Invisible and yet Hyper-Visible: The Gendered Experiences of Female Military Leaders

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my family. You have always supported my endeavors no matter the twists and turns they may take. To my parents, Bob and Joni, who have always inspired me to dream big and to follow my path wherever it may lead. To my brother and sister, Blake and Elizabeth, who have endeavored to join me on the journey whenever possible and pushed me when it was needed. You have all made this dream a reality and I am forever grateful for your support in all its forms.

To my nieces, Alexandria and Adrianna, I hope this inspires you to follow your dreams wherever they may lead and to remember that life is an adventure worth pursuing to all its ends. *Not all those who wander are lost…*

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Abstract of Dissertation

Invisible and yet Hyper-Visible: The Gendered Experiences of Female Military Leaders

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the gendered experiences of active-duty senior enlisted women in the US military. This study was informed by Gendered Organizations Theory, Feminist Institutional Theory, and Social Learning Theory. In-depth interviews with 12 active-duty senior enlisted women representing various occupational specialties within the four branches of the US military resulted in compelling stories of the gendered experiences of the participants related to organizational structures, institutional culture, gendered misconduct, and learning to navigate on their leadership paths within the military context.

This study found that military organizational structures often appear gender-neutral or seek to support women's military service, however more often than not encompass unintentional negative consequences for women. Participants gendered experiences illustrated that no single-issue policy or regulation will likely resolve issues of gender in the military without first recognizing the need for entrenched cultural upheaval and the variances across branch and occupation. In particular, experiences with gendered misconduct suggest it is likely more pervasive than data may belie as concerns over reporting, negative consequences and backlash, and support, remain and make combatting such misconduct challenging despite recent progress and initiatives. Participants encountered a variety of gendered experiences throughout their military careers and learned from not only their own direct experiences, but also those they observed or were relayed by others through socialization.

Future research should include (1) greater diverse representation to capture the voices of a broader military population in both traditional (age, race, and marital status) and military-specific [branch, military occupational specialty (MOS)/rate, rank and equivalent grade, and years in service] demographics, (2) and should have a longitudinal design to understand the professional lives of female military leaders. Future military leadership development initiatives should incorporate efforts to support and enable the advancement of women and to educate all future leaders, regardless of gender, on the magnitude of leader roles and responsibilities when encountering issues of gender. Furthermore, policy and regulatory efforts regarding gender in the military should simultaneously address the organizational structures, institutional culture, and socially learned environment.

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Glossary of Terms

This study utilized constitutive definitions (Fraenkel et al., 2012) when available, those definitions codified by authority, or definitions established and determined via an exhaustive review of the literature.

Active-Duty: "The term 'active-duty' means full-time duty in the active military service of the United States. Such term includes full-time training duty, annual training duty, and attendance, while in the active military service, at a school designated as a service school by law or by the Secretary of the military department concerned. Such term does not include full-time National Guard duty" (Armed Forces, 2017, p. 20).

All-Volunteer Force: A military comprised of volunteers in lieu of conscripts or draftees, though many countries (the US included) still reserve the right and ability to enact a draft or selective service (Encyclopaedia Brittanica). The American military became an All-Volunteer Force in 1973 following the Vietnam War (Yuengert, 2016).

Branch: "A subdivision of any organization. A geographically separate unit of an activity which performs all or part of the primary functions of the parent activity on a smaller scale. Unlike an annex, a branch is not merely an overflow addition" (JP 5-0, 2017). Military branches of the Department of Defense include the US Army, US Navy, US Marine Corps, and US Air Force.

Combat Exclusion: "Service members are eligible to be assigned to all positions for which they are qualified, except that women shall be excluded from assignment to units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground" (SecDef, 1994). This policy was rescinded in 2013, with completion of opening occupations to women no later than 2016 (SecDef & CJCS, 2013).

Component Service/Force: This term denotes the pool of military service that a service member is drawn from. These include active service or active-duty (full-time) and reserve service comprised of the reserves and national guard (part-time) There are substantive administrative and operational differences between the two component services/forces (Cohen et al., 2015).

Department of Defense (DOD): The oldest and largest government agency which houses the armed forces, specifically the US Army, US Navy, US Marine Corps, and US Air Force. The War Department (Department of the Army) established in 1789 (The Library of Congress, 2000) merged with Department of the Navy in 1947 as the National Military Establishment which also created the Department of the Air Force and ensured independent establishment of the Marine Corps under the Department of the Navy (National Security Act, 1947). In 1949 this would be amended to the Department of Defense (History.com Editors, 2018).

Don't Ask Don't Tell: DOD directive in 1993 which delineated that homosexual statements, homosexual marriage, and homosexual acts remained grounds for barring

entry into the Armed Forces. However, it included that homosexuality was a personal and private matter and not a bar to entry without such conduct. Service members and applicants could not be asked nor required to reveal sexuality or orientation (DOD, 1993). The policy was repealed in 2011 (Bumiller, 2011).

Enlisted: Those members of the armed forces which are below the grades of commissioned officers or warrant officers, i.e. E1-E9. "The term 'enlisted member' means a person in an enlisted grade" (Armed Forces, 2017, p. 19).

Experience: "The knowledge acquired through a long life, combined with the reflections made on what one has seen, and on the good and bad that has happened to us" (Gabriel, 2008, p. 101).

Flag Officers: "The term 'flag officer' means an officer of the Navy or Coast Guard serving in or having the grade of admiral, vice admiral, rear admiral, or rear admiral (lower half)" (Armed Forces, 2017, p. 19).

Gender: "Gender refers to being a boy/man or a girl/woman in a cultural context, and it is the appropriate label for humans in most psychological research" (Smith et al., 2010, p. 364). A more comprehensive discussion on gender and language in the military can be found in Chapter Two.

Gendered Experiences: Those experiences, both formal and informal, "reflecting or involving gender differences or stereotypical gender roles" (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2019).

General Officers: "The term 'general officer' means an officer of the Army, Air Force, or Marine Corps serving in or having the grade of general, lieutenant general, major general, or brigadier general" (Armed Forces, 2017, p. 19).

Grade: "The term 'grade' means a step or degree, in a graduated scale of office or military rank, that is established and designated as a grade by law or regulation" (Armed Forces, 2017, p. 19). The DOD has established standardized grades across all branches with the ranks of Enlisted (E) 1 through 9 (E1-E9) and Officer (O) 1 through 10 (O1-O10) as well as equivalents for Midshipmen and Cadets.

Intersectionality: Intersectionality is associated with the overlapping experiences and aspects of women's social identities, including but not limited to gender and race (Crenshaw, 1989). "The intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140)

Institution: "Broadly defined as the formal and informal rules of the game" (Kenny, 2014, p. 679).

Leadership: "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2016, p. 6).

Military: "Relating to or characteristic of soldiers or armed forces. The armed forces of a country" (Oxford University Press, 2019). This broad definition within the US may incorporate elements beyond the DOD, such as the Coast Guard and other supportive national entities. It also integrates the historical and traditional influences of allied and predecessor armed forces.

Military Culture: "The prevailing values, norms, philosophies, customs, and traditions of the armed forces" (Collins, 1998, p. 213). A more comprehensive discussion on military culture can be found in Chapter Two.

Occupational Specialty: Specific duty descriptions, occupations, or functions that service members perform based on training and expertise (McMahan & Londoner, 1996).
Organization: "An organized group of people with a particular purpose, such as a business or government department" (Oxford University Press, 2019).

Rank: "The term 'rank' means the order of precedence among members of the armed forces" (Armed Forces, 2017, p. 19). Each military branch has a coordinated rank or title corresponding to the equivalent grade.

Selective Service: "Except as otherwise . . . it shall be the duty of every male citizen of the United States, and every other male person residing in the United States, who . . . is between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six, to present himself for and submit to registration" (Selective Service Act of 1948). This is commonly known as registering for the draft. Though it has been unused as a means of conscription since the post-Vietnam era, registration remains compulsory for males. In 2019, this male-only application was ruled unconstitutional by a federal judge and is currently under review.

Senior Enlisted: High ranking enlisted service members that form the critical link between the enlisted service members and their commanding officers (Williams, N. et al., 2013). While it may vary slightly by branch to include additional grades/ranks, for these purposes it is limited solely to the grades of E7-E9 in all Department of Defense branches and component services.

Voice: Being heard and understood beyond simply the 'surface' act of speaking (Simpson & Lewis, 2005).

Chapter 1: Introduction

In January of 2019, Congresswoman M. E. McSally, an Air Force veteran and military sexual assault survivor, introduced the Combating Military Sexual Assault Act (2019) in an effort to congressionally address growing concerns over the continued prevalence and rise of sexual assault and harassment within the United States (US) armed forces and a reportedly significant increase between 2016 and 2018 (Brook, 2019). Not long after, the Department of Defense (DOD) released its annual report on sexual assault in the military. Its findings served to reinforce congressional calls for intervention. The report for Fiscal Year 2018 found an increase in sexual assaults against women across all four branches of the DOD: Army ↑5.8%, Navy ↑7.5%, Marine Corps ↑10.7%, Air Force, ↑4.3% (DOD, 2019c). At large the DOD saw a statistically significant increase from 4.3% in 2016 to 6.2% in 2018, meaning an estimated 20,500 service members reported experiencing some form of sexual assault (DOD, 2019a; DOD, 2019c). Furthermore, 24.2% of active-duty women reported experiencing sexual harassment in the military workplace (DOD, 2019a). Despite these numbers, and continued efforts by the DOD, only one in three affected service members reported sexual misconduct to DOD authorities (DOD, 2019a). Additionally, nearly one in four active-duty women experienced an 'unhealthy climate' in the military (Brook, 2019). Countless prevention and support initiatives have been taken by the DOD and its component branches and services to combat sexual misconduct and increase reporting since the all-time high in 2006 (DOD, 2019a). "While the Department encourages greater reporting, it works to decrease the estimated occurrence . . . through prevention activities" (DOD, 2019b). In many of its efforts the military has continually recognized the importance of command

climate as integral to change and prevention. However, beyond efforts to raise awareness, little inquiry has been done to understand the many ways in which gender manifests itself in women's military service and the military environment and enables the pervasive continuation of sexual misconduct as issues of gender endure. Such issues remain complex and convoluted and incorporate both those issues which are explicit and those which are hidden.

The rise in social awareness of the experiences women encounter in professional environments has included pressure within the military to address issues pertaining to sexual violence and discrimination. The proposed Combating Military Sexual Assault Act of 2019 was but one of many attempts from civilian and military leadership alike to address the continued prevalence and rise of sexual assault and harassment within the US armed forces. Attempts at eliminating such misconduct have been met with negligible success and the military continues to seek initiatives to prevent such misconduct contrary to good order and discipline. For the US military, a quintessential male-dominated profession, the intricacies and challenges associated with gender integration have never been more apparent. Despite the formal repeal of combat exclusion policies restricting women's military service in 2013, topics pertaining to women in military service remain a hotbed of debate both in the military itself and amongst its civilian leadership. Additionally, over the course of the 20th and into the 21st centuries, the military has remained slow to enact repeals, remove barriers, and address issues predicated on the basis of gender. Thus, gender integration has remained measured and incremental and challenges persist post-repeal as military and civilian leadership seek to successfully open occupational specialties while maintaining mission and operational effectiveness and

combating issues of sexual misconduct and the like. As with other historically masculine organizations in American culture, the military is a gendered institution. In many aspects the US military reflects American society at large, including socioeconomic, educational, racial, and ethnic demographics. However, gender remains an anomaly and the participation, promotion, and representation of women in positions of leadership within the military is woefully scarce (Archer, 2013; Baldwin, 1996). Military and civilian leaders recognize that the organizational and military operational success of an All-Volunteer Force (AVF) is hinged upon the ability to attract the most competitive members at all levels of service and across the hierarchical rank structure (Yuengert, 2016). Subsequently, they seek to encourage and develop the small, nominal contingent of women currently serving in positions of leadership, further attract women into military service, and retain them towards higher levels of leadership. However, organizational and institutional realities regarding gender often interfere and may be reflected in organizational policies, institutional norms, and a number of other facets. Particularly, the gendered experiences of female service members within the US military reflect these realities. These include not only those gendered experiences service members encounter personally but also those they observe and learn from socially. Additionally, these experiences are by no means limited by rank, grade, branch, or component service/force.

Statement of the Problem

Military service and warfare have traditionally been a masculine, male-dominated profession. However, "warfighting reduces humans to a level where male and female characteristics are erased; you 'do' (i.e. achieve the mission) or you 'don't' (i.e. fail at achieving the mission)" (Brownson, 2014, p. 768). To recruit, develop, retain, and

advance female leaders within the American military presents a continued challenge for military and civilian leadership alike. American civilian leadership and society continue to pressure the military to open opportunities for service in order to greater reflect the socially diverse demographics of American society at large, as with the repeals of Don't Ask Don't Tell, combat exclusion, and the continued debate on prohibitions for transgender service, all while pressuring it to deal with the resurgence in issues of sexual misconduct. To do so, the military must understand experiences which are subject to or hindered by demographic factors such as gender within military culture (Abrams, 1993; Andersen, 2015; Brunner, 2013; Williams, N. et al., 2013) including potential barriers (Cook & Glass, 2014), challenges attributed to institutional and cultural biases, and those organizational structures obstructing women's successful and continued service. These are in addition to the hot-topic issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment (Andersen, 2015). Manke et al. (2015) notes that an understanding of female military leadership and women's experiences in the military must include a number of factors which impact women's military careers, leadership development, and advancement including:

> negative assumptions about women, their abilities and their commitment to careers; perceptions that women do not fit into the military culture; reluctance to give women key line positions important for advancement; women's home and family responsibilities; and lack of mentoring and exclusion of women from the 'good old boy's network (p. 21).

These factors reflect several intrinsic components of female military service including institutional culture, stereotypes and social inhibitors associated with women as military leaders, and the subsequent impediments to advancement women experience as military

leaders. These are in addition to encounters with issues such as sexual misconduct. Women's representation within military service is in stark contrast to their representation in society at large (Morgan, 2004; Klenke, 2012). The underrepresentation of women within the US military is prevalent, and the gendered experiences of women within organizations (the military included) are under enhanced public scrutiny (Williams, L.et al., 2017). Currently women comprise roughly sixteen percent of the active-duty American military force (ICF International [ICF Int'l], 2018) and yet women make up more than half of the American populace. For an institution reliant upon an All-Volunteer Force (AVF), this presents particular consideration and is especially poignant when taking into regard military aims at leveraging an entire pool of talent (Northouse, 2016; Werner, 2018; Williams, N. et al., 2013). For the American military, the entirety of the American population reflects the prospective talent pool and women are increasingly garnering the advanced and technical degrees which the military so direly needs. To continue the inclusion and progress associated with women serving in the US military, including addressing concerns pertaining to issues of sexual misconduct, a full understanding of the nature and experiences of those women currently serving is imperative, particularly those who have attained positions of leadership and achieved long-lasting and successful military careers.

Furthermore, representation matters. This includes not only ensuring that the military demographics reflect those of the society it serves (i.e. greater numbers of women), but also that advanced senior leadership reflects the demographics of the military at large (i.e. greater numbers of women in positions of senior leadership). Representation of women at the highest levels of leadership within the military is

imperative to ensure that women are represented throughout the institution and party to future efforts pertaining to gender issues such as sexual misconduct (Baldwin, 1996; Werner, 2018). However, currently, women remain nominally represented in both enlisted and officer senior leadership ranks. A number of studies surrounding female military leadership have focused on the nominal few women who have attained those highest levels of military leadership: Flag/General rank or O7-O10 grades (commonly referred to as General or Admiral or collectively Flag/General Officers) (Mcgee et al., 2013; Williams, L. et al., 2017; Williams, T. et al., 2017). Yet there are a variety of reasons for which women may not achieve such lofty ranks and military leadership is not solely relegated to those wearing eagles on their shoulders nor to those commissioned in the officer ranks. "The size of the military means that leaders (even rather junior ones) often command large numbers of subordinates, and thus leadership at all levels tends to have a large impact in terms of personnel" (Wong et al., 2003, p. 659). The enlisted ranks are the majority of the military population and their highest levels of leadership (E7, E8, and E9) provide a unique insight into the leadership development and experiences of women serving in the military. Although the American military is hierarchical in nature, the enlisted versus officer ranks, their associated divisions, and the relationships between them are relatively unique to the military context. Furthermore, previous studies have focused on Flag and General Officer ranks, of whom the majority are White, and subsequently have lacked consideration for diversity amongst women in the arenas of race and ethnicity. In regards to racial diversity, "there is an underrepresentation among officers in stark contrast to the trends in the enlisted ranks" (Hall, 1999, p. 154). Additionally, the predominance of research on female military leadership has focused on

a single military branch and component service or force. (Doll, 2008; Iskra, 2007; Mcgee et al., 2013; Vealey et al., 2014; Williams, L. et al., 2017). Lastly, recent research on the military and gender has been relegated to either an institutional (cultural) or an organizational (structural) realm of theory (Manke, et al., 2015; Mcgee et al., 2013; Williams, L. et al., 2017; Williams, N. et al., 2013). It is in these gaps that this study finds its footing. Incorporating senior enlisted as a much larger population than its officer counterpart will not only expand our understanding of gendered experiences amongst female leaders in the military, but will enable a broader addressment of intersectional issues centered on race and other demographic factors as well as enable consideration to the cultural differences between branches and occupations. Furthermore, as the small community of women currently serving in the American military achieve higher levels of leadership in both officer and enlisted grades, it is imperative to understand their experiences regarding gender and underlying phenomena, address the barriers and challenges they may encounter as a result of gender, and consider associated implications for future talent recruitment, development, retention, and advancement as well as policies and initiatives pertaining to gender. "The failure of an organization to identify, recognize and address an essential portion of their workforce results in ignorance of real-time organizational behavior issues and potential policy missteps that can have far-reaching implications no matter how well-intentioned the efforts" (Burton, 2014, p. 52). As previous studies have focused on the few women to achieve the highest ranks of officers, none have focused upon those at the highest levels of the enlisted ranks. The unique hierarchical structure of the military dictates that senior enlisted service members possess crucial leadership responsibilities and are the culmination of a career long path through

the enlisted hierarchy. Senior enlisted women, particularly those still on active-duty, have experienced a decade or more of military service through some of the most revolutionary changes in gender policies within the military. While there remains a dearth of research in this realm, understanding the gendered experiences of active-duty senior enlisted women in the military is critical to further address the broader issues of women's military service and to broaden the understanding of the gendered experiences of women as more than simply isolated issues of misconduct or gender but rather as comprehensive and systemic experiences at multiple levels of the professional lives of women as leaders in the military profession.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the gendered experiences of active-duty senior enlisted women in the US military. For the purpose of this study, gendered experiences were defined as those experiences, both formal and informal, reflecting or involving gender differences or stereotypical gender roles.

To fulfill the purpose of this study the following primary research question was investigated.

- *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered experiences?*

Secondary research questions that enable inquiry into the primary research question included:

  - *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered organizational experiences?*

- *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered institutional experiences?*
- *How do female senior enlisted leaders learn to navigate gender in the US military?*

Significance of the Study

This study has particular significance in matters of theory, research, policy, and practice and directly contributes to the enhancement and understanding of theories surrounding gender and military leadership. Understanding the gendered experiences of active-duty senior enlisted women in the military is critical to further address the broader issues of women's military service. Additionally, it presents a rare research opportunity, given the population and context, for an oft overlooked population to share their experiences and how they make meaning from those experiences. From a theoretical perspective, consideration of the multitude of ways in which gender permeates professional environments and the subsequent experiences of their members facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of organizations and institutions and the ways in which members navigate them. Furthermore, insight into the uniquely gendered structures and culture of the US military enables a more conducive approach to high-profile issues such as sexual violence and discrimination as well as the transferability and applicability to other traditionally male-dominated professions. The study's findings have the potential to inform policies which reflect gender in the DOD and its branches, strengthen opportunities for gender diversity, and buoy efforts to address issues such as sexual misconduct. Lastly, with regards to practice, a comprehensive understanding of the gendered experiences of military women enhances not only the development,

retention, and advancement of women within the military and the ability to address prevailing issues surrounding gender and integration, but also provides implications outside the military realm in other traditionally male-dominated professions. Military professionals, military leadership, military leadership development programs, promotion boards, and military commands, and enlisted women will benefit from such enhanced understanding.

Theoretical Frameworks

This study was informed by three theories as presented in Table 1: Gendered Organizations Theory, Feminist Institutional Theory, and Social Learning Theory. The first, Gendered Organizations Theory, highlights the formalized structures and culture which incorporate gender within the organization, in this case the formal organizational structure of the DOD. Feminist Institutional Theory focuses on the characteristics of military institutions and their inherently gendered natures, exemplified in the broader concept of the military. Both Gendered Organizations Theory and Feminist Institutional Theory bring to the forefront and aim to make visible the "constitutive, gendered power relations and the processes that support and undermine them" (Lovenduski, 2011, p. xi). As such, both Feminist Institutional Theory and Gendered Organizations Theory are often overlapping, however, they are also at times divergent; combined they serve to provide a more comprehensive framework for the inquiry herein. For this study, this enables a comprehensive understanding of the contextual implications of the military and gender. Lastly, Social Learning Theory exposes and aids in understanding the ability of individuals to reconcile their experiences, socialization, and observations to operate within the organization and its institutions. Female service members adapt to the military

environment not only by learning through personal experiences but also from those of others whether observed or learned socially.

Table 1

Theoretical Frameworks

Theory	*Author/ Year*	*Tenets/Description*	*Links to Context*
Gendered Organizations Theory	Acker, J. (1990)	Organizations are gendered in that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine.	The Department of Defense and its component branches are at their core, organizations whose structures, processes, and cultures reflect visible and formalized distinctions of gender
Feminist Institutional Theory	Krook & Mackay (2011)	Feminist Institutional Theory notes that institutions are inherently gendered, institutional processes construct and maintain gendered power and social dynamics, and institutions are constricted by gendered informal and formal norms.	When considering an institution such as the US military, with its long and storied history, steeped in tradition and customs, and informal norms, gender represents an inherent and principal consideration.
Social Learning Theory	Bandura, A. (1977)	Social Learning Theory approaches the explanation of human behavior in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental determinants.	In particular regards to the military context, learning and social behaviors may be acquired from personal experience or through the observations of gendered experiences of others.

Table 1: Theoretical Frameworks

Gendered Organizations Theory predicates that organizations are gendered in that "advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (Acker, 1990, p. 146). The formal social structures and processes of the military organization are inherently predicated on conceptual understandings of gender specifically male and female. This gendering of organizations includes five mechanisms: the construction of divisions along lines of gender, the construction of symbols and images, interactions between genders, processes that

produce gendered individual identities, and the gendered process of creating social structures (Acker, 1990).

The American military as the formal DOD structure, its branches and associated component services/forces are at their core, organizations. The organizational structures, processes, and cultures reflect visible and formalized distinctions based upon a binary and functional application of gender, including standards of attire and grooming, physical and medical standards, and language. The five mechanisms of Gendered Organizations Theory are particularly noticeable in an organization with such clearly delineated and formalized gendered divisions, regulations, and policies.

Similar to the aforementioned Gendered Organizations Theory, the historical and sociological institutional theories particularly resonate when considering an institution such as the US military, with its long and storied history, steeped in tradition and customs, and its own unique institutional culture. However, when considering the dynamic experiences of women, specifically senior enlisted women, who have served in this ever-evolving and yet stagnant masculine institution, gender represents an inherent and principal consideration as women continue to encounter significant and varied challenges associated with military service. Feminist Institutional Theory enables us to understand the distinct implications and influences of gender both on the institution at large as well as the individual actors within (Krook & McKay, 2011a). Gender, therefore, operates at not only the personal level, but also within institutions and social structures and is an intrinsic part of meaning-making (Krook & Mackay, 2011a).

Feminist Institutional Theory considers gender as a seminal component in the analysis of institutions. Kenny (2014) notes that a "feminist institutionalist approach

provides useful insights into the gendered foundations of . . . institutions" (p. 679). The notions surrounding gender, of male and female, masculinity and femininity are intertwined within the institutional fabric in a cyclical and interwoven nature. Gender is embedded within the institution which constrains and shapes social interaction both formal and informal (Krook & Mackay, 2011b). These gendered institutions include schemas, rules, norms, and practices which become engrained as sources of social behavior, be they formal or informal. Feminist Institutional Theory notes that institutions are inherently gendered, institutional processes construct and maintain gendered power and social dynamics, and institutions are constricted by gendered informal and formal norms. The US military is markedly an institution with entrenched gendered norms and dynamics which directly influences the experiences of women in military service and particularly those experiences where gender undoubtedly plays an integral role.

"Social Learning Theory approaches the explanation of human behavior in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental determinants" (Bandura, 1977, p. vii). People are neither powerless nor free agents. Bandura (1977) notes three distinctive features of social learning theory. Firstly, that human thought, affect, and behavior can be influenced by observation as well as direct experience. Furthermore, humans use symbols to represent events, analyze conscious experiences, communicate with others, plan, create, imagine, and engage in foresightful action. Lastly, Social Learning Theory centralizes self-regulatory processes as humans select, organize, and transform stimuli. These aspects reinforce the argument that learning and social behaviors may be learned through self-experience or through observing others. It is a cognitive process within a social context.

In particular regards to the military context, learning and social behaviors may be acquired from personal experience or through the observations of the gendered experiences of others. The gendered experiences of women in the military and how they make meaning of those experiences (both their own and those they observe) generates a more profound understanding of female military service. The cognitive processes surrounding these gendered experiences influences their ability to successfully navigate a military hierarchy and achieve positions and ranks of leadership.

Summary of the Methodology

This study utilized an interpretivist and constructivist paradigm. Qualitative research in this realm employs an emerging approach to inquiry, data collection, and analysis in order to understand how people make meaning and interpret their experiences (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). An interpretive qualitative methodology was selected as a best fit for the purpose of this study in order to understand the context of the military, the meaning and understanding of participants, and the emergence of categories and themes (Cresswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). Purposeful sampling was selected in order to ensure representativeness or typicality (Maxwell, 2013) and target information rich cases (Creswell, 2013). Specifically, this study utilized a stratified purposeful sampling method (Creswell, 2013, p. 158; Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28) using the following sample selection criteria.

- Participants were currently serving on active-duty from one of the four military branches of the DOD (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force).
- Participants had identified as women throughout the entirety of their military careers.

- Participants currently held the DOD grades of E7, E8, or E9.
- Participants were a member of the DOD in one of the four military branches.
- Participants represented different occupational specialties within each branch.
- Participants represented both majority and racial minority composition of the DOD.

Invitations to participate were distributed via email, LinkedIn, Facebook military communities, and the researcher's extensive personal and professional network of senior enlisted service members and twelve participants were selected for this study. Individual in-depth 60-90-minute interviews and document review were conducted. The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via telecommunications which allowed for face-to-face visual and audio communication. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission of participants and transcribed verbatim. Documents including open-source policies, procedures, regulations, and guidelines from the DOD, each military branch, and each participant's occupational specialty which centered around gender were reviewed.

