it's just it's complex because when you're eighteen to twenty three. That is a huge emotional developmental period. And so to grow up in this in the military at that age is a lot different from growing up in other environments. Yeah I mean when I was that age I mean I was in college so those sort of stresses weren’t on me so I can't even imagine what it's going through the minds of these kids. I joined when I was you know young girl I joined when I was twenty three twenty years. So you know these kids there. I can only imagine. And it's up to the older guys like me to be the adult when things are getting a little stupid, adulting.

R: So you know that that's not something you want to do maybe?

B: Yeah sometimes I just want to have a good time then I'm forced to be the adult it's like all right fine. It's not enough but you know what I'm the responsible older guy here so I want to make sure that nobody goes to jail.

R: But let me jump in there some of this area. You know to the stores here on base that is the pricing, availability of the price is that it's lower than the outside of the city but my question is the pricing and availability of that home base, is that true from your knowledge of the pricing of alcohol?

B: I think it's certainly a financial factor because PX’s are all over the base, so why why drive to Walmart or wherever or any place off post when you've got shop better P.X. some post I mean they're there for us. So go there buy beer buy wine buy liquor buy anything. It's all there you know because it's there for us the fees is Army and Air Force and change service those founded I think thirty's of the forty's when the army and the Air Force were on the same their force was under the Army but anyway so they're there for us. So yeah I mean they're there on post so it's like why drive off post when you got it right place right there. I don't know about the prices cited in my post by you know me there and you mean it's not something that's what I've heard from what you're going to drink and drink like a dream. You know.

R: I guess you've never felt like you drink would have you ever felt you drink more than you would have because of price and availability of days?
B: Whenever I buy alcohol it's I'd say it's conservative you know at most on any P.X. run we're actually want to buy beer. I'll buy two six packs and that's it. And that'll last me a good while you know so I don't ever feel like I overdo it.

R: What is your understanding of the state policy concerning drinking in the military and I guess it could be this kind of broad I mean what is your understanding of the rules about it, you know getting in trouble with the law, drinking incidents?

B: It's against that policy in terms of overdrinking there is something called GRF Which is called Global Response force that means that you, your unit is the designated response unit. If there's a crisis and the potest calls on the army to act and when your unit is on GRF or if you are allowed a maximum of two beers for one hour or two hours or something. So you can't go above a certain legal limit with your blood alcohol content and so that's when you aren't you're after. If you're not on GRF what I know policy wise there is no there's no limit but once again you know commanders always have their safety briefs like hey guys you know, drink responsibility Don't be stupid. Always have a battle buddy your enemy wants a battle buddy battle or you can't launch it it's really stupid just like if you have a buddy there you know check each other make sure that you're not driving drunk. That's all that matters but otherwise outside of GRF is that there's no real legal limit. You can have alcohol while at work, GRF, during you know you have only this many alcoholic beverages and other than that, don't be stupid. You don't get don't do don't drive while inebriated, don't don't start fights. You know. Don't be an idiot. Don't be. Don't be that guy those signs all over the place yeah. Don't be that guy. OK it's all over the place.

R: Yeah OK what about OK then we thought you know this. What about unfortunate policy, is it applied evenly?

B: Oh oh well I've seen M.P.'s pull over people, I've seen guys that get DUI's be punished under UCMJ, Like they'll lose rank and then they'll have to do extra duty

R: It’s my understanding now that a DUI incident or higher than that is means to get kicked out

B: It's really happening. There's a guy in my company who got a DUI, I don't know when exactly he's being kicked out. But he's already the lowest rank possible, he's the E1. I mean he's he's on the way out. I don't know the date. This is a good couple months ago but he's out. When I was in Italy, there were alcoholic incidents where soldiers got drunk and fought each other or beat up hookers. This happened once or twice. It depends on the country that you're in, in Italy those soldiers are being prosecuted under Italian law. I mean you could look at Army installations in Korea. I think there's an installation in Japan and then you know you could even look at the Marines because they have they have installations in Bahrain and elsewhere. So yeah I mean if it happens, alcoholic incidents and you drive while drunk or if you like that like it's bad because the whole week

R: There may be those people who overdo that…how are those people treated?

