A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE SENIOR

ENLISTED LEADERS IN THE U.S. ARMY'S BASIC COMBAT TRAINING UNITS

by

Allison Smith

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore retired female senior enlisted leaders' lived experiences while assigned as first sergeant (1SG) and command sergeant major (CSM) in initial entry training (IET) to ascertain if their experiences shed light on the underrepresentation of female leaders in the basic combat training (BCT) environment. Data collection emphasized factors that led to success in the IET environment, as well as challenges and barriers they may have faced. The theoretical framework that underpinned this study included the social role theory that the expectations for men and women are based on sex differences that regulate behavior in an adult's work and family life and the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders that suggests women do not reach top-level positions because they are less capable than men are and women are judged more harshly when they are in leadership roles. Data included a reflective journal, individual interviews, and a focus group. Having to prove oneself, reaction to female leadership, family obligations, and fighting stereotypes emerged as barriers and challenges. Attributes needed for success in the IET BCT environment included Army Values, toughness and tenacity, and good judgment. Coding of positions and male perception of female leaders emerged as challenges and barriers that prevent females from attaining 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment. The findings reflect credence to support the social role theory and role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. The results extend research on the representation of women in senior leadership positions because it includes female leaders in a nontraditional educational environment in the largest branch of the U.S. military.

Keywords: women, leaders, U.S. Army, barriers, basic combat training, glass ceiling

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my family—Jon, Darryck, Tawanda, and Jon-Horace Smith. They have been with me since the beginning of my military career. Through the ups and downs, they have been my support system. They have been there for my promotions, numerous assignments, and even during war. They have motivated me to keep going in everything I do in life and never to ever quit. I love them with all of my heart.

I also dedicate this to my mother, Pastor Emma Mae Meeks. I wanted to ensure that one of her 14 children has the title of "Doctor." One night, during a telephone conversation, she said to me, "Don't you worry about what people say or think of you, you keep doing what you're doing." Momma, I am going to keep doing what God has destined for me to do—thank you!

I also would like to dedicate this to all of the little girls who think they are not pretty enough, smart enough, or good enough. I was once that little girl. I was told by a high school counselor that I did not have what it takes to go to college. I was called a Cro-Magnon Man in middle school. I was bullied in elementary school and middle school. I remember when a boy once took Elmer's glue and squeezed it all over my head and coat. I had to wear a wig for a while, and it was snatched off my head by a bully. By the time I went to high school, I was so afraid of attention, I would never ask questions, even when I did not understand assignments, so my grades suffered. My sophomore English teacher used to look at me with disgust. However, the Army accepted me with open arms, and, to this day, I love the Army and serving people! Jesus also accepted me, even in the horrible state I was in; He loved me. So, to the little girls and young women out there reading this dissertation, never forget you are the apple of God's eye and you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. There is absolutely nothing impossible with God! You are worth it!

Acknowledgments

First, I'd like to acknowledge my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is because of Him that I began this journey and also because of Him I am able to complete this journey. He is truly the author and finisher of my faith. I am so thankful for my husband, Jon E. Smith. He would not let me quit. He would not baby me when I would get emotional and wanted to give up. Instead he reminded me of who I am and whose I am. I am grateful to my dissertation chair, Dr. James Fyock. It is an honor to have a true man of God not only as my chair but praying for me this entire journey. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Carole Baker and Dr. Carol Gillespie, thank you for serving on my committee and thank you for your patience; it has been a long road. I would like to acknowledge my friends, my colleagues, and The Well (Educ 919/980/989/990 and Defense) classmates, our Facebook page encouraged me to keep going. I would like to thank Josh, the manager at the UPS store who also motivated me to keep going by telling me the story of his father's dissertation process. I would also like to acknowledge that little girl, Allison Purvis, who never thought she was smart enough, athletic enough, or pretty enough. You did it!

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List of Abbreviations

Advanced individual training (AIT)

Basic combat training (BCT)

Command Sergeant Major (CSM)

Department of Defense (DoD)

First Sergeant (1SG)

Gender-integrated training (GIT)

Initial entry training (IET)

Military occupational specialty (MOS)

Noncommissioned officer (NCO)

One Station Unit Training (OSUT)

Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC)

Sergeant Major (SGM)

Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA)

Sergeants Major Course (SMC)

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA)

Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC)

Women's Army Corps (WAC)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Globally, there are more women in the workforce than at any other time in history (Burke & Richardsen, 2017; Carter et al., 2018; Marantz, Kalev, & Lewin-Epstein, 2014; Varma, 2018). In the United States, women represent 47% of the labor force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). However, although there has been an increase of women in the workforce, women are underrepresented in senior leader positions. Having increased job opportunities is a factor to more women in the workforce (Marantz et al., 2014). Underrepresentation of women in senior leader positions is attributable to barriers such as gender bias, family life, and leadership styles (Burton, 2015). The problem that this study addressed was that, although there are more opportunities, women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions in almost every professional sector in our society, including the military (Brown, 2017; Department of Defense [DoD], 2014; Glass & Cook, 2016; Northouse, 2015). This transcendental phenomenological study explored the experiences of retired female senior enlisted leaders to ascertain if their experiences can shed light on the underrepresentation of female senior leaders in the positions of first sergeant (1SG) and command sergeant major (CSM) in basic combat training (BCT) units. The study's research questions identified possible success strategies, barriers/challenges, and leadership attributes that may contribute to the representation of women in BCT units.

This chapter provided the foundation and framework for this study. The purpose of this chapter is to address the background, situation to self, problem, and purpose of the study. It also includes the significance of the study, research questions, definitions, and a summary of the chapter. In subsequent chapters, the theoretical framework along with a comprehensive review of literature will be presented, followed by the research methodology.

Background

In the United States, women represent slightly more than 50% of the nation's population and make up almost 47% of the labor force (Pew Research Center, 2015). Women hold over 51% of management, professional, and related positions in the U.S. labor force (Catalyst, 2017; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). However, women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions in education, higher learning, Fortune 500 companies, and other businesses and professions (Cater et al., 2018; Seo, Huang, & Han, 2017). For example, in education, women hold a clear majority in teaching positions. Unfortunately, throughout history, they have held the smallest percentages of leadership positions in the teaching field (Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Copeland & Calhoun, 2014; Shakeshaft, 1989; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017; Wallace, 2015).

Even though women bring considerable talent, experience, and educational background to industry, today they are underrepresented in top leadership positions (Nanton, 2015). Women represent only 24.1% of school district superintendents nationwide, 29% of executive/senior-level officials and managers, and 5% of Fortune 500 CEOs (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010; Menaker & Walker, 2013; Rhode, 2017; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). The underrepresentation of female leaders exists in the military senior ranks as well; women make up only about 6% of the U.S. Army's general officer active-duty ranks (DoD, 2014, 2016). The problem of the underrepresentation of females in senior leadership positions influenced this researcher to undertake this study to explore the leadership opportunities for females in the U.S. Army's senior enlisted leadership positions in BCT units, specifically the positions of 1SG and CSM. This problem is of particular significance for women in the military. Research shows that women and minorities in the military continually face challenges in career progression in the areas of promotion selection and opportunities (Duncanson & Woodward,

2016). The increase of women joining the armed forces yearly and the opening of more job opportunities for women in units below brigade level in the infantry, artillery, and special forces (Bakken, 2014) makes this problem even more significant for women in the military positions and those women who may be considering joining the military.

Historical Background

The exploration of the roles of men and women did not begin in the 21st century. On the contrary, it is a topic that has been much debated throughout the centuries. Notably, the topic can be found in scripture. For example, in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (New International Version [NIV]), the Pauline epistle addressed social roles based on sex differences and concluded that women were to remain silent in churches. They were not allowed to speak but were to be in submission, as the law at that time stipulated. If they wished to inquire about something, they were instructed to ask their own husbands at home, for it was considered disgraceful for a woman to speak in church.

The role of women in the military has changed significantly since they were first formally recognized as military members in the early 20th century. In 1901, women were only assigned to communal roles such as telephone operators and nurses (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017; Farrington, 2017; Permeswaran, 2008). Limits were also placed on the population of women in the military. The Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 limited the proportion of women in the military to 10% of its officer ranks and 2% of its enlisted ranks. This limit was only repealed in 1967 (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017), and that repeal led to an increase of women in the military. After the formation of the all-volunteer force and the signing of Public Law 94-106 by President Gerald Ford, women volunteered and entered the military in record numbers (Doll, 2007). Today, women represent approximately 15% of the Army's active-duty (AD) strength and 14% of its enlisted strength (DoD, 2014). The decision in 2015 to

open all combat jobs to women overturned a long-standing restriction of women in combat roles and opened up 220,000 military jobs to women (Rosenberg & Philipps, 2015). Women in the military now serve as fighter pilots, leaders of security patrols, infantry soldiers, and members of the Army's elite Rangers (Rosenberg & Philipps, 2015; Walker, 2009).

Social Background

In 1973, women represented approximately 1.6% of U.S. AD military forces. Department of Defense data indicated that the military is comprised of only 15% women (16.68% officers and 14.83% enlisted), members of the active military force. An additional 18.2% of 848,302 members comprise Reserve and National Guard forces (Braun, Kennedy, Sadler, & Dixon, 2015). Braun et al. (2015) noted that the number of women serving in the military has significantly increased over the past 3 decades. The U.S. military was also one of the first organizations to allow equal ethnicity status and equal pay. Despite these achievements, the U.S. Army still faces equity challenges with respect to promotion and advancement opportunities (Braun et al., 2015; Doll, 2007). Research shows that AD Army female officers are underrepresented in most senior leadership positions (Department of the Army, 2015a). DiGuglielino suggested that female Army officers appear to reach a glass ceiling at the rank of brigadier general (as cited in Doll, 2007). Tama (2016) and Pinch, MacIntyre, Browne, and Okros (2004) reported an underrepresentation of women in most senior ranks in the officer and noncommissioned officer corps in the modern-day military. These findings are critical because there are 200,692 females on active duty, representing almost 15% of the total force (DoD, 2014). Moreover, the recent rescission of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule for Women and the opening of all military positions to women creates 220,000 more opportunities for women to serve in the military (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017; Pellerin, 2015; Rosenberg & Phillips, 2015; Wechsler Segal, Smith, Segal, & Canuso, 2016).

Theoretical Background

This study explored retired female senior enlisted leaders' experiences while assigned to the leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in initial entry training (IET) to ascertain if their experiences may shed light on the underrepresentation of female 1SGs and CSMs in the BCT environment. For this study, the experiences of the retired female 1SG and CSMs were examined to determine the factors that led to their success in the IET environment, as well as examine challenges and barriers they may have faced.

The central audience for this study was those individuals interested in traditional and nontraditional education, leadership, female leaders in male-dominant organizations, and women leaders in the military. Exploring and understanding the experiences of women who have successfully served in 1SG and/or CSM positions in the basic training combat training environment adds significance to this study. Moustakas (1994) proposed that determining what the experiences mean is significant to a study.

The problem of the underrepresentation of women in senior leader roles has been studied by a number of researchers (Baker & Cangemi, 2016; Beck, Carter, & Peters, 2016; Eagly & Heilman, 2016; Glass & Cook; 2016; Seo et al., 2017; Varma, 2018). Theories such as the labyrinth, glass ceiling, glass cliff, and the velvet ghetto are results of the phenomenon of the underrepresentation of women in senior leader roles (Cook & Glass 2014; Kossek & Buzzanell, 2018; Northouse, 2012; Pasquerella & Clauss-Ehlers, 2017; Ryan & Haslem, 2007). Leadership styles, such as transactional and transformational, have been examined to see which styles women leaders demonstrate (Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci, & Burke, 2017; Stempel, Rogotti, & Mohr, 2015).

The theoretical concepts and principles underpinning this study are the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders and the social role theory. The role congruity theory

was selected because it explores the challenges women face in male-dominant leadership positions such as those found in the military (Glass & Cook, 2016). The role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders is based on the research of Eagly and Karau (2002). The theory proposes that perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles leads to two forms of prejudice: (a) perceiving women less favorably than men when considering potential occupants of leadership roles and (b) evaluating behavior that fulfills the prescriptions of a leader role less favorably when it is enacted by a woman.

The social role theory was selected because it can be traced back to the early 20th century when roles were first beginning to be explored in research (Blakely & Dziadosz, 2015). According to Bissessar (2013), theorists of the social role theory posit that society determines leadership roles by gender. Moreover, researchers have also identified other barriers that prevent women from reaching the senior levels of leadership in academia, banking, sports, business, and Congress. Work-life balance, lack of a flexible work environment, stereotypes, lack of mentoring, lack of role modeling, inflexible career paths, discrimination, salary gap, and glass cliffs are all barriers to women obtaining senior leadership positions (Eagly & Heilman, 2016; Schwanke, 2013).

There is much research on the barriers women face in pursuit of senior leadership positions in the traditional educational environment, business, athletics, and other organizations (Blount, 1998; Brunner, 1999; Diehl, 2014; Eagly & Heilman, 2014; Glass & Cook, 2016; Grogan, 1996; Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010; Lobpries, Bennett, & Brison, 2018; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000). Researchers have also studied the underrepresentation of women in the military (DoD, 2013; Doll, 2007; Marencinova, 2018; Pinch et al., 2004; Rutgers Institute for Women's Leadership, 2010); however, there is very limited research on the underrepresentation of women in the military's senior enlisted ranks. As noted earlier in this

study, enlisted women make up almost 15% of the Army's AD force; however, they occupy only 5.9% of its second most senior enlisted rank—CSM (Department of the Army, 2016). There is only one enlisted leadership more senior than the CSM position, and that is the Sergeant Major of the Army. In addition, there is limited research on the representation and experiences of senior enlisted women in the military's high senior leadership positions of 1SG and CSM.

The number of studies conducted on senior leadership in the traditional education environment, the research and statistical data provided on the underrepresentation of women in the military's senior officer ranks, and the limited research on senior enlisted military women in the BCT environment suggest that further study is needed to identify factors that may influence the representation of senior enlisted leaders in the BCT environment. In today's society, women face barriers at the individual, social, and organizational levels (Diehl, 2014). Thus, this study contributed to the research on gender equality, peace, and justice. This study also added to research that identifies opportunities for women in the military. In addition, the study added to research that identifies challenges or barriers that may lead to the underrepresentation of women in the senior leader positions in the military and added to research on leadership attributes of successful leaders. Last, this research added to the body of existing literature on the topic of the representation of females in leadership positions in education by providing new information on female leaders in a nontraditional training environment of the military—BCT.

Situation to Self

The philosophical assumption that led to my choice of research was axiological. As a retired CSM who has served in the BCT environment, my own perception and interpretation of barriers that I perceived to exist that prevent female senior enlisted soldiers from being selected for the positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment may bear influence (Creswell, 2013). However, as the researcher, I must examine my beliefs and assumptions because they will shape

the study. Based on my experience and my career in the military, I must be cautious of personal

bias that may arise while conducting the study. I ensured any personal biases did not infiltrate

the study by keeping a journal throughout the research process to record my own subjective

biases (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Moustakas, 1994).

My interest in the representation of women in leadership roles in the Army began in 2005

while attending the Sergeants Major Course (SMC) at the United States Army Sergeants Major

Academy (USASMA). The SMC is the capstone of enlisted training. Master sergeants are

prepared for both troop and staff assignments throughout the defense establishment. The SMC is

task-based and performance-oriented. Areas of study include leadership, combat operations,

sustainment operations, team building, communication skills, training management, and

professional development electives. Successful completion of the SMC is a requirement for

promotion to sergeant major (SGM) and appointment to CSM. Noncommissioned officers

(NCOs) selected by a CSM/Sergeant Major/Sergeants Major Course Selection Board are

required to attend the resident SMC at the USASMA under the current Select/Train/Promote

concept (United States Army, 2014).

Training, instructing, and leading soldiers in BCT were my passions. Prior to attending

USASMA, I had been assigned as a 1SG in a BCT unit. It was one of the most fulfilling roles of

my military career. In addition to serving as a 1SG in BCT, I had served as a BCT drill sergeant,

an instructor at the U.S. Army's Drill Sergeant School, and the noncommissioned officer in

charge at the Drill Sergeant Program Proponent, and I had even been selected as the U.S. Army's

female drill sergeant representative to testify before Congress' Armed Services Committee in

1997 on gender-integrated training (GIT). Fittingly, it was my goal to serve as a BCT CSM and

to see more senior enlisted females serve as senior leaders in the Army's training environment.

During one of our USASMA sessions, the post CSM for a BCT installation gave a brief on the BCT environment to our class of over 500 senior enlisted student master sergeants and SGMs. Given my background and my desire to serve as a CSM in that environment, I inquired about the possibility of being assigned as a CSM in a BCT unit upon graduation from the academy; the response was not positive. After the briefing, I reflected on the number of female 1SGs and CSMs I had served with in the BCT environment; there were very few. When I was initially assigned as a 1SG in the BCT environment, I was the sole female 1SG in my brigade. There were no female CSMs. Two years later, when I completed my assignment, there were two female 1SGs and one female CSM. As I looked around the auditorium, I noticed that our class of senior enlisted students consisted of less than 10% women. Were invisible barriers affecting the representation of senior enlisted females in the 1SG and CSM positions in BCT or were female enlisted leaders avoiding these positions by choice?