Data was analyzed simultaneously via constant comparative analysis along with analytic memoing as per Merriam and Tisdell (2015). The constant comparative method of data analysis involves the discovery of similarities and differences through the systematic comparison of data across all units as well as analytic induction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Ragin, 1987). "Analytic induction has always been attractive for studies that rely on a small number of cases—which means most studies based on text. . ." (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 326). With regards to analytic memoing, this included the analysis of field notes, annotations, observations, and other notes throughout the data collection and analysis process which are particularly useful in sense-making (Miles &

Huberman, 1994). Saldaña (2016) notes that analytic memos may serve to reflect and record researcher processes and choices. Qualitative research is an iterative and discursive process involving the managing and organization of data, memoing, interpreting, and coding. For these purposes, the researcher identified categories and themes throughout the analysis to winnow and aggregate the data in order to achieve the desired goal of saturation. Constant comparison analysis enabled the stimulation, isolation, and refinement of themes throughout the coding process (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). Coding included elemental (basic but focused filters), literary (language), and exploratory (preliminary assessments) coding (Saldaña, 2016). These coding methods facilitated the identification of valid, exclusive, and exhaustive codes which enabled the analysis of emergent themes and subsequent development of categories through a constant comparison analysis.

A number of strategies were utilized to ensure trustworthiness of the study such as member-checking, rich thick descriptions, audit trail, and inter-coder reliability. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) recommend utilizing multiple sources of data and cross checking throughout collection and analysis. Additionally, respondent validation (Maxwell, 2013) or member-checks enabled the respondents to review transcriptions to verify authenticity. Lastly, inter-coder reliability, or peer review (Creswell, 2013), called for an interpretive community's review of the coding and thematic analysis.

This study garnered approval from the George Washington University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Approval was obtained before any participant recruitment, data collection, or analysis commences. All data and analysis remained electronically stored on a separate encrypted hard drive on a password protected

computer. Participant names were replaced with interview numbers and subsequently pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study was limited by participants' retrospective recall and the ability of participants to communicate gendered experiences. Furthermore, this study relied upon self-reporting which may be affected given the unique nature of experiences within military service. In addition, there was the possibility of participant reactivity to the researcher as per Maxwell (2013). "In qualitative inquiry, the nature of relationships depends on at least two factors: the quality of your interactions to support your research—or rapport—and the quality of your self-awareness of the potential effects of self on your research—or subjectivity" (Glesne, 1999, p. 95). Participant reactivity to the researcher was mitigated by establishing a strong rapport (a sense of affiliation, trust, and/or affinity) with participants. With regards to delimitations, these were set by the design of the study which included the context of the study (the DOD) and the sample selection criteria.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the gendered experiences of active-duty senior enlisted women in the United States (US) military. To fulfill this purpose the following research question was determined.

- *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered experiences?*

Additionally, secondary research questions that served in this endeavor included:

  - *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered organizational experiences?*
  - *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered institutional experiences?*
  - *How do female senior enlisted leaders learn to navigate gender in the US military?*

Guided by these, a literature review and synthesis were conducted to identify and explore pertinent theoretical and empirical literature related to the context, phenomenon, and theoretical frameworks. This review led to the emergence of the following integral content areas: The Context of the US Military, Women and Leadership, Gendered Organizations Theory, Feminist Institutional Theory, Social Learning, and a Synthesis of the Literature.

Literature Review Methodology and Organization

The purpose of this literature review was to gather and synthesize relevant literature which enhances an understanding surrounding the topics pertinent to the phenomena of gendered experiences, the population of interest, and the supporting

theoretical frameworks. This was done through a meticulous and rigorous search strategy. This strategy began broad and all-encompassing and then winnowed to more defined and precise inclusion criteria and funneled to determine the most relevant literature. Relevant literature was selected based on the researcher's primary language of English. Emphasis was placed on scholarly and peer-reviewed publications. Additionally, key search terms were searched in the title, abstract, and/or subject of the literature. These key search terms included *gender*, military, gender* organization*, feminist institution*,* and *social learning* in their various combinations. Search databases included ArticlesPlus, ProQuest, Sage, and Wiley Online, comprehensive and validated search engines available at the George Washington University Libraries, as well as Google Scholar. Relevant literature was organized via a literature analysis chart utilizing title, author, citation, purpose, research questions, theoretical framework(s), methodology, data collection and analysis, findings, and recommendations for research and practice. The review of the literature led to the following content areas emerging as integral to the context, population, and phenomenon: The Context of the US Military, Women and Leadership, Gendered Organizations Theory, Feminist Institutional Theory, Social Learning, and a Synthesis of the Literature. These content areas together with their associated subsections are organized as the following.

- The Context of the US Military
    - Military Rank/Grade Structure and Hierarchy
    - Gender and Language in the Military
    - Historical Overview of Women in the Military
- Women and Leadership in the Military

- Gendered Organizations Theory and the Military
- Feminist Institutional Theory and the Military
- Social Learning Theory and the Military
- Synthesis of the Literature

While a number of these content areas include terms that were not utilized as key search terms, they emerged from the reviews of the articles identified as relevant to this study's context, population, and/or phenomenon. One such example is that of women and leadership. The concept of leadership and the military is so entwined that any study or research pertaining to the military and gender, inevitably begets leadership as a component.

The Context of the US Military

It is imperative to recognize the distinct nature of the context of the US military. Specifically, to note that the military possesses a unique culture unto itself as both a collection of historic institutions and a formal governmental organization. "One certainly, needs to remain aware of the peculiar circumstances that frame the larger military culture—particularly if one is interested in the issue of military reform" (Murray, 1999, p. 30). Culture is a relatively vague term with any number of meanings and connotations. Schein (1990) defines culture as

> a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (p. 111)

Additionally, it incorporates observable artifacts, values, and basic underlying assumptions.

> We can think of culture as the material and spiritual heritage of a community, a group, or an organization. It includes the stock of myths and stories, artistic and craft artifacts, buildings, tools, laws, institutions, rituals, and customs. It is frequently argued that culture is the cement which holds communities together by establishing shared meanings and values. (Gabriel, 2008, p. 65)

Military culture is passed down by its members, broadly shared across membership, adaptive, and symbolic in nature (Dunivin, 1994). It is an all-pervasive and all-encompassing aspect that lends significance to experiences through selection and organization (Rosaldo, 1993). With organizations such as the military, culture reflects the assumptions, notions, and beliefs articulated or reflected in its symbols, rituals, customs and traditions that give meaning to its members and activities and govern individual behavior (Crotty, 2015; Terriff, 2006). Military culture is reflected in a multitude of levels: its distinction from civilian society, a connective yet broad military culture, individual branch and service specific sub-cultures, occupational sub-cultures, and implications of said cultures.

As an institution unto itself and a collection of historic institutions, the military differs from civilian society and other organizations. The Office of the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (2014) notes that

> those who proudly wear the uniforms of the U.S. Armed Forces are steeped in that broader history and tradition, but they are also the inheritors of the unique

> tradition of the Profession of Arms in the United States that dates back to the earliest days of the Republic (p. 20).

The US military possesses its own sense of society with its own sociology, history, standards, ideals, and beliefs (Hall, 2011; Hill, 2015; OSEA to the CJCS, 2014; Terriff, 2006). Unlike its civilian counterpart, "military society is undemocratic, hierarchical, and quasi-socialistic. It prizes order, routine, and predictability" (Bacevich, 1997, p. 22). With the incorporation of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), the connection between American society at large and the military has diminished over time. Prior to this, and certainly before and after WWII, nearly every American was related to, connected to, or knew personally someone who had served or was currently serving in the US military. The advent of the AVF resulted in fewer communities and families connected to military service (Bacevich, 1997; Collins, 1998). This ever-widening knowledge gap exacerbated the differences between civilian and military societies and encouraged the insular nature of military culture.

At the macro level, the military or Department of Defense (DOD) possesses an overarching culture steeped in tradition and norms. The broad concept of military culture comes with untold numbers of definitions. Terriff (2006) perceives military culture as formed and constituted by discourses and/or narratives generally about historical events or figures (p. 217). Snider (1999) notes that "what makes military culture unique, not surprisingly, is that its central elements derive from an attempt to deal with (and, if possible, to overcome) the uncertainty of war" (p. 15) and is comprised of a number of elements including discipline, professional ethos, ceremonial displays and etiquette, and cohesion and esprit de corps. Murray (1999) defines military culture as that which

"represents the ethos and professional attributes, both in terms of experience and intellectual study, that contribute to a common core understanding of the nature of war within military institutions" (p. 27) and is influenced by history, professional ethos, geography, milieu, experience, and external society. Perhaps the most concise definition and that which is used for this study is Collins (1998) definition of military culture as "the prevailing values, norms, philosophies, customs, and traditions of the armed forces" (p. 213). The American military culture reflects these attributes within a historically male-dominated tradition.

Nevertheless, while there exists a broader military culture, at a meso level each individual branch and component service possesses its own inherently unique and disparate sub-culture (Hall, 2011; Murray 1999; OSEA to the CJCS, 2014; Snider, 1999; Terriff, 2006; Wong et al., 2003). The various sub-cultures may include but are not limited to differences between the four branches (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force), differences between component services (Active-Duty, Reserves, and National Guard), and differences between the military and its auxiliary components (defense employees and military families). This is perhaps most evident in the differences in core values and ideals espoused by each of the branches as seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Core Values and Motto by Branch

Branch	**Army**	**Navy**	**Marine Corps**	**Air Force**
Core Values	Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, Personal Courage	Honor, Courage, Commitment	Honor, Courage, Commitment	Integrity First, Service Before Self, Excellence in All We Do
Motto	This We'll Defend	Semper Fortis, "Always Courageous"	Semper Fidelis, "Always Faithful"	Aim High… Fly-Fight-Win

Table 2: Core Values and Motto by Branch

Additionally, at another level, sub-cultures or idiocultures exist within each branch and service reflective of the various occupational specialties and communities (Hajjar, 2014; Wong et al., 2003). Naval Aviation diverges from Naval Submarine culture, as Army Infantry differs from Army Intelligence, and so on.

Lastly, are individual cultural implications, specifically those cultural implications pertaining to racial, ethnic, and, as with this study, gender. "Culture is invisible and puts implicit expectations on how women and men should act if they are to conform to gendered expectations. . ." (Bierema, 2016, p. 130). The traditionally masculine culture of the military has particular implications for women. Military service, warfare, and combat remain 'men's work'. This is reflected in the masculine norms and values which pervade military culture; where military service is contrary to the alleged suitable roles for women (Boyce & Herd, 2003; Brunner et al., 2013; Dunivin, 1994). At the sub-cultural level, the incremental changes in policy and regulations pertaining to women, the disparity and contradictions between policy and reality, and the continued banning of women from certain occupational specialties has reinforced the masculine archetype and forced the few women in military service to adapt and integrate into the masculine paradigm (Archer, 2012; Kelly et al., 2013; McMahan, 1996). Military culture celebrates the group or collective over the individual and values uniformity over diversity, an essential condition as members must be substitutable in the realm of war. However, this prioritization may have significant implications for those, like women, who intrinsically fail to reflect the group norm.

Military Rank/Grade Structure and Hierarchy

While certainly the military possesses its own unique overarching culture, in addition to the branch and occupational specific sub-cultures, there also lies an inherent distinction between the officer and enlisted corps. The military hierarchical structure is unlike other organizations. Though it may resemble the traditional triangular structure commonly used in professional organizations, its composition is informed by historical traditions, relationships, and structuring unique to the military. "The military has essentially no lateral entry, hiring only at the entry level. . . . If people with a high potential to succeed are missed at the entry level, they are forever missed" (Cooke & Quester, 1992, p. 238). These lone entry level opportunities exist at both the enlisted and officer ranks; however, upward mobility is limited to within the initial accession category of enlisted or officer. This is most starkly seen in the delineation (line) between the enlisted and officer ranks/grades as evident in Figure 1.

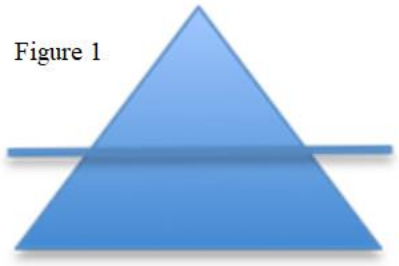

Figure 1: Military Hierarchical Pyramid

This line prohibits movement directly up from the enlisted ranks into the officer ranks. For enlisted members to achieve officer ranks/grades they must depart the hierarchy and reenter via a commissioning source similar to those entering the officer ranks directly. Though admittedly Warrant Officers exist in some in between status, they are few in number. Furthermore, unlike other organizational structures, service members are

generally restricted to entry at the bottommost positions or ranks/grades, i.e. E1 and O1. Military careers may culminate in both the enlisted and officer ranks and senior enlisted members represent a unique entity, with significant leadership responsibilities dissimilar to their civilian counterparts. The unique relationships derived from this hierarchy demonstrate that while officers may possess legitimate power (that associated with formal authority or in this case rank), senior enlisted members possess significant bases not only with legitimate power over their subordinates but also that of expert and information power (experiential knowledge and expertise) which may be used to influence those in the officer ranks (Northouse, 2016). Subsequently, the relationship between senior enlisted and officers is a much more fluid and relational construct than a hierarchical pyramid as in Figure 2 would suggest.

Figure 2

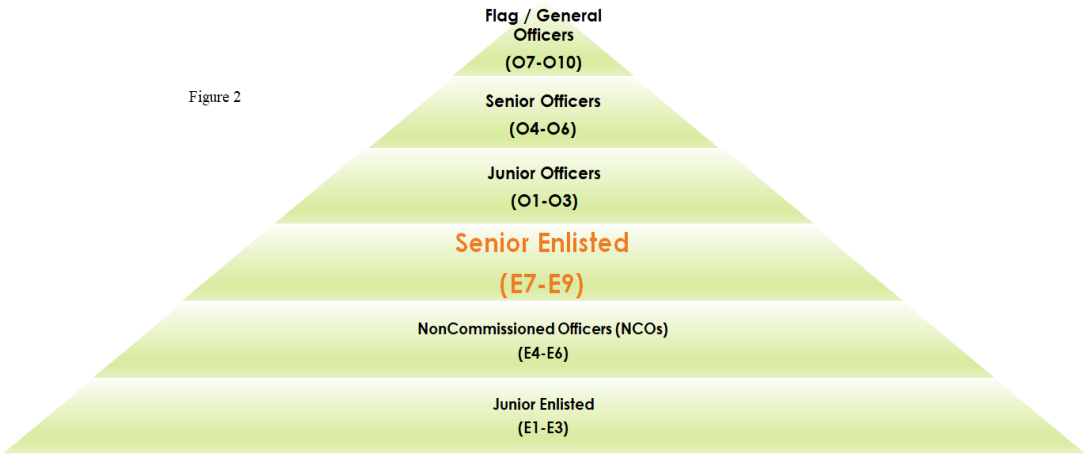

Figure 2: Military Grade Hierarchy

The military has both very clear 'surface-level structures' and very clear 'deep structures' defining power arrangements. For instance, through the use of rank insignia, surface-level power is easily identified to all members in the system. At the same time, there are deeply entrenched 'codes' of behavioral order (deep

structures) that extend beyond the official work environment. (Wong et al., 2003, p. 659-660)

Furthermore, the sheer size of the DOD and its units means that even lower level leadership often command significant numbers of personnel. Therefore, senior enlisted members not only lead vast numbers of junior enlisted, but also by virtue of these underlying relationships and deep structures as well as their expert and informational power, they influence and 'lead' members of the officer corps despite their subordinate hierarchical rank. Senior enlisted service members reflect a

> distinct and invaluable leadership cadre that balances artfully between mission and people . . . possess professional qualities, competencies, and traits that complement the officer corps and enable the enlisted force. They are trusted and empowered leaders in the Profession of Arms— the Backbone of the Armed Forces (OSEA to the CJCS, 2014, p. 2).

Their leadership reflects a blending of formal training and education in conjunction with informal tradition and military culture (Wiltz, 2016). While the term senior enlisted reflects a finite set of grades, each military branch incorporates its own ranks (used as titles for addressment) associated with each grade as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3

Senior Enlisted (E7-E9) Rank Equivalent by Branch

Grade	**Army**	**Marine Corps**	**Navy**	**Air Force**
E9	Command Sergeant Major -or- Sergeant Major	Sergeant Major -or- Master Gunnery Sergeant	Fleet/Command Master Chief Petty Officer -or- Master Chief Petty Officer	Command Chief Master Sergeant -or- Chief Master Sergeant -or- First Sergeant
E8	First Sergeant -or- Master Sergeant	First Sergeant -or- Master Sergeant	Senior Chief Petty Officer	Senior Master
E7	Sergeant First Class	Gunnery Sergeant	Chief Petty Officer	Master Sergeant

				-or- First Sergeant
Note: Data compiled by ICF Int'l (2018).				

Table 3: Senior Enlisted (E7-E9) Rank Equivalent by Branch (ICF Int'l, 2018)

Continuity across grades ensures clarity and consistency across the DOD, yet branch specific ranks allow for the continuance of historical traditions and individual branch and occupational identities and sub-cultures.

Gender and Language in the Military

The notion of gender and its associated implications and aspects is not entirely consistent in research. "Gender is sometimes used as a dichotomous category system, but it is increasingly viewed as more dimensional and complex than a simple dichotomy" (Smith et al., 2010, p. 364). Critical, feminist, queer, and other theories, paradigms etc. discourage the usage of dichotomous or binary applications of gender. Certainly, "gender is affected by social, cultural, and institutional factors" (Brunner, 2013, p. 20) and not merely relegated to biology. However, broadly, gender encompasses the normative conceptions of appropriate sex-based behavior (Gabriel, 2008). As seen in Table 4, there are countless perspectives and therefore definitions of gender.

Table 4

Definitions of Gender

Paradigm	*Definition*
Constructivist	"Gendered behaviors are largely a product of socialization and can evolve depending on historical and social circumstances" (Brunner, 2013, p. 20).
Essentialist	"Gender is strictly reliant on biological sex" (Brunner, 2013, p. 20).
Performative/Discursive	"Biology plays a distinguishing role but gender is mediate through social understanding" (Brunner, 2013, p. 20).
Historical	"Gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (Scott, 1986, p. 1067).
Institutional	Gender is "a set of social norms based on accepted ideas and practices about femininity and masculinity; norms that can be, but are not necessarily, aligned with and assigned to woman and men" (Chappell, 2010, p. 184).
Sociological	"The social construction of gender . . . the many different processes by which the expectations associated with being a boy (and later a man) or being a girl (later a woman) are passed on through society" (Andersen, 2015, p. 22).
Psychological	**"Gender refers to being a boy/man or a girl/woman in a cultural context" (Smith et al, 2010, p. 364).**

Table 4: Definitions of Gender

However, despite the desire to move away from dichotomous or binary systems, the context of the American military remains, functionally, a binary application of gender. Service members are either male or female, a man or a woman in matters pertaining to physical fitness, uniforms/attire, medical status, language, and grooming. Additionally, there are a number of policies and regulations at all levels which center on a binary standard. Subsequently, in keeping with the existing literature and the contextual implications of the military, a binary, dichotomous category system is utilized based upon the definition that "gender refers to being a boy/man or a girl/woman in a cultural context, and it is the appropriate label for humans in most psychological research" (Smith et al., 2010, p. 364).

Historical Overview of Women in the Military

Throughout American history, women have participated in armed conflict, albeit at times covertly and oftentimes with severe restrictions. Historical tales abound of Molly

Pitcher, Margaret Corbin, Deborah Samson, and Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley during the Revolutionary War, and Elizabeth Newcume during the Mexican War, many of whom were recognized by Congress for their service. The Civil War brought women to both sides with Rose O'Neal Greenhow and Sarah Emma Edmunds. In fact, the first woman to receive the Medal of Honor was Dr. Mary E. Walker, a Civil War surgeon, and the first Purple Heart for an American woman went to Annie G. Fox during World War II. However, aside from these relative anomalies and their more covert counterparts, who often disguised themselves as men, American women had little military service affiliations prior to World War II. What service they did have was relegated to medical (primarily nursing as with the Army and Navy Nurse Corps), administration, and other support services. These support capacities enabled the usage of women as manpower without officially militarizing them. Post-World War II, women's military service has grown exponentially (Doll, 2008; Manke, 2015; Williams, N. et al., 2013). Additionally, with the switch from conscription or draft based enlistment to an All-Volunteer Force (AVF) with the option for selective service via registration, women have continued to be recruited in record numbers (Butler & Schmidtke, 2010; Kelly et al., 2013). However, their military service has consistently been plagued by incrementalism and contradictions surrounding both civilian laws and military policies pertaining to women (Abrams, 1993; Archer, 2012; Boldry et al., 2001; Brownson, 2014; Kelly et al., 2013). Below are a number of key policies which gradually opened military service to women.

- 1942 – The establishment of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) granted women

formal military recognition and training as clerks, mechanics, administrators, and cooks.

- 1943 – The Women's Army Corps (WAC) and Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASP) fully accept women into the Army Air Force (aside from combat and flight training). Women are allowed to serve as civil service pilots via the WASP.
- 1948 – The Women's Armed Services Integration Act (1948) serves to ensure the ready mobilization of women in the event of a national emergency or shortage of volunteers. However, combat exclusion legislation is a component of the act and limits enlisted women to two percent of overall strength and officers to ten percent of enlisted strength and grade to O-5. It also prohibits women from commanding men or from having dependent children.
    - The Selective Service Act of 1948 (1948) aka the Elston Act and later renamed the Military Selective Service Act states that it is the mandate of the United States Congress to provide for the common defense by increasing the strength of the armed forces of the United States, including the reserve components thereof, and for other purposes.
- 1951 – The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) is established and remains in existence as an advisory committee to the Secretary of Defense on all matters regarding female military service personnel.
- 1956 – The Combat Exclusion Amendment is codified under Title 10, U.S. Code (Women's Armed Service Integration Act of 1948 amendment, 1956).

- 1964 – The establishment of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (1964) regulates employment discrimination. However, the act provides no determination as to its applicability to the military.
- 1967 – Public Law 90-130 (1967) removes strength percentage and grade limitations for women in military service as established in 1948.
- 1972 – The Equal Rights Amendment is approved by Congress. While this did not directly affect female military service, its precedence was used successfully in a number of court cases brought against military branches on issues of motherhood, pregnancy, and standards of morality to enact military policy change.
- 1973 – The establishment of the All-Volunteer Force heralds the ending of the Draft (Yuengert, 2016) . Additionally, the Army and Navy open flight training to women.
    - Legal decision on *Frontiero v. Richardson* (1973) grants dependents of women equal benefits.
- 1974 – The Department of Defense establishes policies which mandate that pregnancy may no longer be cause for involuntary separation. Women are now permitted to enlist at 18 (previously 21).
- 1975 – Department of Defense Appropriation Authorization Act, 1976 (1975) aka The Stratton Amendment permits women to enter service academies.
- 1977 – Combat Exclusion Policy is reissued by the Secretary of the Army regarding assignment of women to combat arms.

- 1978 – Department of Defense Appropriation Authorization Act, 1979 (1978) repeals WAC and integrates women into the Army. The Navy assigns women to sea duty aboard non-combatant ships.
- 1979 – President Carter proposes repeal of combat exclusion restrictions.
- 1981 – In *Rostker v. Goldberg* (1981), Congress upholds the male-only draft via combat exclusion as justification.
- 1988 – DoD Task Force on women in the military establishes the Risk Rule in response to Congressional requests stating that noncombat units should be open to women unless there exists a high risk of exposure to direct combat, hostile fire, or capture (SecDef, 1988).
- 1991 – After repeated calls for repeals of combat exclusion laws/policies and more specific occupational restrictions, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal years 1992 and 1993, (1991) Congress repeals aviation combat exclusion laws and revises Title 10 U.S. Code, Section 6015
- 1992 – The Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces presents final report recommending aviation and ground combat jobs remain closed to women but recommend the opening of combat ships (United States & Herres, 1992).
    - The Army issues revised policy on the assignment of women with Army regulation (AR 600–13, 1992)
- 1993 – With the NDAA for fiscal year 1994, (1993), Congress repeals laws prohibiting women on combat ships and Secretary of Defense Aspin directs the military to open both combat ships and aircraft to women.

    - Secretary of Defense Aspin issues memorandum on *Policy on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces* (SecDef, 1993).
- 1994 – Secretary of Defense Aspin issues memorandum on *Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule* commonly known as the Ground Combat Rule which replaced the previous Risk Rule. This limited combat exclusion to those positions whose primary mission was direct ground combat (SecDef, 1994).
- 2003 – With Team Lioness, Army and Marine female service-members are assigned to forward deployed military and police search units operating in Iraq (Migdal, 2012).
- 2010 – Female Engagement Teams use Female Marines in forward operations in Afghanistan for population engagement and counterinsurgency (Bedell, 2011).
    - Secretary of the Navy announces the integration of female officers onboard certain submarine commands (Commander, Submarine Forces Public Affairs, 2010).
- 2011 – DOD Directive repeals Don't Ask Don't Tell policy (Under SecDef, 2011).
- 2013 – Secretary of Defense & Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff issue memorandum on *Elimination of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule* (SecDef & CJCS, 2013).
- 2016 – Deadline for DOD as per 2013 memorandum to open all occupations to women as per elimination of combat exclusion.
- 2016 – Secretary of Defense Carter issues memorandum on *Transgender Service Members* thereby removing barriers for transgender service and establishing

policies thereof (DOD, 2016). However, this policy remains contested and is on hold.

- 2017 – Congress begins review of current draft requirements with the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service.
- 2019 – Federal Judge rules the all-male Military Selective Service Act unconstitutional with *National Coalition for Men v. Selective Service System* (2019).

Presently, with the repeal of combat exclusion, there are no longer formal outright legal barriers to women's military service (Brunner, 2013; SecDef & CJCS, 2013). However, countless policies surrounding women, women's bodies, and supposed women's issues remain, particularly those surrounding procreation remain (Abrams, 1993). These policies extend throughout the DOD, its branches and component services, and individual occupational specialties and communities. Policies vary throughout and may even contradict (Archer, 2012) given that they do not operate in isolation (Abrams, 1993). One such example of such tensions includes the Navy's restrictions and regulations on pregnancy at sea and onboard naval vessels which often comes in conflict with policies on career trajectories and career paths. This and other such conflicts between regulations and policies often have negative consequences for women in particular (Brunner, 2013). The continuity lies in their inherently gendered nature given the particular emphasis paid to their often dichotomously gendered implications. As of 2018, women represented 16.5% percent of active-duty service members in the DOD (ICF Int'l, 2018, p. 18) as noted in Figure 3.