B: well as long as they don't do anything illegal you know as long as they don't drive drunk by and, But I mean, as long as they're not driving drunk. As long as they're not getting hostile you know yes there's nothing wrong or illegal just check each other you know because look at them.
R: Yes you have you ever seen some of the fellas treated unfairly because of an alcohol incident, and for someone who got away with things to someone who did the exact same things or maybe even worse but got away with it, or was the other person treated harshly?

B: I've seen in NCO's commit DU's and they lose their rank. But then some time later I forgot the exact amount of times they'll get their right back...technically corporal which is also an E4 is the lowest rank of the N.C.O. So probably sometime this year. I just haven't really pushed for my rank because it's a little more tactical if I become an N.C.O. as an eleven Charlie I'll probably stay and eleven Charlie I want to reply but there's another story...in terms of NCO's you'll see them get DUI's, I've seen this happen in the early years all over the army they have special treatment like some NCO's think they're Gods, like he's just like God's gift to the army. It's like you know your human being like the rest of us. If you drive while drunk, you should get kicked out just like a private a private should, simple as that is this. Sort of the options that I really hate in the higher command is given all the special privileges like just because you have the stripes on your chest does not make you immortal. You should, you should be better than the rest of us and you should be punished accordingly like the rest of us, you should be setting an example you're going to act like a fuck wad you're going to be treated like a fuckwad. But unfortunately that doesn't happen. They get away with stupid shit. So that sort of shit makes me angry

R: Oh what about you know you talked a little bit about policy, how do you police yourselves?

B: Oh yeah sure it's like I said you know you're out and about with your guys who's ever the D.D. you know, is responsible. You know maybe like one drink and then sober up the next hour. But you're only recently going to barbecue with one of the team leaders. He had his guys and they're all getting drunk but he had a couple beers at the start and then over the next four or five hours he sobered up was like alright guys taking them so we checked each other. Hey I can't drive yet I'm still drunk

R: so you look out for each other?

B: we do

R: pretty. Pretty consistent?

B: Yes it's a difference between having a bunch of eighteen year olds run each other. Because if you have a bunch of guys, I mean it would never happen but they like cherries, like straight out of high school, work with each other they're going to get stupid drunk because no matter where you put eighteen year olds around each other, either in college or the military, they're going to get stupid drunk and then do stupid stuff but if you have some guys that are more mature you know they're going they're going to police each other

R: can you describe particular events in the army in which drinking is encouraged, can you describe maybe the sanctioned events?

B: It's really more when they are official events. It's really more informal like when I was in Poland. This is after like a month and a half of being there, um command allowed us to have beers and you know we were in uniform but at same time it was we had been there a while its getting pretty rough and we were at a barracks in Poland. So we weren't driving anywhere we
were doing things stupid even then there are certain policies where it's like if you're in uniform, one or two beers maximum just nothing stupid nothing crazy so that was in Poland. When I went to Romania, you see this a lot in U.S. Army Europe is when you use foreign rotations is there's culture days where you can go out and enjoy that the local culture

R: Like the Greek in the culture.

B: Yeah so you know you bring civilian clothes with you when you go on these rotations so that you can actually go out and you know feel like a normal person when you're not you know. So when we are in Romania. We went to Cebu. And we're in cities going to dinner and our platoon Sharma's there and he said this is me mimicking him. Hi guys. Two bears maximum. OK. While I had my two beers but then the rest I was that they liked us. So they gave us these free beers, sort of third gear and I was like Is this OK. Sergeant? I mean, so when there's a official army sanctioned events and beers there. It's really more of an informal thing but there's also rules like this two years maximum don't get stupid like just you know so big board rules that's what they call it, big board rules is you know just place yourselves don't be a fucking retard so…Be responsible. Don't be an idiot like last year we did do some operations with Canadians and so the Canadians were with us. And we are at our unit and command brought out like these two. A couple a couple ice chests of beer and so people were just drinking and then as the night was the night was going on. It just got really formal you know people started leaving and then people were just they were main or they were there were just all just sitting around so it was like eight o'clock. Everyone's released but a lot of us are still there in uniform just drinking with the Canadians just having a good time and then after that in fact our barracks rooms changed in the cities and went to each other's barracks rooms they were just drinking there so it's really just just about having a good time you fill reasons a double This is me thinking about these sanctions and sanctions.

R: Do you think the Army sends a double message concerning alcohol use not only said it's OK to these circumstances not in these?