My motivation for conducting this study is to encourage female enlisted soldiers to pursue promotion to the enlisted rank in the Army, CSM, and to seek out leadership opportunities in the BCT environment. This study may provide information to help women succeed in the basic training environment. It may also identify and address any hidden barriers that may exist that prevent senior enlisted females from seeking out leadership opportunities in the BCT environment. Throughout the research process, the social constructivism paradigm framed the study because I relied on the participants' views of situations as much as possible (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

Problem Statement

Women around the world have achieved a certain level of success in corporations, academia, and in sports; however, the level of success does not nearly represent the number of qualified women available to equally fill the slots of their male counterparts (Burton, 2015;

DeSilver, 2015; Kalaitzi, Czabanowska, Fowler-Davis, & Brand, 2017). Although research

indicates an increase of female leaders in management positions in corporations, education, and

related occupations in the United States (BlackChen, 2015), research also demonstrates that

women are underrepresented at senior leadership positions such as school superintendents, senior

leaders in higher education, and Fortune 500 companies (Chisholm-Burns, Spivey, Hagemann, &

Josephson, 2017; Diehl, 2014; Wallace, 2015). The research indicates that individual,

organizational, societal barriers and other challenges exist that influence the underrepresentation

of women in senior leadership positions (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Diehl, 2014; Eagly &

Heilman, 2016; Haile, Emmanuel, & Dzathor, 2016; Wilson, 2014). The underrepresentation of

female senior leaders in the military also exists. The Department of the Army reported that

female senior enlisted leaders account for only 10% of the 1SG positions and 4% of the CSM

positions in BCT (Department of the Army, 2017d). Basic combat training is the gateway to the

Army for enlisted soldiers. There is limited research on the representation of female leaders in

the Army (Doll, 2007; Looney, Robinson-Kurpius, & Lucart, 2004; Marencinova, 2018;

Williams, 2017). The lifting of combat restrictions increased job and leadership opportunities

for women in the military (Crowley & Sandhoff, 2017; Pellerin, 2015); therefore, it was

necessary to identify obstacles that may lead to the underrepresentation of women in senior

leadership positions in the military. The problem that underpinned this study was that too few

women serve in senior leadership positions, including those positions in the U.S. military.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore and

understand retired female senior enlisted leaders' experiences while assigned to the leadership

positions of 1SG and CSM in IET to ascertain if their experiences may shed light on the

underrepresentation of female 1SGs and CSMs in the BCT environment. For this study, the

retired female 1SGs and CSMs' experiences helped me explore factors that led to their success in the IET environment, as well as explore challenges and barriers they may have faced.

Currently, research exists on the challenges of women obtaining and serving in senior leadership positions in the traditional education environment, collegiate sports programs, parliaments, Congress, and Fortune 500 companies (Alexander, 2015; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan, 2005). Similarly, there is extensive research on mixed-gender basic training in the U.S. Army (Chapman, 2008). The issue is the lack of empirical research regarding senior enlisted women in the U.S. Army basic training environment, which necessitates additional research. This phenomenon was examined using the role congruity theory of prejudice toward women and leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and the social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 1988) as the theoretical framework, and it focused on senior enlisted women in the Army BCT environment.

Significance of the Study

Understanding the underrepresentation of women in senior enlisted positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment is significant for several reasons. First, this study identified the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and even practices that led to the success of the retired female 1SGs and CSMs in the IET environment. This study also outlined challenges, institutional practices, or organizational culture that preclude or discourage women from seeking or obtaining these leadership positions. It also shed light on the practices used by the study's participants that led to their success in the BCT environment and thus encourage women to take advantage of these leadership opportunities to serve as 1SG and/or CSM in the BCT environment. Last, it identified competencies and attributes necessary to serve as a CSM or 1SG in the BCT environment. Understanding both positive and negative factors may possibly lead to a change in the phenomenon of the scarcity of women in these two positions. The study may also contribute to theory by expanding the research, literature, and limited body of knowledge regarding women

in senior leadership positions in business, nontraditional and traditional educational environments, government, and other organizations. Additionally, this study may influence policies that prescribe the assignment of women to leadership positions to drive a more inclusive leadership presence (Stainback, Kleiner, & Skaggs, 2016).

Currently, there is research on the challenges of women obtaining and serving in senior leadership positions in the traditional education environment, collegiate sports programs, parliaments, Congress, and in Fortune 500 companies (Alexander, 2015; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Grogan, 2005). Similarly, there is research on mixed-gender basic training in the U.S. Army and the integration of women into combat units (Chapman, 2008; Maginnis, 2013; Savge-Knepshield, Thomas, Schweitzer, Kozycki, & Hullinger, 2016; Tama, 2016; Troubaugh, 2018). The issue is the lack of empirical research regarding the representation of senior enlisted women in leadership positions in the U.S. Army, particularly, the U.S. Army basic training environment, which necessitates additional research on this topic. This phenomenon was examined using the role congruity theory of prejudice toward women and leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and the social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 1988) as the theoretical framework, and it focused on senior enlisted women in the Army BCT environment.

Research Questions

Four research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What factors contributed to female senior noncommissioned officers' success in the leader positions of 1SG or CSM in the IET environment?

The social role theory postulates that women and men behave differently in certain situations and take on gender-specific roles dictated by society (Bissessar, 2013). Men are ascribed such characteristics as possessing more assertiveness, independence, and competence

than women are. Women are more communal and characterized as considerate, unselfish, amiable, and have concern for others (Hogue, 2015; Koenig & Eagly, 2014).

Communal qualities have been attributed to the success of women leaders, such as Germany's leader, Chancellor Angela Merkel. Eagly (2018) suggested that Merkel's success should be attributed at least in part to her intelligence, both analytic and emotional, and her patient, deliberative decision making—widely acknowledged qualities. For Merkel, criticism has thus far concerned her lack of an assertive masculine leadership style. *The Economist* ("Sedating, Not Leading," 2014) depicted her as being sedating, not leading. Merkel was described as luring her opposition with passivity and ensuring that she did not offend anyone: "She lulls opponents and the public into passivity with soothing and often bureaucratic expressions that smother controversies, offend nobody and reassure everybody" ("Sedating, Not Leading," 2014, para. 5). However, reducing polarization and finding a noncontroversial middle ground on most issues could instead be regarded as brilliant leadership. The first research question sought to understand the participants' perceptions of factors that led to their success.

RQ2: What are the challenges or barriers experienced by females serving in the leadership positions of 1SG or CSM in a U.S. Army BCT unit?

According to studies by Eagly and Karau (2002), Matthews, Ender, Laurence, and Rohall (2009), Violanti and Jureczak (2010), and Snaebjornsson and Edvardsson (2012), the glass ceiling, gender stereotypes, and other barriers that prevent women from obtaining senior-level positions exist. Thus, the second research question sought to understand the participants' perceptions of what barriers, if any, exist in the BCT environment.

RQ3: What leadership attributes do participants identify as necessary to be successful in a BCT unit?

The U.S. Army leadership attributes describe the type of leader the Army desires (Department of the Army, 2015b). *Attributes* describe how an individual behaves and learns in an environment. It sets the standards for the acceptable characteristics of the Army leader (Department of the Army, 2015b). Knowing those attributes (characteristics) expected of 1SGs and CSMs in the BCT environment could better prepare female senior enlisted leaders to assume those roles. The social role theory postulates that the expectations for men and women are based upon sex differences that regulate behavior in an adult's work and family life (Eagly & Wood, 1988). The responses to RQ3 can be used to determine if the participants perceive that attributes for female senior enlisted leaders (1SG/CSM) in the BCT environment differ from those of a male senior enlisted leader (1SG/CSM) in the BCT environment. In addition, leadership theories or leadership styles that are effective in the BCT environment could be identified (Walker & Aritz, 2015).

RQ4: What challenges and barriers, if any, exist that prevent senior enlisted females from attaining senior leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment?

According to Eagly and Karau's (2002) role contingency theory, women are expected to have strong communal skills (Heilman & Okimoto, 2007). These skills include nurturing, concern for others, helpfulness, and sympathy. Women are expected to be less aggressive, less competitive, and take fewer risks than their male counterparts (Chen, Crossland, & Huang, 2016). It is these communal and agentic traits and behavioral patterns corresponding to women and men, respectively, that breed potential differed perceptions of fit of women vis-à-vis men for leadership positions (Wang, Markoczy, Sun, & Peng, 2018). This question sought to identify if the participants believed that communal skills, mainly associated with women, were barriers that prevented women from being selected to the leadership positions of 1SG or CSM in the BCT environment.

Definitions

Terms pertinent to the study include the following:

1. *Active Army*—members and units of the active U.S. Army (Department of the Army, 2017e).

2. *Agentic*—a social theory leadership expectation. Agentic characteristics are more strongly ascribed to men and are described as primarily assertive, controlling, and confident (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Walker, 2009).

3. *Basic combat training (BCT)*—the U.S. Army's 10-week training program that transforms civilians into soldiers. The training consists of instructing basic tactical and survival skills, as well as of teaching recruits to shoot, rappel, and march. The recruits also learn military customs and courtesies integral to the basics of Army life (United States Army, 2015).

4. *Battalion*—an organization in the U.S. Army consisting of approximately 300-1,000 personnel (Department of the Army, 1994).

5. *Brigade*—an organization in the U.S. Army consisting of approximately 1,000-3,000 personnel (Department of the Army, 1994).

6. *Combat arms*—units and soldiers who close with the enemy and destroy enemy forces or provide firepower and destructive capabilities on the battlefield (Department of the Army, 2004).

7. *Combat service support*—the essential capabilities, functions, activities, and tasks necessary to sustain all elements of operating forces in theater at all levels of war. Within the national and theater logistic systems, it includes but is not limited to that support rendered by service forces in ensuring the aspects of supply, maintenance, transportation, health services, and other services required by aviation and ground combat troops to

permit those units to accomplish their missions in combat. Combat service support encompasses those activities at all levels of war that produce sustainment to all operating forces on the battlefield (Department of the Army, 2004).

8. *Communal*—a social theory leadership expectation. Communal characteristics are more strongly ascribed to women and relate to the concern for the welfare of other people (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Walker, 2009).

9. *Command Sergeant Major (CSM)*—the senior noncommissioned officer of the command at battalion or higher levels. The CSM carries out the policies and standards on performance, training, appearance, and conduct of enlisted personnel assigned to the command (Department of the Army, 2002).

10. *Company*—a unit consisting of two or more platoons, with a headquarters and a limited capacity of self-support (Department of the Army, 2004). A company is usually aligned under a battalion.

11. *Enlisted soldiers*—the most important part of the U.S. Army structure. They carry out orders and complete missions. The Army enlisted ranks are private (E -1), private (E-2), private first class, specialist, corporal, sergeant, sergeant first class, master sergeant, first sergeant, sergeant major, command sergeant major, and sergeant major of the Army (SMA; United States Army, 2016).

12. *First Sergeant*—the senior noncommissioned officer in the company. The company is a unit that is part of a battalion. The first sergeant oversees formations, instructs platoon sergeants, and assists the company commander in daily unit operations. First sergeants supervise routine administrative duties. Their principal duty is training soldiers (Department of the Army, 2002).

13. *Gender-integrated training (GIT)*—mixed-gender training developed to train males and females together in U.S. Army basic combat training (Chapman, 2008).

14. *General officer*—the highest commissioned officer rank attainable in the U.S. Army; it includes brigadier (one-star) general, major (two-star) general, lieutenant (three-star) general, general (four-star), and general of the Army (five-star; Department of the Army, 2014b; United States Army, n.d.).

15. *Glass ceiling*—"an invisible barrier, yet quite penetrable, [that] serves to prevent all but a disproportionately few women from reaching the highest ranks of the corporate hierarchy regardless of merit" (Kephart & Schumacher, 2005, p. 8).

16. *Glass cliffs*—terminology that describes the situation of women being placed in leadership positions during times of crisis (i.e., when there is a shortage of men, as during a war), which often creates a scenario in which burnout or failure is a potential risk (Schwanke, 2013).

17. *Initial entry training (IET)*—U.S. Army training designed to transform civilian volunteers into trusted Army professionals capable of winning in a complex world (Department of the Army, 2017e).

18. *Master Sergeant (Promotable)*—a master sergeant selected for promotion to the rank of sergeant major by a Department of the Army promotion board.

19. *Noncommissioned officer*—an enlisted member of the U.S. Armed Forces who, without being given a commission, has been appointed to a position of authority over other enlisted members. Noncommissioned officers in the Army serve in the ranks of corporal through SMA (Department of the Army, 2014b).

20. *Reserve component*—members and units of the Army National Guard and Army Reserves (Department of the Army, 2017e).

21. *Senior enlisted leaders/advisors (senior-noncommissioned officers)*—enlisted soldiers in

the pay grade of E-7 through E-9. Senior enlisted leaders/advisors are identified by the

rank of sergeant first class through SMA (Department of the Army, 2014b; Military

Advantage, 2015).

Summary

Evidence is accumulating that women remain underrepresented in leadership and major

institutions in every country (Kossek, Su, & Wu, 2017). Even though women bring considerable

talent, experience, and educational background to industry, they are underrepresented in the top

leadership positions (Nanton, 2015). In the United States, women represent 47% of the

workforce; however, they represent only 24.1% of school district superintendents nationwide, 29

% of executive/senior-level officials and managers, and 5% of Fortune 500 CEOs (Kowalski et

al., 2010; Menaker & Walker, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor

Statistics, 2017).

Recently, there has been a surge of research on gender and leadership (Cimirotic, Duller,

Felbauer-Durstmuller, Gartner, & Hiebl, 2017; Ferguson, 2018; Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017;

Kirsch, 2018; Madsen & Scribner, 2016; Patel & Biswas, 2016; Rhee & Sigler, 2014; Schuh,

Hernandez Bark, van Quaquebeke, Hossiep, Frieg, & Van Dick, 2014; Stegaroiu, Zaharia,

Ghinea, Stan, & Munteanu, 2017). One major problem reported in recent scholarly publications

seems to be the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions throughout

numerous and diverse institutions and organizations in the United States. Eagly and Heilman

(2016) reported that there have been approximately 3,000 published articles on this topic since

1970; 38% have a publication date of 2010 or later. This contemporary surge of research on

gender and leadership reveals the underrepresentation problem.

This study sought to address the gap in the literature concerning the representation of women in senior enlisted leader positions of CSM and 1SG in the nontraditional education environment of the Army's BCT by identifying barriers and challenges that exist that may influence the underrepresentation. Chapter 1 of this study contains the foundation for the problem that necessitates the research, an overview of the literature in which the research is founded, the importance of the specific audience, and introduces the research questions. In Chapter 1, the reader is provided with definitions to familiarize the reader with military-specific terms that will be used throughout the study.

Chapter 2 contains an in-depth review of literature on barriers that may exist that prevent women from being selected as senior enlisted leaders in the BCT environment. Diversity inclusion and women leaders, the history of women in the U.S. Army, women and leadership in the U.S. Army, and the CSM and 1SG positions are also topics reviewed in Chapter 2. The review of literature in Chapter 2 includes an overview of BCT and reviews U.S. Army attributes and competencies, and a review of leadership theories.

Chapter 3 contains a discussion of the methodology for this study. The results of the analysis of the data collected are in Chapter 4. A discussion of the results, implications, conclusions, and recommendations for further study are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter contains the review of the literature for this study and discusses the history of women in the Army, theories that relate to leadership, and barriers and opportunities that may factor in the representation of women in the senior enlisted leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in the Army's BCT environment.

Theoretical Framework

A *theory* is defined as an explanation of observed phenomena that is organized into logical, interrelated terms (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2008). A theoretical framework is a systematic explanation of phenomena related to variables within a given theory (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). This section examines theories rooted in perceptions that underpin the roles of men and women and more explicitly the effects these social and organizational theories engender on leadership opportunities. Having a foundational understanding of these theories is vital to the direction of this study and to advancing organizational constructs and policies.

The theoretical frameworks selected to guide this phenomenological study are based on Eagly and Wood's (1988) social role theory and Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. Madsen and Scribner (2016) emphasized the necessity to understand the lack of progress women have made in ascending ladders of leadership and management positions; thus, this study supports the same inquiry. Because progress continues to be protracted, examining the roles women embody shapes the destiny of women whether in corporate America or governmental positions. The social role theory provides a conceptual framework "to understand how sex differences and similarities in behavior reflect gender role beliefs that in turn represent people's perceptions of men's and women's social roles in the society in which they live" (Eagly & Wood, 2012, p. 458) as well as to understand from where

beliefs about social groups are derived. Koenig and Eagly (2014) suggested that the social role theory "postulates that social perceivers' beliefs about social groups in their society derive from their experiences with group members in their typical social roles" (p. 371).

Moreover, role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders is applicable because this theory addresses glass ceiling barriers, physical barriers, and other challenges that women face in pursuit of senior leadership positions or while serving in positions of senior leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Role congruity theory predicts female leaders will experience prejudice because the role of leader aligns more closely with the stereotypic male gender role than it does with the stereotypic female role (Ferguson, 2018). Role congruity theory was applied in the current study because it framed it in the areas of sex differences and equality for women.

The role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders suggests that women do not reach top-level positions because of two types of prejudice. The first prejudice is based on the perception that women are less capable than men are to occupy leadership roles. The second prejudice involves judging women more harshly when they are in leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). These prejudices too may have biblical roots, for 1 Timothy 2:12 (NIV) states, "I do not permit a woman to teach or assume authority over a man, she must remain silent." This is where the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female is made distinct in biblical teaching. However, when considering the strengths of the body of Christ and the strengths men and women collectively share, scripture also gives a reminder about the importance of all members to the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (NIV), which states:

> Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Social Role Theory

Role theories can be traced back to the early 20th century, where theories about roles were first introduced by sociologist George Herbert Meade. The term *social role* refers to the presumption that people fill social positions and hold expectations for their own behaviors and those of others (Madsen & McGarry, 2016). Meade suggested that an individual's behavior is context specific based on social positions and other factors. Meade's role concepts were crucial to Eagly's research on gender and educational studies. Social role theory came into prominence in the 1930s. Linton implemented the terms *ascribed* and *achieved* regarding roles. He also wrote about the distinction between status, or position, and role (as cited in Blakely & Dziadosz, 2015). According to researchers, the social role theory postulates that the expectations for men and women are based on sex differences that regulate behavior in an adult's work and family life (Eagly & Wood, 1988; Kiser, 2015). The theory also suggests that individuals will behave in accordance with preconceived notions about the roles they occupy (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Kiser, 2015). In regard to leader roles, researchers suggest that the social role theory determines leadership roles by gender (Bissessar, 2013; Lobpries et al., 2018).