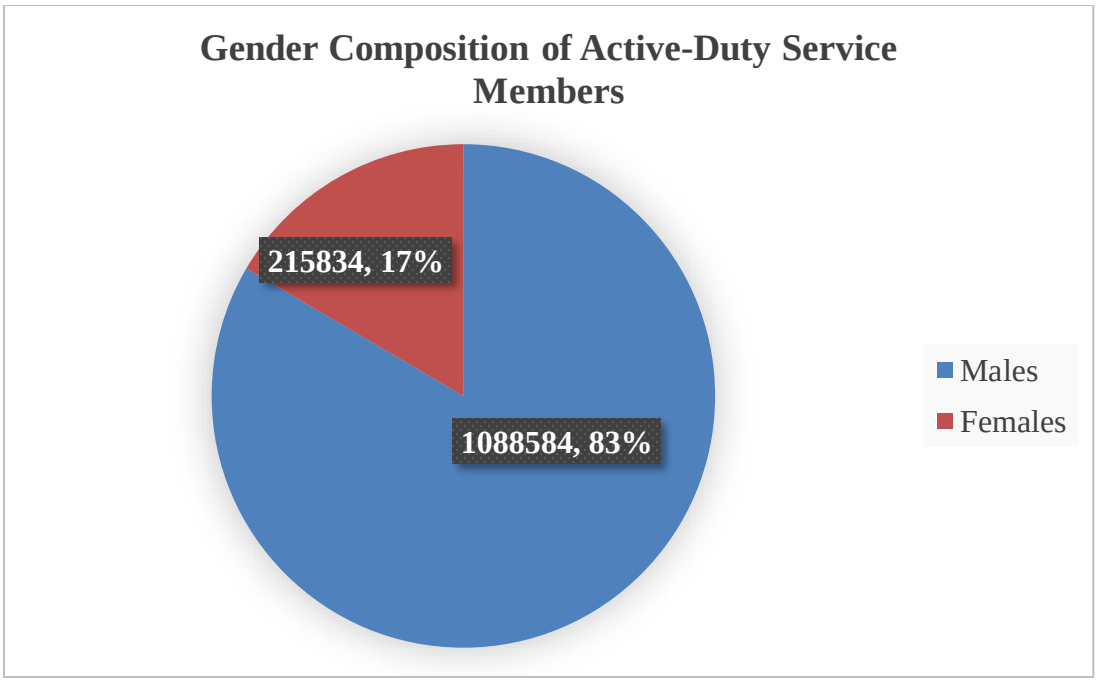

Figure 3: Gender Composition of Active-Duty Service Members in the DOD (ICF Int'l, 2018)

Additionally, the individual branches each vary disparately in their gender composition, as noted in Figure 4 with the traditionally land-based organizations of the US Army and the US Marine Corps possessing the lowest ratios of women.

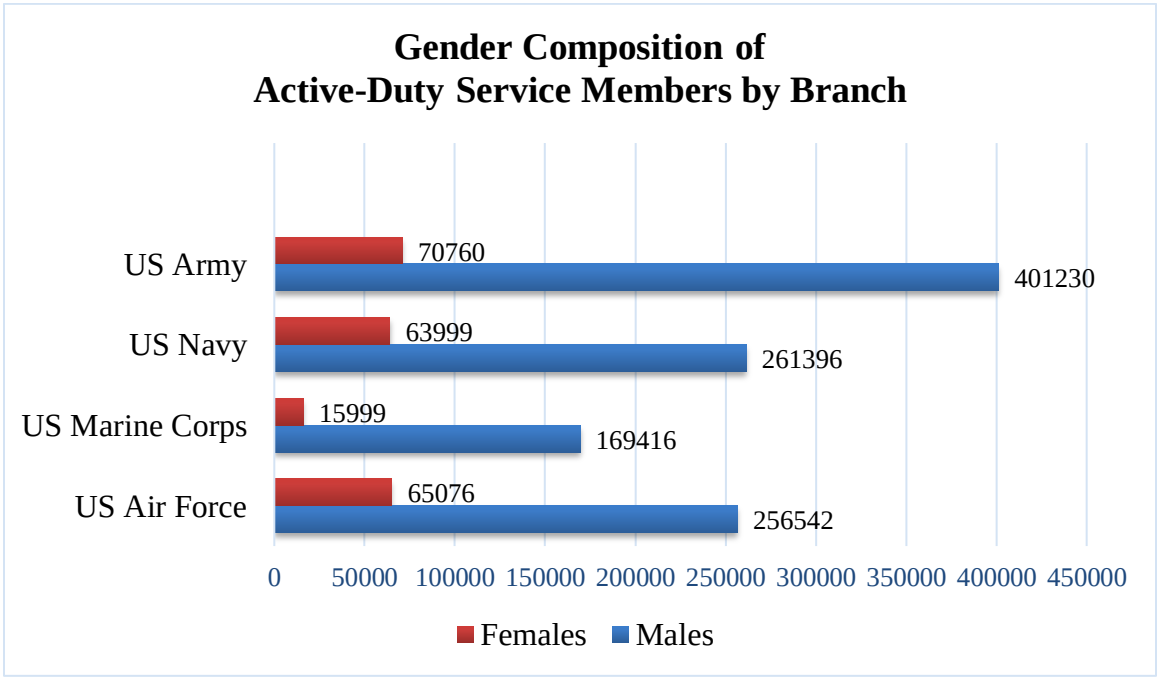

Figure 4: Gender Composition of Active-Duty Service Members by Branch (ICF Int'l, 2018)

The US Air Force presents with the highest percentage of women with 20.2% while the Marine Corps has only 8.6% as of 2018 (ICF Int'l, 2018, p. 19). Even more variations exist within occupational specialties as a result of previous combat exclusion policies and current occupational requirements, where, as with the land-based branches, combat-oriented occupations, though now open to women, remain relatively if not entirely the realm of men.

Women and Leadership in the Military

Leadership is integral to military professional development and mission accomplishment and leadership remains inextricably entwined with the military at every level. "After all, leadership and the military are practically inseparable" (Wong et al., 2003, p. 657). This fundamental connection exists regardless of gender; however, gender and leadership have their own fraught relationship. Women have continually faced challenges and barriers in traditionally masculine professional and organizational spaces with regards to leadership, the military included, and often their voices have gone unheard and their stories untold (Selzer et al., 2017; Simpson & Lewis, 2005). Similar to other male-dominated professions, as women advance upwards in the ranks their percentages diminish starkly (Bierema, 2016; Mcgee et al., 2013). Within the military, given the masculine nature of the profession and the relatively small percentages of women in military service, these challenges and barriers are ever more visible. They make take the form of physical, psychological, and leadership stereotyping, the formal and informal barriers to advancement women encounter, or the silencing of women's voices and lack of representation. These are often compounded by more serious issues like sexual misconduct. Regardless of the means, these challenges and barriers effectively

exclude women from much of military service and especially military leadership. Women fail to reflect the ideal *warrior* archetype physically (Bacevich, 1997; Brunner, 2013; Hall, 2011). They lack the desired masculine psychological attributes, traits, and characteristics of dominance and assertiveness or if they do possess them, this is seen as counter to norm and undesirable (Boldry et al., 2001; Northouse, 2016; Williams, L. et al., 2017). Kelly et al. (2013) found that despite continuing changes in policies and regulations, including the integration of women into previously prohibitive careers, the idealized masculine archetype remains. Male leadership is seen in concurrence with the command and control philosophies of the military and is counter to leadership traits traditionally associated with femininity such as communication and collaboration (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Furthermore, women are subject to formal and informal organizational and institutional barriers to advancement. "While barriers for women have become 'more permeable,' structural barriers that are discriminatory still impeded the advancement of women's career trajectories" (Selzer et al., 2017, p. 3). Homosocial reproduction (the tendency to select those with whom one identifies as similar to oneself), lack of mentoring, perceptions on women's commitment to career and viability in military service, as well as perceived or realized disproportionate family responsibilities (including family planning) present barriers both informal and formal (Acker, 1990; Baldwin, 1996; Boyce & Herd, 2003; Manke et al., 2015; Northouse, 2016). In concert with homosocial reproduction, androcentrism iterates that military structures are inherently patriarchal. Specifically, that men hold positions of power and see the world through their own lens, that men define others in relation to themselves, and that those who are *other* are valued in relation to the dominant group (Abrams, 1993;

Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Certainly, the incremental nature of women's integration into military service and the continued pervasiveness of issues such as sexual misconduct has additionally played a fundamental role in the realities of women's military leadership. The barriers within each branch and specific to occupational specialties present a significant hindrance, particularly in regards to combat-oriented positions which are seen as the most desirable for career long leadership opportunities (Yuengert, 2016).

Intersectionality

An additional layer integral to women and leadership in the military is considerations for women of diverse racial backgrounds, ethnic origins, sexual orientations, or any non-normative identity. "What about the individual who moves in both spheres simultaneously (Hall, 1999, p. 143). As with civilian society, service members who present with non-normative demographics reflective of race, ethnicity, orientation, etc. are met with additional challenges and barriers in addition to and compounding upon those associated with gender. "This association has been made on the grounds that to be visible and to 'stand out in the crowd' is to be seen as different and hence to be isolated and marginalized from the dominant group" (Simpson & Lewis, 2005). As women are spoken of in terms of their deviances from the male norms, so too are women, who reflect the broader spectrum of demographics reflected in American society at large and within the military, marked by their deviances from the majority outside of gender. As androcentrism focuses on the deviation from male, ethnocentrism the deviation from the dominant race/ethnicity (White in the US), and heterocentrism the deviation from heterosexual, those with intersecting identities experience exacerbated

challenges (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Such intersectionality occurs in a variety of facets including leadership. “They are required to display leadership competence while simultaneously conforming to . . . prototypes representing traditional . . . behavior” (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010, p. 74). Be it tokenism, three-way strife, triple jeopardy, or intersectionality, these women may face additional barriers to military service and leadership due to demographic factors as well as unique gendered experiences based on such intersectionalities (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991; Hall, 1999: Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Williams, L. et al., 2017). Intersectionality specifically reflects the interconnected nature of social categorization based on both gender and race which results in overlapping and enhanced disadvantage “greater than the sum of racism and sexism” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140).

Gendered Organizations Theory and the Military

The DOD exists as the formal American military organization. It is the oldest and largest government agency which houses the armed forces of the United States, specifically the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. Its origins begin with the establishment of the War Department in 1789 and culminate in its current form in 1949 as the DOD. Throughout its history and in its many organizational forms it has remained an organization where gender matters. Acker (1990) presents a theory of organizations which reflects the inherently gendered nature of the DOD. Acker (1990) notes that “to say an organization . . . is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine” (p. 146). Gender is not some outlying factor which must be taken into consideration and addressed but rather

is an inherent and integral aspect of the structuring of the organization and without such consideration, any understanding is fundamentally lacking. Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations incorporates five interacting processes including the construction of divisions along lines of gender, the construction of symbols and images related to those divisions, interactions between members based on gender, the production of gendered components of individual identity, and the influence of gender on creating and conceptualizing social structures. Furthermore, it reflects the realities that the concepts of jobs, hierarchies, and the organizations contained within are not gender-neutral. Rather they reflect expectations which are considered more suited to male/masculine domains such as domestic and social life, total commitment to organization, bodily processes like human reproduction, leadership, and emotion (Acker, 1990; Bierema, 2016; Ely et al., 2011). Such realities are even more reinforced within military organizations such as the DOD, who are continuously reaffirming their ties to the past.

Acker's (1990) five aforementioned interlocking processes are easily seen within the military context and culture of the DOD. For the first, the construction of divisions along lines of gender or gendered labor divisions, this can readily be seen in the historic restrictions placed on women's military service. Warfare was seen as 'men's work' and any women who entered the military were limited by the available opportunities at the time. Early occupations available remained in more socially acceptable support fields such as nursing, administration, etc. The incremental inclusion of women into more and more 'masculine' or combat fields clearly reflects a historic division of labor along the lines of gender. The second process, the construction of symbols and images related to the divisions of gender, appears throughout the DOD and its branches as appearances

including uniforms and grooming standards are based upon a binary division of gender. Additionally, women and men are delineated by language such as either Sir or Ma'am. Perhaps even more integral to such symbolism is the continued reverence of the *warrior* archetype, which women intrinsically fail to reflect. This is in addition to perceptions on the acceptable behaviors and images of masculinity and femininity, especially those pertaining to leadership. With regards to gendered interactions, the third process, certainly the relationships and interactions between men and women, women and women, and men and men reflect Acker's (1990) patterns of dominance and submission. Furthermore, these gendered interactions are compounded by the dominance and submission inherent in the military hierarchy and rank structure. The fourth process denotes the aspects of gendered organizations which influence and are influenced by the individual identity of its members. The DOD values collectivism and tradition which places the organization over the individual. Military identity comes to the forefront and becomes a defining characteristic for its members. However, individuals within the military come from diverse backgrounds and bring with them their own understandings and interpretations on implications for gender in the military organization. Lastly, social structures underlying within the organization and organizational logic are deceptively gendered. This is seen in the DOD as structures, policies, regulations, and career paths designed when women were unseen in the military, which reflect men's lives, and therefore disadvantage women.

Feminist Institutional Theory and the Military

While the DOD reflects the formal organization of the American military, the concept of the military and its historical origins exist beyond that of its 1949 inception,

the War Department's 1789 establishment, and even American history. The American military as a broader concept exists as a historic institution, informed by its own history and that of its allies and predecessors. Its gendered nature as both an organization and an institution are overlapping and interconnected. However, it is imperative to recognize the unique nature of the military context as both and therefore the implications that has upon gender. Feminist Institutional Theory hearkens to the inherently gendered nature of the military as a historic and political institution.

> To say that an institution is gendered means that constructions of masculinity and femininity are intertwined in the daily culture or logic…the masculine ideal underpins institutional structures, practices, discourses, and norms, shaping ways of valuing things, ways of behaving, and ways of being. (Krook & Mackay, 2011b, p. 6)

This includes not only the formal institutions but also the informal ones which shape formal institutions but may also contradict or undermine them. Institutions are, generally, the formal and informal rules of the game by which members navigate the logics of appropriateness (Kenny, 2014). Such informal institutions as norms, practices, and discourses, prescribe and proscribe what is often considered acceptable for men and women as masculine and feminine (Krook & Mackay, 2011a; Williams, N. et al., 2013). Additionally, informal norms serve to complement or reinforce formal norms, offer alternatives where no prescription exists or when the prescription is undesirable (Mackay, 2011). Historically, such formal and informal institutions marginalize women and privilege men by reinforcing established gender roles and stereotypes (Brunner, 2013; Simpson & Lewis, 2005). It is a continuously mutually reinforcing cycle whereby the

products of the institution are informed and imbued with the informal and formal norms and culture which are then reflected back onto the institution itself, particularly in regards to gender. Chappell (2010) notes that institutions are structural features of the society from whence they come, possess some relative stability over time, may affect the behaviors of individuals, and provide come cultural sense of values and meanings shared amongst members (p. 184). With regards to the American military, these institutional components are readily seen as it draws its members and is influenced by society at large, is a long and storied historic institution where change occurs slowly and incrementally, members are indoctrinated into acceptable behaviors, and there exists a strong sense of military culture and associated sub-cultures. Additionally, and beyond simply broadly defining the military as an institution, the military is a gendered institution, specifically a masculine one, which values hierarchy, force, disciplined obedience, and tradition (Abrams, 1993; Andersen, 2015; Hill, 2015).

Recognizing the institutional and specifically the gendered institutional nature of the American military is integral to understanding the gendered experiences of its members. “This suggests a need to focus on deeper phenomena than ‘surface states’ of exclusion, different, or neglect” (Simpson & Lewis, 2005, p. 1260). Any continued progress in addressing issues surrounding gender in the military, no matter how large, requires an understanding of the ways single-issue policies and strategies fail to explain and address the underlying institutional realities (Abrams, 1993; Terriff, 2006). For the military especially, given the great degrees of institutionalization that occur amongst its members, gender appears antithetic to the institution and its professions (Bacevich, 1997). The formal and informal rules, by which the American military operates in regards

to gender, are convoluted, overlapping, and interconnected. Recognizing that gendered institutions, like the military, consist of these formal and informal norms as complex systems is integral towards institutional change, reform, or innovation (Mackay, 2011).

Social Learning Theory and the Military

The military, as both an organization and an institution, as well at its constituent members, is tied to its history. Both the history members personally experience and that which they see and hear. That history informs their understanding of the world and their place within it. The strong military culture discussed earlier is learned as all cultures are learned (Rosaldo, 1993). There are countless theories of learning, however, within the realm of war, where learning must come before personal experience, Social Learning Theory presents an integral component to the organization and its members' development. Bandura's (1977) "Social Learning Theory approaches the explanation of human behavior in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental determinants" (p. vii). While a "social perspective" (Wenger, 2009, p. 216) does not encompass the entirety of learning in the military, it reflects a unique aspect unto the organization and institution.

Individual social learning that occurs throughout a military career is a learned process unto itself. Organizational socialization as articulated by Van Maanen (1978) "refers to the manner in which the experiences of people learning the ropes of a new organizational position, status, or role are structured for them by others within the organization" (p. 19). The military culture is a learned one, whereby members are indoctrinated early and reinforced throughout. Van Maanen (1978) identified seven dimensions by which organizations ensure socialization: Group versus Individual, Formal

vs Informal, Investiture versus Divestiture, Serial versus Random, Sequential versus Disjunctive, Fixed versus Variable, and Tournament versus Contest. For the military, socialization lies in the realms of Group (recruits are processed in batches), Formal (set training programs), Divestiture (destroying aspects of individual identity and replacing it), Serial (role models are provided), Sequential (series of discrete steps), Fixed (fixed timetables for each stage), and Contest (where individuals build up track records). This established early learning socialization enables the continuation of social learning throughout a military career.

For Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, he conveys three distinctive features of social learning: human thought, affect, and behavior can be influenced by observation as well as direct experience, humans use symbols to represent events, analyze conscious experiences, communicate with others, plan, create, imagine, and engage in foresightful action, and Social Learning Theory centralizes self-regulatory processes as humans select, organize, and transform stimuli. For the military, the strength of its culture, individual socialization, and the ambiguities of preparing for war ensure that observation, modeling, and learning from others experiences is integral to its members. Hill (2015) notes that militaries often use collective experiences and history to strengthen collective identity and prepare for war (p. 87). The military regularly uses historical events, persons, and experiences as symbols in its endeavors. Finally, individuals within military service must regularly organize and select the requisite personal, observed, or learned experiences to draw upon within the dynamic environments service members find themselves. Bandura (1977) notes a number of processes involved in social learning as displayed in Figure 5.

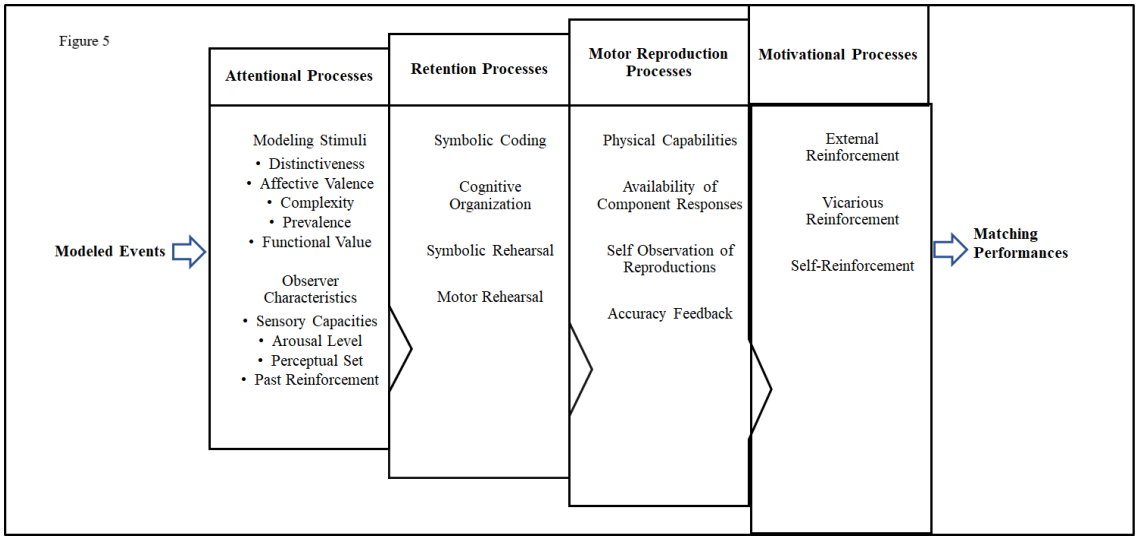

Figure 5: Social Learning Theory Processes.

Modeled from Bandura's (1977) component processes governing observational learning in the social learning analysis (p. 23).

Attentional processes indicate that people learn by observation so long as they understand and perceive accurately the observed incident. However, there are various determinants which may affect attention as seen in Figure 5. Retention processes contend that for observations to resonate and influence they must be remembered. Thirdly, motor reproductive processes reflect the ability of individuals to observe, model, and learn from representations and convert them into action. Lastly, motivational processes highlight that while members learn from observing and perhaps modeling others, not everything they acquire is enacted. Herein, members may socially learn what not to do, the primary determinants including "stimulus inducements, the anticipated satisfactions, the observed benefits, the experienced functional value, the perceived risks, the self-evaluative derivatives, and the various social barriers and economic constraints" (Bandura, 1977, p. 54). With regards to gendered experiences in the military, service members learn, either from personal experience or socially through the experiences of others, military culture,

acceptable behaviors, institutional norms, and organizational realities as they pertain to gender.

Synthesis of the Literature

There remains a dearth of research surrounding gender in the military and there have been relatively few studies which have elements of the military, rank, and gender and never entirely in concert. When the context of the military and gender were both present, studies examined single-source issues such as mental health and military sexual trauma (Haskell et al., 2010), gender stereotyping (Archer, 2012), sexual assault and sexual stressors (Murdoch & Gackstetter, 2007), sexual harassment (Butler & Schmidtke, 2010), sex-based training (Collins, 1998), deployment (Kelly et al., 2013), and leadership (McGee et al., 2013; Williams, L. et al., 2017). Wong et al. (2003) conducted a context specific literature review of military leadership and noted that not only was research on the military and gender scarce, but moreover, "as the novelty of women in the military wears off, it would be expected that researchers would shift to more substantive gender issues other than just integration" (p. 681). Abrams (1993) addresses gender in the military as a component of institutional reform. Her analysis focused on the legal and regulatory realities of gender in the military finding that reforms are highly restricted by gender and unlikely to be resolved easily. Perhaps the closest to a broad addressment of gender was conducted by Kelly et al. (2013), though the context of their study is more narrowly constrained by population, studying the deployment of women in Midwestern National Guard units. In their study, the authors found that with regards to gender and military deployment, general themes emerged including aspects of gendered experiences

such as segregated living quarters, overprotectiveness from male counterparts, sexual harassment, disparate family obligations, and heterogenous jobs responsibilities.

Regarding gendered experiences, as the phenomenon of interest, the identified studies encompass a wide-range of issues and experiences for which gender presents a distinctive factor. Certainly, this includes the starkly negative experiences so common in discussions of women and the military of which "it is safe to say . . . has replaced racial issues as the military's major managerial issue" (Butler & Schmidtke, 2010, p. 194), namely sexual assault, sexual harassment, military sexual trauma, and sex-based discrimination However, gendered experiences are not value-laden nor are they inherently negative. Gendered experiences are those experiences, both formal and informal, reflecting or involving gender differences or stereotypical gender roles. Gendered experiences include those aforementioned negative aspects but also more nuanced negative, positive, or neutral experiences as well as any overlapping experiences or policies which might alter the nature of an individual instance. Given the high-profile nature of those negative aspects involving sexual misconduct, it has become the norm to view gender policies, regulations, and experiences in isolation (Archer, 2012; Baldwin, 1996; Boldry et al., 2001; Boyce and Herd, 2003; Brownson, 2014; Butler & Schmidtke, 2010; Doll, 2008; Kelly et al., 2013), rather than as a complex whole which illuminates the organizational and institutional realities of the military (Brunner, 2013). It is insufficient to simply establish policy which denounces such high-profile negative aspects without recognizing the ways in which the systematic devaluation of women pervades women's experiences (Abrams, 1993). Yet, gender is neither a substitute nor a synonym for women. Nor are gendered experiences inherently limited to the realms of

women, as men may certainly experience instances where gender differences or stereotypical gender roles play a part. However, reflective of the military context, for the purposes of this study it has been limited to those gendered experiences of women. Furthermore, the relatively small numbers of women overall and particularly within individual units or commands means that there are few opportunities for women to share such gendered experiences (Kelly et al., 2013).

In regards to the population of this study, throughout the literature there exists a number of evident omissions. The predominance of research on the military is relegated to the officer corps, particularly Flag/General Officers. This includes studies on women, inevitably focusing on the nominal few who have attained the highest of ranks/grades. However, "just as there are female officers climbing the ladder of military ranks, there are also senior enlisted women who have made great strides. Little has been written about their accomplishments or their struggles" (Williams, N. et al., 2013, p. 2). The stratification of the military by rank/grade is rarely addressed in research as prominence is given to the officer ranks (Snider, 1999) particularly those officers in the Flag/General Officer realm. Only two previous studies considered senior enlisted as the population of interest. Though Wiltz (2016) focused on enlisted leaders, it did not factor gender as an integral component of analysis. Williams, N. et al.'s (2013) study of senior enlisted women was, like many other studies, delimited to a single branch, in this case the Army. These approaches lack consideration of the many layers of culture the military possesses both unto itself, by branch, by service, and by occupation. Additionally, as previously mentioned, much of the literature focuses on a single issue of gender in the military, e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, etc. These perspectives see policies and regulations in

isolation and fail to reflect the realities of the many overlapping and interconnected messages both formal and informal which service members receive. One consistent exclusion across the literature is the absence of consideration and analysis for racial, ethnic, and other demographics which intersect with gender. While many studies collected and presented some form of demographic data, race and/or ethnicity or other potential intersectional datapoints were never used as a delimiting factor, nor at times even reflected in demographic data, and subsequently were never utilized within analyses. Such absence fails to reflect the intersectional realities which face women of color and others who fail to reflect the norm on multiple levels.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this research study was to understand the gendered experiences of active-duty senior enlisted women in the United States (US) military. To fulfill this purpose, this study sought to answer the following research question.

- *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered experiences?*

Additionally, secondary research questions that served in this endeavor included:

  - *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered organizational experiences?*
  - *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered institutional experiences?*
  - *How do female senior enlisted leaders learn to navigate gender in the US military?*

This chapter describes the methodology utilized in achieving these aims. This includes the researcher's ontological and epistemological paradigms, an overview of the methodology, the population of the study and sample selection, and the data collection and analysis methods. Elaboration regarding trustworthiness, a statement of subjectivity, as well as discussion regarding human participants and ethical precautions conclude this chapter.

Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology, the nature of reality as it pertains to a given study and the essence of a given phenomenon, and *epistemology*, the nature and grounds of knowledge and how individuals (including researchers) understand and communicate knowledge, are reliant

upon the assumptions of individual researchers. “All social scientists approach their subject via explicit or implicit assumptions about the nature of the social world and the way in which it may be investigated” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 1). This qualitative study drew upon a social constructivist epistemology. As a researcher utilizing an interpretivist paradigm, ontologically, reality is socially constructed, and epistemologically, knowledge may be garnered from any number of sources including interviews, documents, and observations.