B: no I don't think they do they. The message that the army portrays is just drink responsibly. I'm, but like I said Like the reasons that make people drink like when work at stupid. That's something that inadvertently makes soldiers want to drink is they get stressed out and they want to drink but you know when you get the safety briefs it's always drink responsibly. You know. Don't be stupid. So higher command in the army is aware of the drinking problem but it's not like they can police every soldier so it's just like Hey guys just be safe here, be responsible protect each other. So it's just be careful, just don't be an idiot. Don't be an idiot

But how do you believe that the army could better address and treat the total in problems.

B: So it's tough because you know they already have ASAP and that's there after it's already happened. So it really comes down to prevention and I mean the Army as a whole can only do so much like you know when you get the safety briefs, safety briefs are only there because there have been idiots in the past that have done stupid things right in there, to make sure this is like hey guys you know it's the weekend, just be safe be responsible don't do anything stupid. So you know you really can't you can't tell soldiers what to do over the weekend. You know they
can't you can't tell them what to do in their free time because it's like is it is this is this fascism? If you if you start controlling what people do in their free time, you know something like that.

R: So what about in terms, there seems to be a close relationship between drinking and good or bad days, you know what I mean, a better day than we did but you know just better. You know situation worse situation in the military and how it relates to drinking, and what about the structure the work structure the environment that are so closely related to drinking that lead to drinking?

B: How could those things change possible. Well I would love to see votes put out to have say hey let's have our first serve replaced by somebody better or have our P.L. completely replaced have the whole command structure in place by people that are better but that'll never happen, that'll never happen. So I mean we all have free will, we all have free will even though we are all legally adults even if mentally and emotionally some of us are not really adults. So really it comes down to personal responsibility. You know you have free will. You have choice. So if you're having a bad weekend. You can either get really stupid drunk be get a healthy buzz going or see just get a town to relax for a while so work is going to be stupid matter what his army is just a piss poor organization and it's up to service members to either be smart about it or they can be dumb about it and it's like to base easy to accept the situation. I don't know how the Army can be improved. I mean I know how I would improve it but I'm never going to the sergeant major of the army as much as I want to, so I can get rid of some of these people but hey what do I know so it really falls down it is individual service members you know like I said like yes, work is going to be stupid is not what you can do about it and if you're going to shoot stupid drunk. Just make sure you don't drive you know make sure you're with friends you know. So it's just really about being responsible for yourself in the category where you can be a child about it.

R: Is there anything I should’ve asked you during this interview?

B: I have an idea. I think I think some areas, some civilians think that alcohol is all that service members do in their free time I think should be noted like I was saying earlier that service members, no matter what branch were still regular people. It's just we've been through some shit. And so we feel the kind of common bond of yeah man this fuckin blows right now. Like when you're in the prone it's just raining and it's cold and it's wet and you're just soaked you're just like this and you’re soaked, your body like yeah man. So there's other things I just when you report this to your class I just I want that to be you know that we're still regular people. We're not like they don't they portray in T.V. We're just like these like drones with no personality. That's that's not how it is I mean so, drinking is just one thing but I mean there's so many other things that people do, you know like I was in Europe people travel. You know they're dudes going on trips to like all over the place you know like. There's a lot of things that service members do to have fun you know they play paint ball go to the beach play sports. I bet it is. I mean the server it is a problem is I mean. Oh yeah you know I mean all this. It's all is a problem. You know. Yeah you know I just want that to be you know I don't want there to be a negative portrayal because there's you know there's other ways that you can go right. We've exhausted things. Yeah appreciate every minute.
R: alright today is July 16th, 2016, it is 5:50, my name is Rollin Short I’m a graduate student at the University of North Texas, and I’m in North Carolina speaking with , um, I’ll be taping the interview to make sure I have an accurate representation of your views and I’ll also be taking a couple of notes. Alright, can you tell me a few personal things about yourself, you know where you’re from, your age, your rank, educational background, why you decided to enlist in the military, deployments, any other interesting things

D: alright, um my name is I’m from Fairfield, California, I’m 30 years old, I joined the military out of high school when I was 17 and I’ve been in for about 13 years now, um, I joined because I wanted to go to college because I didn’t have any money for it, however I have not used the GI bill or the military--

R: you haven’t taken advantage of that?