The theory also discusses two kinds of expectations for leaders—*agentic* and *communal* (Walker, 2009). Agentic behaviors refer to give-and-take tendencies (Eagly, 1987). Agentic characteristics are described as assertive, controlling, aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, self-sufficient, and prone to act as a leader and are normally associated with male leaders (Hogue, 2015; Walker, 2009). Communal behaviors refer to a concern with interpersonal relationships (Eagly, 1987; Hogue, 2015). Communal characteristics are often ascribed to women and relate to care and welfare; for example, being affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing, and gentle are behaviors typically associated with female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hogue, 2015; Stegaroia et al., 2017). A successful

leader should possess both communal and agentic qualities; however, there is a traditional perception that agentic leadership is more successful than communal leadership, especially in a military setting (Walker, 2009). There have been critiques concerning the validity of these perceptions; one study's critique is that there have been substantial changes to leadership qualities based on these gender stereotypes (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Glick, & Phelan, 2012). Further, although female leaders are typically identified as leaders with communal characteristics (Chapman, 2008), studies indicated that women possess more desirable leadership qualities and interpersonal skills (Kiser, 2015; Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014; Tench, Topic, & Moreno, 2017; Violanti & Jureczak, 2010).

In male-dominated organizations such as the political arena and military, the faces, the leaders, and the followers have changed (Diekman & Schneider, 2010; Walker, 2008). Recent studies suggest the scarcity of women in top-level positions warrants a unique leadership approach for aspects of femininity, self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and teamwork (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017; Kiser, 2015; Walker, 2008). As societal changes continue to evolve both in how leaders lead and in those who are being led, it becomes important for organizations to distinguish what is indispensable for effective leadership, irrespective of gender. Rudman et al. (2012) may have refuted the social role theory, but current research supports the social role theory claim that inference from group members' typical role behaviors concerning their group stereotypes is a key process that creates stereotypes. In Kiser's (2015) study, the researcher theorized that findings aligned to the expected roles of men and women, which lent credence to why women did not hold as many high-level positions as men. Another important point of this study was that men viewed it as their right to a job in conditions when jobs are few. Results of this study also asserted that men are better political leaders and executives and that children suffer when women work (Diekman & Schneider, 2010; Ferguson, 2018; Koenig & Eagly,

2014). These stereotypes often derive from social role theory and explain why men and women serving in the military are typecast (Bissessar, 2013; King, 2013). For example, a long-standing stereotype is that women should only serve in positions requiring a communal leadership style (Hogue, 2015). I explored the social role theory to determine its impact on leadership challenges, barriers, and opportunities for women.

Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice Toward Female Leaders

A theory by which to explain gender stereotyping is the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. This theory is grounded in social role theory's treatment of gender roles and their emphasis on promoting gender differences as a result of characteristics in behavior (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Role congruity theory extends beyond social role theory in that it factors gender roles with leadership roles (Buckalew, Konstantinopoulos, Russell, & El-Sherbini, 2012).

According to role congruity theory, individuals are penalized when they do not perform according to the expectations of society (Ferguson, 2018; Skelly & Johnson, 2011). Because effective women leaders tend to violate standards for their gender when they manifest stereotypical male, agentic attributes and fail to manifest stereotypical female, communal attributes, they may be ostracized (Bongiorno, Bain, & David, 2013). An important aspect of Eagly and Karau's (2002) research is the conditions that moderate incongruity. Eagly and Karau contended that unpredictability exists in gender roles and how leadership is defined. Eagly and Karau noted a distinct principle: "The greater the incongruity between the descriptive norms that define the female gender role and a leader role, the more likely that women are perceived as less qualified for leadership" (p. 577). This premise is a cornerstone to this study.

Ferguson (2018) used the role congruity theory to examine female leadership within the context of the religious congregation and the clergy; the researcher suggested that female clergy may experience prejudice because they do not align with the cultural image of a pastor.

Ferguson hypothesized that female clergy using a more masculine leadership style would experience more prejudice; the results offered support for the hypothesis that female clergy experience role congruity. Ferguson also found that female clergy experience more prejudice if they use a more masculine leadership style (Frawley & Harrison, 2016). This finding is in keeping with the role congruity theory. Ferguson also pointed out that the pastoral role aligns closely with the female gender role because pastors are known to be nurturers and build community. The researcher's findings also suggested that even though there are behavioral restrictions for women, the profession of clergy is an amenable profession for female leaders (Ferguson, 2018). Recent findings indicate that there is a greater acceptance of women who demonstrate agentic behavior; however, there is evidence of a more elusive form of prejudice toward women who fail to display agency leadership roles (Bongiorno et al., 2013).

In a study by Gurbuz, Faruk, and Kosal (2014), the military was perceived to have very distinct definitions of what leadership is and the expectations of its leaders. While the military has made advancements in the number of women serving, the idea of women serving at all is still counter to social expectations (King, 2013). Therefore, women are caught in a dichotomy; they can either (a) conform to the stereotypical communal role or face criticism for not meeting the requirements of being a leader; or (b) follow the leader role and fail to meet the stereotypical communal role (Bongiorno et al., 2013; Eagly & Karau, 2002). According to Eagly and Karau (2002), the path to congruency is achievable when a leader's role is less masculine, which should abate the stereotype that women are less qualified than men are. As previously described, this can create a quandary when women find themselves behaving in ways that accentuate and deny the stereotype (Ferguson, 2018). Women find themselves trying to meet the perception that leaders must espouse agentic traits, all while performing communal roles that submit to gender role expectations (Zheng, Surevil, & Kark, 2018). Thus, this study may delve into the degree to

which leadership definitions are more androgynous and how continued leadership perceptions in the military might influence junior enlisted women's elevation to senior enlisted positions.

Another characteristic of conditions that moderate incongruity is that of the culture of organizations. Eagly and Karau (2002) described how organizations that are male dominant present adversities for women because of the incongruity with the expectations placed on women, causing limited access and a perception of ineffectiveness. The military is a classic depiction of such incongruity. For decades, women were not authorized to serve in combat roles, a role often used as a barometer for advancement to senior positions. Without combat experience, women faced difficulty garnering the respect of decision makers sitting on promotion boards who determine the future career paths of senior leaders. A defining moment occurred on December 3, 2015, when then Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter ordered the U.S. military to open all military occupational specialties to women, including combat specialties, which previously excluded women. This order significantly changed women's role in the military because doing so committed the DoD to removing one more obstacle that hinders women from ascending to the top based on demonstrated performance (Pellerin, 2015).

Allowing women into combat roles is a divergent as well as a historical shift (Crowley & Sandhoff, 2017; King, 2013). The change required military leaders to recognize perceptions and unconscious biases that may have existed that prevented women's assignments to leadership positions historically held by men (Tama, 2016). This fact is critical and illuminates Eagly and Karau's (2002) findings that the type of organization moderates the role congruity theory. Because of the change to allow women in combat, this study proved timely because it allowed me to examine how the traditional, highly male-centric environment is evolving and whether there is hope that change is possible in how women are perceived in leadership roles, thereby allowing them greater access to upward mobility and equalizing leadership diversity.

Advancing the role congruity theory based on today's 21st-century workplace will appreciably contribute to the body of available research. The workplace of the future is becoming more transformational, global, and competitive. The antiquated styles of autocracy, rigidity, and directive, which are often perceived as agentic behaviors, are being overshadowed by a participative, team-focused, and democratic style of leadership, making androgynous definitions of leadership more common. Today's workforce commands leadership that propels an organization to excel and succeed with an effective style of leadership that is neither male nor female but is instead gender neutral (Holten & Brenner, 2015). Eagly and Karau (2002) opined that as organizations shift from traditional views of leadership to one that advocates for democracy and involved leadership, women should encounter diminished prejudice and realize greater offers of leadership roles (Bongiorno et al., 2013).

Related Literature

The purpose of this section is to provide a synthesis of previous research linked to this study. While the social role theory and the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders provide a theoretical framework, the related literature offers a contextual background that indicates the need for further research on the representation of females in the senior enlisted positions in the U.S. Army's BCT environment. Diversity inclusion and women leaders, the history of women in the Army, women and leadership in the U.S. Army, the U.S. Army BCT Program, leader attributes and competencies, leadership theories and styles, and barriers and opportunities for women are examined to establish a foundational understanding of the topic.

Diversity Inclusion and Women Leaders

The opportunities and challenges of women in the military have become amplified due to the underrepresentation of women in the military compared to the overall population (Stone,

2008; Williams, 2017). The population of active-duty enlisted women in the military grew over

300% between the years 1973 to 2010, from about 42,000 to 167,000 (Patten & Parker, 2011).

Moreover, the military is not impervious to the changes influencing the fabric of society

at this point in history. Leaders must contend with several generations working side by side—a

diverse environment inclusive of differing gender, religious, and cultural underpinnings. Now

more than ever, organizations must have leaders who are representative of those they employ.

According to Nanton (2015), leadership imperatives for the 21st century include

competition, diversity, agility, and sustainability. While the military is highly recognized as

sustainable and competitive and recognized as the world's leader in protection and defense, it too

must espouse qualities that allow it to continue advancing inclusivity and diversity among its

leadership ranks. With more combat roles open to women, these women will also need to see

enlisted women in leadership positions.

As interpreted through the auspices of the foundations of the social role theory, women

have faced challenges perpetuated by perceptions stemming from society and thus the

workplace. Windscheid, Bowes-Sperry, Mazei, and Morner (2017) called for an attitude check

when it comes to women's roles in the workplace. Moreover, their findings illuminate the need

for consideration of the women's presence in both the workplace and the world at large. In other

words, women must advocate for their right to pursue their status in the workplace but must also

push for organizations to reconsider decades of decisions that have left women at a disadvantage.

Nanton (2015) suggested ushering diversity schemes into organizational discussions to

elevate the practices that systematically have impeded the rise of more women to leadership

positions. Continuously bringing such conversations to the forefront frames a level of

mindfulness for leaders in policy or decision-making positions to consider the broad availability

of talent that is available. It is not enough for organizations to go passively about business as

usual in assigning leadership roles; they must take conscious action to expose the underlying biases and perceptions that are rooted in decision making. Removing the perceived challenges and barriers of the glass ceiling that tend to limit advancement for women stems from the intentionality of those in positions of authority to make a difference. Thus, an emphasis on promoting more women to leadership programs and mentoring opportunities can deliberately lead to a greater pipeline of women for selection not primarily based on their gender but by the sheer fact they are qualified as leaders.

In a gender role study completed by Berkery, Morley, and Tiernan (2013), they validated the long-standing stereotype of males continuing to favor men in leadership roles, whereas women find both men and women equally suitable for those roles. Their study also reflected a gap in senior leadership positions, suggesting that few women reached senior positions in the sampling of their study. This researcher asserts that even though this was a finite study, it further confirms in the military construct the challenges perceived to enlisted female leaders obtaining the highest positions available.

Berkery et al. (2013) argued that for organizations to witness cultural changes that no longer perpetuate gender stereotyping, they must embrace the changes emanating from society. Interestingly, the researchers determined that the role of leaders and that of men continue to be perceived through agentic lens. The researchers contended that the long-held views of women in communal roles have changed to reflect androgynous views—having an amalgamation of agentic and communal features. The important findings of Berkery et al.'s study include the recognition that evidence exists that women have the capacity to lead similarly to men, and the best application for organizations is to focus on how a diverse leadership talent pool can benefit the organization. A diverse organization fosters the concept of men and women working collaboratively and collectively, using their strengths to advance the purpose of the organization.

Furthermore, organizations must make the most of unused talent to ensure the organization's structure is a mix of the skills and competencies necessary to lead successfully.

While women's presence in the workplace has gradually increased over several decades, ascending to a current rate of 50%, organizations continue to struggle with increasing the representation of women in senior leadership roles (Powell, 2012). The phenomenon of women equally represented in senior positions, whether in corporate America, academia, or the federal government, remains perplexing and provides the basis for the branding of a glass ceiling. A recent study found that although most women classified their social skills and expertise as key factors to their successful advancement, they also highlighted that ambition and luck played a role as well (Cimirotic et al., 2017).

Powell (2012) confirmed that a male leader is often preferred and exposed the stereotype that men are better leaders based on masculine skills. Negative attitudes prevail toward women in senior leadership roles when compared to males in those same roles. Powell found that the effectiveness of a leader is not a matter of masculine or feminine characteristics that are vital to success but a matter of having a range of behaviors that best suits the organization.

Researchers indicated that innumerable opinions exist on the styles of leaders and whether men or women are more effective in the leadership chair (Eagly, 2007; Hernandez Bark, Escartin, Schuh, & van Dick, 2016). The perceptions of women's alleged inferiority indicate the need for more inclusive thinking, for more leaders challenging their assumptions, and for more looking beyond gender when considering assignments for leadership positions. Organizational success is often attributed to the level of women in those organizations (Haring, 2013). Even more important, when women sit on boards, the companies perform better and are more successful. Subsequently, with women involved in more positions that were not possible 10 years ago, women are now able to provide significant contributions toward our nation's security

objective. However, based on the military's record of not fully recognizing the leadership

capacity of women, the military has not optimized the entire talent pool at its disposal (Tama,

2016).

History of Women in the Army

The U.S. military has traditionally been viewed as male dominant. Further, military

forces have traditionally exemplified a strong and authoritative leadership style, normally

exemplified by males (Bass, 1990); however, women have been serving, unofficially, in the

military since the Revolutionary War. Admiral Michelle Howard, Vice Chief of Naval

Operations stated, "Women throughout our history have endeavored to serve the flag, not

looking for special treatment, prestigious awards or financial wealth, but merely for the

opportunity to serve the flag itself and the great nation it represents" (Chief of Naval Personnel

Public Affairs, 2016, p. 5). During the Civil War, the U.S. government first recruited women to

serve as nurses, but the women were not given military status. It is reported that 4,200 women

served as nurses with the Union Army. Women nurses were also recruited for the Spanish-

American War, again without military status until finally being officially recognized as members

of the active duty in 1901 (Monahan & Neidel-Greenlee, 2010). The success of the nurses led to

the establishment of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901.

Many women have chosen to support and defend their country by enlisting to serve in the

U.S. military. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, there were approximately

2,000 women volunteers serving as enlisted members of the Navy (Monahan & Neidel-Greenlee,

2010). Unfortunately, women have not always been welcomed into the military:

> Opponents characterized the female soldier as a dire threat to the home and family, and to
>
> the privatized gender relationships within them, especially the husband's status as
>
> breadwinner and head of household. . . . The female soldier epitomized the wartime anti-

heroine, a figure whose potential . . . independence from men subverted the "natural

order" and whose position as a female protector usurped men's status and power, both

inside and outside of the home. (Meyer, 1980, p. 3)

In 1941, Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers introduced a bill in the House of

Representatives that would establish a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC; Permeswaran,

2008). Significantly, Rogers did not want a WAAC to serve with the Army; instead, she wanted

a Women's Army Corps (WAC) to serve in the Army. A WAC would give women protection of

military status and the WAAC would not. However, Rogers introduced the WAAC bill because

she thought it could pass, and she knew the introduction of military status would be met with

much resistance (Monahan & Neidel-Greenlee, 2010). The WAAC bill was met with much

resistance as well, mostly from the South, but also from the North. New York Congressman

Randolph called the bill the silliest piece of legislation that had ever come before his notice, and

he believed that the WAAC would be a humiliation to the manhood of America (Permeswaran,

2008). On May 6, 1942, after many setbacks, the bill establishing the WAAC passed Congress

and was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt the following day (Monahan &

Neidel-Greenlee, 2010), but it did not grant military status to its members (Morden, 2000). In

January 1943, the Chief of Staff of the Army, General George Marshall, notified the director of

the WAAC, Major Oveta Culp Hobby, that he felt that the WAAC had proven itself as a valuable

organization and would support it becoming a part of the U.S. Army (Monahan & Neidel-

Greenlee, 2010).

It was not until July 1943, with the establishment of the WAC, that women were

authorized to have the same rank, benefits, and privileges as their male counterparts. It was not

until 1948, when Congress passed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, in which

women won the right to serve, conditionally, in the regular active peacetime forces (National

Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2011); the 1901 provision only allowed women to

serve on active duty during war. The WAC was discontinued in 1978 to remove any feeling of

separateness for women (United States Army Women's Museum, n.d.).

Women and Leadership in the United States Army

Today, women may serve in all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. Women comprise

14.9% of the military's total active-duty force and 14.5% of the military's active-duty enlisted

force (DoD, 2013). Women represent 15.6% of the Army's active-duty force (DoD, 2013).

Military leadership positions have historically belonged to men (Gibson, 2016), and women hold

less than 10% of Army general officer positions (Static Brain, 2016). In fact, when the WAC

was disbanded in 1978, it was not until 30 years later that the U.S. Army promoted its first

female four-star general, General Ann E. Dunwoody, to the rank of general in 2008. General

Dunwoody is also the first female in the Army to lead a major Army command (Army Material

Command; United States Army Women's Museum, n.d.). General Dunwoody also shared an

interesting fact when she retired after 38 years; she stated she never had a female boss. Although

there has been a slight increase in female leaders in the officer ranks (DoD, 2013), there has not

been a female CSM of a BCT unit in nearly a decade (Military Advantage, 2015).

Senior enlisted Positions

Sergeant major of the Army, command sergeant major, and first sergeant. Sergeant

major of the Army is the U.S. Army's highest enlisted rank. The SMA is the senior enlisted

advisor to the chief of staff of the Army. There is only one SMA position. The SMA serves as

the top noncommissioned officer of the Army. The position was established by General Order

29 on July 4, 1966, and the first SMA, SGM William O. Wooldridge, a Vietnam veteran,

assumed the position of SMA on July 11, 1966. The SMA reports directly to the chief of staff of

the Army. The chief of staff determines the tenure of the SMA. According to the U.S. Army

Center of Military History, there have been 14 SMAs but no female SMAs since the establishment of the position.