Social Constructivism, which is at times referred to as Interpretivism, seeks understanding of the world individuals exist within utilizing the subjective meaning of experiences. It finds understanding and meaning in the subjective experiences of participants (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) and examines the culturally and historically situated and derived meaning-making of participants (Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 2015). Social Constructivism or Interpretivism enables researchers to understand “(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 24). This allows researchers to look for a complexity within multiple views which may be negotiated socially or historically. “Thus, constructivist researchers often address the ‘processes’ of interaction among individuals . . . focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). The objective of the researcher is to interpret or make sense of these experiences. Subsequently, this study utilized the researcher to make sense and meaning of the varied experiences of the participants.

Overview of Methodology

This study utilized an interpretive qualitative methodology which allows researchers to reveal and interpret meaning. Qualitative research makes the world visible by utilizing methods of observation and measurement in order to interpret multiple, socially constructed realities with the researcher as the principal means and instrument (Glesne, 1999). Qualitative research generally incorporates a number of characteristics which may include the researcher as the key instrument, multiple methods of data collection and analysis, multiple sources of data collection, inductive and deductive logic, participants' meanings, emergent design, and reflexivity (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study utilized all of the aforementioned characteristics throughout the research design, data collection, and analysis as the researcher served as the key instrument for data collection and analysis, multiple methods and sources of data collection and analysis were utilized through interview and document review, inductive and deductive logic illuminated findings from the data, participants' meaning making was a component of data collection, the study utilized an emergent design, and the researcher maintained constant reflexivity and memoing.

Utilizing qualitative analysis enables the researcher, acting as the primary research instrument in data collection and analysis, to get to an understanding of the meaning making and interpretation of participant's experiences which could not be gained from quantitative means. "The emphasis is on a specific…phenomenon embedded in its context. The influences of the local context are not stripped away but are taken into account. The possibility for understanding latent, underlying, or nonobvious issues is strong" (Miles et al., 2014). This study utilized qualitative data and analysis to understand

the meaning making and interpretation of participant experiences and to enable the understanding of latent, underlying issues and themes. The central phenomenon for this study was that of gendered experiences. The findings present a comprehensive and contextual understanding of the participants' experiences and utilize the participants' experiences to "go beyond the data to develop ideas" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 139). The cross-disciplinary nature of the study was integral to fully address and understand the gendered experiences of women in a unique organizational and institutional profession such as the US military. The basic interpretive design allowed for the understanding of the gendered experiences of female senior enlisted military service members. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) note that general interpretive designs are useful in research "interested in understanding the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved" (p. 24). In these regards, an interpretive qualitative methodology was considered as the best fit for the purposes of this study in order to understand the context of the military, the meaning and understanding of participants, and the subsequent emergence of categories and themes (Cresswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013).

Population and Sample

In order to achieve an understanding of the gendered experiences amongst female senior enlisted military service members, a sample was selected to reflect the population at large. For this study the population was identified as female senior enlisted active-duty Department of Defense (DOD) service members. That population is a large and complex

entity. 1,073,394 (82.3%) of DOD active-duty personnel are enlisted as seen in Figure 6 (ICF Int'l, 2018, p. 19).

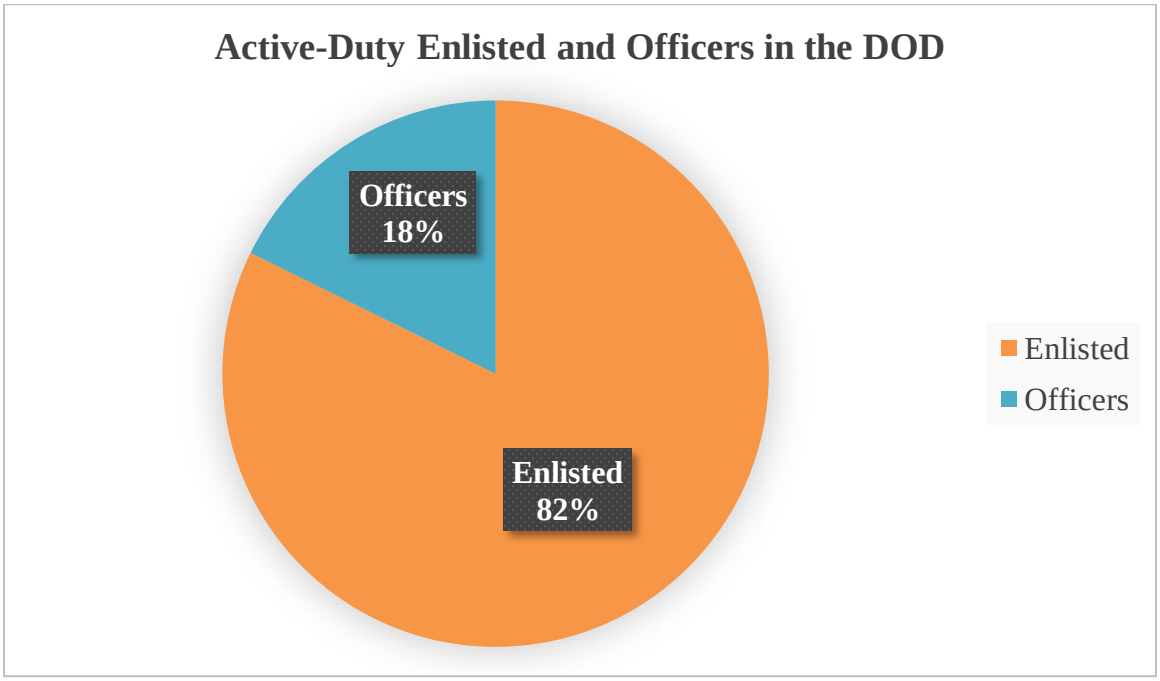

Figure 6: Active-Duty Enlisted and Officers in the DOD (ICF Int'l, 2018)

Of that 1,073,394, the individual branches have disparate yet incredibly large numbers of enlisted personnel and the total is not evenly distributed by branch as seen in Figure 7.

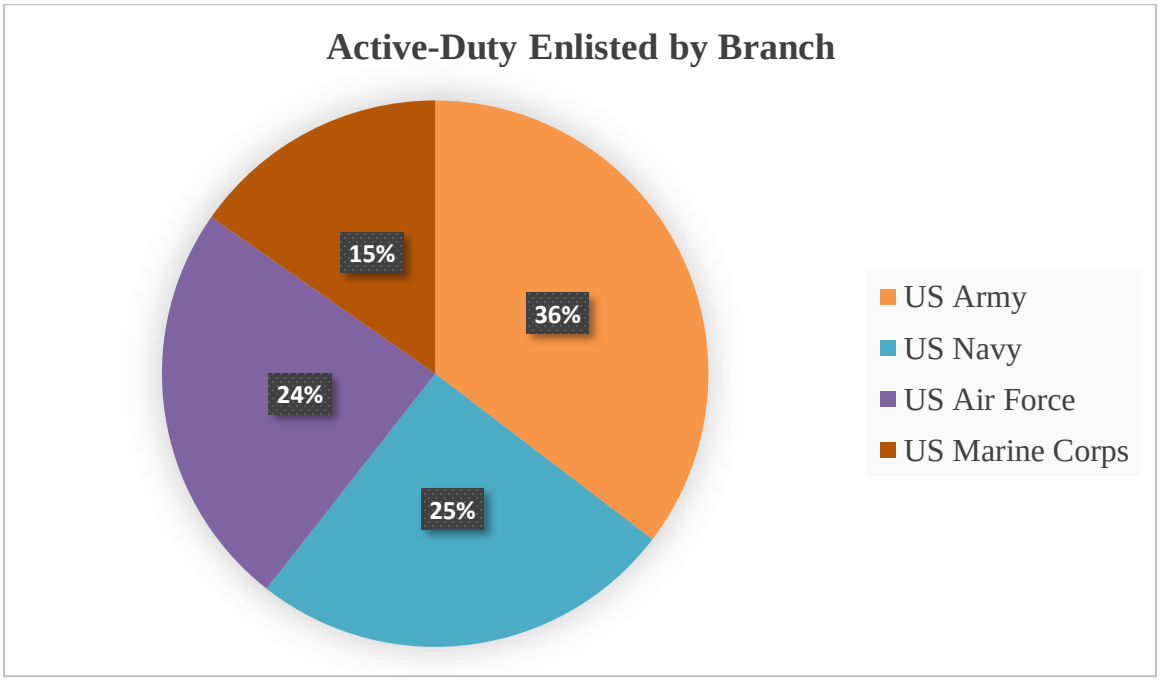

Figure 7: Active-Duty Enlisted by Branch (ICF Int'l, 2018)

Similarly, each branch has its own unique breakdown for gender amongst the enlisted ranks, as depicted in Table 5. The Air Force has historically held the largest percentages of women followed in order by the Navy, Army, and Marine Corps. This is historically in concert with the percentages of open occupational specialties by branch (Miller et al,

2012). In particular, prior to the repeal of combat exclusion, the predominance of occupational specialties within the Marine Corps were unavailable for women.

Table 5

Number and Percentage of Active-Duty Enlisted Members by Branch and Gender

Branch	Male	Female	Female Percentage of Total Enlisted Force
Army	325,089	54,586	14.4%
Navy	217,036	53,622	19.8%
Marine Corps	149,740	14,343	8.7%
Air Force	207,198	51,780	20.0%
Total DOD	**899,063**	**174,331**	**16.2%**

Note: Data compiled by ICF Int'l (2018).

Table 5: Active-Duty Enlisted by Branch and Gender

Other demographics (like ethnicity and racial minorities as reflected in Tables 6 and 7) are also varied by branch.

Table 6

Percentage of Active-Duty Ethnically Hispanic or Latino Members by Branch

Branch	Hispanic or Latino
Army	*15.5%*
Navy	*15.5%*
Marine Corps	*32.6%*
Air Force	*14.5%*
Total DOD	***16.1%***

Note: Data compiled by ICF Int'l (2018).

Table 6: Active-Duty Ethnically Hispanic or Latino Members by Branch

Table 7

Percentage of Active-Duty Racial Minority Enlisted Members by Race and Branch

Branch	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Multi-Racial	Other / Unknown	Racial Minority Total
Army	0.8%	4.6%	23.6%	1.3%	N/A*	3.6%	**33.9%**
Navy	2.5%	5.6%	19.0%	1.3%	8.0%	4.8%	**41.1%**
Marine Corps	1.1%	2.9%	11.1%	1.1%	1.0%	2.8%	**20.0%**
Air Force	0.7%	3.7%	16.6%	1.3%	4.5%	3.3%	**30.0%**
Total DOD	**1.2%**	**4.4%**	**18.8%**	**1.3%**	**3.3%**	**3.7%**	**32.7%**

Note: Data compiled by ICF Int'l (2018).

*The Army does not report Multi-racial.

Table 7: Active-Duty Racial Minority Enlisted by Race and Branch

Given the variety of occupational specialties across the DOD's branches, there is no clear and simple statistical mapping of them in their entirety. However, some examples include but are not limited to: Aviation, Supply, Infantry, Intelligence, etc. Specific to this study, the senior enlisted grades comprise roughly 10% of the American military population (broken down by grade and branch in Table 8) (ICF Int'l, 2018, p. 15).

Table 8

Number and Percentage of Active-Duty Senior Enlisted Personnel by Branch and Grade

Grade	Army		Navy		Marine Corps		Air Force		Total DOD	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
E7	35,796	7.6%	21,294	6.5%	8,634	4,7%	25,388	7.9%	91,113	7.0%
E8	10,600	2.2%	6,620	2.0%	3,920	2.1%	5,075	1.6%	26,215	2.0%
E9	3,513	0.7%	2,641	0.8%	1,580	0.9%	2,640	0.8%	10,374	0.8%
Total Senior Enlisted (E7-E9)	49,909		30,555		14,134		33,103		127,702	
Total E7-E9 / Total Enlisted	13.1%		11.3%		8.6%		12.8%		11.9%	
Total E7-E9 / Total Active-Duty all Grades	10.6%		9.4%		7.6%		10.3%		9.8%	

Note: Data compiled by ICF Int'l (2018).

Table 8: Active-Duty Senior Enlisted Military Population by Branch and Grade

The American military population remains a predominantly male-dominated arena including the enlisted ranks/grades as previously noted in Figure 4.

The sample for this study was selected to best reflect not only the sub-group and branch-sub-cultural differences but also demographic and occupational variances across the military at large as well as the differences across the senior enlisted grades. Rosaldo (1993) notes that studies of culture necessitate a number of perspectives (p. 93). To garner the integral variety of perspectives, stratified purposeful sampling (Creswell,

2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994) was conducted identifying participants from each of the four individual branches of the DOD (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force) as well from each of the senior enlisted grades (E7, E8, and E9). Participants were active-duty at the time of interview, had identified as female during the entirety of their military careers, and were currently within the grades of E7-E9 in their respective branch. Additionally, participants were selected to best represent demographic (for these purposes race) and occupational differences across the military at large.

Maxwell (2013) notes the following five aims of purposeful sample selection: representativeness/typicality, heterogeneity, deliberate selection of critical individuals/cases, establish comparisons and illuminate differences, and selecting groups/participants with whom the most productive relationships may be established (p. 98). Elements of all of these factors come into play in criterion and stratified purposeful sample selection. Purposeful sampling, specifically stratified purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994) was utilized to identify participants across all four branches and all three grades in order to illustrate subgroup differences and facilitate comparisons. It is of note that a common limitation of gender and military studies is that the samples within are not an exhaustive representation of the populations at large and often lack diversity, both traditional and military-specific, among participants. This study attempted to fill that gap by ensuring occupational, branch, rank, and racial/ethnic diversity. Stratified purposeful sampling (Cresswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994) allowed for the accounting of the heterogeneity of the population (Maxwell, 2013) through the selection of participants to represent each of the four DOD branches and each of the three senior enlisted grades. Additionally, sample selection was criterion-based

ensuring all cases met certain criteria which is useful for quality assurance (Creswell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Invitations to participate were distributed via email, LinkedIn, Facebook military communities (Appendices C and D) and participants were recruited via the researcher's extensive personal and professional network of senior enlisted service members. Of the respondents, 12 participants were selected and represented within the study who met the sample selection criteria. Participants were subsequently presented with an initial screening call and individual interviews were scheduled (Appendix E). Purposeful sampling for this study utilized the following sample selection criteria.

- Participants were currently serving on active-duty from one of the four military branches of the DOD (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force).
- Participants had identified as women throughout the entirety of their military careers.
- Participants currently held the DOD grades of E7, E8, or E9.
- Participants were a member of the DOD in one of the four military branches.
- Participants represented different occupational specialties within each branch.
- Participants represented both majority and racial minority composition of the DOD.

Data Collection

In order to achieve the desired goal of saturation, two forms of data collection were utilized within this study: open-ended in-depth interviews and document review. Interviews provided important historical and contextual information. Such interviews enabled the collection of rich thick descriptions, as well as the flexibility to ask probing

and malleable questions established within the interview protocols (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) (see Appendix A). Studies where gender is a principle consideration often utilize in-depth interviews to understand 'how and why things are done,' the role of informal rules and norms, and whether or to what extent formal rules impact behavior (Gergen, 2010; Kenny, 2014). Individual in-depth 60-90-minute interviews with each participant were conducted to yield rich thick descriptions via the determined interview protocol. Interview protocol was established for individual interviews; the in-depth nature of individual interviews ensured that participants were asked a similar set of probing open-ended questions while allowing the researcher flexibility and ceding some control to participants (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via telecommunications which allowed for face-to-face visual and audio communication. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission of participants and transcribed verbatim. The researcher kept detailed notes and memos during the interviews of main ideas and any observable behavior. Notes and interview memos were then affixed to their associated transcript for analysis in conjunction. Additional analytic memoing served to support the researchers' analysis including recognition of emergent themes and patterns, the researcher's bracketing, annotating, and organizing.

The final data collection source was that of documentation. Qualitative documents for this study included public documents procured from open sources (Creswell, 2013) such as military guidance, regulations, policies, and procedures which alluded to, have consequences for, incorporated, or centered around gender. These included documents explicitly gendered (e.g. uniforms/grooming) as well as non-gendered documents which had unintentionally gendered consequences (e.g. parenthood). Such documents were

identified at the larger DOD level, each of the individual branches, and the occupational specialties for each participant as appropriate. Document review was utilized at all times of the study to inform interview protocols, data collection, and data analysis as well as an independent source of data unto itself where applicable, as documents were reviewed both before and following participant interviews. Document review particularly served to reinforce and clarify interview data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis implies the extraction of valid meaning from data including data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification (Rocco & Hatcher, 2011). For this study, data analysis included a number of analytic strategies including categorizing (such as coding and thematic analysis) and memoing. Data was analyzed simultaneously throughout the data collection process via constant comparative analysis. This enabled the researcher to make deeper sense and broaden clarity through a continuous back-and-forth dialogue with the data. Constant comparative analysis involves the discovery of similarities and differences through the systematic comparison of data across all units as well as analytic induction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Ragin, 1987). "Analytic induction has always been attractive for studies that rely on a small number of cases—which means most studies based on text. . ." (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 326). With regards to analytic memoing, this included the analysis of field notes, annotations, observations, and other notes throughout the data collection and analysis process which are particularly useful in sense-making (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative research is an iterative and discursive process involving the managing and organization of data, memoing, interpreting, and coding. For these purposes, the

researcher identified themes throughout the analysis to winnow and aggregate the data in order to achieve the desired goal of saturation. Categories were identified and emerged from layers and iterations of coding and constant comparison analysis, the notation of patterns and themes, clustering, and subsuming particulars into general categories. As initial themes and patterns began to emerge or 'jump out' from the coding process, these patterns were then clustered together, where appropriate, by intuitively grouping and conceptualizing similarities. "Clustering can also be seen as a process of moving to higher levels of abstraction" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 250). These intuitive higher levels continued as themes and clusters were then subsumed into general classes or categories. "Subsuming particulars into more general classes is a conceptual and theoretical activity in which you shuttle back and forth between first-level data and more general categories that evolve and develop through successive iterations until the category is 'saturated' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 256). Coding included elemental, literary, and exploratory coding (Saldaña, 2016) along with the identification of valid, exclusive, and exhaustive codes which enabled the analysis of emergent themes and categories. Specifically, coding included elemental (basic but focused filters), literary (language), and exploratory (preliminary assessments) coding (Saldaña, 2016). Elemental codes served as a primary qualitative coding using basic but focused filters and included descriptive (topic coding) and *in vivo* coding. Literary coding and in particular the subset of narrative coding enabled the preliminary analysis of participant experiences through language and stories and is particularly suitable for inquiries pertaining to social and cultural meaning and feminist research (Saldaña, 2016). In regards to exploratory coding, these were the early sets of codes based upon preliminary assessments from the literature

review and theoretical frameworks and includes the initial provisional codes. *A priori* (first level organizing codes) were derived from the literature review and are annotated in Appendix F. Additionally, emic coding achieved what Creswell (2013) notes as the emerging information collected from participants. Specifically, *in vivo* coding was utilized to capture the actual language of the participants, an especially pertinent consideration given the unique cultural and linguistic distinctions which the military and the individual branches possess. Additionally, Saldaña (2016) notes that analytic memos may serve to reflect and record researcher processes and choices. "Interpretation involves making sense of the data" (Cresswell, 2013, p. 187). This interpretive qualitative study relied upon the abstraction of data through the development of codes, the establishment of themes, and the subsequent organization into overarching categories.

Trustworthiness

For the purposes of this study, a number of strategies were utilized to ensure trustworthiness including multiple data collection sources, rich thick descriptions, member-checking, audit trail, and inter-coder reliability. Rich thick descriptions of data and findings enable transferability. Bracketing, memoing, reflexivity, and rich thick descriptions are all integral to this study. Axiological or value-laden realities inform the very questions researchers ask and the methods they use to answer them. However, while such aspects may not be entirely eliminated, they can be mitigated and acknowledged. This was done through critical and continuous reflexivity. Bracketing aids researchers in continuous reflexivity and memoing. Additionally, respondent validation (Maxwell, 2013) aka member-checks enabled the respondents to review transcriptions to verify

authenticity and solicit feedback. Lastly, inter-coder reliability called for an interpretive community's review of the coding and thematic analysis.

Statement of Subjectivity

I, the researcher, am a female US Navy veteran with more than a decade of active-duty service as a Naval pilot. This prior service enables me to establish an experiential, cultural, and linguistic rapport integral to this study. However, my entire military service was within the officer ranks. As aforementioned in discussions on rank and hierarchy, the relationship between senior enlisted and officers is not as clear-cut as in other organizations. However, there remains elements of power dynamics which must be considered both as a senior-ranking service member and as a researcher. Although I am now a civilian, I recognize that, as a veteran, my past experiences and affiliation with the military could result in perceived power differences between myself and participants. As Farquhar (1999) notes, "power cannot simply be ironed out of the research process" (p. 55). However, the establishment of a strong rapport along with the clear articulation of my position solely as a researcher aided in mitigating any issues of power dynamics as well as sub-cultural differences based upon branch variations between my own Naval service and that of the participants from the Army, Marine Corps, and Air Force. However, regardless of any military-specific differences, my own military service enabled a strong sense of rapport to develop with participants given that the military population may view civilian researchers as outsiders who find it difficult to understand the cultural realities of the military including those specific to women's experiences. Within this study, a number of instances of gender arose including misconduct and it is of note that the incidents of misconduct presented herein were either formally reported or

considered by the participants to be public knowledge. While my own military service ingratiated strong rapport with the participants, it was distinctly disparate in rank, occupation, and experience. Researcher engagement and responsiveness go a long way towards enabling and facilitating such rapport while still maintaining that the line of inquiry is centered on research.

Human Participants and Ethical Precautions

For the purposes of this study, the researcher garnered approval from the George Washington University Institutional Review Board (IRB) regarding the usage of human participants in accordance with federal, institutional, and ethical standards. Additionally, the researcher completed the National Institute of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research training on Protecting Human Research Participants. Approval was obtained before any participant recruitment, data collection, or analysis commenced. Participants were informed on the nature of the study and its usage and asked to provide informed consent (Appendix B) to participate.

Confidentiality is integral to ensuring participant confidence in research. Ensuring confidentiality was done through a multitude of methods including data storage, the use of aliases/pseudonyms, and considerations for sensitive material. All data and analysis remained electronically stored on a separate encrypted hard drive on a password protected computer. Participant names were replaced with interview numbers and subsequently pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality and any identifiable information was stored in an alternative location. The most difficult aspect to ensuring confidentiality lies in the realm of sensitive material. “Research challenges us to define our individual ethical principles and then to make choices that honor or violate them” (Booth et al., 2008, p.

274). The use of pseudonyms and the separation of identifiable information ensured confidentiality over individual interviews. It was important to maintain some semblance of fidelity to participants' language and voices, balancing their own words with analysis and theory generation: both to prioritize their individual voices as female service members as well the implicit underlying findings while still maintaining confidentiality.

In particular regards to the study of potentially sensitive material which the study of gendered experiences may bring to light, the researcher came to each interview session with resources in hand. These included both civilian and military counseling and support services available in the participants' locality and through telecommunications. The participants did not request assistance nor appear in distress when discussing their gendered experiences. Only one of the participants discussed an issue which was still pending final resolution and the incidents of misconduct presented herein were either formally reported or considered by the participants to be public knowledge. Research pertaining to issues of potential trauma including gendered misconduct should account for potential risks to participants and how to minimize such (Legerski & Bunnell, 2010) and many of the participants of this study expressed their gratification with the opportunity to share their experiences. Ethical research on misconduct and its resultant and associated potential trauma have shown that inquiry into such realms is rarely harmful, rather many participants find it cathartic and beneficial (Campbell et al., 2010; Newman et al., 2006; Newman & Kaloupek, 2004).

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents key findings which emerged from a constant comparative analysis of in-depth interviews along with analytic memoing. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the gendered experiences of active-duty senior enlisted women in the United States (US) military by answering the following research question and sub-questions.

- *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered experiences?*
    - *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered organizational experiences?*
    - *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered institutional experiences?*
    - *How do female senior enlisted leaders learn to navigate gender in the US military?*

The chapter commences with a comprehensive overview of the participant demographics and continues with the presentation of the four categories which emerged from the data analysis. Within these categories, ten themes and five sub-themes were identified and presented in this chapter. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the findings. Based upon the theoretical frameworks and research questions, three *a priori* categories and one emergent category were identified: Organizational Structures, Institutional Culture, Gendered Misconduct, and Learning to Navigate. These categories and their subsequent themes were identified and emerged from layers and iterations of coding during the constant comparison analysis. Figure 8 provides a taxonomic visual

overview. The incidents of gendered misconduct presented within the gendered misconduct category were either formally reported or considered by the participants to be public knowledge.

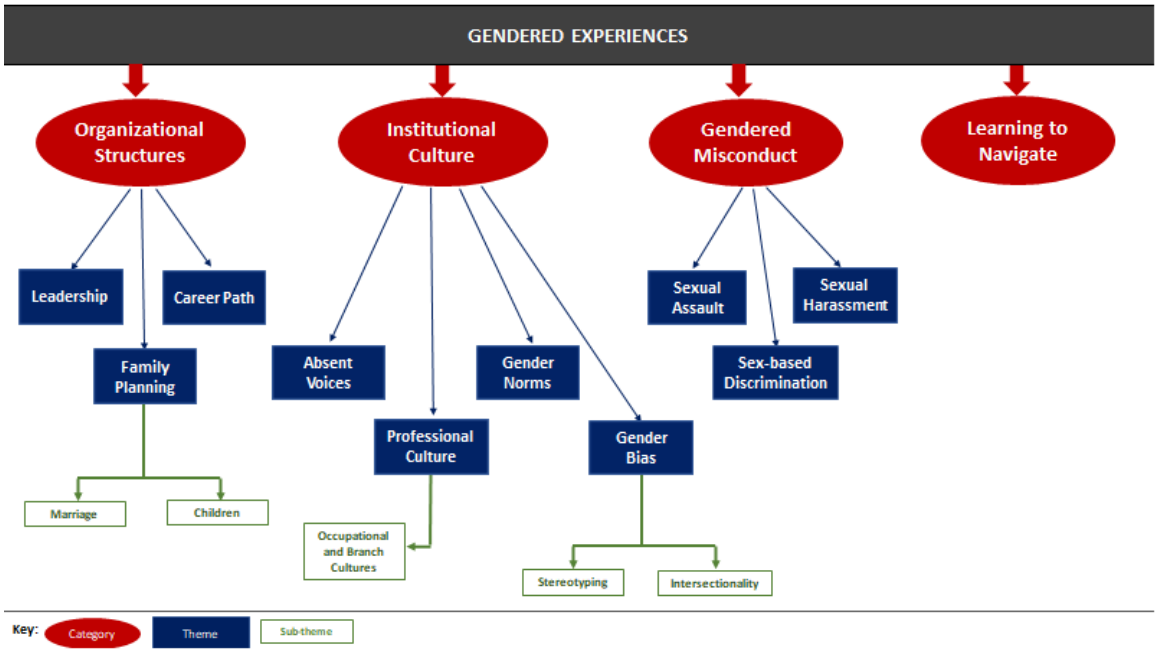

Figure 8: Taxonomic Visual Overview of Categories, Themes, and Sub-themes

Participant Demographics

Twelve active-duty senior enlisted women from the Department of Defense (DOD) participated in this study. All participants were currently on active-duty and were confirmed to have identified as women for the entirety of their military careers. Demographic data was compiled on all participants including general demographics (age, race, and marital status) and military-specific demographics [branch, military occupational specialty (MOS)/rate, rank and equivalent grade, and years in service]. MOS/rates were clustered and ranks were converted to grade to ensure confidentiality as noted in Table 9.