D: No I haven’t taken advantage of that

R: Man, you’re still young

D: yeah, that’s pretty much it

R: so what is it that you exactly do in the military? There are so many different jobs, what do you do?

D: So I’m an E6, I’m a staff sergeant, I do sensitive sight exploitation

R: You’re going to have to explain that

D: So when I go on an objective I go into an area of interest, I go in and I gather intelligence, you know whatever is going on in the area, I’ve pulled fingerprints, I’ve pulled DNA, you know, tactically questioned people, I do biometric scans of intelligence and stuff, and send it off to different agencies, and I get stuff back that says what is true and what’s what.

R: Oh okay. So I take it you entered right after high school?

D: Yes

R: Why did you decide to get into the military?

D: well initially I joined because it was either go to jail or go to the military type thing, so I went to the military and it worked out. I didn’t have anything going on. I wanted to go to college but I didn’t have money for it, um I’ve enjoyed the military so much that I decided not to do the college thing.

R: Have you been on deployments, and if so how many have you been on?

D: I’ve been on four deployments, a total of 39 months.

R: and where were those deployments to?
D: I’ve had two deployments to Iraq and two deployments to Afghanistan.

R: okay I’ll get back to the influence those deployments have had, uh, can you tell me about your drinking before you entered the military?

D: I did not drink before I entered the military, I was only 17.

R: so were there occasions where you could’ve drank and didn’t at that age? Or let me ask this, how old were you when you first started to drink?

D: Well I tried a beer before I entered the military, I was like 15, it wasn’t good so I didn’t like it, but after I joined, I was 17 I went to my first appointment at 18 or 19 whatever, I still wasn’t of age but I started drinking. I started out with beer, shots. Something like that.

R: so I take it your family or religious background, um what influence if any did they have on your drinking?

D: uh, none?

R: If anything has it been a negative factor that probably influenced you not to drink?

D: no not really, it’s kind of neutral.

R: okay, so your religious background didn’t have an effect on your drinking?

D: I don’t think so, nah not really. I guess I’m told not to drink in excess according to religion, but I’m not a very religious person, I have my religious beliefs but I’m not really a religious person per se.

R: so you’ve been in for a few years, how would you compare your drinking to your peers in the military? When do you drink, how much do you drink, where do you drink?

D: Uh, I feel like I’m more of a social drinker, I’ve tried to drink at home by myself but I’ve had a beer, gotten bored and called a friend to see if they want to come hang out, but if they’re not in the mood to hang out, then I’ll stop drinking. Other than that, I only drink around my peers I don’t drink by myself.

R: so what times do you usually drink?

D: I guess on average it’s more of the weekends than anything.

R: how would you compare your weekday drinking to weekend drinking?

D: well, yeah I definitely drink more during the weekend, way more than the weekdays, because you know I have work the next day but uh, other than that yeah.

R: what is your drink of choice?

D: I’ve had two deployments to Iraq and two deployments to Afghanistan.
D: my drink of choice is beer, I like beer. I don’t know, whatever seems appetizing from the draft choices at the time, wherever I’m at.

R: so how many do you find yourself drinking on the weekends or on occasion?

D: um on occasion I’ll drink probably 6-8 whatever size, just a regular sized beer at any given time, but I don’t know

R: you’re single right now, have you been married before?

D: I’m actually married right now

R: oh, so are you happily married?

D: yeah, we are. It’s a geographical difference, she lives in a different state. We’re just waiting to get stationed together.

R: okay, well for the purpose of this study we’ll say you’re living apart from your wife. So how long have you lived apart from your wife?

D: six months

R: okay, so how has living apart from your wife changed your drinking patterns?

D: I’ve been the same, my drinking patterns have been the same since we met and since we’ve been married.

R: really? When you’re there with your wife, do you find her putting a clamp down on how much you drink?

D: No. Not even a little bit, no. I’m not going to say she’s supportive of my drinking, she’d rather I didn’t, but as long as I’m safe she doesn’t mind.

R: so from your experiences and your observations of drinking in the military, what do you think are the primary reasons personnel engage in drinking?

D: I think personnel engage in drinking because it’s an escape from the reality or, I don’t want to say the horrors, but the pressures of work. It makes people feel good, otherwise people would drink. And it’s legal, one, and it’s something to help your body and mind get away from what is going on during the work week. I think that is why personnel drink.