Command sergeant major and first sergeant positions. Other than the SMA, the CSM is the highest rank an enlisted person can achieve in the U.S. Army. The CSM is recognized as a prestigious position because it represents less than 1% of the active-duty Army soldiers (Department of the Army, 2016; DoD, 2014). Obtaining this rank is not easy; therefore, those who attain it are highly esteemed. The CSM position designates the senior noncommissioned officer of the command at battalion or higher levels. Command sergeants major carry out policies and standards and advise the commander on the performance, training, appearance, and conduct of enlisted soldiers. The CSM also administers the unit's Noncommissioned Officer's Development Program (Department of the Army, 2002). The position of 1SG designates the senior enlisted officer at the company level. The 1SG of a separate company or equivalent-level organization administers the unit's Noncommissioned Officer's Professional Development Program (Department of the Army, 2014a).

Women make up a little more than 6% of active-duty Army command sergeants major (Department of the Army, 2016). In 1959, enlisted women were authorized up to the grades of master sergeant/first sergeant (E-8) and SGM (E-9); both ranks have the equivalent authority of their male counterparts. In November 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Public Law 90-130, removing the restrictions on advanced military ranks for women. In March 1968, Yzetta Johnson was the first female appointed to the rank of CSM, at that time the highest enlisted rank in the Army (Villa, 2014).

United States Army Basic Training Program

Basic combat training is a part of the Army's IET Program. The Army's IET Program is a subset of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command's core function of initial military

training. The IET training program consists of BCT, one-station unit training, advanced individual training (AIT), and any other training required prior to an awarding of a military occupational specialty (Department of the Army, 2017e).

The U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command defines *BCT* as training in basic military subjects and fundamentals of basic combat skills common to all newly enlisted active Army and reserve component personnel without prior service (Department of the Army, 2017f). BCT is also the training course that transforms civilians (recruits or trainees) into soldiers. Typically, all enlisted recruits, both male and female, attend BCT.

The Army BCT Program has three goals: (a) convert civilians into soldiers by motivating the trainee volunteers, instilling discipline, and encouraging acceptance of the seven core Army Values—loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage; (b) ensure the trainees reach the required physical fitness standards; and (c) train them to the basic level standard on tasks to make them successful soldiers (Klimack & Kloeber, 2006).

The U.S. Army currently has four BCT locations: Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri; Fort Sill, Oklahoma; and Fort Benning, Georgia (Department of the Army, 2017a). Fort Jackson is by far the largest, training 50% of all new soldiers and 60% of all female soldiers (Department of the Army, 2017b; Klimack & Kloeber, 2006). The basic training staff is organized into battalions commanded by lieutenant colonels and command sergeants major, with 16 and 22 years of experience, respectively. Battalions are organized into companies commanded by captains and first sergeants, with about six and below 13 years of experience, respectively (Klimack & Kloeber, 2006).

The basic training program is the same for both male and female. In addition, basic training units are gender integrated, with both male and female soldiers; male and female train side by side in the same basic training battalions, companies, platoons, and squads. The U.S.

Army began its gender-integrated BCT Program in 1993 (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1997). A 1996 study of gender integration in the Army reported that women's performance improved in GIT units and men's performance did not decline (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1997). In fiscal year 1996, the Army trained all its female trainees and 49% of its male trainees in gender-integrated units; the male trainees who were not trained in gender-integrated units were assigned to combat arms specialist units, which were closed to female trainees at that time (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1997). In 2016, the U.S. Army opened all specialties, including combat arms, to women (Doan & Portillo, 2017). On May 19, 2017, Fort Benning, Georgia, one of the U.S. Army IET installations and the home of the infantry, graduated 18 female soldiers from the first gender-integrated infantry BCT course (Bennett, 2017). The infantry only recently opened its military occupational specialty to women (Vergon, 2016).

The U.S. Army BCT is a 10-week program. Over the course of 10 weeks, recruits learn basic tactical and survival skills along with how to shoot, rappel, and march. They also learn the basics of Army life and military customs, including the seven core Army Values—leadership, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage (Department of the Army, 2017f). Male and female trainees receive the same program of instruction and are mixed at the operational level of basic training. The only differences are they receive different medical examinations and hygiene classes, they are housed in separate facilities, and the physical fitness standards each gender must meet are different (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1997). The BCT 10-week course or program of instruction is taught in three phases, as shown in Table 1. Upon successful completion of BCT, soldiers are transitioned into the AIT of the IET program (Department of the Army, 2017a).

Table 1

The Three Phases of U.S. Army Basic Combat Training

Phase	Weeks	Category	Focus
Red	1–3	Character	Introduction to army profession and physical performance
White	4–5	Competence	Individual skills proficiency
Blue	6–9	Commitment	Battle drills and team performance

Note. Source: Department of the Army (2017f).

U.S. Army Leader Attributes and Competencies

Research demonstrates that people generally believe that men and women possess differing characteristics, and these characteristics are prescriptive. However, the Army's leadership manual, which defines the leader attributes and competencies that encompass characteristics expected of Army leaders, is not prescriptive in design. Army leaders afford the Army with a competitive advantage that cannot be replaced by technology nor substituted for with advanced weaponry and platforms. The Army has articulated expectations of its leaders, as shown in Figures 1 and 2, regardless of status—military or civilian, officer or enlisted, active duty or reserve.

The Army leadership requirements model aligns the desired outcome of leader development activities and personnel practices with a common set of characteristics valued throughout the Army. Attributes are defined as desired internal characteristics of a leader—in other words, what the Army wants leaders to be and know. Competencies are skills and learnable behaviors the Army expects leaders to acquire, demonstrate, and continue to enhance—meaning what the Army wants the leaders to do (Department of the Army, 2015b). In addition,

Army Leadership Attributes (Characteristics)					
Character	Army Values	Empathy	Warrior ethos	Service ethos	Discipline
Presence	Military bearing	Professional bearing	Fitness	Confidence	Resilience
Intellect	Mental agility	Judgment	Innovation	Interpersonal tact	Expertise

Figure 1. Army leadership requirements: Army leadership attributes (Department of the Army, 2015b).

Army Leadership Competencies (Skills)						
Leads	Leads others	Builds trust	Extends influence	Leads by example	Communicates	
Develops	Creates a positive environment	Prepares self	Develops others	Stewards the profession		
Achieves	Gets results	Integrates tasks, roles, resources, and priorities	Improves performance	Gives feedback	Executes	Adjusts

Figure 2. Army leadership requirements: Army leadership competencies (Department of the Army, 2015b).

the Army's leadership requirements model includes attributes and competencies that include

both agentic and communal characteristics. The characteristics expected of Army leaders are not

much different from those of Kouzes and Posner's study on characteristics of an admired leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2016).

Likewise, whether considering leaders' principles, traits, characteristics, or attributes they command, it is clear great leadership is important in both the public and private sector to achieve organizational success (Kouzes & Posner, 2016; Latham, 2013; Maxwell, 2011). In Dye and Garman's (2015) exceptional leadership model, competencies are about skill and behavior. These competencies shape a leader's interaction, performance, behavior, and decision making. Within their model are 16 competencies that are consistent to the Army's attributes and critical to success. Similarly, the federal government hires and assesses senior executives based on competencies. The Office of Personnel Management categorizes five executive core qualifications (ECQs) that define competencies necessary to shape the culture of its executives and are key for driving results and leading people (Office of Personnel Management, 2018). There are five ECQs: leading change, leading people, results-driven, business acumen, and building coalitions. Additionally, 28 competencies undergird the five ECQs and are foundational to an elite core of government employees. Those characteristics can be associated with various leadership theories that form the foundation for leadership.

Leadership Theories

The role of women in the military has changed drastically over time, especially in combat. Women are no longer limited to administrative and health care roles; they are now leading security missions and serving as air defense artillery missile operators and fighter pilots (Doan & Portillo, 2017; Pellerin, 2015; Tama, 2016; Walker, 2009). The leadership role of women in the military is pivotal because of the role of the woman in combat (Walker, 2009). Although most women in the military serve in support roles, the DoD (2013) reported that between the initiation of the conflict in the Middle East in 2001 and December 2011, 289,512

female military members deployed to combat zones in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other combat operations. This figure accounted for 11.8% of all service members deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan during that period. Women represented 172,542 of the U.S. Army's Active Regular Army, National Guard, and Army Reserve Components (DoD, 2013). In the U.S. Army alone, 86,254 of those women (49.9%) deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan during that time (Bensahel, Barno, Kidder, & Sayler, 2015; DoD, 2013).

In the early 1800s, *leadership* was used in writings about political influence and control of the British Parliament (Bass, 1990). Traditional leadership roles in organizations like the military have been largely shaped by men. Burns (1978) reviewed the historical foundation of leadership and concluded, "Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (p. 2).

Northouse (2010) defined leadership as a process that occurs in groups that entails influence and goal setting, "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). John Maxwell (2007) stated, "Leadership is influence. I think it's nothing more, I think it's nothing less. I think the person who has the most influence on people is the one people are going to follow" (p. 2).

The Army defines leadership as the process of influencing others by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization (Department of the Army, 2015b). In this section, I reviewed various leadership theories and styles used by leaders, regardless of gender—which are pertinent to the leadership concept followed by the military (Hussain & Hussain, 2015).

Great Man Theory

In the 18th and 19th centuries, philosophers suggested a theory of leadership that was termed the Great Man theory (Denmark, 1993). The theory suggested that people, specifically

men, were born great leaders. The great leader characteristics were inherited traits (Northouse, 2010), and the personal attributes of the great man "determined the course of history" (Denmark, 1993, p. 344). The great man was believed to have unique qualities that distinguished him from his followers (Bass, 1990). The Great Man theory, as it relates to the male gender, is no longer relevant as an explanation of leadership (Eagly, 2007).

Trait Theory

The trait theory is an extension of the Great Man theory of leadership. Trait theory surfaced early in the 20th century and stressed that leaders' characteristics are different from non-leader characteristics without assuming that leadership traits are acquired or inherited. The categories of the traits of a leader include charisma, intelligence, physical appearance, masculinity, self-confidence, and dominance (Northouse, 2010). Contrary to the trait theory, the Army is based on the tenet that leaders are developed (Department of the Army, 2015b). As noted earlier, the Army defines leadership as a process, and this process requires specific competencies for the leader to be effective. This means that leadership can be learned and developed through proper training and education (Fallesen, Keller-Glaze, & Curnow, 2011).

Contingency Theory

Contingency theory (Fiedler, 1978) suggests that leadership effectiveness is a function of the interaction between the leader and the leadership situation. In this theory, leaders can be characterized by the scores they achieve on the Least Preferred Co-Worker (LPC) Scale developed by Fiedler. The leader's score indicates whether he or she is task oriented or person oriented (Peters, Hartke, & Pohlmann, 1985). Fiedler (1971, 1978) classified leadership situations by three major dimensions:

- Leader-member relations: Leaders presumably have more power and influence if they have a good relationship with their members than if they have a poor relationship with them.

- Task structure: Tasks or assignments that are highly structured, spelled out, or programmed give the leader more influence than tasks that are vague, nebulous, and unstructured.

- Position power: Leaders will have more power and influence if their position is vested with such authority as being able to hire and fire, discipline, and reprimand.

Contingency theory seems to be more practiced by military organizations than by the business sector (Fiedler, 1978).

Transformational Leadership

The transformational leadership model was first developed by James McGregor Burns (1978). Burns defined transformational leadership as an enduring relationship beyond exchanges and agreements that occurs when individuals engage with each other in such a way that the leader and follower raise one another to higher levels of motivations and morality (as cited in McKnight, 2013). The transformational leader gives great value to satisfying basic needs and meeting higher desires through inspiring followers to provide newer solutions and create a better workplace (Chandrashekhar, 2002; Jue, 2004; Marturano & Gosling, 2008; McKnight, 2013). Bass (1985) uncovered four dimensions of transformational leadership models: (a) idealized influence aims to develop a shared vision and improve relationships with followers (Ghasabeh, Soosay, & Reaiche, 2015); (b) individualized consideration identifies employees' individual needs and empowers followers to foster a learning climate and mobilize their support toward goals; (c) intellectual stimulation encourages knowledge sharing to generate more innovative

ideas and solutions; and (d) inspirational motivation focuses on inspiring followers, thereby setting higher levels of expectations for them.

Judge and Piccolo (2004) examined 87 studies in a meta-analysis and found that leaders who scored higher on the four transformational behaviors were rated as more effective by their followers. These analyses indicated that transformational leadership consistently led to positive organizational outcomes (Barbuto & Gifford, 2010). Transformational leaders are characterized as being motivating and inspiring. The transformational leader is attentive to and intellectually challenges his or her followers (Gipson et al., 2017). Transformational leadership used to be the desired leadership style for organizational change (Holten & Brenner, 2015).

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership is the exchange between leader and follower to meet self-interest (Bass, 1997). On a continuum, transactional leadership is often viewed as being in opposition to transformation leadership. In transactional leadership, the leadership theory undergirding an organization is driven by the style of leadership that enables organizational success. Unlike transformational leadership, transactional leadership centers on the role of the leader and organization (Saravo, Netzel, & Kiesewetter, 2017). It works within the limits of the organization while transformational leadership transcends the organization (Bass, 1997). Transactional leadership includes two dimensions: contingent reward and active management (Cuadrado, Garcia-Ael, & Molero, 2015). Leaders drive obedience and discipline by way of punishment and rewards, and the style is often hierarchy focused (Bass, 1985). Bass (1990) stated that the best of leadership comes from not just a transformational leadership style or a transactional leadership style but from both styles; one is not better than the other. Leaders must know when transactional leadership is necessary to meet mission requirements and when transformational leadership is necessary to achieve results from their subordinates.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership was first articulated by Greenleaf (1977). It is defined as a leadership style that emphasizes the leader's responsibility to the success of the organization as well as his or her moral responsibility to subordinates, customers, and stakeholders (Peterson, Galvin, & Lange, 2012). Servant leadership is composed of seven dimensions: acting ethically, showing sensitivity to others' personal concern, putting subordinates first, helping subordinates grow and succeed, empowering others, creating value for the community, and having conceptual skills and knowledge of the organization and tasks at hand necessary to effectively support and assist followers (Linden, Wayne, Zhoa, & Henderson, 2008). Servant leadership has been noted to have commonalities with transformational leadership; however, there are two distinct differences: (a) Servant leaders acknowledge their responsibilities to the personal development of followers, and (b) they acknowledge their responsibilities to a wider range of organizational stakeholders, not just their responsibility to the organization. Unlike transformational leadership, servant leadership encourages moral reasoning (Graham, 1991). Researchers suggested that CEOs may potentially improve their firms' performance through inclusive forms of leadership, such as servant leadership. Servant leadership may be effective at improving performance by motivating and empowering knowledge workers to reach their full potential (Peterson et al., 2012). In a study examining communal leadership, findings suggest that expectations for servant leader behavior were greater for the female than male leader, and expectations for authoritarian behavior were greater for the male than female leader (Hogue, 2015). However, in a study by Mignonne-Sims and Morris (2018), Ken Rhodes, an organizational consultant, suggested, "Servant leadership is gender neutral because true leadership is gender blind" (p. 3).

Situational Leadership

Situational leadership was first introduced as the life cycle of leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Situational leadership theory, developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1969), suggests that instead of using just one leadership style, successful leaders should change their leadership style based on the maturity of the people they are leading and the details of the task (Blanchard, Drea, & Robert, 1993). The theory has continued to evolve over the years based on work by scholars such as Blanchard, who identified four leadership styles and the corresponding development levels of subordinates (as cited in Northouse, 2010). Blanchard's model is referred to as the situational leadership II model. The model postulates that the leader aligns the style of leadership with the ability of the subordinate. The four leadership styles and development levels of subordinates are the following (as cited in Northouse, 2010): (a) direct—high directive and low supportive behavior; (b) coaching—high directive and high supportive behavior; (c) supportive—high supportive and low directive behavior; and (d) delegating—low supportive and low directive behavior (Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Zigarmi, 1985, 2013).

Society has a general perception based on a history of social norms that leadership is something men possess or can innately do, which is different from the perception held about women (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). The examined literature regarding theories and leadership styles suggest gender is not what makes an effective leader; instead, the literature suggests that what makes effective leaders are individuals, regardless of gender, who have the qualities and the opportunity to showcase themselves as a leader (Sahin, Gurbuz, & Sesen, 2017). Women have made significant progress, as exhibited by female CEOs and the first female obtaining the rank of four-star general (Frye & Pham, 2018; Gibson, 2016), but a long road is still ahead. The next section of this review includes a close examination of the barriers that create a leadership void

for women and examine the potential for organizational leaders to fill senior leadership positions based on demonstrated competence as opposed to gender.

Barriers for Women

A study conducted by Lane-Washington and Wilson-Jones (2010) found that women experienced challenges and barriers while aspiring, seeking, and serving in senior leadership positions in the American public school system. Women in the military have experienced similar challenges, as indicated by a quote from the Commandant of the Marine Corps, who stated, "When you get right down to it, you've got to protect the manliness of war" (as cited in Enloe, 1983, p. 153). Since the Spanish-American War, over 700,000 women have served in American wars and/or conflicts (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2011). Despite these numbers, Hajjar (2010) reported that there is still a problem in the military regarding treatment of women soldiers. He found that acceptance of women in the military is one of the main issues that needs to be focused on and stated, "The military is still struggling to accept women as equals, which may stem from the military and its members having a very traditional view of gender" (p. 255). In 2015, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Analysis Center published its Gender Integration Study. Results indicated that the Army should proceed with the integration of women into previously closed jobs and units, such as the infantry. However, the study did indicate that barriers much be addressed, such as inconsistent enforcement of existing standards and perceptions of double standards; incidents of unprofessional behavior and indiscipline; fear of sexual harassment and assault; cultural stereotypes; and ignorance of current Army policy (Troubaugh, 2018).