The participants were purposefully selected to reflect all four DOD branches and were comprised of three soldiers (25%), four sailors (33.33%), two marines

(16.67%), and three airmen (25%) in varied occupational specialties of medical, intelligence, cryptology, engineering, computers, aviation, special operations, personnel, administration, and supply To ensure confidentiality, in addition to the utilization of larger occupational fields, specific occupational specialties were simplified by combining occupational fields with similar demographics and operational status into broad categories: Medical, Intelligence/Cryptology, Engineering/Computers, Aviation/Operations, and Personnel/Supply/Admin as in Table 9. Additionally, stratified sampling was employed to ensure representation of each of the three senior enlisted grades and resulted in six E7s (50%), four E8s (33.33%), and two E9s (16.67%). Participants ranged in years of service from 12-28 years, with an average of 21.1 years in service. Participants ranged in age from 30 to 47 years, with an average of 38.9 years. Three women identified as White/Caucasian, four as Black/African American, one as Asian, three as Hispanic, and one as Multiracial. The participants identified with a variety of marital statuses, including two identified as Single, one as Engaged, five as Married, three as Divorced, and one as Widowed. (See Table 9)

Table 9

Demographics of Study Population

Demographic Characteristics (N=12)	*n*	*Participant*
Age		
Range		30 to 47 years
Mean/Average		38.9 years
Median		39 years
Race		
White/Caucasian	3	P02, P11, P12
Black/African American	4	P03, P06, P08, P09
Asian	1	P01
Hispanic	3	P04, P07, P10
Multiracial	1	P05
Marital Status		
Single	2	P08, P10
Engaged	1	P02
Married	5	P01, P03, P06, P07, P09
Divorced	3	P04, P05, P12

Widowed	1	P11
Branch		
Army	3	P01, P03, P08
Navy	4	P02, P04, P09, P11
Marine Corps	2	P07, P10
Air Force	3	P05, P06, P12
Broad Occupational Field		
Medical	1	P01
Intelligence/Cryptology	3	P03, P08, P12
Engineering/Computers	2	P02, P11
Aviation/Operations	2	P04, P05
Personnel/Supply/Admin	4	P06, P07, P09, P10
Grade		
E7	6	P01, P02, P04, P06, P10, P12
E8	4	P05, P07, P08, P09
E9	2	P03, P11
Years in Service		
Range		12 to 28 years
Mean/Average		21.1 years
Median		19 years

Table 9: Demographics of Study Population

Lastly, each participant was randomly assigned a pseudonym from the military phonetic alphabet. Pseudonyms are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10

Participant Pseudonyms

Participant #	Pseudonym
P01	Alpha
P02	Golf
P03	Delta
P04	Hotel
P05	Tango
P06	Sierra
P07	Lima
P08	Echo
P09	India
P10	Oscar
P11	Juliet
P12	Victor

Table 10: Participant Pseudonyms

Category 1: Organizational Structures

The category of Organizational Structures represents participants views of their military service, as impacted by the organizational structures which encompass the military and military service. The organizational structures comprising the military,

particularly the policies and regulations, both formal and informal, at all levels of the Department of Defense (DOD), its branches, and associated occupations, are vast, complicated, and overlapping. They include elements and impacts from the hierarchical rank structure, the realities of career paths which were established based on the lives of men long before women were wholly integrated into the military, and structural affects related to family planning which while well-structured are inherently and at times explicitly gendered. All of these components build an organizational structure with unique experiences based upon gender. The emergent themes within this category were Leadership, Career Path, and Family Planning.

Leadership.

A common theme which every participant noted was the importance of leadership in their overall and individual experiences pertaining to gender. This included the actions and responses to issues of gender by those personnel in positions of influence as well as the overall climate created by organizational leaders. Leadership within the military extends beyond mere influence to a formal structural system comprising not only influence but deeply rooted in the hierarchical interactions and relationships of its members. The ways participants engaged with leadership in gendered experiences reflected the hierarchical format of the military from their direct supervisors or higher ranks to command climate and policies driven by executive level leadership. Whether a positive or a negative reflection, leadership often played an integral role in the gendered experiences of the participants. Delta found positive leadership was key to professional success as a woman. “I felt with him it had very little to do with me being a woman and

very much that I was his Sergeant Major. . . . And we kind of came together in a very cohesive way." Oscar too found that:

> I am thankful to all prior leadership that I've had for conducting business professionally. I think that allowed me to be the way I am. . . . My last unit, prior to me getting there, I think they had a sexual harassment in one particular work session. But the Commanding Officer, he stopped it. It was taken care of and I do know Marines were held accountable. So, I mean, that, too. I think that set the tone for the rest of the squadron and the Marines. It's not going to be tolerated. I think a lot of people think twice and before going down those particular scenarios.

Unfortunately, as often as there were positive experiences, negative experiences of gender were often compounded by leadership. Hotel revealed that following her rape at her first duty station, when she came forward to her senior supervisor and leadership, the response was harsh. "I told my Senior Chief I was like, 'hey, I was raped.' And he's like, 'well, it's a he said she said. So, there's really nothing that we can do for you." Her experiences were later exacerbated when she felt pressured to have an abortion in order to execute military orders given the Navy's instruction dictating that "a Service member who gives birth will be deferred from all transfers (e.g., permanent change of station, temporary additional duty (TAD), temporary duty) to operational assignments for a period of 12 months following delivery" (OPNAVINST 6000.1D, 2018, p. 2). Hotel felt "it took many years before I openly talked about that I had an abortion. My leadership knew that I was going to have an abortion and they kind of just ignored me and there was really no help." Such examples of leadership failures were common across most of the

participants and many of the participants including Juliet noted their retention and successes in the military as antithesis to these experiences.

> I said, you know, be thankful for shitty leadership, because that's how you know how you don't want to be treated. And I think I had so much, I don't even know if bad leadership is the word, maybe just biased leadership that just didn't give me a shot for whatever reason it was, that that's made me who I am. . . . But I think that definitely I've had more bad leadership than good leadership. I had more people go against me than for me. And so, I have a handful of people that no kidding will go to war with me. And those are the ones that, of course, helped me get to where I needed to go. . . .

Additionally, a number of participants noted the challenges associated with a lack of female leadership throughout their careers. The rigid hierarchical structure of the military has served to limit the speed of women's upward mobility. Delta noted that this was obvious early on in basic training where the top echelons of leadership remained the realm of men.

> But the female drill sergeant, was almost always the assistant drill sergeant, it's not your primary, right? So even the leaders were the male drill sergeants and then the student population or the candidate, the trainee population, the student leaders are all males. That's your initial set.

This absence of women at the upper hierarchical positions was noted to additionally constrain the reporting of gendered misconduct. Echo found that "if you don't get to be a sergeant major or have enough of a diverse population going through the academy. . . . I mean, nobody cares about like some E5, right?" Furthermore, participants found that the

rigid military hierarchical rank structure exacerbated power differentials, either between genders or between ranks or in some cases both. Tango noted that such gendered experiences of power imbalance began early in her career when she observed an instructor harassing and coercing her female peers in an effort to pressure them into bartering sex for grades. Furthermore, Delta recounted a severe tale where as a junior enlisted E5, a senior enlisted male service member propositioned and physically threatened her while stationed in a combat zone in the Middle East. His attempts eventually escalated and when she refused and threated to report him, he responded by using his rank.

> Talking about, you know, it's my word against his. And he's a sergeant major. I'm just an E5. No one's going to believe whatever, whatever, whatever. . . . So, man, I mean, if that puts me more intimately aware of what, you know, being exposed to that there's really creepy predatorial behavior that's happening at our senior ranks.

This lack of senior female leadership representation or role-modeling left the participants without support in many gendered experiences. “And I didn't have any female leadership to really back me up so I had to concede and just OK, sir, I'll follow what you say” (Hotel). As a part of the initial screening for women entering the Submarine occupational field, India noted that it quickly became apparent that without senior enlisted leadership onboard, female junior officers were unlikely to succeed. In conjunction, many of the participants, Oscar included, expressed a sincere desire to see women obtain the highest ranks and positions in the future.

> But, you know, five, 10 years from now or even a few years from now, just seeing more female senior enlisted and officers in higher billets or billets that they have never, were never held by women. . . . I think that's going to be something really special. You know, when it does occur.

Career path.

Within the military's organizational structures, career paths emerged as a common theme amongst all of the participants. Along with the formal military hierarchical structure, a military career path is unlike other organizational career paths. A military career path's composition is informed by historical traditions, relationships, and rigid structuring in addition to the unique mandates and experiences necessary within the profession of arms. A military career path is a continuous linear trajectory with rigidly articulated expectations and requirements determined by branch, service, and occupation informed by tradition, history, and a preference for homosocial reproduction. Subsequently, it incorporates a rigid structural form for service members allowing for very little deviation, if any. The continuity and formal structure of military career paths seeks to ensure military requirements for standardization are met for an organization with over one million employees. However, these career paths and career trajectories were designed when women were unseen in the military and reflect men's lives. Nearly all of the participants regularly noted that their gendered experiences occurred throughout their career and included direct impact upon their military careers. Particularly, they noted that significant gendered experiences were encountered early on in their careers, as they were socialized and indoctrinated into the organization, and played a formative role in their understanding of what it is to be a woman in the military and their acceptance of the rigid

career paths the military incorporates. These gendered experiences were often encountered in the rigid structural early career training and operational environments (e.g. boot camp, occupational schools, etc.). Moreover, their gendered stories often began with phrases such as Golf's "when I first joined the military" and Tango's "it kind of started very early as far as like there was an instructor when I was at . . . school." India found that her formative gendered experiences occurred quickly and early on in her military career. "The first incident was in A school. The second encounter was right at my first command, right after A school. It was really back to back. It was crazy." Tango also had a number of early formative experiences.

> There was an instructor when I was at . . . school that was harassing and bullying and intimidating women and using his position as an instructor to coerce young women into having sex with him in exchange for grades. And like never, like he would hit on me and it creeped me out . . . and I didn't want to deal with him. But like, that's when it started. And then, you know, I got to my first duty station and without even like explaining or getting to know me or anything, the guy didn't even introduce himself, it was just 'I don't think women belong . . .' was the first thing out of his mouth. So, like that's where it started.

This initial early career indoctrination and socialization would continually be reinforced throughout their military careers and participants remarked that gender regularly played a role in their careers, career paths, and career trajectories. Experiences where gender impacted career paths covered a broad range of topics. For instance, Alpha experienced unwritten Army policies, which she stated to have confirmed as well-known if unwritten with her contacts in personnel, where younger women of childbearing ages

were restricted from deployable units for fear their familial status may change due to pregnancy, marriage, etc. Similarly, Delta noted that the traditional military career path which was designed before women entered military service often left women behind. Two service members who marry, are of the same rate, rank, and entry date will find that over time the man has left his wife behind professionally regardless of capability, simply due to the influences of pregnancy and the restrictions placed upon her career as a result. “Fast forward two or three years now there's almost a two-rank disparity between two soldiers who started out their careers at the exact same time in the exact same career field . . . the only difference is that he's male.” Participants also noted instances where their gender played a role in selection or deselection from assignments or positions. Oscar was required to do a second tour as a drill instructor, specifically to fill a ‘female billet,’ due to the “needs of the Marine Corps” and Victor found that her perceived attractiveness played a role in her selection for assignments.

> There were assignments that I feel like I was definitely like picked for because I was a female that, you know, they were like, oh, she's you know, she's not unattractive like she, you know, hey, we want her on our team kind of thing. But then there were, you know, instances like that too where they were like, hey, like, maybe she shouldn't be up in front of everybody because we don't want distraction or we don't want, you know, maybe some unwanted sexual attention, which it's I think both of those things are kind of, you know, on the ends of both sides of the spectrum. Right, both wrong for different reasons.

As women have integrated further and further into the military career path, greater and greater regulations and policies have emerged, some of which are intentionally

gendered while others often have unintended gendered consequences such as the recent revisions to the Department of the Army's *AR 670–1: Wear and appearance of Army uniforms and insignia* (2017) and the Naval Personnel Command's *NAVPERS 156651: United States Navy uniform regulations* (2020b). Participants noted ways in which both forms played a role in their gendered experiences. Their implications were varied and included regulations pertaining to grooming and uniforms, physical standards, women in combat, and policies regarding career trajectories. All of the Army participants noted that regulatory changes regarding Army grooming standards are often to the disadvantage of women. An update to the Army's regulation manual *AR 670–1: Wear and appearance of Army uniforms and insignia* (2017) was later recalled after service members noted that the changes seemed to disproportionately target women and in particular women of color. With regards to combat exclusion and changes in the status of women in combat, participants felt that often formal policies failed to reflect the realities of military service and military career paths. For instance, Tango noted that:

> Oh, we allow women in combat now. You came pretty late in my career, like I'd already been in combat. So, I thought it was kind of laughable, like, oh, now this is formal. I was in combat, you know, long before they revealed that, you know, the ban on women in combat, there's no frontlines in Iraq and Afghanistan, you're there. . . . So, yeah, I was the front lines. So, I kind of struggle with that. And I was like, 'yeah say it louder for my . . . sisters in the back. They couldn't hear you over all the combat.

Unlike regulations which generally have clearly defined gender implications, career related policies are generally presumed to be gender-neutral yet a number of participants

found that there were often unintentionally gendered consequences to such policies. Tango found that the Air Force career process 'vectoring' for senior enlisted, meant to provide mentorship and career support as well as "enhance professional development" (Air Force Handbook 36-2643, 2019, p. 10), was "more of a good ole boys club . . . and I'm not sure they're totally neutral" (Tango).

Family planning.

Family planning in the military, including marriage and children, is highly regulated and structured and is the subject of countless regulations and policies which encompass a variety of elements and experiences including the Chief of Naval Operations' *OPNAVINST 6000.1D: Navy Guidelines concerning pregnancy and parenthood* (2018), the Commandant of the Marine Corps' *MCO 5000.12F: Marine Corps policy concerning pregnancy and parenthood* (2020), the Department of Defense's *Directive: Qualification Standards for Enlistment, Appointment, and Induction* (1993) and *Financial Management Regulation Volume 7A: Military Pay Policy – Active Duty and Reserve Pay* (2020), the Secretary of the Air Force's *Air Force Instruction 10-203 : Duty Limiting Conditions* (2014); the Secretary of the Army's *Army directive 2019-05: Army military parental leave policy* (2019) and the Secretary of the Navy's *SECNAVINST 1000.1B: Department of the Navy policy on parenthood and pregnancy* (2019). Unlike other professions, military personnel's marital status and family planning is the subject of numerous policies and regulations at all levels. Furthermore, these organizational structures may vary by branch, occupation, and even gender. All of the participants often reflected on the unique implications organizational structures have upon the theme of family planning within the military, to include marriage and children.

Unlike other organizations the US military highly regulates and supervises service members experiences pertaining to marriage and children. Pay scales reflect the addition of a spouse or child (FMR Volume 7A, 2020), job placement is impacted by pregnancy (AFI 10-203, 2014; MCO 5000.12F, 2020; SECNAVINST 1000.1B, 2019), and the inability to provide an acceptable childcare plan may result in dismissal from military service entirely (MCO 5000.12F, 2020; MILPERSMAN 1300-1000, 2020a; OPNAVINST 6000.1D, 2018; SECNAVINST 1000.1B, 2019). The participants' experiences included those which reflected the inherent biological differences and subsequently were intentionally gendered as well as those which were unintentionally gendered or had unintended gendered consequences pertaining to family planning. Each participant reflected upon the interwoven nature of military service and decisions and experiences pertaining to family planning, both personally and observationally.

Marriage.

All of the participants noted the influences that their personal marital status and those of their compatriots have had upon their military service resulting in the sub-theme of marriage. Whether a result of policy, regulation, culture, or other, marital status was a common experience though the nature of it varied. This included differing opinions on support, whether it was better or not to intermarry within the military, and how marriage affects a career. Echo found that as a single unmarried service member, she was deployed more regularly compared to her married compatriots. Whenever a deployment arose "they tend to shift towards the single no kid person, as though the deployment in of itself is not going to affect us. . . . Nobody cares about single people in the military." As Echo rose in ranks, this thinking was exacerbated by the assumption that she was successful

due to a lack of personal familial commitments. “And the higher up you go, you know people make comments like, oh, of course, this is why you got to the point where you are because you don't have a family.” Tango found that having a spouse was a double-edged sword. Her spouse was at times a hindrance to her career due to their dual-military status and yet the absence of one upon her divorce left her at a disadvantage to her peers given the military’s organizational support and reliance on military families. “Because I look at a lot of my male counterparts . . . for example. He has a spouse that is really supportive of him and will help him achieve his goals. I don't have that support.” This was reiterated by Echo who noted that despite formal statements to the contrary, successful service members have often attributed their success to strong familial and spousal support, where “every speech they give, oh, you know, it's because of my wife, my rock, who stood by me that I got as far as I did.” Hotel also noted the high rates of divorce among female military service members in comparison to their male counterparts and its relation to the Navy’s policies for dual military couples which see them alternate deployable statuses. “One on Sea Duty/One on Shore Duty. Whenever possible, PRDs will reflect a rotation in which one member will be on sea duty while the spouse is on shore duty. . .” (NAVPERS 156651, 2020a). Hotel argued that such policies contributed to higher rates of divorce for military women.

> One will be at sea; one will be at shore. So, there's just consistent, one of us is gone. And again, that pushes people to grow apart or people marry in the same rate, makes it hard to get the right billet or job to continue promoting or somebody's, promotion has to suffer while the other person's takes off, which can cause resentment. And that leads to divorces.

Participants did however, have opposing views on whether marriage to a service member or a civilian was more amenable to women's military service. India, married to a civilian, felt that "because my husband isn't military, so it wasn't an issue. I don't know how, I, me personally, I don't get how you could be dual military and married." In contrast, Lima, married to a fellow marine, felt that marriage to a fellow service member was key, due to their understanding of the military environment and the dynamic of the male-female relationships within. "I don't know how easy it would be for a woman to be married to a civilian."

Children.

Participants often noted that experiences surrounding pregnancy, maternity/paternity, and parenthood were gendered, whether through obvious biological differences or through unintentional consequences of policies often written before women were fully integrated begetting the emergent sub-theme of children. Relevant regulations and policies confirmed the participants frustrations pertaining to children and unintentional consequences (AFI 10-203, 2014; Army directive 2019-05, 2019; DOD Report No. 1304.26; MCO 5000.12F, 2020; MILPERSMAN 1300-1000, 2020a; SECNAVINST 1000.1B, 2019). The participants' experiences were starkly different and unique to each participant's situation, some positive, some negative. Yet, participants often expressed the challenges of accommodating and adapting children into a military career field structurally designed to reflects men's lives and the traditional male relationship to children. With regards to pregnancy, this covered a variety of gendered experiences unique to the military context. While not all participants had gone through pregnancy themselves, all of the participants noted the ways in which the military and its

members, as Echo articulated, have “had to adjust to accommodate this natural thing because we don't have structures that allow for that.” Some participants felt that their career success was contingent upon whether they had children. Hotel felt that her career pressured her to have an abortion in order to execute new orders, unfortunately this would have long lasting consequences.

> I had fought so hard. I chose not to have the child that I actually wanted because of my career. And so, I still live with that, and unfortunately. . . . I had endometriosis and adenomyosis, so I ended up having a hysterectomy. So now I cannot have children. . . . And through the military care system, I had to go see my doctor. And she was this old little Catholic Filipino lady and she scolded me instead of helping me through it. So, for many years, I carried a lot of guilt.

Lima also felt that a military career had discouraged her from having children. After waiting to ensure it would not detrimentally affect her career, Lima has gone through a number of rounds of in-vitro to no success. These attempts were often interrupted by military obligations and she now fears it may be too late.

> But, one of my regrets being in the Marine Corps is not putting myself first and not putting my want for a family first. Truth be told, I feel like I may have lost my chance to be a mother because I was too busy trying to meet this deadline, trying to go to this meeting, making sure I was at this training, making sure, you know, my, I was ready for inspection, going to these courses, going on deployments. And now it's like. I did all this and I missed my opportunity. . . .

This concern over the consequences of a pregnancy was not always substantiated. Delta was initially concerned over the response to her pregnancy in an operational status.

> I was very, very stressed out about, you know, the implications that I would not deploy. I wouldn't be kind of contributing to the team. And so, you get a lot of angst over. . . . What will they think of me then? And so, I was terrified. Me personally. Me as a person, I was terrified at that. That once you took away kind of my, what I thought was diminishing my value to the organization, what would that mean?

However, she was quick to find support amongst her unit and organization despite the challenges. “The beauty of it was that we were all learning together. There was not a point where it was 'you, you go to figure this out’. . . . it was like, 'no, what do you need?”

With regards to maternity and paternity, participants either had an overall positive experience or a pointedly negative experience. The experiences were particularly colored by the reception, support, and response of their leadership and its acceptance or lack thereof of evolving and progressing maternity and paternity standards (AFI 10-203, 2014; Army directive 2019-05, 2019; MCO 5000.12F, 2020; SECNAVINST 1000.1B, 2019). In particular, the Air Force participants noted overall positive experiences in regards to maternity and paternity driven in large part by an understanding of the realities of an increasing number of women in the Air Force. Victor found her pregnancy to be a positive and supportive experience where:

> I didn't have any problems with what was going on. Like I got pregnant, when I wanted to, like I had a baby. I didn't have a lot of problems. I was back to work in six weeks, no problem.

Similarly, Sierra found her own maternity leave a positive experience but noted that this was contingent upon the command's ability to support her in her needs and not pressure her into returning.

> You know I got my six weeks. . . . Nobody gave me a hard time. Nobody looked for me. . . . They checked in on me. . . . I have to be able to bond with my children, which is why that maternity leave was extended. . . . And the reality is you have to set us up for success versus setting us up for failure. You didn't issue me a family, but then I got one. . . . If things aren't right on my Homefront, it'll make it difficult for me to come into that door and be able to do things for you as a military unit.

Not all maternity experiences were positive. Echo felt that the Army reflected the double-standard inherent in women's military service.

> People often say 'the army didn't issue you a family' or 'the army didn't issue you a baby. But then every speech they give, oh, you know, it's because of my wife, my rock, who stood by me that I got as far as I did, and blah, blah, blah. And I'm like well it's not really true because there really haven't been those sorts of considerations deliberately factored in.

Beyond issues of maternity, the participants noted a number of experiences which centered on gender, parenthood, and raising children while concurrently serving in the military including issues with parental roles and restrictions on single parents. Alpha remarked that the majority of parenting policies and regulations within the military operate with the presumption that single parenting is solely the domain of women, largely ignoring the growing numbers of single fathers, whether by marital status or single by

deployment. “Well what about the single dads because we have a lot of single dads, you know moms who are deployed because we have a lot of dual military.” This is noticeably seen in the recent revision of the Commandant of the Marine Corps’ *MCO 5000.12F: Marine Corps policy concerning pregnancy and parenthood* (2020). The previous iteration contained significantly greater numbers of gendered language including language which by default assumed single parenthood to be the domain of women. “Ensure that a servicewoman who will become a single parent and Marines who are members of a dual military couple residing in a joint household are counseled regarding the availability of government housing (especially in high cost areas)” (MCO 5000.12E, 2004, p. 15). Many of the participants stated that the military and single parenthood often came into conflict. Hotel was forced to relinquish custody of her first-born in order to enter the Navy and met with legal resistance when trying to regain custody from her mother. “The Military Services may not enlist married individuals with more than two dependents under the age of 18 or unmarried individuals with custody of any dependents under the age of 18. . . (DOD Report No. 1304.26, 1993, p. 8). Even after successfully regaining custody she was now met with the lack of resources for single parents as a result of the presumption of traditional dual parent households compounded by the organizational demands for family care planning. Such organizational demands include stipulations pertaining to ensuring service members have arranged sufficient childcare should they be unavailable due to work schedule or deployment. “COs will require certain Service Members to create and maintain up-to-date and duly executed family care plans . . . failure to maintain a family care plan is a reportable, temporary non-deployable category” (SECNAV, 2019, p. 3). Without suitable family care plans service members

may be subject to immediate dismissal from military service, effectively losing their job (OPNAVINST 6000.1D, 2018; MCO 5000.12F, 2020; MILPERSMAN 1300-1000, 2020a; SECNAVINST 1000.1B, 2019).

> There's not many resources or anything available for females. You have no other option. You know, you're kind of forced to figure it out on your own. And if you don't figure it out on your own, you face admin separation. So, and this was how I make my money and how I feed my children. So, anything that would get in the way of the livelihood of taking care of my children was not a simple thing (Hotel).

Both Hotel and Juliet dealt with the ramifications of single parenthood and deployment and were forced to seek out long term childcare. Deployment for Hotel meant that "I was going to have to send my kids away again." Both also saw this system fail when their long-term childcare provider fell through and they were forced to deal with the consequences while deployed overseas. For Juliet this "was one of those that you got to make it work. And you can't use that as an excuse because the men can't use that as an excuse." Furthermore, Juliet recalled that her now older children were at times resentful of her commitment to military service and the sacrifices they had all made in support of that commitment.

> There have been times, like they said before, you love the Navy more than you love us. The Navy is your life. You know, those are your kids, not us. Just hateful, mean things. But that's just really how they feel. They feel like, if I had to pick, I think they know I would pick them. But I feel like they just know how much I love what I do to the point where I think they've suffered a little bit.

Category 2: Institutional Culture

All of the participants articulated their gendered experiences as impacted by the Institutional Culture. The institutional culture of the US military incorporates the beliefs, values, behaviors, communications, and underlying assumptions which give meaning to its members and ensure the adaptation and survival of the institution. Institutional Culture reflects the contextual implications of military culture. Subsequently, within such institutionalized culture emerged additional themes, including the professional culture of the military, the absent voices within said culture, the gender norms which it regulates, and the gender-based biases which pervade. All of the participants numerously identified experiences where gender and some element of institutional culture intertwined.

Professional culture.