R: besides that, do you think your peers have an influence on your drinking?

D: I don’t think people, well I think peers have an influence. Like if I’m at home and stressed out, I’m not going to drink by myself, to this night it’s not fun, I’m more of a social drinker, I would rather drink around my peers and have people relate to me, have people to converse with and all that stuff, if somebody I’ve invited to drink with me isn’t available, they’re not going to drink with me, I’ll probably just sit there and do something else, not drink. So if my peers aren’t available to drink with me, then I probably won’t drink.
R: so because there are a lot of people in the military who like to drink, and you like to drink with others, you’re more likely to drink than you would outside of the peers.

D: yeah, right, yeah. So pretty much, I like, most people that I know like to drink around people who are like minded, like say if I was with Espy over here, like hey bro do you want a drink? No. like ah you not drinking tonight? Well fuck. Okay, I guess I don’t want to drink either. We’re more social drinkers than anything.

R: so it kinda lubricates the drinking, it kinda gets it going?

D: yeah

R: so if you didn’t have your peers for an influence, what would happen to your drinking?

D: it would probably be degraded quite a bit. I don’t think I would drink as much

R: so what do you think about the idea of drinking and the military go hand in hand? Is that true?

D: I think it’s true to an extent, I don’t think the military promotes drinking, but there are a lot of traditions within the military which are conducive for drinking, for instance the military balls, like third and forth, there’s the grog, there’s separate units and you walk out with a bottle of what is particular to your unit, and at the end of the ceremony they pour drinks from the grog, and who ever is of age and whoever is willing, and yeah I don’t feel like there’s any pressure to drink but I’ve never heard of any repercussions of anyone forcing someone to drink, I’ve never heard of getting in trouble for not wanting to drink, but uh

R: but there’s an influence? Well let me ask you from this side, have there been occasions where others were drinking and you didn’t want to drink?

D: oh, no. in fact, I think it’s quite the opposite. If I’m out with a group of friends and I tell them, hey I’m not going to drink tonight, you know they’re drinking like come on man, drink. And I’m like no fucker, I’m not drinking tonight. I think they respect me more cause I stick to my guns and don’t drink when I don’t want to drink. So then it’s moreso, well you’re going to be the designated driver tonight, and it’s cool and they’ll respect you more. I’ve never been around a group of people who shoot you down for not wanting to drink

R: so I take it you don’t have a negative view of those who don’t drink?

D: yeah, hmm, I’m not going to think negatively of someone who doesn’t drink alcohol, for one if the person is underage I don’t expect them to drink, but if they are of age, they have a reason not to drink, like I’m not drinking because I have a history of alcoholism in my family, then yeah that’s cool, or I’m not going to drink because I’m a lightweight. That’s cool. Or if you just tell me I’m not going to drink because I don’t like to drink, okay. why, I don’t know, I guess it’s that it’s like no one is really going to judge you, from my experience, because you don’t drink.

R: okay, uh so you mentioned earlier about the stress from the military, and do you think the main purpose for drinking serves what do you think that would be? Other than just having fun, do you think drinking serves a purpose? Does it improve relations?
D: I think so. In some of the units I’ve been in, we have our alcohol, we gather around, pour our shot glasses full of whatever liquor, and we toast to people who have died in combat and stuff, and other than that, you know, I haven’t really come across any traditions that have been relevant to drinking.

R: so the environment of the military, the work environment, what effect does that have on you? How does that relate to drinking?

D: the stresses and strain of work? None really, everybody goes to work and you have your stresses and your strains, depending on if you’re deployed or not it’s no different than the stresses and strain of someone who works as a stockbroker or wherever, work is work and you get stressed out at work unless you’re that good at your job, but uh I don’t think it has that much of an impact, I don’t think the stresses and strain have much of an impact on your drinking.

R: do you feel yourself going home after a stressful day and drinking?

D: yeah, I mean I get home after a long day and want to relax, I open a beer and sit down, it’s relaxing you know, I feel like when I’m at work, I’m stressed out and it’s like I gotta go and get drunk tonight, it’s a little bit different I think, but yeah

R: so if I was a new recruit in the military, what would you tell me about fitting in?