Although women have played increasingly important and expanded roles in both the enlisted and officer ranks (Herek, 1993), barriers remain, especially in terms of attaining top leadership positions (Ellmers, 2014; Hosek et al., 2001). The Duncan Hunter National Defense

Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 established the Military Leadership Diversity

Commission. The commission was directed to conduct a study and file a report regarding

diversity issues in the armed forces with attention to the "establishment and maintenance of fair

promotion and command opportunities for ethnic- and gender-specific members of the Armed

Forces at the 0-5 grade level and above" (Kamarck, 2015, p. 10). One of the commission's

recommendations relevant to the issue of combat was that the Secretary of Defense must ensure

that an annual assessment of all qualified candidates (including racial/ethnic minorities and

women) has been considered for nomination of every three- and four-star position. If there are

no qualified candidates, then a statement of explanation should be made in the package

submitted to the Senate for confirmation hearings. This recommendation was a result of the

commission's findings that the combat exclusion policy limits women's opportunities to attain

the highest ranks in the military. The chair of the commission, Retired Air Force General Lester

L. Lyles, stated, "We know that [the exclusion] hinders women from promotion. . . . They're not

getting credit for being in combat arms, [and] that's important for their considerations for the

most senior flag ranks" (as cited in Kamarck, 2015, p. 11).

Legislative Barriers

Until recently, women were restricted by law and policy from serving in certain military

occupational specialties and units below brigade level, where the primary mission was to engage

in combat. The policy barred women from serving in infantry, artillery, armor, combat engineer,

and special operation units of battalion size or smaller (Kamarck, 2015). In 2013, the Secretary

of Defense rescinded the rule that restricted women from serving in combat units and directed all

departments of the military (Department of the Army, Department of the Air Force, Department

of the Navy, and the Marine Corps) to review their occupational standards and assignment

policies by January 1, 2016. In part because of the high performance of women in combat

situations during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Joint Chiefs of Staff unanimously recommended lifting the combat exclusion policy (Bensahel et al., 2015). In December 2015, the newly appointed Secretary of Defense ordered the military to open all combat jobs to women with no exceptions (Orrick, 2016; Pellerin, 2015).

Glass Ceiling

Women comprise a significant percentage of the nation's workforce and middle management (Baker & Cangemi, 2016). Northouse (2015) stated, "Women are earning the majority of bachelor's degrees; however, they are underrepresented in government and almost every professional sector in society" (p. 1). Women comprise 51% of management and professional positions. They make up 47% of the U.S. labor force and earn 57% of all bachelor's degrees and 60% of all master's degrees. However, women only account for 19% of the U.S. Congress, 17% of Fortune 500 board seats, and only 5% of CEOs in Fortune 500 companies (Frye & Pham, 2018; Northouse, 2015). For decades, the glass ceiling has been a focal point for researchers, and the phenomenon still draws much attention (Cook & Glass, 2015; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009; Jackson, O'Callaghan, & Adseria, 2014). The term *glass ceiling*, introduced in 1984, is one of the most common terms used to describe inequalities between men and women in the workplace (Gamble & Turner, 2015). A glass ceiling suggests that although women are able to get through the front doors of management in organizations, at some point they hit an invisible barrier that blocks them from any further upward movement (Baxter & Wright, 2000).

Even though women have made advancements up the leadership ladder to key positions, more than 30 years have lapsed without significantly moving the needle in nearly all sectors: private, military, government, and academia (Baker, 2014). The lack of progress is often considered flagrant discrimination, yet there is little progress in pushing through and breaking down the barriers that remain intractable. Baker (2014) suggested that the debate of differences

between the leadership style of men and women is not the root of the debate; rather, it is about diminishing the biased and negative perceptions held by society. Organizations must focus on diversification of their leadership team and value the varied attributes that each gender has in order to help the organization succeed.

Baker and Cangemi (2016) offered similar views; shattering the glass ceiling requires leaders in the decision-making chair understanding and actively working to make a difference in the composition of their corporate structure. Making changes to the practices embraced in the day-to-day operation of an organization are within the scope of the organization's leaders and generally require deliberate adjustment to policy and training to ensure that the pipeline to senior positions consists proportionally of men and women. Likewise, policies must exist to leverage diversity and promotion practices to force thoughtful consideration of the action to select a senior leader. Unfortunately, the area also requiring change is the DNA of the organization—the culture. According to Schein (2016), culture is the norm of an organization shared by its members, and changing culture simply takes time. Culture drives conduct and behavior; therefore, organizations should make gender diversification part of the strategic conversation to reinforce growth, opportunity, and the strengths of all those who can benefit the organization.

Haring (2013) noted that in the top five military ranks, including 06s, women comprise only 6.73% of general officers. Access to leadership positions is directly linked to combat specialties (Haring, 2013). The underrepresentation of women in the general officer ranks mirrors the underrepresentation in other areas of governments (Cook & Glass, 2015; Jackson et al., 2014; Sandgren, 2014) and indicates the possibility that a glass ceiling phenomenon may exist in the U.S. Army, because 80% of general officers come from combat specialties. These positions, until recently, excluded women (Haring, 2013; Tama, 2016).

There is also an underrepresentation of women in the U.S. Army's most senior enlisted ranks. The Army's senior enlisted ranks of master sergeant (promotables), SGM, CSM, and SMA are only 8.3% female (Department of the Army, 2016). Women represent a little more than 13% of the Army's active-duty enlisted personnel (DoD, 2014). For this study, the ranks of master sergeant, CSM, and SMA are identified as senior enlisted ranks. Since 1994, when BCT became gender integrated, women drill sergeants have trained both male and female soldiers (U.S. Army, 2014). The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command requires a minimum of one female drill sergeant per platoon, except in gender-pure environments (Department of the Army, 2013). There is no mandatory ratio requirement for female 1SGs and CSMs per battalion or brigade; however, the Army reported that women account for only 10% of the 1SG positions and 4% of the CSM positions in BCT units (Department of the Army, 2017d).

Barriers Related to Physical Differences

The physical ability of women in the Army has been an ongoing issue in the Army's BCT and non-training environments (Chapman, 2008; Cohn, 2000). Male military personnel have complained about Army physical fitness training standards for some time, questioning, for example, "How can she claim equal rights when she doesn't have to do as many push-ups as I do?" or "How can she claim to be my equal when she can't run as fast?" (Cohn, 2000, p. 1). In 1982, mixed-gender basic training programs were abandoned (U.S. Army Women's Museum, n.d.). Although neither the Army nor Training and Doctrine Command leadership ever announced the reason for the abandonment, the informal explanation was that men were not being physically challenged enough in mixed-gender training (Chapman, 2008). In 1993, however, the Army reinstated integrated basic training (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1997).

BCT requires trainees to complete physically exerting milestones to graduate. These milestones include obstacle courses, weapons qualifications' ranges, physical fitness tests, and

four road marches, including the completion of a 16-kilometer road march in less than 6 hours (U.S. Army, 2015). Whether through assumed leader roles or assigned responsibilities, Army leaders are expected to lead by example (Department of the Army, 2002, 2015b). An Army drill sergeant in a combat training unit was quoted as making the following statement:

> We don't need leaders who stay warm on cold days . . . while their men freeze on the grenade ranges. If they get cold, the leader ought to get just as cold. And when he marches back to the barracks with them after that kind of day, they know he is one of them. (Department of the Army, 2002, pp. 2–4)

It was believed that returning to single-sex training would toughen the men and enhance the *soldierization* process (Chapman, 2008). Recent Army gender-integrated survey results indicated that women were viewed as weaker than men were because the current physical fitness test standard is so low for women (Troubaugh, 2018). The standard differences noted serve as the basis for institutional bias (Troubaugh, 2018). In addition, as physical fitness relates to the recent integration of women into combat jobs and units, recent research indicates that many men feel standards will be lowered to accommodate women (Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, 2013).

Family Obligations

When a woman joins the workforce, the challenges she faces in maintaining both the home and a career come into focus (Dindoffer, Reid, & Freed, 2011). In 2008, almost 60% of women worked outside of the home (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). A longitudinal study conducted by Morris (1998) that followed Harvard 1973 MBA graduates found that women felt torn between family roles and responsibilities and the demands of climbing the corporate ladder. Managing both a family and career can be more stressful for military

members. Groysberg and Abrahams (2014) suggested that women executives have difficulty

meeting expectations when they have to balance motherhood and work.

Unlike most civilian organizations, the military requires its members to be available for

extended duty hours, training exercises, and worldwide deployments. These requirements can be

especially stressful on the military's single parents and dual-service parents who are required to

have a plan for their dependents should they be deployed. Though personnel managers consider

requests from dual-service parents and try to keep families together, the military's staffing needs

take precedence (Clever & Segal, 2013). Pregnancy and maternity leave policies make it

difficult for women to balance the physical demands of both their career and childbirth.

Bensahel et al. (2015) found that female soldiers stated that pregnant women "aren't seen as real

soldiers" or are seen as a "burden and a liability to their unit" because of duty limitations (p. 15).

Others reported being told early in their careers, "If you want to be successful, you shouldn't

have kids" (p. 15). Offer (2014) suggested that women's roles at home and work are their

principal difficulties in the workplace because family stress and parental duties lead to high

family conflict and interfere with work life. Additional research is needed on understanding

military-related situations (Wechsler Segal et al., 2016).

Gender Stereotypes

In an analysis of 61 empirical studies, Eagly, Makhijani, and Klonsky (1992) found that

women leaders were likely to be devalued to a greater extent when they held leadership positions

in male-dominated areas or fields and when they exhibited stereotypically masculine style

leadership, such as autocratic or directive styles or agentic behavior. Recent studies support

Eagly et al.'s analysis. Research has found that when women engage in agentic behavior, they

often receive backlash because they are seen as insufficiently communal (Brescoll, 2016). The

Army is perceived as a male organization (Matthews et al., 2009). Women were originally

accepted in the military to fill health care and administrative roles only, and even though in the 1970s several laws that distinguished between individuals based on gender were invalidated, the military continued to use statutes and military policy supporting female exclusion based on gender (Rollins, 2012). Women were also historically excluded from Selective Service registration because they were ineligible for combat positions (*Rostker v. Goldberg*, 1981). It is only recently that the DoD has opened all combat roles to women (Rosenberg & Philipps, 2015). On December 3, 2015, Defense Secretary Ashton Carter ordered all branches of the military to open all combat jobs to women with no exceptions (Kamarck, 2015).

Despite the increased presence of women in military leadership positions, there is evidence that social attitudes toward women serving in leader roles continue to reflect historical biases and stereotypes that may hinder their performance (Matthews et al., 2009). For example, research findings indicate that although the military is seen as a male-dominant organization, there is less approval from women than from men regarding women serving in combat roles (Matthews et al., 2009). In addition, Kurpius and Lucart (2000) examined the role of civilian and military college environments on gender role attitudes and authoritarianism. The researchers compared the Naval Academy and Air Force Academy cadets with students from civilian colleges enrolled in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) training and non-ROTC students, and they reported that the military students had the most traditional authoritarian beliefs and gender role attitudes. Although there were no large gaps among graduating seniors, the military academies, ROTC, and Duke University military students, particularly those from the academies, were more likely to perceive that the presence of women would be detrimental to combat effectiveness (Snider, Priest, & Lewis, 2001).

Opportunities for Women

While the previous section described many of the barriers women face, it would be shortsighted not to recognize that much advancement has occurred over several decades (Glass & Cook, 2015). Despite the aforementioned barriers, studies in business show strong connections between organizational performance, profitability, and women in senior leadership positions (Hurn, 2013; Johns, 2013). For example, the number of female directors at Fortune 500 companies has increased noticeably in the past decade to around 20% (Sawyer, 2017). The percentage of female principals increased in public schools between 1987 and 2012 from 25% to 52% (Hill, Ottem, & DeRoche, 2016).

Most recently, the 2016 presidential election produced the first woman to receive the Democratic nomination for president. This was indeed a historic moment, and Hilary Clinton, powerfully noted, "Happy for grandmothers and little girls and everyone in between. Happy for boys and men, too, because when any barrier falls in America, for anyone, it clears the way for everyone. When there are no ceilings, the sky's the limit" (as cited in Keneally, Kreutz, & Haskel, 2016, p. 1). As corporations continue to seek increased profits and an expanded customer base, women are the cornerstone to this success, and companies are promoting women's development and inclusiveness in the workplace in greater numbers (Ngunjiri & Madsen, 2015; Orbach, 2017).

The U.S. military, a longstanding institution that shielded certain professions from women, has started opening certain jobs to women. In 2016, the Army opened armor, infantry, and observer specialties to women. Combat arms includes personnel who are directly involved in tactical ground combat, making this evolution historic because men and women are viewed and treated equally. In fact, since 2001, women have deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq in mass numbers and have accomplished heroic feats (Vergon, 2016).

Summary

As previously stated, even though there has been an increase in women in leadership positions, women remain underrepresented in senior and key leadership positions in government, Fortune 500 companies, education, and the military (Beck et al., 2016; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014; Seo et al., 2017). Studies of women leaders in the military have been conducted; however, limited studies exist on the experiences of women who have served in leadership positions to examine how the opportunities and barriers may affect the representation of women in leadership positions (Cho et al., 2016; Epps, 2008; Fitzsimmons Callan, & Paulsen, 2014; Glass & Cook, 2016). While research exists that indicates women leaders are evaluated more negatively than their male counterparts regardless of their style of leadership (Cohn, 2000; Denmark, 1993), there is also research that compliments the leadership style of women as a preferred style of leadership (Hernandez Bark et al., 2016).

A review of the literature indicated that barriers prevent women from attaining top leadership positions in both the civilian (public and private) and military sector (Chapman, 2008; Cohn, 2000; Kurpius & Luchart, 2000; Matthews et al., 2009; Snider et al., 2001; Wedgeworth, 2018). Research suggests that women in higher education have had to prove themselves in the male-dominated education field to be recognized as leaders (BlackChen, 2015). Just as only a small percentage of women advance into superintendent positions in education, only a small percentage of women advance to senior officer and senior enlisted ranks in the military (Blount, 1998; Brunner, 1999; DoD, 2013; Grogan, 1996; Skrla et al., 2000), which supports the notion of a glass ceiling (Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010).

The review of the literature also found that most studies conducted on women in leadership positions in education are limited to traditional educational environments (Kowalski et al., 2010; Lane-Washington & Wilson-Jones, 2010). Although there are a few studies on

female officers in leadership positions in the military and there are studies on females in the military in general, this researcher was unable to find any studies on women in senior enlisted leader positions in the military's BCT environment (Dill, 2014; Vealey, 2014).

Due to the military's decision to open about 220,000 military positions and the expected increase in the military's female population, the need for women trainers increases (Rosenberg & Philipps, 2015). Thus, there is a significant need for further research to determine if barriers result in preventing or deterring female enlisted leaders from seeking or being selected for the senior enlisted positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment and to discern how the relevancy of the social role theory and role congruity theory sheds light on this phenomenon.

The findings of this literature review support the theories on which this study is framed, the role contingency theory of prejudice toward female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and the social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 1988). Because of the limited number of studies on this phenomenon, this study will add value to the current body of research, increase the awareness of attributes supportive of leadership success, and provide knowledge of the talents of females in the military and in education's nontraditional environments that may be overlooked because of inherent social biases.

The entry of women into combat positions is clearly a success and should increase the leadership opportunities of women based on the historical rise in leadership positions derived from the pipeline of combat exposure (Haring, 2013; Troubaugh, 2018). Striving for greater gender parity can influence change and create a workforce that surpasses earlier models because the newer model embraces change and the value change brings, thus making it more competitive (Stainback et al., 2016). It is obvious steps have been taken to increase the opportunities available to women, and over the years, with continued research emphasizing the importance of equal opportunities, women will continue to make big steps to change the trajectory of this

phenomenon of the women's role; however, the review of the literature indicates that scant research has delved into factors that may cause the underrepresentation of women in the U.S. Army's military. More specifically, more research is needed in the representation of senior enlisted females in the senior enlisted roles of 1SG and CSM in the U.S. Army's BCT environment. Exploring the experiences of success stories of women who have obtained senior positions in the military might shed light on the underrepresentation of women in senior leader positions in the military. Moustakas (1994) suggested that exploring what the experiences mean is significant to a study. The next chapter contains a description of the methods that were used to conduct this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This chapter contains a detailed description of the research design, research questions, setting/site, participants, procedures, researcher's role, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations of this study. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore and understand retired female senior enlisted leaders' experiences while assigned to leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in IET to ascertain if their experiences shed light on the underrepresentation of female 1SGs and CSMs in the BCT environment. For this study, the experiences of the retired female 1SG and CSMs included factors that led to their success in the IET environment as well as challenges and barriers they may have faced.

Design

This qualitative phenomenological study investigated the perspectives of retired female senior leaders' understanding of factors that led to their success as 1SGs and CSMs in the IET environment, as well as the challenges and barriers they may have faced while assigned to these leadership positions. The study also explored how these successes, barriers, and challenges may relate to the underrepresentation of females being assigned to these positions. The purpose of a phenomenological study is to investigate the meaning of the lived experience of people to identify the core essence of human experience or phenomena as described by the research participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). A transcendental phenomenological study was used because it describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experience of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The transcendental phenomenological philosophy or method was used rather than the hermeneutic approach because the transcendental method focuses on a pure description of the phenomenon rather than on a close reading of the text so that

the meaning behind appearances are understood, which is what a hermeneutic approach requires (Rockinson-Szapkiw & Spaulding, 2014).