The theme of professional culture of the military comprises the collective identity of its members and its subsequent branch and occupational cultures. The collective identity unique to the military culture was particularly common and reflected both the desire to conform and the frustrations with the inability to do so by way of gender. “I've always tried to blend in but also make sure that you're not going to stomp all over me just because I'm here” (Alpha). This sense of collectivism was prevalent in all of the participants. Sierra felt that “like we're all one” and Juliet found that within the military “either you fit in or you didn't.” Lima found that much of her success in navigating the Marine Corps and the realities of being dual-military was because she was “one of the guys. We have the same lingo. We have the same culture. We have the same values and experiences.” However, this collective identity was at times detrimental to gendered experiences. Delta found it challenging to navigate the aftermath of sexual harassment in

the military because she “was extremely loyal to the command. I didn't want to make waves.” Similarly, Golf found the idealization of a collective identity was detrimental to her sense of belonging within the military ‘Brotherhood’.

> I think over at certain commands where you don't, you feel like a little bit of an outsider, like you're never gonna be one of the guys. . . . And it makes me kind of laugh because they talk about the Brotherhood and everything and I'm like, well Brotherhood, the fraternity excluding women, because as women, it's not that way with us. We're never gonna be one of the guys. We're never gonna be a brother. We are always going to be judged by different standards.

Occupational and branch cultures.

With regards to occupational and branch cultural distinctions, these played integral roles in the experiences pertaining to gender for all of the participants. At times positive, though for the majority negative, the sub-theme of occupational and branch cultural influences were often articulated. Branch cultural implications generally focused upon the policies and regulations which directed standards for women, many of which differed between the branches. The connection lied in that the participants regularly spoke specifically about their own branch culture and its continuous evolution in lieu of a larger military culture. Lima stated that “the Marine Corps makes Marines. They don't make female Marines or male Marines. . . . So, let's keep at that” and Sierra found that “it is a continuous process, and for the Air Force in itself to acknowledge, you know, the way that the world is changing. . . . it's things like that, that have definitely helped out and made a difference.” However, a number of participants expressed frustration with the

evolving branch cultures. Golf was conflicted over changes towards a more gender-neutral Navy which might diminish the efforts of previous female sailors.

> So, I'm kind of conflicted because at the same time, like all of these are you know, this is what women's history and heritage and all the uniforms and what it took to get there. But at the same time, I don't want people to be like, 'oh, that's a woman.' I do want to be viewed as a sailor. So, I think that the uniform does play a part of heritage. And I feel like switching over is kind of losing it. But at the same time, I think it's the right thing to do.

Similarly, Lima stated that the constant pressures and demands of the Marine Corps resulted in her putting her own personal desires for family and children to the wayside.

> But, one of my regrets being in the Marine Corps is not putting myself first and not putting my want for a family first. . . . And that's how I describe it about the Marines, because it's always constantly, its constantly Master Sergeant, Master Sergeant, like they're all mom, mom, mom. They all want something from me. And I feel like they suck so much out of me and I get home. . . . And it's just it can be overwhelming. It really can. . . . I think I really needed to get that part out about this. Putting your needs aside for the organization has been hard.

Additionally, participants noted the disparities between branch cultures. Echo jokingly expressed frustrations with Army culture in contrast to others such as the Air Force "You know, looking back, sometimes I joke that maybe I should have joined the Air Force" and Victor recalled an example, while working in a joint environment, which highlighted the cultural differences between the Air Force and the ground/land forces (Army and Marine Corps), where males felt much more comfortable using crass language she had

not encountered previously in the Air Force culture. “I understand that's a little bit of what the culture is for them.” Occupationally, cultural implications generally focused on the realities of workplace integration of women, both positive and negative. Positive experiences generally resulted in occupational environments which were relatively small as with Echo, “so, everybody knows each other, knows of you” or in occupational specialties with higher percentages of women. Negative occupational experiences generally focused on those occupations in typically more male-dominated fields. Tango noted that “where I've encountered ostracism, has been in my specific subset culture. . . . I think it's more prevalent in the male oriented ones. . . . Anything that I think is more male dominated. . . .” Juliet found that her occupational specialty was often sexist and racist and did not reflect necessarily the Navy at large.

> But I feel like that community and I can only speak on that community because that's where I grew up in, it is very sexist and very racist and they still are. You can put as many pictures up as you want. Our all-female det out here doing whatever. But you're still going to look at them sideways just because that's the way you are.

Lastly, Delta noted that this occupational cultural disparity lessens as more and more occupations are opened for women, however it requires the leadership to avoid habits of siphoning females into not only traditional occupations but also from creating gender heavy specialties post-repeal of combat exclusion.

> When they lifted the ban on women being engineers, that you kind of saw a couple of job specialties where all the women were funneled to and not necessarily in the combat . . . career fields. Now you kind of see that wall coming

> down. And so that's kind of what happens like the gender ban goes away but then there a couple of MOSs where like, 'let's still put that just there.

Absent Voices.

Every participant hearkened to the implications of voice or lack thereof upon their experiences with gender in the military as a continuous theme. These included both representative and individual voices. Representative voices, specifically the presence or absence of female voices in regards to policy and regulation development within the military, included concerns for female voices and representation at all levels. Echo found overall that many of the military's doctrines "of course, were written by men. So, they don't know our struggles." Juliet felt that such decisions necessitated diversity and representation. "I do think that the right people need to be in the rooms making these decisions. But I feel like it needs to always be a diverse enough group to bring a different aspect." Meanwhile, Delta argued that a lack of representative voice often results in negative consequences.

> Female representation is missing. It's, at this point, it has to be a requirement. It has to be mandatory. It has to be. Has to be, because you have an underrepresented population already. And if you are building policy and building, you know, uniform standards and you're doing it in a vacuum of the male perspective, you know, the result could actually be offensive. And that's what happened. You know, the result was offensive.

Additionally, participants expressed a number of experiences where individual voice (the ability or perceived ability of an individual to express issues pertaining to gender while serving in the military) or lack thereof played an essential role. When recalling a harsh

experience with sexual harassment, Delta noted that she was “enamored with the woman who goes in and reports every single thing, every single time. It takes a different type of courage. She possesses a courage at the different and in the feminine spectrum that I did not possess.” Similarly, Juliet found lack of individual voice was detrimental in dealing with her experience with domestic abuse because she “couldn't let anybody know that because again . . . I'm in a male dominated field and I can't be weak. I can't show weakness. I can't cry. I can't be that abused woman. I have to be tough and hard.” As the participants gained maturity, experience, and rank throughout their careers, they often found that their individual voice capabilities grew. Golf notes that her exposure to unwanted solicitations and language was diminished overtime. “But I don't hear that anymore because I'm more mature enough to be able to speak my voice and it's a different Navy, so men don't even try that around certain women like me.” Likewise, Juliet found the more senior she became the more readily she was able to halt any unwanted language with peers, subordinates, and superiors alike.

> So then from then, as I got a little bit higher up in rank, it got a little bit easier because I could, I don't know if pull ranks the right word, but I had a little bit more power to say, shut the hell up, you are not going to talk to me crazy.

Gender Norms.

Participants’ gendered experiences often reflected the theme of gender norms and were exacerbated by the expectations of military informal norms. The military is rife with informal norms and traditions which are interwoven within the larger military institutional culture. These often played an integral and at times insipid role in the participants gendered experiences. Despite the vast numbers within the military, Alpha

noted the familial nature often has consequences in that “there's never secrets in the unit as much as they say like 'oh you know we'll keep this in house' or 'It’s not going to get out.' It always gets out.” Alpha recounted a tale of pressures to change a military unit’s name to a more sanitized politically correct variation. Such external pressures perceived as political correctness were blamed on women and perceived as antithetical to military tradition. “So, just kind of a shift in mentality in some units. And it’s like no it's just not appropriate to be saying that.” Correspondingly, India recalled her experience in regards to recent external pressures to change the Navy’s rates to more gender-neutral pronouns in lieu of the regularly used man at the end, i.e. yeoman, corpsman, etc. In contrast to Alpha’s scenario, however, India’s resulted in a significant pushback from within the military, women included, to maintain the traditional nomenclature. “I don't understand why they think because it has the word man in it, it means it’s just for men, for gender. I don't understand that. Like human, we are going to be called people or persons.” The informal norms of the military are often deeply rooted, tied to tradition, and may at times fail to reflect the changing compositions of the military, its branches and services, and occupational specialties. Sierra recounts her frustrations in the acceptance of male haircuts as a part of their military duties whereas women’s are regarded as a vanity and therefore results in a double-standard. She conveyed her efforts to pushback and alter this norm and to advance the recognition of women’s needs.

> If a guy can go get his hair cut, you know, during lunch and be gone for an extended period of time. Then why can't I leave early to go get my hair done? You know, it's an appointment and they need to be within regs, just like I need to be within regs. So, you know, but I think it was that unspoken rule, you know,

> when I first joined that, you know, that's not what females did. Females don't leave. . . . They didn't leave early. . . . And I was like 'but why?

A common norm which regularly frustrated participants dealt with the lack of incentive for male service members to be informed and familiar with female grooming standards whereas women were expected to be experts in both. This was notably expressed by all of the participants in the sea services, the Navy and the Marine Corps. Navy participants, like Juliet, felt that "it just showed that the males . . . didn't educate themselves to learn female grooming standards. But I knew the male grooming standards" and found this contrary to the collective military identity. "But everybody should know regs, I should know your regs, you should know my regs because we're all in the Navy together. We're all supposed to uphold the standard." For the Marine Corps, Oscar found that "sometimes male Marines don't really make an effort to learn female Marines orders, whether with the uniform, hair and thats just that Marines not choosing to educate themselves." Lima articulated a common frustrating occurrence where male Marines would ask her to correct subordinate female Marines rather than do it themselves.

> They always come to me and be like, 'you need to go fix that.' And it's like 'hey your creed and your promotion warrant says the same thing mine does. You can do the same thing.' 'Well, it's better if it comes from you.' . . . And that was a frustration. And I schooled him up. I was like 'brother you're a SSgt Select and you're going on recruiting duty. You need to know the rules and regulations. You cannot be scared to tell them if their wrong.'

The participants' experiences with gender norms often included formal and directed divisions of labor and work based upon gender and the prevailing learned roles

or behaviors deemed as appropriate for each gender. These experiences generally reflected the continuing growth of women in the military's more traditionally male-oriented fields. While serving in a combat operative unit, Hotel found that her male compatriots were disproportionately concerned with her operating in such an environment beyond simply the concern for a fellow service member.

> So, males were like 'Ah, if something happens to you because you're female we're going to treat you like one. And we're going to risk our own lives to try to save you and put ourselves in danger because that's what males do, being chivalrous.' I'm like 'wouldn't you do that for any teammate? I don't understand what my gender has to do with it.

Early in her career, Juliet found that her supervisors regularly tasked her with the more traditionally feminine work despite her training.

> And it was very apparent that my job was not to be an electrician, which is what I was quote 'paid to do'. It was to do the girl stuff, the filing paperwork, the counting the tools and doing all the office type work because God forbid, I couldn't carry a ladder and a construction person being a female. . . . My job was to ride around in the truck with him all day and quote unquote 'look cute.'

These were often in tangent with experiences surrounding the idealization of masculinity and the male gender as the *warrior* archetype and the subsequent preference for inherently stereotypical male traits regardless of gender. Furthermore, these centered on military policies and regulations which continue to move towards more gender-neutral affinities. However, in these cases gender-neutral regularly centered more on the male standards. Alpha felt that the recent changes in Army physical fitness standards found in

the *FM 7-22: Army physical readiness training* (2013) and the Center for Initial Military Training (2019) towards a gender-neutral standard resulted in “something like a good percentage, forty two percent, of females failed it and the comments that were put out about it is like you know this is going to weed out females so that we only have strong males.” Similarly, Juliet regarded the Navy’s uniform standards as:

> It was assumed that I couldn't do the work because I was a priss or I was too feminine . . . I was told I couldn't wear deodorant. I couldn't wear perfume. I couldn't wear lip gloss. Anything that was feminine if you will . . . the Secretary of the Navy at the time . . . said when I look out on the fleet, I want to see everybody look like this. So now we all wear these ridiculous dixie cups so we all look like guys, we all look stupid. . . . But I think from the uniform side, they want us to dress like a man. And wear the uniforms like guys and that kind of stuff.

Participants continually highlighted the culturally accepted ways in which military service members interacted between genders including language and behavior. These interactions reflected the nuanced cultural differences between military culture and society at large. This may be seen through unwarranted language such as Alpha’s “'please don't be a girl' . . . or 'why do you have to be such a girl?” or Golf’s early exposure to shipboard language.

> When we talk about girls on the ship like, 'oh yeah, she's a fucking whore' or 'she's like has this backfat, who would fuck her?' And just like all those really vile things that I and I of course if you hear that about women, you think that, they talk that way about you too.

Likewise, the interactions of service members often contained distinctly gendered implications. Hotel found that after getting promoted early on in her career it was acceptable for senior males to make jokes that her ‘crows’ (a symbol of rank worn on an enlisted Navy uniform) weighed less than a male’s. “Implying that my crow or me as a third class was less important or had less of an impact because I was female in some way, shape or form.” Tango was often frustrated by the double-standard of acceptable behaviors.

> And I can't tell you how many times we hear the guys talk about dicks, not even there like that. They're talking about dick this and dick that, duh, duh, duh. It's constant, the crude talk. But the minute she and I say something thats crude, it's like, 'oh, god, that's disgusting.' And like covering their ears. It's like, sorry. You guys talk about dicks all day long and then heaven forbid we say vagina.

For the majority of participants such behaviors were frustrating and upsetting. However, they often felt that they were unable to express such feelings for fear of how they would be received. Delta found that when such an encounter occurred, she could only hope to vent to another female of similar rank and experience.

> You know, I couldn't go in there and cry. I couldn't go in there and actually emote the things that I was actually feeling. And so, I could call a friend and be expressive. I could call, you know, another female sergeant major. You know, my roommates and I could cry and I could get it all out of my system. But in this room of men, I felt like they were going to just say I was playing the female card, you know. I felt like I was gonna be dismissed if I was, if I was emotive of what I

> was actually feeling. . . . You know, I felt humiliated, I felt disgusted by his behavior. And I felt even worse that it was acceptable to some extent, right?

Gender Bias.

Gender bias as a theme arose as every participant identified a number of experiences that formed their understandings about workplace bias or the prejudices against an individual on the basis of gender in a military workplace. Distinct from gender norms found in society and in the military, both formal and informal, gender bias as a theme centers on the preconceptions and prejudices of individuals uniquely prevalent in military institutional culture. These experiences with gender bias often centered on the need for the participants to prove themselves or justify their position within the military itself and/or a particular military leadership setting. Delta reflected that such need to prove or justify her presence included that:

> the initial perception would be that the male soldiers were going to be better in those leadership positions and the female soldiers had to prove themselves through the rigor, rigorous kind of tests that went on during basic training . . . So, for me, I would say validation at the soldier task was very important. And I found that I had to work harder and be more perfect or as close to perfect as possible just to even know, you know, gain kind of the baseline recognition. . . .

Similarly, Hotel recalled that she "learned really quickly that I had to do three times the amount of work to get the same level of credit as my counterparts" and Echo stated that this feeling continued throughout her career even as she obtained more senior ranks.

> I feel that the higher I got the more people questioned my, whats the word, questioning why I was there, like the legitimacy of my presence at meetings. . . .

> Like now I'm older and I don't really care as much, but I think early on it was just a struggle to prove that I belonged at the table.

Many of the participants identified a number of assumptions they had experienced or observed as commonly made by other service members regarding male-female interactions which were entirely based upon gender and uniformly resulted in a negative experience. These assumptions covered a broad spectrum but were often centered on the perceived sexual nature of male-female relationships. In a collective culture like the US military, such 'gossip' may have severe personal and professional consequences. Alpha reflected upon her husband's concerns and frustrations with perceptions regarding men who interact with other female spouses while their wives are deployed.

> You know it'd be cool if there was other dads, you know I can't go to any of these groups because then I look like the creeper and then you know you don't want to be friendly with anyone because then it's like oh his wife is deployed and he's talking to Mary or whatever. . . . And you know in the civilian world I don't know if it's that where it's like 'Oh look those two are hanging out. They must be you know they must be doing something wrong.' But in the military, it's just the way, it's perception, perception is the number one thing. . . .

Oscar noted that such perceptions were common but often unfair and unjustified. "Possibly maybe if a female Marine is 20 years old and she's an E3 and has multiple male marine friends, someone that's ignorant could possibly try and make that out to be something that it's not." Additionally, assumptions were often associated with the legitimacy of participants professional successes, calling into question the veracity of promotions by implying they were merely the result of meeting some form of gender

quota as with Echo “and so, when the list came out and they, you know, they made the announcement. There was a sort of like. I got it because there was some kind of quota.” Tango expressed the same concern when reflecting on her own promotion experiences.

> But, you know, no one ever said like, 'oh, Jordan got ahead because of his genitalia.' It was Jordan got ahead because he worked really hard. Where like when I make rank, it’s like, 'oh, well, you're just a chick filing a quota.

Stereotyping.

Along with experiences of gender bias, the participants identified a common sub-thematic experience of stereotyping within the military, generally exacerbated by a lack of female presence. Alpha noted that as women integrate into the various professions many of these stereotypes diminish.

> And the whole misconceptions of having females in the unit and she's gonna get pregnant by the time she hits her sixth month here. Yada Yada. But it's just very interesting to see that as more and more females are integrated especially once they started integrating to combat arms units and then it became more of a norm rather than an exception. That, those, the stereotypes of girls bring bears to the field and stupid shit like that started to go away and it became more about capability. . . .

However, one stereotype remained a continuous experience across the participants. The stereotyping of women in the military, and particularly in positions of leadership, as ‘bitches’ or other similar diminishments. Lima reflected that throughout her military service “if you are strict on someone, then you're a bitch . . . if you like shut down people,

then you're kind of a bitch." And Golf noted that this 'bitchy' stereotype was often the result of a binary lesser of two evils scenario.

> So, I feel, I really feel like women in general, if they're successful in the military are like one of two things. They're a bitch and they're way too aggressive, more than they have to be or they're like maybe nice, but not considered as smart. . . .

Hotel was told early on that she had to embrace this 'bitch' stereotype or embody another.

> He told me that there's three types of women in the military. There are whores, there are lesbians, and then there's bitches. And I remember thinking like, 'wow,' he's like, 'so pick one wisely.' At that moment, I was like, well, I guess I need to fit into one of these three categories. And then which one am I going to be? I'm not going to be a whore and I'm not a lesbian. I guess I'm supposed to be a bitch and I remember just being so confused at 18 that that was the box that they were trying to put me in.

Intersectionality.

Lastly, nearly all of the participants noted that some of their gendered experiences were exacerbated by their race resulting in an overlapping and enhanced disadvantage, the sub-theme of intersectionality. These intersectional experiences were expressed by women of all represented race/ethnicities and ran the gamut of magnitude, from simple intersectional stereotypes as with Alpha's "my first unit was all males and the first thing they ask when they notice I'm not obviously White but I'm Filipino so it's always like 'Oh can you cook'?" to much more significant issues pertaining to race and gender. Often times these intersectional experiences were difficult to discern as with Sierra, "and it was

just difficult to tell whether it was because I was Black or because I was a female. You know what I mean? . . . It could have been both. . . .” However, more often these intersectional experiences were starkly apparent. Whether through sheer lack of diversity as Echo notes “and even within women, there are fewer people of color who are in the senior ranks” or, as all of the Army participants noted, within errant policies and regulations which create intersectional disparities such as the previous revision of the Army’s *AR 670–1: Wear and appearance of Army uniforms and insignia* (2017) which governs grooming and uniform standards and seemed to target Black women specifically. Furthermore, Alpha recalled an incidence where her orders were unexpectedly changed against her wishes and contrary to her career trajectory in order to meet the diversity requirements of the Army.

> When I had orders for Italy and they switched me to Germany, they were like they need a female instructor, flat out. I didn't want to do recruiting, I was, I was, I already had my stuff packed for deployment. I was getting ready to deploy in three weeks, and I got orders for recruiting and I tried to get out of it and they were like 'No you can't unless you can find the comparable exchange, so it has to be a minority female, it has to be an Asian female, same rank, same status'. I was like 'Are you kidding me?' So, I'm like I don't know anybody else like me.

However, these intersections did also occur in the most serious of gendered experiences, gendered misconduct. While discussing such an instance, Delta noted that

> You know, I mean, it was, it was almost a, it was kind of that intersectionality. Right. Like part of it was clearly gender based. But then it was also like this weird Black woman space, you know. . . . For me there, there's, there's no doubt in my

> mind that that happens because I was a woman. I don't know the blend of the intersectionality. I don't know how much of it happened because I'm Black or how much of it happened because I'm specifically a Black woman.

While intersectionality generally is directed towards women of color, two of the participants who identified as White/Caucasian, also reflected upon experiences where their race, coloring, and connections to people of color played a significant role in their gendered experience. Golf experienced intersectional colorism where she recalled being relegated to a 'ditzy' blond in the engineering/computer field based on her fair skin and hair color, Similarly, Juliet's interracial marriage often played a negative role in her experiences. "I was in an interracial marriage. And people would see me, talk to me, whatever, the minute they see my kids, they'd completely change the way they talk to me."

Category 3: Gendered Misconduct

It is without surprise given the current statistics that all of the participants reflected upon the most stark and abhorrent of gendered experiences, Gendered Misconduct. This was often enabled by organizational structures and institutional culture. The participants' experiences with gendered misconduct specifically included sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sex-based discrimination, delineated from other gendered interactions and experiences due to their uniquely legal nature. Not only are they criminal acts in American society at large but are additionally criminal misconduct within the military justice system through the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ, 2019) and are the subject of countless orders and regulations within the DOD and its component branches. Additionally, all policies and regulations pertaining to gendered misconduct by

DOD, branches, and occupational specialties reflected a formal repugnance and prohibition for such misconduct (MCO 1752.5C, 2019; DOD, 2019a; DOD, 2019b; DOD, 2019c; DODI 6495.02, 2017; Army directive 2018-23, 2018). Subsequently, these actions are prosecutable and punitive in both civilian and military domains and extend beyond the military context. However, at each level and within each written policy and regulation there exists significant variance in language and composition. The incidents of misconduct presented herein were either formally reported or considered by the participants to be public knowledge. For all of the gendered misconduct, participants noted that despite their individual experiences there has been significant progress over the course of their careers in regards to sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination in the military. Many participants noted the increases in reporting of such incidents was a move in a more positive direction. “I've seen the Marine Corps go in the right direction. I think things are getting reported more than ever” (Oscar). Increased reporting and its acceptance trickles down as “the things that come out and empowers other people, other girls to come forward and then even some of the males” (Alpha). Furthermore, participants noted that recent efforts have encouraged greater knowledge and understanding amongst service members. “When you first joined the military, you're giving so much information on a lot of things, but not really things to protect yourself. You don't know what your rights are . . . that's changed in the Navy recently with annual training” (Hotel). As reporting and its acceptance increases so too does the ability for such issues to be openly discussed among members. Victor notes that there has been an increase in the acceptance of conversations surrounding gender.

> So that's another thing that I think is changing a lot, is that we're able to kind of talk about these things that may or may not exactly be gender, but like definitely have to do more with, like, the sexual nature of things that can happen because of gender.

Sexual assault.

Covered ad nauseum in the UCMJ articles, rape and sexual assault includes any nonconsensual sexual contact. "DOD uses the term 'sexual assault' to refer to a range of crimes including rape, sexual assault, forcible sodomy, aggravated sexual contact, abusive sexual contact, and the attempts to commit these offenses" (DOD, 2019b). Within the theme of sexual assault, while all participants noted the real presence of sexual assault within the military environment and the policies associated thereof, a number of participants reflected upon specific experiences throughout the course of their military careers. Hotel's early days in the service included being raped by a male superior, reporting that rape to another male supervisor, and being subsequently dismissed. Eventually a female superior would inquire over her obvious symptoms and respond appropriately, enabling Hotel to seek and obtain the necessary support services of which she had previously been unaware. "You don't know what your rights are. You don't know what's supposed to be there for you." Delta observed the deadly consequences of sexual assault when one of her peer's daughters committed suicide following a sexual assault and the resulting investigation. "And she went behind her mom's house on the road right there. We could see the road from her backyard. And at 6:00 o'clock in the morning, she blew her brains out in the car." Juliet also observed a blatant sexual assault

when her superior, who had regularly harassed another junior enlisted female, assaulted the same service member in front of a number of witnesses.

> He literally told everybody, watch this. And she was up hooking up some lights or something. And he literally bit her on her butt in front of everybody. So, she reported it, there was an investigation and he ended up getting kicked out as an E6 and he was an E9 at the time. . . . I feel like it was 'let's let her, she has the right to submit a statement. So, let's just let her submit her statement.' Because it wasn't something they'd believe until it happened to other people and other people and at some point they had to finally believe it . . . so I think after she had reported it three or four times and then people saw that, thats, it took other people to see it, to believe it. They wouldn't just take our word for it.

Delta noted that such occurrences were not rare but often went unreported through formal channels. While spending time with fellow female senior enlisted members in the Army, she learned that she was not alone in these experiences.

> Right here we were in a lot of ways, like kind of healing or recovering from all of these different experiences that have gotten us to this, to this point, every single one of us had been sexually harassed. Every single one of us had almost been sexually assaulted. Every single one of us had been exposed to like random propositions. Every single one of us had a boss or a leader that didn't want to promote us because of being a woman that didn't want to hear and this was across multiple different career fields.

As with the experiences above, while all of the participants reflected with distaste on the experience, more often their focus was less on the experiences themselves and more on

their experience in the aftermath. The overall experience driven less by the misconduct itself and more by the reaction and support or lack thereof from the military. Golf described the military culture as a ‘rape culture,’ recounting her time on a naval vessel listed as first in sexual assault rankings at the time.

> And there is a lot of ‘she's lying. She lying.’ And none of the guys, even though we have the number one sexual assaults, none of the guys were like 'maybe we do have a problem there.' They were like 'she's lying. . . .

Echo too expressed frustration with a lack of support in the reporting of sexual assaults despite continued efforts both externally and internally to the military.

> It’s a national conversation. But I know that DOD has to submit stats and all of this. Absolute rubbish! I also know that every climate survey is like 'have you been a victim in the last six months?' 'Did you feel comfortable reporting it? or 'would you feel comfortable about?' Well, why would I feel comfortable talking to you when we don't even have a relationship? You haven't even laid a foundation for me to know that if something did happen, I would be taken care of. So, yeah, if it did happen, would I feel comfortable talking to you about it? Hmm, probably not.

However, not all experiences were negative. India’s encounter with a superior who would “brush up against me more or less in a way that made me feel uncomfortable all the time” resulted in his reprimand and dismissal. She felt that the Navy was supportive and that early support encouraged her throughout her career.

> I guess that's what gave me the confidence when I got to my command and something else happened in my first command. Something else happened. I spoke

up against him as well. They were very supportive, but there it's not like they tried to hide it or kick it under the rug. So, I always had confidence in the command. From the beginning, as far as me. I'm not, I can't speak for anybody else.

Sexual harassment.

As with assault, the participants articulated a number of experiences which were reflective of the theme of sexual harassment or uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature. This includes sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and comments or gestures of a sexual nature [Combating military sexual assault act (CMSAA), 2019]. In all cases the participants expressed an almost bewilderment or at the least anger and exasperation at the event. Early in her career Delta was harassed by a senior enlisted member while deployed in a combat zone. The Sergeant Major ensured she was alone in a vulnerable location and proceeded to proposition her. Delta noted that the encounter quickly escalated until she was forced to threaten to defend herself if necessary.