D: um I would say drink when you’re of age, do not feel pressured to, peer pressure, you don’t have to drink if you don’t want to drink. If you do drink, then be responsible. You need to eat, and drink yes, but don’t overdo it.

R: okay. Well how do the combined influences of the military effect drinking, like peer influence and stress of the military?

D: they don’t really, I mean we’re going to drink regardless of what is going on. Alcohol may be a stress relief for some people, but the military has a bunch of stress relief. They teach you to work out, go to the gym, you can bowl, whatever kind of physical activity you can think of, and then there’s alcohol, you can read, you can study you can meditate, theres all kind of stuff on post that is readily available, I don’t think alcohol is the only outlet. If somebody is going to drink to relieve their stress, I think it has moreso to do with their personality

R: okay so I see what you’re saying, what you’re saying is, when you drink you have peers around you, buddies around you, that will socially drink with you?

D: yeah, like I enjoy drinking but I will only drink with friends

R: is that because you enjoy more, you kinda

D: yeah I guess it kinda, uh lubricates the friendship, I dunno, that sounds kind of weird, uh drinking makes, um it’s more fun when you’re with friends
R: would you say you have a lot of friends in the military? A lot of young males who are more likely to drink? How do you think the influences outside the military differ from drinking in the military?

D: I don’t think there’s much of a difference honestly, when I go on leave the times that I’ve drank with my friends in the military, it feels the exact same as when I drink with those who aren’t inside the military, it feels the exact same. Like guys who are in the military really aren’t different from guys outside of the military. People are people despite their occupation, the military is just an occupation, so I feel like there’s really no difference.

R: okay, um so alcohol is available all around base, I understand that price might be a factor in this, is price lower than it is outside of base? How does that influence you and others to drink?

D: so I feel like maybe for the lower listed guys, they feel more obligated, they might feel more inclined to buy stuff on base because it’s a little cheaper, but for the guys who live off, like I live off base, I’m not going to drive on bases to buy something ten cents cheaper, that’s ridiculous. So like I said, maybe for the guys who live on base that would be more feasible.

R: have you ever felt you drank more because of the pricing and availability of alcohol on base?

D: No

R: so you mentioned you’ve been on two deployments? As a result of these deployments, have you undergone any changes such as PTSD?

D: the second deployment I was diagnosed with PTSD, but there’s a book I’ve read that, pretty much says that there’s a cycle, a chart of your first deployment um you’re kind of here and then something happens and you elevate, pretty much after a couple of deployments you level off, but then my third deployment I was tied, then I peaked, I went up high, and then I came back down, and then the same type of shit happened but I peaked often so it wasn’t an issue, but yes back to your question, after the second deployment, the alcohol consumption increased substantially and I was a bit out of control, and I went to go get help, and I went to talk to the psychiatrist

R: so have things changed from that time? I assume that was a while ago so things have changed now?

D: yep

R: um okay, getting to that, how has your drinking changed since you’ve joined?

D: when I first joined I was 17 so I couldn’t buy alcohol but it was available, but we didn’t want to drink, it wasn’t a necessarily, I wasn’t inclined to drink, so I guess when I turned 21 is when it seemed like okay, I can go and buy alcohol, so let me go try this. I feel I started drinking more once I turned 21.

R: so how is your drinking now compared to when you were 21?
D: I feel like I drink less comparatively, because when I turned 21, I would consistently drink smaller amounts throughout the week, and I would drink more on the weekends, binge drink, but now throughout the week I don’t drink, it’s rare, it’s super rare if I drink anything. On the weekends I’ll drink normally; it’s considered binge drinking.

R: what’s your understanding concerning the policies of alcohol and the rules, you know getting into trouble due to levels of alcohol use, when you’re coming to work, what is allowed, what’s not?

D: pretty thorough on that. On base you’re not supposed to have it, and during duty hours you’re not supposed to have alcohol content of 0.05 or above, off base most places is .08 or above, but I don’t know what else there is

R: so you’re allowed to have a .05?

D: it’s frowned upon, um, during the duty day, if you’re working you’re not supposed to drink, if you go out to chili’s or whatever, you’re not supposed to drink at all, but on base you’re not supposed to have alcohol content of .05 or more. So basically if you drink a fucking beer on your job on post then you have a DUI and that’s what it is. So. It’s frowned upon.