I also selected the transcendental method because it focuses more on the participants' experiences described in their own accounts rather than on my interpretation of their accounts. In addition, the transcendental approach was selected because of Husserl's concept of *epoché*, or *bracketing* (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché is a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Thus, by selecting the transcendental phenomenological approach, I was able to refrain from judgment and from viewing events in the ordinary way they are perceived (Moustakas, 1994). I am an Army veteran who has served in the basic combat training environment; therefore, it is important that I set aside my own military experiences. This approach allowed me to set aside prejudgment as much as possible by upholding awareness and practicing reflexivity over personal conjectures and views that could influence the research progression. The transcendental phenomenological method is the most appropriate approach for this study because it allowed me to perceive the experiences freshly, as if it were my first encounter with the phenomena.

Research Questions

Four research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What factors contributed to female senior noncommissioned officers' success in the leader positions of 1SG or CSM in the IET environment?

RQ2: What are the challenges or barriers experienced by females serving in the leadership positions of 1SG or CSM in a U.S. Army BCT unit?

RQ3: What leadership attributes do participants identify as necessary to be successful in a BCT unit?

RQ4: What challenges and barriers, if any, exist that prevent senior enlisted females from attaining senior leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment?

Setting

I selected the U.S. Army's IET environment as the site for this qualitative study. The IET environment consists of multiple installations. The installations selected for this study were Fort Alpha, Fort Bravo, Fort Charlie, and Fort Delta. The IET environment was selected as a setting in which to examine this phenomenon because BCT is conducted at these installations. Trainees are assigned to brigades, battalions, and companies to complete BCT. For example, Fort Alpha has two BCT brigades. Each BCT brigade consists of five basic combat training battalions. There are five 1SG positions and one CSM position in each battalion (U.S. Army, 2016). These installations have also been selected because the participants served as a 1SG or CSM at one of these sites. Last, Forts Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta were selected because these training installations conduct basic combat GIT. GIT is training in which male and female trainees are trained within the same unit down to squad level (Lieberman, Karl, McClung, Williams, & Cable, 2016).

The data collection for the study took place at participants' homes, other places of preference, or via video conferencing, such as Skype or webinar, based on what was most convenient for the participants. Furthermore, the location allowed each participant to speak freely in a private setting. By doing this, I hoped to promote comfort and put the participant at ease during the data collection process.

Participants

The purposeful sampling method was used to select the participants. Purposeful sampling is a strategy employed by researchers to select a target group to find rich information about a particular subject (Palinkas et al., 2015). I selected these participants based on the high

probability they would be able to provide their experience as it related to the research problem and central phenomenon that is the focus of this study, as suggested by Creswell (2013).

The purposeful sampling method was appropriate for this design because the participants would be especially knowledgeable about the experience and would have lived the experience of serving in a leadership position as a 1SG or CSM in an IET environment located at Fort Alpha, Fort Bravo, Fort Charlie, or Fort Delta. The participants were retired Army senior enlisted leaders who retired from the Army in the last 10 years and served as a 1SG or CSM in the IET environment at Fort Alpha, Fort Bravo, Fort Charlie, or Fort Delta.

I identified a few participants who easily met the criteria established in the study, as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Next, I contacted former colleagues who served as 1SG or CSM in the IET. I also used social media groups to identify retired females who had the lived experience of service as a 1SG or CSM in the Army's IET environment. Finally, I used snowballing to locate participants. As Patton (2015) noted, "By asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases" (p. 298). When I had exhausted my own efforts to identify prospective participants, I contacted other U.S. Army Veterans (former colleagues and current associates) for assistance. These veterans provided me with names and email addresses of potential participants.

Interview Participants

I identified 13 retired females who served as a 1SG or CSM in an Army IET environment. Ten of the 13 meet the participant criteria. I sent an email to the participants requesting their participation in a study (see Appendix A). If they were interested in partaking, I made known the purpose and implication of the study, and the ensuing steps that would follow. I then requested a follow-up interview with the respondents. My intent was to control the setting by suggesting that the interviews take place in person.

Prior to collecting any data, I obtained institutional review board (IRB) approval (see Appendix B) and gained consent (see Appendix C) from each participant. The informed consent contained the following elements: (a) the right of the participant to withdraw voluntarily from the study at any time, (b) the central purpose of the study, (c) the protection of confidentiality of the participants, (d) the known risks that may be associated with the study, (e) the benefits that participants can expect, and (f) the signatures of the participants and researcher (Creswell, 2013).

A researcher-developed participant intake screening tool (see Appendix D) was sent to the 10 participants who agreed to participate via email to gather their personal information. The focus of the screening tool was to identify preliminary information about the individual. The tool was used to gather demographic information that described who the participants were and provided information about their history and other personal information. This step allowed more time to be devoted to the interview questions.

Focus Group Participants

I also used a focus group as a data collection method for this study. A focus group is an interview conducted on a topic with a group of people who have knowledge of the topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data collection from the focus group took place via video conferencing. The focus group was comprised of five participants who previously participated in the interviews. All individual participants were invited to participate in the focus group in the original recruitment email, however, because of previously scheduled events, only five were able to be a part of the group. During the focus group, participants had the opportunity to share their views on the topic, hear others' views, and perhaps refine their own views based on what they have heard or learned from the other participants (Hennick, 2014).

Because the participants could have possibly served at different IET installations, participants in the focus group had the ability to query each other and explain themselves to each

other while listening to one another's experiences. Morgan and Krueger (1993) emphasized that such interaction offers valuable data on the extent of consensus and diversity among the participants. Participants were briefed on anonymity before, during, and after the focus group session. I did not disclose identifiable information about the participants, and the respondents remained anonymous.

Procedures

The procedures in this study followed Liberty University's requirements and guidelines. Prior to proceeding with this phenomenological study, I submitted the research proposal for IRB approval. Studies and information available to the public did not require permission. Once approved, I conducted purposeful sampling to recruit participants for the study. I canvassed former colleagues to identify participants who met the criteria for the study. I used the snowball recruitment method to identify and recruit research participants. Once I had exhausted my own efforts to identify prospective participants. I contacted other U.S. Army Veterans (former colleagues and current friends) for assistance. Wilkerson, Shenk, Grey, Rosser, and Noor (2015) recommended that researchers combine online and offline snowball recruiting methods. After the participants were selected, I requested consent from each woman to participate in the study. I receive signed consent for each participant in the study, as suggested by Creswell (2013). After consent had been gathered, I began the process of gathering the data through a participant screening intake tool, individual interviews, and the focus group, and my research journal.

Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants. The data were collected and recorded by audiotapes. A professional transcriber was used to transcribe the interviews. Participants were given the opportunity to review their transcript in order to ensure that the information was accurate. No participants asked for revisions. I reduced bias in the data collection and analysis procedure using bracketing (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and member

checking (Creswell, 2013). I used an audit trail to establish dependability that allowed future researchers to replicate the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The Researcher's Role

The researcher is considered an instrument (Creswell, 2013); however, my motivation to explore this particular phenomenon is because of my personal experience as a leader in the Army, specifically my experience during my tenure in the BCT environment. Female senior enlisted leaders serving in 1SG and CSM (master trainer) positions are rare. I am a retired U.S. Army CSM (E-9) with 27 years of active-duty service. I served over 7 years in the BCT environment. I served in the position of drill sergeant (instructor) in the BCT environment and as a drill sergeant leader (an instructor for training personnel to become drill sergeants) at one of the U.S. Army Drill Sergeant schools. I also served as a member of the Drill Sergeant School Proponent Office, which is responsible for the curriculum, instruction, regulatory guidance, and accreditations for the U.S. Army Drill Sergeant schools.

Last, I served in a senior enlisted role as a 1SG in a BCT unit. During my tenure as a 1SG in the BCT environment, there was one female CSM, and I was the only female out of 20 1SGs in my brigade. I was also stationed (assigned) to the largest BCT installation while assigned as both a drill sergeant and 1SG. Because of my experience in the roles of drill sergeant and 1SG and my assignment to a BCT installation, it was necessary to bracket my experience in those roles. I tried to be cognizant of any biases, perceived notions, shaping, or approach to the study. I used bracketing by reflexive journaling to ensure that my experiences were set aside and that the study research process was rooted solely on the topic and questions (Moustakas, 1994). The maintenance of a journal can ensure the researcher maintains and instinctively logs any preconceptions (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

Subsequently, I was deliberate in verifying and handling bias that may arise while interpreting the results. These methods consist of perceptively assessing undesirable or favorable information; scrutinizing and rechecking the data; bracketing assumptions, ideals, and beliefs; and assessing the resulting data (Moustakas, 1994). The importance of managing and controlling researcher biases is imperative because it directly affects the creditability of the study. Thus, researchers must eliminate any biases to achieve understanding and awareness as it relates to the uniquely lived experiences of those who participate in the study.

Data Collection

Upon receipt of IRB approval to conduct research, data for this phenomenological study were collected using three instruments. To uphold credibility in qualitative research, Creswell (2013) and Isaac and Michael (1997) suggested implementing triangulation by using several sources to obtain a different perspective of the same data. *Triangulation* is defined as "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (Denzin, 1978, p. 291). Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) suggested that the use of multiple methods of data collection to achieve triangulation is important to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. To triangulate and ensure trustworthy interpretation of the data, I used multiple means of data collection: (a) my research journal used to reflect upon the data as it was collected, (b) individual interviews, and (c) a focus group.

It is important to note the importance of sequencing. Whenever using two or more measures for data collection, researchers must carefully consider and document the order in which data are collected because researchers suggest that data collection order affects both validation and replication of research data (Deshefy-Longhi, Sullivan-Bolyai, & Dixon, 2009; Morse, 2005). Each of these data collection methods provided information about the

phenomenon as it pertained to each participant's lived experiences. I collected the data in the following order: research journal, individual interviews, and focus group.

The journal was the first data collection strategy used to gather information. I began with the journal to capture information from the intake tool. In addition, the journal captured my reflections during the individual interviews and focus group. Because I have experience with the phenomenon, I wrote of any personal opinions or biases during the research process. The individual interviews followed the beginning of the journal data collection strategy.

I sequenced the individual interviews after I began my journaling to ensure that I captured any information that may affect a participant's responses to the interview questions or my personal biases or opinions prior to beginning the individual interviews. I conducted the interviews before the focus group to give me the opportunity to gain the trust of the participants and to allow the participants to recognize the depth of my interest in the research phenomenon.

Concluding the data collection strategy with focus group interviews gave me the opportunity to explore the views, experiences, and beliefs of the participants as a group (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). Focus groups also allow a permissive atmosphere to discuss the phenomenon. Hennick (2014) explained, "During the group discussion participants share their views, hears the views of others, and perhaps refine their own views in light of what they have heard" (pp. 2–3). Finally, the focus group gave a more complete and revealing understanding of the phenomenon and refined the participants' own views. Culminating the data collection with the focus group tied together all pieces of data collection and provided me with an opportunity to clarify any data that might have been unclear.

Document Analysis

As Creswell (2013) suggested, for a data collection method, I kept a journal during the study to keep track of my thoughts pertaining to the study. Keeping a journal contributes to what

Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to as an *audit trail*. Because I have experience with the phenomenon, this data collection strategy was significant because it served as a reflective stance that recorded my experiences. Conducting this audit trail prevented personal biases from contaminating the research because it allowed me to write down my speculations, hunches, questions, and opinions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This data collection strategy addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: What factors contributed to female senior noncommissioned officers' success in the leader positions of 1SG or CSM in the IET environment?

RQ2: What are the challenges or barriers experienced by females serving in the leadership positions of 1SG or CSM in a U.S. Army BCT unit?

RQ3: What leadership attributes do participants identify as necessary to be successful in a BCT unit?

RQ4: What challenges and barriers, if any, exist that prevent senior enlisted females from attaining senior leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment?

Individual Interviews

Next, I conducted individual interviews with the participants. Interviewing is one of the most commonly used methods in qualitative studies (Berg, 1998, Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Kvale, 1996). As described by Moustakas (1994), I used informal, interactive, semistructured, open-ended questions in the interview (see Appendix E). Crowley and Sandhoff (2017) also used this data collection method to study the lived experiences of U.S. Army women combat veterans to ascertain their experiences in the context of the masculine culture of the military.

Less structured questions allow the participant to answer questions in a more exclusive way. Semistructured interviews are more focused and designed to gather information on a specific topic (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Semistructured questions are more flexible. The

questions are designed to gather specific information from the participants; however, neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined in advance (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This gives the researcher and participant more flexibility during the interview process. Bonnes (2017) used the semistructured questioning strategy to allow participants to raise issues they deemed important. The flexibility of the semistructured interview makes it the preferred and primary data collection for this phenomenological study.

The individual interview questions related to the purpose of the study and the research questions. Individual interviews were scheduled at a convenient time for the participants. I offered participants setting options to conduct the interviews. One option was face-to-face in a public location that offered privacy, such as a library with private rooms. The participants also had the option of interviewing via telephone or using an Internet medium such as Skype, FaceTime, or videoconference. Internet interview methods of communication are becoming more important because they expand researchers' options (Aborisade, 2013; Lo Iacano, Symonds, & Brown, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interviews took approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed by a professional transcriptionist (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). I also took notes that were part of my research journal. Back-up recording devices, such as my iPhone recorder and my iPad, were used in case the primary recording device malfunctioned.

The focus of the interviews was to gather information on each participant's experience while assigned as a 1SG or CSM in the IET environment. The interviews also identified perceptions of barriers and other challenges that the participant may have experienced or witnessed as a 1SG or CSM in the IET environment. Finally, the interviews explored the participants' beliefs on why there is an underrepresentation of female 1SGs and CSMs in the BCT environment.

The interview questions were designed to elicit individual lived experiences of the participants so an understanding of the phenomenon could be achieved. The Army Training and Leader Development regulation identifies the CSM, 1SG, and other noncommissioned officers as the principal training providers to the individual soldier (Department of the Army, 2017c); therefore, their beliefs, perceptions, and experiences are crucial. The basic logic of social role theory posits that the expectations for men and women are based on sex differences that regulate behavior in an adult's work and family life (Eagly & Wood, 1988).

Question 1 examined if the participants had any preconceived notions or underlying influences because of the values and belief systems of their childhood. The participants were encouraged to describe their childhood. Questions 2 through 4 followed up on the effect of these influences and values and belief systems by encouraging the participants to explain their motives for joining the Army.

Question 5 was designed to examine what motivated the participant to become a senior enlisted leader and serve in the BCT environment. The question may identify role models and begin the discussion of any barriers the participants may have encountered during their journey to acquiring senior leadership positions.

Research indicates that individual, organizational, and societal barriers and other challenges exist that influence the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017; Diehl, 2014; Haile et al., 2016). Questions 6 through 8 gave participants an opportunity to discuss barriers they may have encountered and to discuss if challenges and barriers of female senior leaders, 1SGs and CSMs, in combat training units differed from those in non-combat training units. Questions 6 through 8 also examined if and how participants believed that their lived experience differed from their male colleagues.

Social role theorists suggest two kinds of expectations for leaders—*agentic* and *communal* (Walker, 2009). Agentic behaviors refer to give-and-take tendencies (Eagly, 1987). Some agentic characteristics are assertive, controlling, aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, self-sufficient, and prone to act as a leader and are normally associated with male leaders (Hogue, 2015; Walker, 2009). Communal behaviors refer to a concern with interpersonal relationships (Eagly, 1987; Hogue, 2015). Communal characteristics are often ascribed to women and relate to care and welfare—for example, being affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing, and gentle—and are typically associated with female leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hogue, 2015).

Both communal and agentic qualities are needed to be a successful leader; however, there is a traditional perception that agentic leadership is more successful than communal leadership, especially in a military setting (Walker, 2009). The role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders further suggests that individuals are penalized when they do not perform according to expectations of society (Skelly & Johnson, 2011). Questions 9 through 11 examined if the participants believed that females who possess agentic qualities and characteristics are more effective and acceptable in the BCT environment.

Questions 12 through 15 examine if the participants believed there was a preferred leadership style in the BCT environment. These questions also examined if women who use an agentic approach to leadership are more effective. Last, Question 12 through 15 examined if these female leaders were ostracized because they violated standards for their gender when they manifested stereotypical male, agentic attributes and if they were further ostracized for failure to manifest stereotypical female communal attributes (Bongiorno et al., 2013).

Question 16 is a knowledge question based on participants' expertise and factual knowledge of performance standards (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and examined if participants

believed that female CSMs and 1SGs were held to a different standard from their male colleagues in the areas of technical and tactical skills and abilities required in the BCT environment.

Questions 17 through 18 are opinion and value questions. I was interested in the participants' beliefs and opinions of how the Army can increase the representation of female CSMs and 1SGs in the BCT environment and possibly resolve the problem of underrepresentation of females in the senior leadership positions of CSM and 1SG in the Army's BCT environment. Questions 19 and 20 are also opinion and value questions, as I was interested in the participants' belief and opinions on what they believed led to their success as senior enlisted leaders. Question 20 is based on participants' proven success as female leaders (Hill & Wheat, 2017). I was also interested in the advice they would give to females senior enlisted soldiers who may be interested in becoming a 1SG or CSM in IET/BCT environment.

The interview data collection strategy provided me with the information needed to address the factors that contributed to female senior noncommissioned officers' success in the leader positions of 1SG or CSM in the IET environment (Research Question 1). This strategy also addressed Research Questions 2, 3, and 4:

2. What are the challenges or barriers experienced by females serving in the leadership positions of 1SG or CSM in the U.S. Army BCT unit?

3. What leadership attributes do participants identify as necessary to be successful in the BCT unit?

4. What challenges and barriers, if any, exist that prevent senior enlisted females from obtaining senior leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment?