> He walks in to the house and I'm uncomfortable out the gate. There's just something. Something just seemed off. I didn't like that I was alone. I didn't like that. I wasn't really in comms with anybody because they were out doing the operation, so. At that point, he began to ask me why I didn't give him attention and he was, he was kind of going on about how you know, I should be able to tell that he liked me and he was doing all these things, and hadn't he taken care of my guys and hadn't he showed me such great hospitality, blah, blah, blah. . . . I don't like that we're alone. And he began to, like, physically escalate the situation, talking about, you know, it's my word against his. And he's a sergeant major. I'm

> just an E5. No one's going to believe whatever, whatever, whatever and at that point, our weapons rack was right there and I pick up my M16 at the time. He had his 9 mil on him. And I said, you know, 'I'll shoot you. Like I mean, you have to understand, like, I'm going home. I'm going home. I'm not going to be, you need to back up or I'm gonna, I'm going to pull this trigger.' And he kind of laughed it off and then I think he realized that I was very serious.

Hotel was the victim of a shipboard scandal where visiting Marines had taken compromising and salacious pictures of females onboard. The scandal was kept inside the ship and Hotel expressed significant frustration at the feeling of being objectified.

> And it was more shameful. I didn't want to make a big deal about it. Because everybody, it was a small ship, so everybody knew who I was. And at that point, I had already started being harassed by people, being called a MILF because I was a mom and I had children. Again, people, for whatever reason in the military feel that it is OK to complement. I think they think they're complimenting you. But I feel that it's not actualizing who I am. I'm not a look, I'm Hotel. I'm intelligent. . . . I'm ambitious. But all they're viewing is, I'm attractive.

Tango remarked on the commonality of these early experiences with harassment. “I've constantly had to kind of fight against those kinds of like, that kind of stigma where, you know, like I've dealt with harassment, you know, bullying, ostracism because I was a female. . . .” Lima too, commented on the regularity of such occurrences and in her case the desire to keep said occurrences from her spouse’s knowledge.

> When you hear, I wouldn't necessarily say daily, but when it's a common thing for you to be sexually harassed. You don't really want to tell your husband. When

> you have a first sergeant that comes up to you and touches you on your side and then you have to later confront him about it. You don't want to tell him those things. . . . And you would think that your spouse would be safe at work. But men are men. Men are going to say crazy things.

Yet such occurrences were by no means limited to the participants early careers. Delta recounted that, even as a Sergeant Major, she encountered sexual harassment from a superior officer who physically cornered her in an office and threatened her.

> And it culminates with him closing a door to our shared office, pinning me in a corner with a chair screaming at me. 'Do you like this? Do you like how, look, how you've made me? I have to talk to you this way. Do you like it when I talk to you like this? Does this feel good to you? Do you like this?' . . . And despite all of the Army training and all the SHARP and all the EO and all this, you're almost so angry to be a victim that you, at this level, at this rank, at this, your duty title, that you're a horrible victim. . . . I mean, I knew I had a duty to report, even though, like I said, I was a very terrible victim. I felt like a hypocrite the more it kind of just mulled over in my guts like, what would I have told an E4, an E5, a PFC to do if they came to me and told me that a male had done it. . . .

Sex-based discrimination.

As in other professional settings, sex-based discrimination (discrimination in employment and opportunity based upon gender) can be nebulous and often difficult to discern. However, many of the participants noted particular experiences where clearly the theme of sex-based discrimination was blatantly at play and was in no way the result of the military's uniquely gendered regulations and policies. As a young leader, Juliet was

prevented from performing official duties as a result of a superior who felt women should not be within her traditionally male-dominated occupational specialty. Rather she was required to “ride around in the truck with him all day and quote unquote 'look cute.' . . . I couldn't even be out there as the supervisor because my job was to ride around with this old perverted Master Chief in the truck.” Later that same Master Chief would work to prevent her from transferring. “He wanted me to stay and do another deployment with him. So, he made sure I got a mark low enough that didn't qualify me for instructor duty.” Victor was denied the opportunity to serve as a Physical Training (PT) instructor since as her peer noted “some of the male instructors were worried that if you were a PT instructor that people would be distracted or that you might get unwanted attention because you're larger in the chest region than other people are.” While deployed to a combat zone, Tango encountered sex-based discrimination from a superior officer who felt that she should not be permitted to remain in theater on account of her feminine bodily functions.

> And the captain was like, 'well, how is she going to pee' and or 'how is she going to whatever?' Like, my period essentially is what he was trying to figure out and I'm like, hey, at the time I was a 32-year-old woman, let me figure out how to relieve myself and how to handle my own bodily functions. If I can't handle that then how did I get to this stage? You've got a whole company of dudes you need to worry about, you don't need to be worried about my bodily functions. I can handle that.

Category 4: Learning to Navigate

Throughout their interviews the participants reflected not only on their gendered experiences but also on their understandings of the implications of such experiences as they learned to navigate a military career. Learning to navigate included how such experiences informed their overall understandings of gender in the military and their ability to navigate it. Their ability to navigate the military was a seemingly constantly evolving skill learned through direct personal experience, observation, and socialization often utilized to avoid the challenges and pitfalls associated with gender or at the very least mitigate them when inevitable. Experiences in all of the realms framed the ways in which the participants learned to navigate a military career as a woman in uniform resulting in their successful attainment of senior enlisted rank and grade.

According to the participants, individual direct experiences did not exist in isolation but rather often reflected a larger assemblage of gendered experiences in the military. Subsequently, such incidents served as illuminations into the realities of military service for women and often served as a vital reference point for analysis and self-regulatory processes for the participants. Alpha felt that such direct personal experiences were what "drove me to work a lot harder than just what I thought I was gonna do in the military." Echo learned greatly from her experiences with older male service members who were resistant to change including the growing involvement of women which resulted in her expressing that not all gender-based battles were worth fighting and served as a basis for analysis and future reference.

> I feel like at a certain point I can't even explain it to you. . . . I could never reach a person like you. Why would I stress myself out about that? I'm never going to reach you. So, I learned to cut my losses.

Sierra found that her direct personal gendered experiences provided valuable lessons in her future efforts both personally and as a future leader. These experiences enabled her "to be to the point that I am, where I've been able to learn lessons and pick up and move forward and then help other individuals, whether it be male or female." Subsequently, her own understanding of such experiences was used as a point of reference to impart to other service members.

As Sierra passed on such experiences herself so too did the participants learn from others. While all of the participants reflected on numerous direct personal experiences throughout their careers as well as how such experiences played an integral role in their understanding of gender in the military, they also articulated a number of instances where the observed gendered experiences of their fellow service members influenced and informed their understandings of how to navigate the military as a woman in uniform. These formative observed experiences of others ran the gamut of topics but were often highlighted as comparable to direct personal experience and correspondingly as influential in informing the understandings of the participants regarding gender and the military. Subsequently, seminal gendered experiences need not have happened to the participant personally to be essential to their understandings. Rather, the experiences of others, observed and learned socially, served as an additional source of reference for learning to navigate the military. Despite her initial assumptions, Tango learned from a women's mentoring group that even women who 'fit in' more with their male

counterparts, whether through occupation, orientation, or personality, encountered similar gendered experiences. “I think sometimes we assume that they have it easier because they’re one of the guys. And even she had struggles not always being accepted. . . .” Juliet noted that a fellow female sailor, often felt the need to work overtime and micromanage her subordinates to ensure that she was respected and valued in the unit despite her overly sexualized and feminine appearance. “And I feel she needs to know her stuff because people look at her as Barbie or whatever so she has to prove a point.” The participants learned from observing their fellows’ experiences of gendered misconduct as well. Echo observed early on that stories surrounding gendered misconduct were “always centered on the victim.” Furthermore, Delta found the experiences she observed in reporting misconduct, including that of a senior officer, as reflective of the cultural norms. “And she comes forward and says, you know. . . and she’s buried in investigations. Right! It’s like, yeah, like this is your norm and you can’t turn around and say it’s not your norm.” Whether through direct personal or observed experience, the participants repeatedly reflected on the prevalence of gendered experiences and the many ways in which such experiences have informed their careers, their understandings of the military as an entity, and their own evaluations and responses to further gendered experiences.

Additionally, many of the participants articulated that early career socialization and gendered experiences were particularly influential and served as a demarcation for their early learnings and understandings regarding the military as well as informing and self-regulating future behavior. These socialized experiences often began as early as boot camp and occupational training and Delta noted that these early “formative” experiences

taught her that women in uniform were both "invisible but hyper-visible." Nearly all of the participants experienced such encounters as early as indoctrination (e.g. boot camp, training, etc.) and were continually referenced for future behavior. Their stories often began with phrases such as "so I can go back very early to the basic training experience" (Delta), "my first is going to be when I first joined the military" (Golf), "well it starts off in boot camp" (India), and "even from when we started basic training" (Victor). This early learning would set the stage for how participants would frame future gendered experiences and navigate their military careers as, like Oscar, participants were vigilant for gendered behavior after hearing stories from other women.

> I was prepared mentally. . . . I think through word of mouth and social media, you hear these terrible stories or you read about. . . . I was just prepared because I'm not silly. I know there's people out there that still believe to this day women shouldn't even be in the service period. It's just kinda just having that in the back of my head. This is a possibility and may not be, but think.

Such considerations were similarly felt by all of the participants, whether as a result of direct personal experiences, observations, or socialization, and were analyzed by the participants as symbolic representations and subsequently used for future behavioral reference and self-regulation. As Oscar was mentally prepared from stories she heard or saw, often the participants recognized the cautious disposition necessary for successfully navigating a military career as a woman. "This is what I tell like young service members. It's like, listen, you have to be careful because you will always lose" (Oscar). Delta looked back on her early interactions with a female Desert Storm drill instructor differently after her own career's gendered experiences.

> I remember going up to her kind of starry eyed . . . she was very rude, very short . . . She was so focused on correcting the females that it was instead of ever feeling like comforted by her being in the leadership position, you felt almost like a sense of dread when you saw her come around. Of course, I look back on that now and I see it kind of through a different lens where I clearly was not aware of whatever her story was and whatever it meant for her to have been one of the few females participating in Desert Storm and what that must have looked like for her. And kind of how she felt her focus was supposed to be or what she was going to bring to the fight. And so, I look back on it a little bit more rose colored than I did at the time as a trainee.

With such reflection Delta found that after the duration of her own career and discerning consideration, she viewed this early encounter, which at the time she found distasteful and discouraging, in a much more understanding and sympathetic light. Furthermore, as a result of negatively interpreted experiences, both their own and those they observed or learned socially, Victor felt that female service members are often more cynical and critical of their female fellows and "I would definitely say that we're harder on each other." Such experiences were used as rationale for harsher self-imposed standards and regulation.

Summary

The findings in the chapter present a compelling story of the gendered experiences of female senior enlisted leaders in the US military based upon the comprehensive analysis of twelve in-depth, semi-structured interviews, document review, and analytic memoing. Accordingly, the chapter began by offering a summary and

depiction of the study's Participant Demographics and followed with a presentation of the four categories and ten themes which emerged from the data. The categories of Organizational Structures, Institutional Culture, Gendered Misconduct, and Learning to Navigate along with their associated themes and sub-themes reflected the variety of ways which the participants articulated and understood their gendered experiences across the wide-spectrum of military service and the profession of arms and how they remain invisible and yet hyper-visible.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the gendered experiences of active-duty senior enlisted women in the United States (US) military. To fulfill this aim, the following research question was investigated:

- *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered experiences?*

Secondary questions that were additionally investigated were:

- *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered organizational experiences?*
- *How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered institutional experiences?*
- *How do female senior enlisted leaders learn to navigate gender in the US military?*

This chapter will present a discussion of the findings, render conclusions, and will conclude with recommendations for future research, practice, and policy.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

The gendered experiences of the participants present a holistic picture of gender in the military incorporating its multifaceted, nebulous, interwoven, and overlapping nature. Thus, these experiences captured the complexities inherent in the gendered experience in the US military, shown in the following four conclusions which emerged from this study. In particular, one participant aptly illustrated these complexities in her reference to gendered experiences as being both invisible and yet hyper-visible.

The discussion herein is organized based upon the categorical findings which subsequently informed the drawing of associated conclusions. The findings of this study illuminated four categories (along with corresponding themes and sub-themes) where the participants experienced gender as an integral component of their military service as they reflected on the entirety of their enlisted military careers: Organizational Structures [Leadership, Career Path, and Family Planning (Marriage and Children)]; Institutional Culture [Professional Culture (Occupational and Branch Cultures), Absent Voices, Gender Norms, and Gender Bias (Stereotyping and Intersectionality)]; Gendered Misconduct (Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, and Sex-based Discrimination); and Learning to Navigate. These findings align with extant literature and provide a more comprehensive and expansive understanding of the gendered experiences of active-duty senior enlisted women in the US military when elucidated through the lens of three theoretical frameworks: Gendered Organizations Theory, Feminist Institutional Theory, and Social Learning Theory. The discussion of the findings herein is organized within four subsections: Organizational Structures, Institutional Culture, Gendered Misconduct, and Learning to Navigate. Four conclusions emerged from the discussion of the findings.

Organizational Structures

Gendered organizational literature (Acker, 1990) notes that gender is not some outlying factor within organizations which must be taken into consideration and addressed but rather is an inherent and integral aspect of the organization itself and without such consideration any understanding is fundamentally lacking. Rather than responsive action, insight is required of the implications and realities of the multitudes of ways in which gender plays a role in the professional lives of organizational members.

Traditionally male-dominated organizations reflect expectations which are considered more suited to perceived male/masculine leadership styles (Acker, 1990; Bierema, 2016; Ely et al., 2011). Such realities are even more reinforced within military organizations such as the Department of Defense (DOD), who are continuously reaffirming their ties to the past and to date remain largely populated by men. The findings of this study support this understanding through organizational structures and expand it to more specifically include leadership, career paths, and family planning within the military context. The organizational structures of the US military were historically, clearly and openly gendered and much has been done in recent years to mitigate such distinctions (Abrams, 1993; Archer, 2012; Boldry et al., 2001; Brownson, 2014; Kelly et al., 2013); however, there remains both explicit and implicit gendered experiences pertaining to organizational structures throughout the military organization. These organizational structures are rooted in layers upon layers of policies and regulations at all levels which impact participants' gendered experiences within the military. These policies and regulations are often overlapping and yet contradictory, with significant ambiguity, lack of continuity and clarity, and are therefore often open to interpretation and subjectivity. Such policies and regulations may be intentionally and explicitly gendered or may contain unintentional disproportionate gendered consequences generally to the detriment of women. According to Simpson and Lewis (2005), "organizations have been conceived primarily as arenas for masculine endeavor" and subsequently, "this has created a silence over issues of gender so that women's voices have gone unheard" (p. 1256). Senior enlisted women, particularly those still on active-duty like the participants of this study, have experienced not only the realities of women's experiences with gendered organizational structures but

have withstood a decade or more of military service through some of the most revolutionary changes in gender policies and regulations within the military.

One organizational structure stemming from the findings of this study was leadership, which presented an integral and key component to the gendered experiences of the participants. In particular, how leadership within the military is structurally and hierarchically bound and subsequently impacts gendered experiences. Within the military and the DOD, leadership sets the standard and the stage whereby gendered experiences play out and subsequently has fundamental influence over the policies, regulations, standards, and the ensuing experiences of its organizational members. Scott (1986) notes that, like leadership, "gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (p. 1067). This study goes beyond extant leadership literature pertaining to the military (Abrams, 1993; Scott, 1986; Wong et al.; 2003 Yuengert, 2016). The participants confirmed Hajjar's (2014) articulation that the established cultural orientation within the military upholds the importance of organizational hierarchy and leadership. However, this study expands this understanding in that leadership plays dual roles in the gendered experiences of women in the military. Firstly, the participants' experiences *with* military leaders and organizational leadership and secondly, the participants' experiences *as* military leaders themselves. For the former, they often reflected on the influences, at times beneficial but more often detrimental, of other leaders when they encountered and/or reported gendered experiences. As for the latter, the participants encountered a number of instances where their gender played a detrimental role in perceptions of their leadership both from above and below, given their inherent inability to reflect the male

ideal military leader and the masculine archetype and as part of a vicious cycle tied to other organizational structures.

With the repeal of combat exclusion policies and the opening of most, if not all, of military occupational specialties to women, the formally structured military career paths may appear gender-neutral. However, previous literature notes that the realities of military career paths largely disadvantage women (Archer, 2012; Kelly et al., 2013; McMahan, 1996). The findings of this study confirmed that regardless of discriminatory intent, the realities of military career paths and their associated policies and regulations inherently place women at a disadvantage. Within the military, like other traditionally male-dominated professions, men are perceived as more suited for leadership given that leadership roles and the paths to attain them were specifically designed for and reflecting men's life trajectories. The military, unlike other professions, has unique interwoven relationships with its organizational members' lives. It is an especially stark relationship given the dynamic, uniquely challenging, and complex interwoven life trajectories and career demands experienced by military service members. Likewise, this is seen within the military career path as it is a continuous linear trajectory with rigidly articulated expectations and requirements determined by branch, service, and occupation informed by tradition, history, and a requisite for standardization (Bacevich, 1997; Cooke & Quester, 1992; Wiltz, 2016; Wong et al., 2003). Subsequently, military career paths consistently impact military service members personal life trajectories and vice versa. Career standardization particularly comes in opposition with individuals who diverge from 'standard' military life trajectories, in this instance women. Participants'

experiences where gender impacted career paths covered a broad range of topics including family planning and job opportunities.

The participants highlighted a number of ways in which gender and a military career often clash, the most notable of which centered on issues of family planning. Family planning, in particular marriage and children, present a constant tension with military service regardless of gender. However, the disproportionate responsibilities of women in family planning, whether perceived or realized, presents a stark challenge to the military organization and subsequently women's military service. Acker (1990) notes that women's bodies including pregnancy, breast-feeding, and child-rearing are often used in gendered organizations as means for exclusion. The US military is no exception. Despite increased attention to such issues and numerous policies and regulations pertaining to them, the participants continually noted the ways in which marriage and children played a role, usually detrimental, in military service for women. Though, how such issues of family planning played a role was at times contradictory. Regarding marriage, as they reflected on career advancements, participants shared opposing viewpoints on whether it was better to be married to a fellow service member or a civilian and whether it was better to be single or married. Nevertheless, all of the participants noted that marital status mattered in their military careers. Participants experiences showed the intricacies, generally reflected as a result of the organizational structures, of military career paths, policies, and regulations, and their particular conflictions and impacts upon family planning. Specifically, this study notes that the participants' understandings of the intersection of family and military service are contradictory and stem from a compilation of policy and regulation variances, lack of clarity in policy and

training, susceptibility to interpretation, and perceptions. With regards to children in particular, the participants almost uniformly found the elements of children including pregnancy, breastfeeding, childcare, and child-rearing to have adverse effects on women's military careers. As in previous literature on gendered organizations (Acker, 1990; Baldwin, 1996; Boyce & Herd, 2003; Manke et al., 2015), this study found that such adverse effects were often based on the disproportionate responsibilities women have towards children whether based upon reality or simply perception. Regardless, all of the participants noted that marital status and children were often uniquely detrimental to women's military careers. Irrespective of the individual experiences, at large, family planning, regardless of its composition or form, was characterized as inherently antithetical to women's military service.

Leadership, career paths, and family planning (marriage and children) as part of the organizational structures within the military were found by the participants to be particularly influential upon gendered experiences as policies and regulations pertaining to these components, both formal and informal, at all levels of the Department of Defense (DOD), its branches, and associated occupations, are vast, complicated, and overlapping. Such organizational structures have both explicit and implicit implications for female service members and while many appear either gender-neutral or aim to benefit women, often they encompass unintentional gendered consequences, generally detrimental, for women in military service. Even those meant to support women's military service may have negative outcomes once they interact with other policies and regulations. Thus, the following conclusion arose from the findings of this study pertaining to the gendered structures within the military organization.

Conclusion 1: Military organizational structures often appear gender-neutral or seek to support women's military service, however more often than not encompass unintentional negative consequences for women.

Institutional Culture

The US military as an institution is confronted with many of the same deep-rooted and entrenched challenges of other gendered institutions where formal and informal norms present as complex systems in which single-issue policies, regulations, and strategies fail to explain and address the underlying barriers to institutional change, reform, or innovation. Feminist Institutional Theory notes that gender is a seminal component in the analysis of institutions as gender is embedded within the institution in that it shapes and constrains social interactions. In support of extant literature on institutional cultures (Bacevich, 1997; Mackay, 2011; 2013), the findings of this study showed that despite the efforts of military leadership to address issues of gender, open all of the military occupational specialties to women, and to combat misconduct, given the depth and longevity of military history and culture, there remains institutional resistance to such cultural upheaval. This resistance makes adaptation especially challenging and "military institutions are especially prone to this, given their veneration of tradition" (Wilson, 2008, p. 32) and the deep-rooted nature of military culture.

This study confirms the strong prevalence of a military culture and its associated implications on individual behavior and social interactions. Furthermore, as with existing literature on military culture (Archer, 2012; Kelly et al., 2013; McMahan, 1996), this study found that oftentimes women in military service are presented with additional cultural challenges reflected in both the desire to conform and frustration with the

inability to do so by way of gender. Subsequently, the collective military identity and culture was often detrimental to gendered experiences as the reality is that female service members will never fully be 'one of the boys.' This collective identity and cultural affiliation may have more severe consequences beyond simply a lack of belonging as participants navigate issues of gender while attempting to avoid making waves. Specifically, the collective fraternal nature of military culture may even counter efforts to combat issues of gender and misconduct.

Military culture is reflected in a multitude of levels: its distinction from civilian society, a connective yet broad military professional culture, individual branch and service specific sub-cultures, occupational sub-cultures, and the implications of said cultures. Military professional culture at large celebrates the group or collective over the individual and values uniformity over diversity, an essential condition as members must be substitutable in the realm of war and the profession of arms (Hill, 2015). However, the military is not some monolithic homogeneous entity and the prioritization of substitutability may have significant implications for those, like women, who intrinsically fail to reflect the group norm. Furthermore, the military is a composite of a multitude of cultural elements both at large and within, specifically professional sub-cultures based upon branch and occupation. Within the overarching military professional culture are branch and occupational sub-cultures which hold significant influence over members (Hall, 2011; Murray 1999; Terriff, 2006; Wong et al., 2003). Snider (1999) notes that "it is doubtful that any single policy change will be equally effective when applied uniformly" and " broadly based policy changes applicable to all services and branches simply fly in the face of a more informed understanding of military culture" (p. 21). The

findings of this study support such considerations as occupational and branch cultures continually reflect disparate historical traditions and mandates. In addition, such sub-cultures impact in particular upon women's gendered experiences in the military and may at times come in contrast to efforts towards change in the larger military culture. This study emphasizes the need for consideration of not only military professional culture as in previous literature (Collins, 1998; Murray, 1999; Wong et al., 2003) but also the distinctions and variations in branch and occupational sub-cultures necessary in understanding the gendered experiences of female service members.

The findings of this study go beyond existing military cultural literature (Hall, 2011; Murray 1999; Snider, 1999; Terriff, 2006; Wong et al., 2003) by highlighting the necessity to recognize not only the cultural variance between these layers of professional culture but also the policy and regulatory differences which uniquely affect individual service member's gendered experiences. For instance, the Navy's policies and regulations regarding pregnancy and operational status significantly differ from other branches given the unique operational demands based upon the task of operating at sea. Additionally, branch and occupational disparities in gender reflect vastly different experiences for women in military service. Women in traditionally non-combat-oriented professions within the Air Force reflect significantly different gender proportions then women in combat units within the Marine Corps. Such military-specific demographic proportional variance was largely supported and reflected within the participants' gendered experiences.

The findings of this study note that in addition to recognition of cultural distinctions, the absence of women's voices plays an essential role in gendered

experiences within the military institution, including both individual and critical representative voices. The emergence of absent voices is in keeping with prevailing literature on voice and visibility regarding women and similarly marginalized sub-populations (Burton, 2014; Selzer et al., 2017). Women in the military, while formally encouraged to speak out, regularly encounter difficulties being heard, reflective of the "deep processes of silencing that occur" (Simpson & Lewis, 2005, p. 1254). The absent voices of female service members in this study were highlighted in two manners, as participants noted the cultural silencing of women's individual voices, whether formally or informally, particularly when issues of gender arose, and more broadly with the lack of representative voices in the upper ranks/echelons and in critical decision-making environments, especially those pertaining to policies directly affecting women's military service. In regards to the former (individual voices), despite recent policy and regulatory efforts, it is necessary for individual service members to express and subsequently address issues pertaining to gender. This study goes beyond this recognition to note that to do so, individual service members must perceive that capability without consequence especially in regards to issues pertaining to gender and misconduct. Individual voice distinguishes itself as being heard and understood rather than simply as an act of speaking or vocalization. The participants found that their individual voice carried more weight both internally and externally as they rose in the ranks. They felt both more confident in speaking out and found that it was generally more heard and understood with the credibility of senior rank. Though this was by no means a guarantee. Furthermore, as for the latter (representative voices), this study reinforces the importance of continuing to encourage greater diverse representation at the upper echelons of the military hierarchy

and extends such need beyond simply women at the senior officer ranks; it includes not only senior enlisted as an upper echelon but also extends diversity beyond simply gender to include women of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, the hierarchical nature of the military and its advancement systems means that such representational voices are often contrary to tradition and institutional norms based upon hierarchical rank structures as it takes time and opportunity for women to be in the necessary decision-making and leadership positions and ranks. This study particularly highlights the importance of not only the representational voices of women but also the imperatives for considerations of intersectional voices such as women of color. Women of color possess an "acute social invisibility . . . manifested in a continuous struggle to be seen, heard and understood, often manifested in achievement of lower leadership status" (Burton, 2014, p. 50). Without representational and intersectional voices in positions of leadership and decision-making, public failures may occur such as the recently rescinded update to the Army's regulation manual pertaining to grooming and hair which seemed to disproportionately target women of color. The compounded intersectionality of race and gender found in this study dictate that the representational voices of women of color is integral to ensuring women not only see diverse leadership, with women in the upper echelons, but that diversity and representation includes those whose voices reflect the intersectionality many military women encounter.