R: so what about enforcement of those rules? Do you see a difference in treatment between those who come to work inebriated?

D: it kinda depends upon you and the type of soldier you are, and what unit you’re in. I’ve been to quite a few units, and where I’ve been to I’ve seen a lot of guys who have been great soldiers and they have an alcohol related incident, and they get kicked the fuck out which I feel is unfair because people make mistakes, first mistake they get kicked out, and I’ve been uh in units where people have been shit hammered, and they’ve been a terrible soldier, and they’ve been retained. I don’t feel there’s favoritism, I feel there’s a standard across the board, but I think it should be more of a performance based system. If he were to get in trouble right now, we should look at his performance instead of saying, oh he made a mistake so get the fuck out

R: so you’re saying there shouldn’t be a straight across the board, to be more subjective?

D: that’s how it should be, cause I feel like the military shouldn’t be like a cookie cutter world

R: so they should take into account all the factors?

D: if he was a dirtbag before, he sucks and then he gets in trouble, kick him out. But if he was great at his job, he was never late, he never got in trouble before, and he got in trouble…okay, rehabilitate him.

R: do you think the army does enough to help those with alcohol issues, such as those who join ASAP or other military programs?

D: uh no, I feel like right now the army’s substance abuse program is good for I guess retroactive offenders, but people who have already gotten in trouble, it’s good, okay you fucked up, you got a DUI and you had alcohol related incidents, you can get referred to ASAP, you did this, you did
that program, there's a whole bunch of stuff you can do, but before then, you could just self identify like hey man, I got a problem, I need to go to rehab, before you even get into legal trouble, the army man, it has a fault. Like lets just say you're in the army and you get a DUI right now, the army would send you to ASAP, ASAP would send you to counseling, and they would send you to something called primed for life, it's like a two day class that would teach you about all kinds of shit, alcohol related, what it does to your body and all this shit, it seems like it would be more beneficial to send you to primed for life before you get in trouble because I know people who have been to primed for life and they're like holy shit, if I would've known that before I got in trouble, I never would've done that because I didn't know alcohol affected me like that.

R: but you're saying the army should be more proactive?

D: yes, more proactive than reactive

R: don't they just tell you what not to do, do a lot of briefing and stuff like that?

D: yeah man, it's more reactive than proactive. It's like, don't do this you'll get in trouble. Okay well fuck off, it's friday and I'm not really listening dude, I'm trying to go home and I'm trying to fucking hang out, you know, you put people in these programs, I think primed for life, for example, should be a prerequisite, any soldier in process at fort bragg or wherever should go through this two day class, it would do fucking damage in a good way. I don't know, I feel like the army is more reactive than proactive.

R: so you've been in for 15 years...how have things changed since you first joined the military?

D: I feel like when I first came in, people would get in trouble with alcohol, whatever, and they would get rehabilitated and retained in the army, in the military, and learn their lesson and move forward. Now I feel like people make one mistake and you're done, you're getting kicked out. That's it, there's really no rehabilitation..i mean there is, but after that you're kicked out

R: have you noticed any changes with drinking over the years?

D: yeah not really, drinking has been drinking 100%, it's not going to go away man. Dudes and females in the military, you're going to drink. As long as it's legal, you're going to drink.

R: but they've toughened out on some of the rules for drinking, they're not going to show any kindness towards someone who gets in trouble, one and done, I mean you have a DUI

D: yeah a lot of times it's up to the chain of command. If they, if the people in charge of you, your supervisors whatever, if you're a dirtbag or shitbag soldier they're giong to kick you out, if they don't they can retain you and try to rehabilitate you, but other than that yeah

R: so you talked earlier, how it depends on the enforcement dependent on unit, what about policing yourselves, when you're drinking in the group, how do you police yourselves, take care of yourselves when you drink?

D: it's mainly about having a plan, you know who's driving, what's going on, know people's tolerance and stuff, if I was out drinking with someone who had a lower tolerance of alcohol, and
they're out there taking shots, I'm not going to be like yeah, take another one, take another one, that's kind of fucked up, but as far as being with the group, you have to know your group, and be responsible I guess for a lack of a better word, you have to be the fucking adult when you're drunk at the same time

R: alright, so can you describe the grogg and other military events in which alcohol is involved?