Focus Group

Patton (2015) suggested that after conducting the individual interviews, researchers use focus group interviews to validate the research themes. A focus group is a group discussion focused on a single theme (Kreuger & Casey, 2015; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Focus groups provide participants with an opportunity for interaction that can yield rich information (Creswell, 2013). The focus group is used to elicit a range of feelings, opinions, and ideas; understand differences in perspectives; uncover and provide insight into specific factors that influence opinion; and seek ideas that emerge from the group (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The focus group setting can also clarify any complex topics that may arise. The underlying assumption of the focus group is that a more complete and revealing understanding of the topic will be obtained (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

The focus group protocol (see Appendix F) consisted of nine open-ended questions that supported the three research questions. The protocol also consisted of possible follow-up questions or prompts for explanation and clarification. I designed the semistructured focus group questions to explore the lived experience of the retired females while serving as 1SG or CSMs in the IET environment. The group participants sent an (individual) email confirming that they would participate in the focus group. The group interview was conducted at an agreed-upon location. I allowed participants to join in the focus group by webinar for convenience as well. The group interview was scheduled for a minimum of 45 to 60 minutes, digitally recorded, and transcribed by a professional transcriptionist, as suggested by Creswell (2013). I took notes and included them in my reflective journal. Back-up recording devices, such as my iPhone recorder and my iPad, were used in case the primary recording device malfunctions.

The focus group questions were designed to examine the collective lived experience of the participants as CSMs or 1SGs in the IET environment. The questions sought to determine if

the participants faced challenges and barriers while serving in senior leadership roles and if these challenges and barriers resulted in the underrepresentation of women in the IET environment; specifically, in BCT units. The focus group data collection strategy also allowed me to examine if other members of the group agreed that the issues encountered were challenges and barriers, and if so, if they were the norm or isolated incidents. The questions were designed to examine if the issues prevented the participant from achieving her military goals.

Question 1 is an introductory/background question. Question 2 allowed the participants to recall memories and reflect on their lived experiences. Question 3 examined if participants had preconceived notions about the roles of men and women in the military. Questions 4 and 5 examined if, collectively, the participants believed that there are leadership differences between men and women in the military and in general. Questions 6 and 7 examined if participants encountered any challenges or barriers in achieving the senior enlisted rank.

Question 8 examined how the participants believe their roles affected the military. Question 9 examined if the participants believed their role in the IET environment differed significantly from their role in non-IET units. Question 9 was also designed to examine if challenges and barriers they may have experienced in IET units were different from those experienced in non-IET units.

The participants' collective answers to the focus group questions allowed for a better understanding of the phenomenon by generating information on the participants' collective views and the meaning that lies behind those views. This data collection strategy addressed the following research questions of this study:

RQ1: What factors contributed to female senior noncommissioned officers' success in the leader positions of 1SG or CSM in the IET environment?

RQ2: What are the challenges or barriers experienced by females serving in the leadership positions of 1SG or CSM in a U.S. Army BCT unit?

RQ3: What leadership attributes do participants identify as necessary to be successful in a BCT unit?

RQ4: What challenges and barriers, if any, exist that prevent senior enlisted females from attaining senior leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment?

Data Analysis

Analyzing data from a transcendental phenomenological study is a rigorous systematic process (Moustakas, 1994). I used Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological reduction research methods, which are summarized in the following steps: (a) bracketing, (b) horizontalizing data and clustering into themes, (c) creating textural and structural descriptions, and (d) synthesizing the meanings to determine the essence of the phenomenon. These steps are described in more detail below.

Bracketing

I began data analysis by bracketing my previous experiences. Bracketing is the process of the researcher setting aside their personal experience. In the bracketing step of analysis, the focus of the research is placed in brackets. In my case, I had to set aside my experience as a female 1SG in the BCT environment. This allowed me to bracket out personal experience with the phenomenon; this process is also called the epoché (van Manen, 2014). I documented my personal opinions, biases, prejudgments, and assumptions that could have affected the shape or approach to the study. This process was done by journaling and reflection. Journaling and reflection ensured that I stayed focused on the topic and the questions (Moustakas, 1994).

Horizontalization and Clustering

After reading the interview transcriptions several times, every statement of the participants was treated with equal significance and value (Moustakas, 1994) without beginning to cluster themes or disregarding repetitive statements. Later, those statements irrelevant to the topics and questions, as well as those that were overlapping and repetitive, were deleted, leaving only the horizons (Moustakas, 1994). The horizons were then clustered into themes. Moustakas (1994) suggested validating the theme by searching for an explicit reference of the theme in the participant's transcript.

Textural and Structural Descriptions

After the data had been clustered by theme, I used the themes to develop a textural description of the meaning and essences of the experience of the individuals. I also developed a structural description of their experiences to produce a combination of descriptions in order to convey the overall essence of the phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The textural description is formed from the final process of phenomenological deduction (Moustakas, 1994) or a description of what the participants experienced (Creswell, 2013).

Data Synthesis—The Essence

Finally, I took the textural and structural descriptions created to synthesize the findings into the essence of the phenomenon. Synthesis pulls everything together. The data synthesis – essence process requires the researcher to describe and interpret findings and to attach meaning to the findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The data syntheses describe how the researched questions were answered by the findings, how the data collected supported the findings, how the findings related to the literature, and how the findings related to the researcher and her original assumptions.

Trustworthiness

Creswell (2013) noted that many perspectives exist regarding the importance of validation in qualitative research. Trustworthiness addresses credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the trustworthiness of a research study is important for evaluating its worth. Lincoln and Guba also proposed various criteria for evaluating trustworthiness in a qualitative study. These criteria are credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). To establish and increase the trustworthiness in this phenomenological qualitative research study, this researcher used bracketing, triangulation, member checking, and external audits.

Credibility

Credibility evaluates how congruent the findings are to reality. It determines whether the findings capture what is really there (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The credibility of the researcher is reflected through the final report. Credibility was captured through triangulation by using three data collection methods: individual interviews, a focus group, and my research journal. Triangulation of data increases credibility and validity by reducing the likelihood of misinterpretation and redundancy (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Triangulation also allows the researcher to create, categorize, and synthesize the data and develop themes (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Member checks can also be used to establish credibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and provide feedback on findings from participants. Maxwell (2013) reported:

> This [member checking] is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what the participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstandings of what you observed. (pp. 126–127)

Transferability

Transferability is concerned with how well the findings of the study can be applied to other situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used member checks to ensure transferability by allowing each participant to review her responses for accuracy. Member checks reduce bias and clarify participants' views (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

Dependability

Dependability shows that the findings are consistent and can be repeated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used an audit trail to establish dependability that allows future researchers to repeat the steps of this study. An audit trail in a qualitative study describes how data were collected, how categories were established, and how decisions were made during the inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this qualitative study, I maintain a journal to document the process of conducting the study.

Confirmability

Confirmability measures how well the study's findings are confirmed or supported by the respondents and not by my bias, motivation, or interest. I used an external auditor and bracketing to establish confirmability and increase the trustworthiness of this study. An external auditor was given full access to the study to determine if the results were supported by the data collected and if the analysis is correct. Reviewing and discussing findings with subject matter experts, other than the participants, is a way to ensure that the reality of the participants was accurately reflected (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). I used a retired CSM who served in the BCT environment as one external auditor. Bracketing also served as a method for ensuring trustworthiness by allowing me to set aside prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about the phenomenon, as suggested by Moustakas (1994). Bracketing was used to identify and clarify researcher biases and assumptions. Throughout the study, but specifically during the interview

process, I noted any past experiences, biases, and prejudices that would likely shape the interpretation and approach to the study. I used journaling, reflection, and an external auditor to bracket my experience with the phenomenon. These methods helped ensure that I stayed focused on the topic and the research questions only.

Ethical Considerations

As Creswell (2013) noted, ethical issues in qualitative research can occur before the study begins, during data collection, in data analysis, in the reporting of the data, and in publishing the data. I used Creswell's procedures to ensure that all ethical issues were taken into consideration. For instance, prior to conducting the study, I contacted the appropriate Army official to ascertain if approval was needed. Because the participants were retired, military information was public facing, and the study was not an official sanctioned military study, approval was not needed. Another necessary step was to receive IRB approval. Prior to beginning the study, I received signed informed consent from all study participants. Before collecting the data, I ensured there was no bias present to influence the response of the participants during the interviews.

In reporting the data, the survey and interview process presented minimum risk for participants; however, participants remained anonymous to avoid disclosing information that may harm them. I also used pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants and the military installation. In addition, I provided participants with copies of the individual and focus group interview transcripts prior to analysis in order to review for accuracy. The participants did not report any inconsistencies. Finally, all data are locked and secured, and information has been filed on a password-protected computer.

Summary

Chapter 3 contained an outline of the research design, research questions, setting, participants, procedures, researcher's role, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and

ethical considerations. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore and understand retired female senior enlisted leaders' experiences while assigned to the leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in IET to ascertain if their experiences shed light on the underrepresentation of female 1SGs and CSMs in the BCT environment. For this study, the experiences of the retired female 1SG and CSMs included factors that led to their success in the IET environment as well as challenges and barriers they may have faced. This transcendental phenomenological study addressed a gap in the literature and will contribute to the limited body of knowledge regarding senior enlisted female leaders in the BCT environment.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Overview

Transcendental phenomenology is a philosophical approach to qualitative research methodology that seeks to understand human experience (Moustakas, 1994). This researcher has attempted to describe, through the retired female 1SGs and CSMs own words, the factors that led to their success in the IET environment. I also used the experiences they related to me through semi-structured interviews and a focus group to explore the challenges and barriers they may have faced in their quest for leadership positions and during their tenure as 1SGs and CSMs.

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore retired female senior enlisted leaders' experiences while assigned to the leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in IET to ascertain if their experiences may shed light on the underrepresentation of female 1SGs and CSMs in the BCT environment. Four research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What factors contributed to female senior noncommissioned officers' success in the leader positions of 1SG or CSM in the IET environment?

RQ2: What are the challenges or barriers experienced by females serving in the leadership positions of 1SG or CSM in a U.S. Army BCT unit?

RQ3: What leadership attributes do participants identify as necessary to be successful in a BCT unit?

RQ4: What challenges and barriers, if any, exist that prevent senior enlisted females from attaining senior leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment?

This chapter contains both an overview and brief introductions of the 10 participants who took part in the study. Next, a results section follows containing a description of the 16 codes I identified from the participants' transcripts. Finally, a discussion of the four research questions are answered using a description of the four emerging themes and 16 subthemes.

Participants

The 10 participants were retired Army senior enlisted leaders who retired from the Army between 2009 and 2019 and served as a 1SG or CSM in the IET environment at Fort Alpha, Fort Bravo, Fort Charlie, or Fort Delta. The interviews took place at the participants' homes, other places of preference, or via video conferencing, based on what was most convenient for the participants. Furthermore, each interview location allowed participants to speak freely in a private setting, which promoted comfort and put the participants at ease during their interviews.

Jane

Jane grew up in middle-class single-family home in Florida. She and her younger brother lived "a pretty good life." During high school she participated in Marine Corp JROTC. Because college was an expensive option, her experiences in JROTC paved the way for her to join the Army "straight out of high school." She joined the Army because she wanted a new challenge and "an opportunity to go to college." She served as a drill sergeant in a gender-integrated basic combat training unit. Jane served 30 years in the Army, obtained a master's degree, and obtained the rank of SGM. At the time of the interview, Jane was 50 and married.

Debbie

Debbie grew up in South Carolina with two brothers and three sisters. She joined the Army in 1986 to "to serve our county, to give back, and also to gain benefits for my college education." Debbie served 27 years in the Army, obtained a bachelor's degree, and the rank of CSM. At the time of the interview, Debbie was 54 and single.

Sue

Sue grew up as an only child in a middle-class two-parent home in Florida. She opted to join the Army because she wanted an opportunity "to do the things that I wouldn't have been able to do had I gone to college, because I would've still been kind of under my parents'

control." Sue served 30 years in the Army, obtained a master's degree, and reached the rank of CSM. At the time of the interview, she was 47 and single.

Beth

Beth was born and raised in a middle-class, two-parent home in South Carolina. She was one of six children whose father "followed [the] Muslim faith to some extent" but her mother was a Christian. She married a man in the Army and later joined because she wanted "to see what the organization was about." Beth served 25 years in the Army, obtained a master's degree, and achieved the rank of CSM. At the time of the interview, Beth was 56 and married.

Becky

Becky grew up in a lower-middle class two-parent family with six children in New York City. Becky stated that her family's life was "pretty simple because we didn't know that we didn't have as much as others . . . . There was food on the table, there was clothing and shelter." After high school, Becky worked in an office in Manhattan and was "bored stiff." When she discovered the recruiting office, she "felt like I was home." When she signed up, she "was scared, but was more excited about joining the military for the adventure, for the travel, and to just be exposed to a new environment and learn new things." Becky was promoted to 1SG in 1997 and served as a drill sergeant of a gender-integrated basic combat training unit. Becky served 28 years in the Army, obtained a master's degree, and was appointed to the rank of CSM in 2004. At the time of the interview, she was 56 and married.

Kim

Kim was the oldest of three children born to a single mother in East St. Louis, Illinois. She was raised by her grandmother and mother in a strict Pentecostal household. Even though her family did not have money, her mother "did work and we were never homeless. We always had food to eat, we had clothes to wear. We had the basics." After high school Kim had a job, a

place to stay, her own car, and she helped her mother to pay the bills. However, she always "felt I had potential, but I didn't have the opportunity where I was." After a station commander she dated told her a lot about the Army, she decided she "had nothing to lose" and joined. She reported, "If I didn't like it, I would do my time and get out." Kim joined because "of the educational opportunities, to travel, to learn a new trade at the Army's expense, to meet new people, and just to explore another side of life." Kim was promoted to 1SG in 2002 and served as leader of a gender-integrated advanced individual training unit. Kim served 22 years in the Army, obtained a doctorate, and rose to the rank of CSM in 2006. At the time of the interview, she was 53 and married.

Cindy

Cindy was born in a small town in North Carolina. She was the second of seven children in a two-parent home that "did not have much money." Her parents taught their children about values and giving back. She realized that if she did not do something different, she would remain in that small town. Cindy decided to join the military to give "me opportunities for education and opportunity to explore and see the world a little bit differently." Cindy was promoted to 1SG in 2000 and was leader of a gender-integrated basic combat training unit. Cindy served 34 years in the Army, obtained a MBA during her service, and, in 2005, was promoted to the rank of CSM. At the time of the interview, she was 55 and married.

Lisa

Lisa came from a military family. Her father was in the Air Force. She moved around a lot during his career. After her parents retired, she knew her parents were not in the position to pay for her to attend college. Lisa reported, "I actually joined the Army for the college fund, with the express intent to do my one term and get out and go to college." Twenty-five years later, she retired as a sergeant major. Lisa was promoted to 1SG in 2000 and was leader of a

support battalion. Lisa served 25 years in the Army, obtained a master's degree, and was

appointed to the rank of CSM in 2005. At the time of the interview, she was 55 and married.

Carol

Carol grew up in southern Florida in a lower-middle class single-parent family. Her

father and grandfather were in the military. The family's understanding for three generations

was to attend college and/or join the military. Carol attended college and then joined the Army.

Her husband was a Vietnam veteran. She joined the Army after training as a social worker.

However, she found it difficult to maintain her credentials as her husband moved from base to

base. Because she needed a job and had three children, Carol joined the Army. She and her

husband did well in the military, and she is proud of what she accomplished as an enlisted

African American woman. Carol served 32 years in the Army, obtained a master's degree, and

was promoted to the rank of CSM. At the time of the interview, she was 64 and married.

Mary

Mary grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, in a low-middle income, two-parent family. She

and her brother had a "wonderful childhood . . . was always involved with sports and camps."

She was raised in a Pentecostal household. Her father died when she was a high school

freshman. She attended college for less than a year, until "the money ran out." At the same

time, around 1985, drugs were all around her, affecting schoolteachers, family members, and

even physicians. Mary stated, "I guess I started being grown and wanted to do my own thing,

but my mother wasn't having that because I lived at home." She saw an Army commercial, liked

the signing bonus, and the pay, which was twice as much a month than what she was earning as a

civilian. She joined the military because being assigned to a camp reminded her of the fun times

she had as a child attending camps. She also wanted to get away from her mother, and she

wanted "to be grown." Mary was promoted to 1SG in 2001 and was leader of a gender-

integrated basic combat training unit. She served 30 years in the Army, obtained a master's degree, and retired as a SGM. At the time of the interview, she was 53 and single.

Summary of Participants

The participants ranged in age between 47 and 64, with an average of 54 years of age (see Table 2). They had served in the Army for an average of 28 years. Seventy percent of the former enlisted officers were married at the time of their interview. Ninety percent of the women had earned a master's or doctoral degree. Eighty percent of the participants rose to the rank of CSM.

Table 2

Description of Study Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Marital status	Years of service	Degree	Highest rank
Jane	50	Married	30	Master	SGM
Debbie	54	Single	27	Bachelors	CSM
Sue	47	Single	30	Masters	CSM
Beth	56	Married	25	Masters	CSM
Becky	56	Married	28	Masters	CSM
Kim	53	Married	22	PhD	CSM
Cindy	55	Married	34	MBA	CSM
Lisa	55	Married	25	Masters	CSM
Carol	64	Married	32	Dual Masters	CSM
Mary	53	Single	30	Masters	SGM

Table 3 contains a description of the participants IET experience. Four of the participants had basic training as their assignment. Five of the women were drill sergeants. All of the senior

enlisted officers were in a gender-integrated IET environment. All of the eight participants'

promotions to CSM occurred 2003 and 2012.