As women advance within the military, they continue to encounter resistance from prevailing societal gender norms. The literature on gender norms within the military (Archer, 2012; Brunner et al., 2013; Dunivin, 1994; Kelly et al., 2013; McMahan, 1996) notes that "military responsibilities are often perceived as contrary to societal

expectations about appropriate roles for women" (Boyce & Herd, 2003, p. 365). This study's findings affirm that military service and the profession of arms are often defaulted to masculine traits, skills, and norms. Additionally, attempts at gender-neutrality regularly default to male standards as seen in the Navy's recent uniform changes for female officers and senior enlisted which sought to eliminate distinctly gendered dress white uniforms (chokers) and subsequently defaulted to the male version of the uniform and cover (hat) (NAVPERS 156651, 2020b). The change was quickly met with resistance from female service members resulting in a widespread yet largely unsuccessful #savethebucket social media campaign. For junior enlisted women in the Navy, they too were converted to the male covers, commonly referred to as dixie covers, for dress whites. Such uniform changes necessitated that women alone were required to purchase additional uniform items, not all of which were entirely reimbursable. Similarly, Army and Air Force participants noted recent changes to physical fitness standards towards a gender-blind standard seemed to default to male physical capabilities regardless of professional and occupational requirements. While these recent revisions seemed to embrace a sense of gender-neutrality, they had distinctly gendered implications.

Diverging from existing literature on the military, yet in keeping with literature pertaining to gender biases (Bierema, 2016) such as stereotyping (Archer, 2012; Boldry et al., 2001) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010) in women's leadership, this study's findings confirm that despite concerted efforts to mitigate biases within the military, experiences of gender bias remain. Furthermore, given the formal hierarchical structure of the military and its

institutional norms pertaining to deference towards rank and authority, issues of bias and gender endure and often center on the need for the participants to prove themselves or justify their position within the military itself and/or a particular military leadership setting and to take excessive precautions and considerations regarding male-female interactions. Additionally, participants recalled being stereotyped in a number of derogatory means, the most common of which being 'bitch'. These findings concur with relevant literature (Kelly et al., 2013; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010) on women's leadership in that women find such stereotyping and prejudice to be a significant barrier to career advancement. As with stereotyping, this study extends existing literature on intersectionality (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991; Hall, 1999; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008), reflected in the double biases of race and gender encountered by most of the participants. According to Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach (2008), "intersectionality challenges us to contemplate what it means to have a marginalized status within a marginalized group" (p. 389). Women of color often face such double layered biases with complex, overlapping, and interwoven components of gender and race and the military is by no means immune. Likewise, if women of different racial identities have "different experiences, ones that go unrecognized, it is possible that broad military policy prescriptions may not address their particular concerns" (Hall, 1999, p. 144). Although, this study illustrated the intersectionality pertinent to the participants' gender and race within the military, given the singular presence of women leaders in the experiences encountered and the subsequent rarity of clear comparisons with other women, it was at times challenging for participants to parse out if what they experienced was informed by gender, race, or some combination thereof. As one of the participants

noted “it was just difficult to tell whether it was because I was Black or because I was a female. You know what I mean? . . . It could have been both. . . .” (Sierra).

The military institutional culture is comprised of a number of elements which directly impact gendered experiences including professional culture (branch and occupational culture), absent voices, gender norms, and gender biases (stereotyping and intersectionality). Such cultural components often have deep impact upon the gendered experiences of women in military service. Despite the continued evolution of women’s military service, the ongoing opening of professional opportunities, and efforts towards policy and regulation resolution, issues of gender within the military remain institutionalized and cultural. Accordingly, the following conclusion stemmed from the findings of this study pertaining to gender within the military.

Conclusion 2: Participants gendered experiences illustrate that no single-issue policy or regulation will resolve issues of gender in the military, including misconduct, without first recognizing the need for entrenched cultural upheaval and continuity across all levels of the military institution.

Gendered Misconduct

The findings of this study were in keeping with existing literature on gendered misconduct within the male-dominated military occupation (Andersen, 2015; Archer, 2012; Haskell et al., 2010; Murdoch & Gackstetter, 2007; Butler & Schmidtke, 2010). As with other studies centered on misconduct in such a setting, the participants reflected on a variety of gendered misconduct including sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sex-based discrimination. Within the military, including the DOD, its branches, and occupational specialties, all policies and regulations pertaining to such gendered

misconduct reflect a formal repugnance and prohibition. However, at each level and within each written policy and/or regulation, there exists significant variance in language and composition, and often fails to reflect the unique and disparate cultural environments in which such misconduct occurs. Abrams (1993) notes that the existence of a simple 'no tolerance' policy is insufficient to address issues of gendered misconduct given that "the policy conflicts with a range of other messages military personnel receive. . ." (p. 228). This study affirmed extant gendered misconduct literature that despite efforts to eliminate such misconduct, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sex-based discrimination, each was prevalent throughout the participants' military service, whether personally or observationally. These experiences ran the gamut from outright rape to sex-based allocations of work. It is of note that the incidents of misconduct presented herein were either formally reported or considered by the participants to be public knowledge. Moreover, this study notes that participants' experiences with gendered misconduct were often exacerbated by the overall experience interacting with leadership, traversing military culture, and navigating the existing policies and regulations surrounding the addressment of such misconduct. As women encounter gendered misconduct in the military, the implications of these are integral and for leadership particularly, "by not demonstrating more vigilance, military leaders give the impression that the crime, and therefore, the injured party, must not be very important" (Burton, 2014, p. 56). Incidents of gendered misconduct cannot be separated from the unique military environment in which they occur. This includes the significant impacts which leadership, culture, and regulatory provisions have on such issues and service members' individual experiences. The participants found that despite their own experiences there has been significant

progress regarding gendered misconduct over the course of their careers in the military, including efforts towards more positive perceptions of reporting, enhanced awareness of support services and legal rights, and the diminishing feeling of taboo when openly discussing such issues amongst service members. Nevertheless, this study found that issues of gendered misconduct (sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sex-based discrimination) remain and occurred regardless of rank. As a result, the following conclusion derived from the findings of this study pertaining to gendered misconduct.

Conclusion 3: Participants experiences with gendered misconduct suggest it is likely more pervasive than data may belie as concerns over reporting, negative consequences and backlash, and support remain and make combatting such misconduct challenging despite recent progress and initiatives.

Learning to Navigate

This study corroborates and expands prevailing literature on social learning (Bandura, 1977; Hill, 2015; Van Maanen, 1978; Wenger, 2009) including direct personal experience, observation, and socialization as impetus for symbolic analysis, future behavioral reference, and self-regulatory processes as service members regularly organized and selected the requisite learned experiences to draw upon within the military environment. The participants' ability to navigate the military was a seemingly constantly evolving skill learned through direct personal experience, observation, and socialization. Such navigation was often utilized to avoid the challenges and pitfalls associated with gender or at the very least mitigate them when inevitable. As service members learn institutional and organizational realities, either from personal experience or socially through the experiences of others, so too do they learn those specific to navigating a

military career as a woman. This analysis occurs both during and immediately after, which in turn affects future behavior, but also in hindsight as participants reflect on early experiences with the benefit and insight of their own time in service.

This study goes beyond extant literature on social learning within the military context (Hill, 2015; Van Maanen, 1978; Wenger, 2009), underscoring the military's reinforced and stringent socialization processes and the reliance on collective memory and learning, a necessary approach within the realm of war where learning must come before personal experience. This familiarization with social learning within the military enables such learning within gendered experiences as well. Participants conveyed experiences they observed or heard about nearly as often as they articulated their own personal experiences, all of which were part of their personal interwoven experience of gender in the military. Additionally, participants regularly utilized the experiences of others they learned socially as determinants for their own personal behavior whether by mentally preparing oneself for the cautious reality necessary for successfully navigating a military career as a woman based upon shared stories or by finding it imperative to share one's own stories pertaining to gender with subordinates and peers.

The usage of personal, observed, and learned experiences as impetus for personal direction (Bandura, 1977) is not uncommon amongst military service members as the military regularly uses the experiences of others in learning given the challenges of recreating the dynamic environments service members may find themselves in. Such socially learned behavior includes experiences pertaining to gender. The military culture is a learned one, whereby members are indoctrinated early and the learned behaviors are reinforced continuously. The participants' socialized experiences often began early in

their careers and it was noted that these early formative experiences taught women in uniform that they were both invisible and yet hyper-visible as social learning reinforces the existing male-dominated culture. Nearly all of the participants experienced such encounters as early as indoctrination (e.g. boot camp, training, etc.) and were continually referenced for future behavior. Such socialization was often pronounced within gendered experiences. Although all military members are socialized to a military identity (soldier, sailor, marine, or airman), akin to Van Maanen's (1978) divestiture of individual identity, in reality the participants were at times confronted with identity based upon gender (e.g. female marine) which created a dissonance and contributed to the gendered experiences they described.

The participants regularly utilized social learning as they navigated their military careers as women. This social learning included personal experiences, observations, and socializations and how such experiences informed their overall understandings of gender in the military and their ability to navigate it. Subsequently, the following conclusion emerged from the findings of this study pertaining to the military and learning to navigate as a woman in uniform.

Conclusion 4: Participants encountered a variety of gendered experiences throughout their military careers and learned from not only their own direct experiences, but also those they observed or were relayed through socialization.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study showed that the gendered experiences of the participants were impacted by branch and occupation, thus it is imperative for future research to continue study larger samples of women leaders from different branches and

occupations in order to deepen understanding and to reflect the cultural variance across the military within gendered experiences. The participants in this study were representative of the racial diversity of the military, often unavailable in previous studies, which focused on senior officers (the predominance of whom were White) and found notable experiences pertaining to the intersection of race and gender, particularly for women of color. Although, this study illustrated the intersectionality pertinent to the participants' gender and race within the military, because of the overall small numbers and comparison of experiences of other women, it was at times challenging for participants to parse out if what they experienced was informed by gender, race, or some combination thereof. Subsequently, ethnographic studies should be designed to understand the influences of intersectionality on gendered experiences. Additionally, given the intense socialization process and reinforcement of the military identity of soldier, sailor, marine, or airman, female servicemembers are often challenged when confronted with the tension between this military identity and social identities such as gender that differentiate them from other service members (e.g. female marine). Future research should investigate the cognitive dissonance related to the identity of female service members and its impact on their experiences.

This study captured a career-long synthesis of gendered experiences among participants. However, more expansive longitudinal, time-interval studies throughout the various career points of women in military service would be beneficial to understand work and life trajectories as well as gendered experiences. Further research incorporating longitudinal touchpoints would reveal how participants' understanding of their experiences evolved and changed over the course of their careers. This study highlighted

the importance of building rapport with members of the military which represent a unique cultural and linguistic community necessitating either personal affiliation and familiarity or knowledgeable translation and interpretation. It is crucial for researchers conducting studies in the military context to understand the unique linguistic and cultural characteristics of this context in order to build the needed rapport that will ensure a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participants.

Recommendations for Practice and Policy

The findings in this study highlight the importance of leadership in a variety of facets including within various ranks, from superiors, subordinates, and peers, as well as both *with* and *as* leaders. Leadership, whether through response, composition, representation, or direction, serves as an integral component to gendered experiences. Such leadership includes the policies and regulations derived by military and civilian leadership, the leaders themselves and their composition, the representation of a variety of voices, the interpretation and direction provided by all levels of leadership, as well as the individual and collective responses to incidents of gender and in particular gendered misconduct. Military leadership development efforts, both at large and for women in particular, must reflect the pivotal role which leadership plays. Future leadership development initiatives should incorporate efforts to support and enable the advancement of women and to educate all future leaders, regardless of gender, on the magnitude of leader roles and responsibilities when encountering issues of gender.

This study has particular implications for policies and regulations pertaining to gender and even for those that do not explicitly denote gender but rather have unintentionally gendered consequences. Specifically, it compels a comprehensive review

of existing policies and regulations to ascertain and address unintentional and/or disproportionate gendered implications. Additionally, such a review should include considerations to address issues of clarity and continuity at all levels (occupational, branch, and DOD-wide) in an effort to remove ambiguity and lessen the implications for subjective interpretation. It is of note that any such policy and regulatory changes and subsequent cultural upheaval requires significant military cultural competency and awareness. Such a review could also include considerations for evaluation of other traditionally male-dominated professions.

The findings of this study, including organizational structures, institutional culture, and especially gendered misconduct, highlight that simple single-issue policy and regulatory resolutions are insufficient to address such deep-rooted and entrenched issues. Rather comprehensive and expansive awareness training is needed beyond existing efforts. For instance, in addition to traditional training measures, case studies, a training measure particularly familiar to military populations, may be utilized to not only illuminate and connect experiences but also provide insight for leadership into possible responses. Similarly, learning methods such as storytelling and role-modelling, which are crucial to capturing in-depth and nuanced experiences and used throughout the military in other realms, present significant opportunities to create deep meaningful change. Unfortunately, no single-issue policy and/or regulation nor amount of training will resolve all issues of gender across all levels. To address issues of gender across such a large spectrum likely necessitates a bottom-up cultural upheaval versus a top-down implementation. Though scarce, some bottom-up efforts currently exist in the informal efforts of women through social and professional organizations. This bottom-up

mentality is bolstered by the prevalence of social learning within the military through observations, role-modeling, and socialization in the diffusion of learning pertaining to gender. Such social learning may even supersede policy and regulation. What service members learn socially may trump even the harshest of policies and regulations pertaining to gendered misconduct. Given the deep-rooted and entrenched strong military culture in all its capacities, including professional culture, collectivism, branch and occupational cultures, etc., the significant institutional cultural change necessary to address issues of gender necessitates a more rigorous bottom-up approach in support of more established military and civilian executive leadership policies, regulations, and directives from the top. It is insufficient to simply prohibit gendered misconduct and other issues of gender without simultaneously addressing the organizational structures, institutional culture, and socially learned environment in which they occur. Otherwise women in the military will remain invisible and yet hyper-visible.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Protocol Form

Gendered Experiences in the US Military Amongst Female Senior Enlisted Service Members

IRB #: NCR191311
Principal Investigator Name: Dr. Maria Cseh
Version Date: 27September2019

RQ1: How do female senior enlisted leaders in the Department of Defense (DOD) understand their gendered organizational experiences?
RQ2: How do female senior enlisted leaders in the US military understand their gendered institutional experiences?
RQ3: • How do female senior enlisted leaders learn to navigate gender in the US military?

Thank you for participating in this research study. I know you have a very busy schedule and I am grateful to you for your time.

As I mentioned to you in our previous conversation, I would like to ask your permission to audio-record our interview. I will transcribe the interview within 48 hours and will share the transcription to ensure its accuracy.

1. I would like to start the interview to ask you to think back over the course of your military career, and share with me any experiences that you had where you believed that your gender impacted that experience.
2. How if at all, did the military as a historic institution and culture with its own norms and traditions impact this experience.
    a. How did gender impact, if at all, your experience in regards to acceptable behaviors?
3. How did gender-related organizational policies or regulations of the DOD impact your experience?
    a. How did policies and regulations which placed professional and/or occupational restrictions on the lines of gender impact, if at all, your experience
    b. How did requirements related to gender such as grooming, uniforms, language, and acceptable behaviors, if at all, impact your experience?
    c. How did gender impact, if at all, your professional interactions?
4. How did gender-related organizational policies or regulations of the *(insert participant's branch here)* impact your experience?

    a. How did policies and regulations which placed professional and/or occupational restrictions on the lines of gender impact, if at all, your experience
    b. How did requirements related to gender such as grooming, uniforms, language, and acceptable behaviors impact, if at all, your experience?
    c. How did gender impact, if at all, your professional interactions?
5. How did gender-related organizational policies or regulations of *(insert participant's occupational specialty here)* impact your experience?
    a. How did policies and regulations which placed professional and/or occupational restrictions on the lines of gender impact, if at all, your experience
    b. How did requirements related to gender such as grooming, uniforms, language, and acceptable behaviors impact, if at all, your experience?
    c. How did gender impact, if at all, your professional interactions?

I would like to conclude our discussion with a few last questions.

6. Overall, how has your gender affected your military service?
7. What changes if any would you hope to see in the military and DOD in regards to gender?
8. Is there anything else you would like me to know about your gendered experiences that we have not already discussed?

Thank you again for your time. Should I have any follow-up questions upon reviewing what we have discussed here, may I contact you for a short follow-up?

Once again, I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration in speaking with me and thank you for your service.

IRB Application (NCR191311)

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent for Participation in a Research Study

Title of Study: Gendered Experiences in the US Military Amongst Female Senior Enlisted Service Members
IRB #: NCR191311
Principal Investigator Name: Dr. Maria Cseh
Version Date: 27September2019

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Stephanie K. Erwin, doctoral candidate, under the direction of Dr. Maria Cseh of the Department of Human and Organizational Learning at George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development (GWU/GSEHD). The purpose of this study is to understand the gendered experiences of inclusion of female senior enlisted Service members in the US military and their perceptions of how these experiences impact their military careers.

Taking part in this research study is entirely voluntary and your participation in this research is confidential. If you choose to take part in this study, you will be asked to share your gendered experiences in a 60 to 90-minute individual interview. The individual interview may be conducted in person or via Skype or other online video chat application, depending on your preference and will be scheduled for a day, time, and place that works best for you.

The individual interview will explore your gendered experiences within the US military. You will be asked to think of memorable situations or events related to your experiences where gender played a role in some fashion. The interview will be recorded with your permission. After the interview is transcribed, I will send you a copy of the transcript for your review of its accuracy. I will share the findings of the study with you once it is published.

While taking part in this research will not benefit you directly, the study will provide insights to inform policies and practices surrounding gender and the military. This study will benefit social research by adding to the body of literature on gendered experiences and gender in the military. This understanding will be valuable for Service members, promotion boards, military leaders and leadership development programs, military Human Resource Development, military policymakers, and other traditionally male-dominated professions and organizations who are concerned with enhancing the development, retention, and advancement of women.

You will not be exposed to any risks beyond what you encounter in the daily conduct of your work. The potential risks of participating in this study are minimal. While every effort
will be made in order to keep your information confidential, this cannot be guaranteed. The
following steps will be taken to safeguard your privacy and keep your information confidential:

- Data collected will be kept in a secure file and electronic data will be saved electronically in a password-protected file on a password protected computer under my sole control.
- All names will be replaced with pseudonyms. No organizational names will be used.
- I will be using a digital voice recorder to capture our discussion and will immediately transfer the file to a password protected computer. The recording will be saved in a password protected file and erased from the digital recorder memory. Recordings will not be used for any reason other than data analysis.
- All identifying data, as well as any handwritten notes I may take during the interview, will be destroyed six months after the conclusion of the study and my dissertation.
- Findings will be presented in aggregate form and any direct quotations that may be used will be selected in such a way that you and/or your affiliation with this study will not be identifiable.

Further information regarding this study may be obtained by contacting: Stephanie K. Erwin at serwin1@gwu.edu or via text/telephone at (614) 397-0111, or by contacting Dr. Maria Cseh at (202) 994-8649. The Office of Human Research (OHR) of George Washington University can provide further information about your rights as a research participant. OHR can be reached at (202) 994-2715.

There are no costs to you for participating in the study. You will not receive any compensation for participating. Your decision to participate in this research is voluntary. You can skip any question and you may stop the interview at any time and withdraw from the study. To ensure confidentiality, your signature is not required. Your willingness to participate in this research study is implied, if you proceed. Please retain a copy of this document for your records.

Appendix C: Recruitment Email

Gendered Experiences in the US Military Amongst Female Senior Enlisted Service Members

IRB #: NCR191311
Principal Investigator Name: Dr. Maria Cseh
Version Date: 27September2019

Dear…

The purpose of this email is to request your assistance in recruiting participants for my dissertation research entitled *Gendered Experiences in the US Military Amongst Female Senior Enlisted Service Member.* The findings of this study will be shared with the military, its branches, servicemembers to inform policies and regulation surrounding gender. This study will not directly benefit participants but will inform policies which reflect gender in the Department of Defense (DOD) and its branches and strengthen opportunities for gender diversity.

I am looking for women participants who meet the following criteria:

1. Currently serving on active duty.
2. Have identified as women throughout the entirety of their military careers.
3. Currently hold the DOD grades of E7, E8, or E9.
4. Are a member of the DOD in one of the four military branches.

Please forward this invitation to any servicewomen who you believe might be interested in participating in this study and who meet the above criteria.

Servicewomen who meet the above criteria should contact me at serwin1@gwu.edu or via telephone at (614)397-0111.

Thank you for consideration.

Kind Regards,

Stephanie Erwin

Serwin1@gwu.edu

(614)397-0111

Appendix D: Invitation to Participate

Gendered Experiences in the US Military Amongst Female Senior Enlisted Service Members

IRB #: NCR191311
Principal Investigator Name: Dr. Maria Cseh
Version Date: 27September2019

I am conducting a research study entitled *Gendered Experiences in the US Military Amongst Female Senior Enlisted Service Members* as part of my fulfillment of the doctoral degree in the Department of Human and Organizational Learning at George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development (GWU/GSEHD). I would like to invite those Servicewomen who meet the following criteria to participate in my study:

1. Currently serving on active duty.
2. Have identified as women throughout the entirety of their military careers.
3. Currently hold the DOD grades of E7, E8, or E9.
4. Are a member of the DOD in one of the four military branches.

Your participation in this study will be kept confidential and all data will be presented in aggregate form. The findings of this study will be shared with the military, its branches, servicemembers to inform policies and regulation surrounding gender. This study will not directly benefit participants but will inform policies which reflect gender in the Department of Defense (DOD) and its branches and strengthen opportunities for gender diversity. If you are interested in participating or would like additional information regarding this study, please feel free to contact met at serwin1@gwu.edu or via telephone at (614) 397-0111.

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Appendix E: Initial Screening Call

IRB #: NCR191311
Principal Investigator Name: Dr. Maria Cseh
Version Date: 27September2019

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are currently serving on active duty, have identified as a woman throughout the entirety of your military career, currently hold the grade of E7, E8, E9, and are a member of a branch of the DOD. The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the gendered experiences of active duty senior enlisted women in the US military. For the purpose of this study, gendered experiences are defined as those experiences, both formal and informal, reflecting or involving gender differences or stereotypical gender roles.

Our conversation is scheduled to last approximately 60-90 minutes. Please note that your privacy and confidentiality is of utmost concern. Your identifiable information will not appear in any formal write-ups, all data collected will be retained and presented in aggregate form, and pseudonyms will be correlated.

I am interested in learning about your gendered experiences in the military. If at any time you feel uncomfortable answering a question, just let me know. The questions I have here are simply to guide our conversation.

Additionally, I would like to audio record our conversation, but will only do so with your consent. This way I can focus more on our conversation while taking any additional notes. Would that be acceptable?

If at any time you would like our conversation to be off the record, just let me know. Do you have any questions at this time?

Appendix F: Codebook

Etic **(Codes derived *a priori* from the research design)**	
Gendered Labor Divisions	Formal and directed divisions of labor and work based upon gender.
Language	Language which creates divisions or strife on the basis of gender.
Acceptable Behaviors	Behavior between genders which is acceptable based upon contextual factors.
Dominance and Submission b/w Genders	Power exerted between one gender over the other.
Dominance and Submission b/w Ranks	Power exerted in gendered encounters on the basis of rank.
Individual Identity vs Collectivism	The military and its members value a collective identity.
Policies	Non-gendered military structures which have unintended gendered consequences.
Regulations	Military structures which are intrinsically gendered.
Masculinity vs Femininity	The preference for inherently stereotypical male traits regardless of gender.
Masculine Ideal	The idealization of masculinity and the male gender as the warrior archetype.
Gender Roles	The prevailing learned roles or behaviors deemed as appropriate for each gender.
Stereotyping	A fixed idea or general image which represents a particular gender in the military regardless of the individual.
Informal Norms	The unwritten rules of social conduct within the military which serve to complement or reinforce formal norms or offer alternatives where no prescription exists or when the prescription is undesirable.
Tradition	A cultural element which reflects the assumptions, notions, and beliefs of a military culture that gives meaning to servicemembers and governs individual behaviors.
Hierarchy	The military hierarchical structure is unlike other organizations. Though it may resemble the traditional triangular

	structure commonly used, its composition is informed by historical traditions, relationships, and structuring unique to the military.
Social Learning	Learning through self-experience or through observing others.
Organizational Socialization	Refers to formative gendered experiences encountered in the early stages of a military career.
Leadership	Positive and negative experiences of leadership while serving in the military.

Emic **(Generative codes and themes which emerged from the data)**	
Workplace Bias	Prejudice against an individual on the basis of gender in a military workplace.
Pregnancy	Experiences pertaining to pregnancy while serving in the military.
Maternity/Paternity	Experiences pertaining to maternity/paternity including leave, lactation, and the early stages of parenthood while serving in the military.
Parenthood	Experiences pertaining to parenthood and raising children while serving in the military.
Marriage	Experiences pertaining to marriage, marital status, and partners while serving in the military.
Intersectionality	The interconnected nature of social categorization based on both gender and race which results in overlapping and enhanced disadvantage.
Perception	An outside impression which may be based upon assumptions rather than facts.
Sexual Assault	Any nonconsensual sexual contact.
Sexual Harassment	Uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature.
Sex-based Discrimination	Discrimination in employment and opportunity based upon gender.

Career Path	Career trajectories designed when women were unseen in the military, which reflect men's lives, and therefore disadvantage women.
Occupational Culture	The prevailing values, norms, philosophies, customs, and traditions of a particular military occupational specialty and field.
Branch Culture Army Navy Marine Corps Air Force	The prevailing values, norms, philosophies, customs, and traditions of a particular military branch i.e. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, or Air Force.
Representative Voice	The presence or absence of female voices in regards to policy and regulation development within the military.
Individual Voice	The ability or perceived ability of an individual to express issues pertaining to gender while serving in the military.

Codes → Categories			
Codes	***Sub-Themes***	***Themes***	***Categories***
Dominance and Submission b/w Genders		Leadership	Organizational Structures
Dominance and Submission b/w Ranks			
Hierarchy			
Leadership			
Policies			
Regulations			
Career Path		Career Path	
Pregnancy	Children	Family Planning	
Maternity/Paternity			
Parenthood			
Marriage	Marriage		
Representative Voice		Absent Voices	Institutional Culture
Individual Voice			
Individual Identity vs Collectivism		Professional Culture	
Informal Norms			
Tradition			
Occupational Culture	Occupational and Branch Culture		
Army Branch Culture			
Navy Branch Culture			
Marine Corps Branch Culture			
Air Force Branch Culture			
Stereotyping	Stereotyping	Gender Bias	
Workplace Bias			
Intersectionality	Intersectionality		
Perception			
Gendered Labor Divisions		Gender Norms	
Language			
Acceptable Behaviors			
Masculinity vs Femininity			
Masculine Ideal			
Gender Roles			

Sexual Assault		Sexual Assault	Gendered Misconduct
Sexual Harassment		Sexual Harassment	
Sex-based Discrimination		Sex-based Discrimination	
Social Learning			Learning to Navigate
Organizational Socialization			

Categories, Themes, and Sub-Themes	
Category 1: ***Organizational Structures***	
Themes	*Sub-Themes*
Leadership	
Career Path	
Family Planning	Marriage Children
Category 2: ***Institutional Culture***	
Themes	*Sub-Themes*
Absent Voices	
Professional Culture	Occupational and Branch Culture
Gender Bias	Stereotyping Intersectionality
Gender Norms	
Category 3: ***Gendered Misconduct***	
Themes	*Sub-Themes*
Sexual Assault	
Sexual Harassment	
Sex-based Discrimination	
Category 4: ***Learning to Navigate***	