D: umm honestly the only time I can think that the military sanctions or promotes people drinking alcohol, is the the grog, and the grog is a ceremonial thing we do during the balls or whatever, there's a huge bowl and one of the members of the chain of command pours out a bottle of whatever, it can be pineapple juice or it can be alcohol, you know let's say it's vodka, and then they pour it in, boom, and then the next commander comes up, this bottle of whatever represents the spirit of whatever, it could be, like I said, it could be alcohol but it doesn't have to be, but 9/10 it is alcohol. So then they mix it all up and then they have the commander, first sergeants come up and get a scoop, a cup whatever, and they take a cup and fucking drink it, and it's ceremonial man, it's not mandated that people drink it or, in my experience a lot of the time the grog is disgusting and the shit gets poured out after ceremony, but it's not something that's mandated, it's recommended, like come drink out of the grogg man don't be a bitch, but it's not mandated, you don't have to drink it

R: do you think that in any way sends a double message, and tells you don't drink under these circumstances but it's cool to drink now, do you think that sends a..?

D: I don't think so. Honestly I've never really gotten the message of don't drink while I'm in the military, except when I was underage. I've heard if you're going to drink then be responsible, have a fucking plan, like if I get fucking drunk I need to have a plan, know where I'm going and stuff, have my taxi whatever, but I've never really heard someone say don't drink except when I was under 21, but uh I don't think so

R: how do you believe alcohol related problems could be better addressed in the military?

D: I think that right now the military is more reactive than proactive, the excuse is they told you not to do it, as opposed to here's the education. The military doesn't really give you the education behind it, they'll tell you not to fucking do something but won't tell you why, except that you're going to get in fucking trouble. Now these classes they were part of in-processing, you would understand more about what alcohol does, uh how much you can drink, how much you could uh, how much your body could fucking tolerate but after you get in trouble. Like I said, I think the military should be more proactive with alcohol education than reactive with alcohol rehabilitation. There are plenty of resources, like if you get in trouble right now, with an alcohol related incident, you will have to do you know, XYZ classes which those XYZ classes are way more beneficial to the solider or whomever before something happens to you, I feel like it's some of that shit, that's something the military throws at you

R: so have you seen how the military has tried to educate you and inform you about what's allowed and what's not allowed, how has that changed in your years of the military?

D: it hasn't, no. That's pretty much it, nothing has changed
R: so maybe only the enforcement of policy has changed, they're coming down harder?

D: I wouldn't say the enforcement of policy, but the repercussions are

R: the repercussions are tougher now than they were in the beginning if you get into trouble?

D: yeah, the education of it is kinda you know, bullshit. I don't want to down talk the military but there are briefings every so often in the military, you're wasting your fucking time, these people, young soldiers, young humans in general but this is what happens to your body when alcohol, it does this, it does this, and I learned, I know people who've learned so much in two fucking days, the military needs to be more proactive than they have been, like don't drink, this is what will happen if you drink, they can focus more on other things

R: why do you think they don't do this now?

D: I don't know man, all those classes that I'm talking about, it's ridiculous, I've never understood it, I will never understand it, but this is what it does, and I know I'm being very vague about it, but

R: yeah I've heard that soliders are told often to be careful on the weekends and stuff like that

D: yeah it's like don't press the red button, okay well why the fuck not? So you're going to press it, but if I told you reasons why you shouldn't hit the red button, electrical wires and shit, whatever, if you tell the science behind it, then it helps, I don't know how else to explain it, but that primed to life class is really indepth and I believe that if people went to the class before something happened they would be better off, alcohol related incidents would plummet drastically

R: so what do the new soliders go through compared to what you've gone through? Is there any way they maybe are offered new things?

D: the new soldiers? Everybody that I know of is offered the same opportunities in the military, as far as alcohol, the army substance abuse program, ASAP, is more reactive than proactive, I feel like that's a problem, definitely a problem. If they want to see results there needs to be something done more

R: do you think that would've effected your drinking if you had gone through it?

D: yes, absolutely, 100% yes. I learned so much during those two days, I can asses now these days okay I'm an alcoholic, or I only like to drink, or if I drink this drink, then this this this. You learn a lot, man.

R: so is there an area that I didn't cover that we could've talked about?

D: no, that's pretty much it man

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REFERENCES