Table 3

Participants' IET Experience

Participant	Experience with basic combat training prior to assignment as 1SG/CSM in IET	Promoted to First Sergeant or Command Sergeant Major in IET	Assignment	Type of IET environment	Appointment to rank of CSM
Jane	Drill sergeant	2006	Basic combat training	Gender-integrated	NA
Debbie	Drill sergeant	2007	Advanced Individual Training	Gender-integrated	2009
Sue	None	2008	Advanced Individual Training	Gender-integrated	2012
Beth	None	2005	Reception battalion	Gender-integrated	2005
Becky	Drill sergeant	1997	Basic combat training	Gender-integrated	2004
Kim	As a recruit	2002	Advanced individual training	Gender-integrated	2006
Cindy	Drill sergeant	2000	Basic combat training	Gender-integrated	2005
Lisa	BCT BN training NCO and Security NCO for a BCT brigade	2000	Support battalion	Gender-Integrated	2005
Carol	Drill sergeant	1SG–1997 CSM–2003	IET–Advanced individual 1SG and IET Support Unit Command Sergeant Major	Gender-Integrated	2003
Mary	Drill sergeant	2001	Basic combat training	Gender-integrated	NA

Results

The interviews and focus group were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. I then

read and reread the transcripts. After deleting repetitive and irrelevant comments, I used 15

codes to describe the data in the transcripts (see Table 4).

Table 4

Codes Used in Analysis of Transcripts

Code	Instances	Description
Guidance from others	12	Retired female noncommissioned officers reported receiving advice from both male and female officers
Leaders	8	Leaders encountered by participants ranged from good to bad, both male and female
Stereotypes	11	The female noncommissioned officers had to fight stereotypes about what others thought women were capable of doing in the Army
Prove self/be better	22	Throughout their careers, the participants reported having to prove to others that they were capable of leadership roles.
Taking care of soldiers	10	The participants were successful in their IET careers because they cared for soldiers.
Role model	6	They wanted to be role models for other women coming up the ranks
Career plan	8	The retired 1SGTs and CSMs followed career plans created by themselves and their mentors
Knowledge	12	To be successful, the retired female noncommissioned officers had to be technically and tactically proficient at their job.
Family	4	Raising a family was considered by some of the female noncommissioned officers as restricting their career plans.
Male-dominated institution	9	The Army is a male-dominated institution, similar to civilian corporations. The lack of females in leadership roles and the inability of some males to work with females was challenging for women who strove for leadership roles.
Integrity	12	Army values of integrity and selfless service were considered by the participants to be characteristics of good leaders.
Physically fit	7	The retired noncommissioned officers reported that being physically fit was a definite requirement for leadership positions in the IET environment.
Tenacity	10	Success came to those who were tenacious in their pursuit of leadership roles.
Leadership	13	Participants described leadership characteristics necessary for both males and females to be successful in a BCT unit.
Selection procedures	9	The retired noncommissioned officers outlined the Army procedures that hindered females attaining senior NCO leadership positions in the BCT environment.

I used the 15 codes to develop a textual and structural description of the participants'
experiences. The 14 codes were synthesized into four themes and 16 subthemes to describe the
essence of the participants' experiences while assigned to the leadership positions of 1SG and
CSM in IET (see Table 5).

Table 5

Themes Found in Analysis of Data

Theme	Description	Subtheme
Success factors	Factors that contributed to female senior noncommissioned officers' success in the leader positions of 1SG or CSM in the IET environment.	Guidance from others Tenacity Setting standards for self Creating a career plan
Challenges/barriers	Challenges or barriers experienced by females serving in the leadership positions of 1SG or CSM in a U.S. Army BCT unit.	Old boy network Having to prove oneself Reacting to female leadership Family Fighting the stereotype
Leadership attributes	Leadership attributes necessary to be successful in a BCT unit.	Army Values Caring for soldiers Selfless service Toughness and tenacity Integrity
Barriers to advancement	Challenges and barriers prevent senior enlisted females from attaining senior leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment.	Coding of jobs Male perceptions of females

Theme: Success Factors

In both the interviews and focus group session, participants highlighted factors that
contributed to their success as female CSMs and 1SGs in the IET environment. The overarching
themes were guidance from others, tenacity, setting standards for self, and creating a career plan.

While journaling during the interviews, I noted few female role models or senior enlisted for the participants to look up to; however, most of the participants who did have female enlisted leaders credited them for their success. Most of the females noted tenacity, which included being physically tough, as a must to their success. The participants could not just be tough enough to meet the Army standard, but they had to meet the standard of their male counterparts. Many of the participants did not even consider being an IET 1SG or CSM when they initially joined the Army; however, when they acquired these positions, they knew they had to set standards for themselves and develop a plan if they wanted to be successful. Carol stated:

> You had to show up ready. You couldn't show up, in my opinion during that time when I got to Fort Alpha–this was my second or third assignment–to come to the IET/AIT world because I was in the AIT world for five years as a first sergeant so I knew showing up at Fort Alpha that you had to be ready, meaning you can't be short in your APFT, you can't be short in your leadership. You could not even have family issues that for a male you probably would overlook. For a female, they're probably oh my God, so I had to ensure that I had all the proper credentials, that I could pass my APFT when I showed, and that I met the weight standards as my male counterparts. I had to run, jump, and hop as fast and as well as they could.

Theme: Challenges/Barriers

The participants consistently mentioned the lack of females in the enlisted ranks, fighting stereotypes, reaction to female leadership, and even being a female as barriers or challenges. As I listened to the participants during their interviews, I realized that the central theme was male acceptance. I noted in my journal that although the participants listed being female as a challenge or barrier, they did not specifically list that being accepted by their male colleagues and leaders as a challenge or barrier. Proving themselves and being accepted by males seemed

to indicate that, in my own words, "they had met the standard." I noted in my journal that meeting the standard set by their male colleagues was more important than meeting the established Army regulatory or policy standards.

The participants also noted the reaction of their subordinates, peers, and superiors to their use of the direct approach to leadership. The participants noted that they were considered "a bitch" when using this approach. They were also viewed as emotional, dramatic, and an angry female. One participant even stated that she was considered an angry black female. Only one participant responded that she was respected as much as her male counter parts when using this approach. I noted in my journal that in my experience, I have been referred to as a "bitch" when using the direct approach; however, on the other hand, I was respected by my male peers and superiors. I was also given what was considered the "tough jobs (assignments)" because of the ability to use this approach to leadership.

Theme: Leadership Attributes

While listening to the participants during their interviews, I noted in my journal that the Army Values they discussed included loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honesty, integrity, and personal courage. The overarching attributes expressed were caring for soldiers and integrity. Responses to this question echo an overall central theme of Army Values and caring for others. As leaders in the IET environment, the participants were entrusted with integrating newly hired soldiers from a variety of cultures into the Army's beliefs and values system. The participants expressed that caring for others was a prerequisite to shaping the minds of new recruits as well as a tenet for future leadership roles. The participants not only understood the value of exhibiting the Army Values, but most importantly, they understood the fundamentals of instilling these same values in those they were entrusted to integrate into the Army's culture.

Theme: Barriers to Advancement

The participants agreed that position coding and archaic systems created both barriers and challenges that limited their ability to move into leadership positions. I noted in my journal that historically, positions in the IET commands are gender coded for male combat arms soldiers. Female soldiers who are assigned to IET units face a challenge because they are not viewed as highly competitive as their male counterparts are while working in a male coded position. These jobs are often seen as complementary to their basic skills, while their male counterparts are given credit for troop leading positions. These positions, for the male soldier are necessary for their promotion, while less emphasis is placed on the female soldier's time in the positions. However, the participants excelled in the roles they were assigned and were ultimately great role models for recruits. The participants reported that change is needed in order to attract more female leaders to these types of roles. The changes could significantly increase the potential for female leaders to compete for advancement on an even scale with their male counterparts.

Research Question 1

What factors contributed to female senior noncommissioned officers' success in the leader positions of 1SG or CSM in the IET environment?

The participants, in individual interviews and during the focus group, described several factors that helped make them be successful female senior noncommissioned officers in the IET environment. Their comments were categorized into four themes to answer this research question. The themes were (a) guidance from others, (b) tenacity, (c) setting standards for self, and (d) creating a career plan.

Guidance from others. The participants indicated that they received guidance from others, both males and females. Lisa reported that she was "fortunate enough to have leaders, both male and female, to help guide me towards those positions." Mary also indicated that she

had female role models and "I appreciated them." During the focus group, Carol stated that, "Some females pointed me to the positions I should go for." Later, she elaborated:

> [Female role models] tell you which way to go, which way not to go, and what positions that you should adhere to try to be a part of or be in or do things at that time. I will never forget them and thank them for what they've done. They followed me throughout my career and I still to this day communicate with two. They were some tough sisters.

Tenacity. The former NCOs reported that to succeed, they needed tenacity. They had to want the job and they worked for their promotions. Carol recommended that female senior noncommissioned officers have to "be in their face and say, 'I want to be first sergeant here. I want that job and I want to be a first sergeant and I need your support and ensure that I have it.'" Becky reported that she worked to overcome the stereotype Army males have of females, "I was studying all the time, studying all the time. It's about constantly learning, constantly educating yourself and demonstrating that knowledge, not just to the trainees but to your male counterpart that you're willing to learn." During the focus group, Jane indicated that success comes only from within:

> [The] only person that stops me is me. They [males] want you not to succeed, they want you to stay back, they want you to just sit there and just be like, "Oh, woe is me, I'm just a little female." They want that from you. But if you show them that's not my plan here and I really don't care what you do but I'm gonna do it and be successful.

Becky, speaking during the focus group, reported, "You've got to be confident about yourself. It's important not just for yourself but how your counterparts see you." Becky also stated that being successful in the IET environment took teamwork. In order to do that, she had to earn her peers' respect, "Once you earn their respect, they'll help you. But, primarily they want to see you stand on your own feet so it's that demonstration of toughness, that

perseverance, that tenacity, your steam power." Kim described tenacity as the willingness to continue working toward a goal even when faced with defeat, "Go for what you want. Even if you don't get selected for something on your first time around, keep going. There's hardly anybody who gets everything they want. You know, we've all had failures, we've all had successes." Cindy defined tenacity as getting out of "your comfort zone:"

It requires time, it requires lack of sleep, it requires a lot of things that some people, they're not wanting to give all that. It takes you out of your comfort zone. It requires a different kind of responsibility that's placed in your hands that people are not willing and wanting to do that.

Setting standards for self. Success as a 1SG or CSM also required the participants to set standards for themselves, which ultimately were those they expected of others under their command. By setting those standards, they earned the trust of their peers and subordinates. Kim reported that:

It's important for women especially to set a good example because those young kids look at you and they can see themselves either being you, being where you are, or being the opposite of you. Be competitive. We as women can't do everything men can do but we can do our best at whatever we can do.

Becky was able to set standards for herself by determining what her shortcomings were, "Start finding out what it takes to get to each level. And whatever your shortcomings are, work to overcome those and take one step at a time and overcoming those until you get there." Beth felt that communication was important to develop as she prepared herself to become a 1SG or CSM, "I think communication is a really big one–effective communication . . . is very vital. Being able to write, express ourselves in [the] written word."

Being proficient at the job was a way to make sure standards they set were met. Four of the women indicated that they needed a solid knowledge of basic Army training and of Army Values. Beth reported that she needed to know "basic soldier combat survival skills that we learn as we go through our schooling." Debbie and Kim both reported that females seeking promotions to 1SG and CSM positions must be "tactically and technical proficient." Lisa listed a number of other proficiencies:

Just a good solid knowledge of basic army types of training, a good basic understanding of the foundation of the Army, whether it's Army Values or medal-type of paths. You have to have those types of skills so that you can lead those troops and bring them up through an IET environment.

Four of the retired NCOs reported that they had to do more than their male counterparts did to receive the respect needed for the job. Sue reported:

You've got to be an overachiever. You've got to do better than your male counterparts. Your male counterparts can just make the minimum and still be okay but you've got to do a little bit more and you've got to be ready to do a little bit more in order to be able to make it to that rank.

Becky had the same sentiment as Sue, "You have to demonstrate double the effort than what your male counterpart is expected to do."

The participants also indicated that to be successful as a 1SG or CSM, they could not rely on being female to get the job done. Kim stated, "Don't rely on being a woman or being a person of color or anything else. You're a soldier, you're just as good as anybody else, and if you want it, go for it." Beth explained the advice she gives other females:

One of the things that I've always . . . tried to instill in other female leaders and tried to practice myself was to do my best and not expect my male counterparts to do my work

for me. I was going to be judged by my male counterparts. They were going to see if I could carry my load. It was very important for me to always remain physically fit, to always maintain expert with my weapon. I was at the top of my physical fitness game, then that would automatically give me a different level of respect from them, that when they were carrying their load, I was carrying mine. They could count on me being a team player. I could pull my own load. We could pull our own loads so that our male counterparts would not look at us differently or look at us as being weak or expecting someone else to do our work for us simply because we were female.

Creating a career plan. Progress toward the highest NCO positions did not come without a plan for the participants. An important first factor in developing a career plan was to determine what they were willing to do to advance to the higher NCO ranks. Sue and Carol indicated that they had to determine if they really wanted to do what they had to do for advancement. Sue stated, "You've got to make a determination on whether you want to stay in the Army . . . are you willing to do everything necessary for you to . . . achieve the success you want in the Army?" Carol recommended, "Make sure that this is your goal, and this is what you want to do. Search your soul [and ask], 'Can I do this?'" Debbie described how to attain the goal, "You gotta want it. You got to want to be hungry for it."

Lisa, Sue, and Carol suggested that a clear career path with diversity, a drill sergeant patch, and a number of leadership assignments were crucial factors in becoming a 1SG and CSM. Lisa stated that females who want to advance to "the rank of E8 or E9 and as a first sergeant, make sure . . . there is diversity in their records." Sue suggested that:

First sergeants or command sergeant majors in that environment [IET] should have a drill sergeant badge. They should've been drill sergeants prior to serving in those positions because they have a better understanding of how that environment truly is so that when

they do come to those leadership positions, they know how to talk to the drill sergeants, they know how to talk to the soldiers, they know how to relate to those drill sergeants

Carol also indicated that females who want to advance higher in rank should have leadership roles on their record, "You should have had team leader, squad leader, platoon sergeant, and first sergeant . . . You're going to deal with all of that knowledge you've gained as a team leader [as] a first sergeant."

Women in the Army must consider family when planning their career. Becky stated that a factor in her success was putting off having a family. Becky's comments about family were similar to other participants:

I will tell you that I put off having a family just to make it to the rank. At least for me, I felt like if I was to have a family at a certain point in my career, it means that I would be taking a step back instead of taking a step forward. Now I believe that is self-inflicted, but I felt like that was the impression that I got from competing in a male-dominated environment.

Research Question 2

What are the challenges or barriers experienced by females serving in the leadership positions of 1SG or CSM in a U.S. Army BCT unit?

The participants, both when interviewed individually and as members of the focus group, provided examples of the challenges and barriers experienced by females who serve at the rank of 1SG or CSM in the brigade combat team unit. These examples were categorized into five themes: (a) old boy network, (b) having to prove oneself, (c) reaction to female leadership, (d) family, and (e) fighting the stereotype. The structure of the organization and the old boy network could be considered barriers, while having to prove oneself, family, reaction to female leadership, and fighting the stereotype are challenges.

Old boy network. Threaded throughout the interviews and focus group was the participants' perceptions that the Army is male dominated and ruled by an old boy network. Many believed that the lack of females in higher ranks is self-perpetuating. A male-dominated leadership provides more opportunities for males. Cindy reported, "In the IET environment . . . they have more mentors." Lisa reported:

[The Army is] just male dominated and it is male dominated in the higher tier leader positions whether you're enlisted or an officer. I believe in a promotion system but also I'm a realist and I know it's about who you know, it's about people knowing other people. Not just who you know as a female in obtaining these positions but I think it has to do with who you know male on male.

Having to prove oneself. The participants reported that they had to work harder to prove themselves when men were automatically accepted as belonging in the higher ranks. Cindy reported her biggest challenge was people who only saw her as a female, not as a soldier who could learn different techniques. She stated, "Being in the military to me the whole time as a leader was all about I had to prove myself." Cindy continued:

It's always in the back of your mind that people question how you got to certain places, how you do certain things. They think sometimes, being a female that your promotion didn't come honestly like if I had a male counterpart. So, I think it's always having to prove that. If you're a male you don't really have to prove that because everybody assumes that you're technically sound.

Cindy reported how, on one assignment "he [the boss] was coming up with excuses why he was reluctant to choose me…but he . . . had no choice but to pick me. He was just too concerned about my being a woman than anything else." Carol reported that she knew peers thought, "She's not going to be able to do this, and she's not going to stay out overnight in the

field training area." However, "The males are not questioned. They are not looked at as hard as the female sergeant majors." Becky described the challenge:

> [It] appears that a female has to demonstrate even more because the expectation going in is one of stereotype and until you can prove yourself the stereotype will always be there. . . . Does everyone operate on the same level of toughness? Does everyone operate on the same level of leadership abilities? Does everyone operate on the same level of confidence, knowledge? Absolutely not, because the expectation is that you're a lesser being. You have to demonstrate more that you're capable than any male who is even at a lesser grade than you are.

Debbie also described how the female NCOs had to be better:

> You gotta be on top of your game as a female or else you're looked down upon. They're not gonna select you if you're not on top of your game. . . . You gotta just be smart and intellectual. They expect that out of females. You gotta know more policy, procedures, your job. You gotta know it inside and out better than the males.

> The participants described how the female NCOs were held to a higher standard. Mary stated, "It appeared that the female leaders, both first sergeant and command sergeant majors had to be better. And they were. But they had to be because there was not gonna be given any slack to them." Lisa stated, "I just think some males felt that females weren't up to those types of roles even in the IET environment because I think it's been so male dominated for so long." Mary believed that the problem lies in how men are trained to relate to females:

> Males have a hard time, because they didn't train with females. I don't think it's personal. I really don't think it's personal. I just think they don't know any better and so they have a hard time either being a subordinate to a female in the beginning. But, it doesn't last. Let me be clear, it doesn't last. All the female has to do is show that she's a

soldier and then they'll give her respect. But that's the thing. Males don't have to do all that. Males who have been in the IET environment before, meaning former drill sergeants, don't have to prove themselves.

Reaction to female leadership. Participants were asked how they were characterized when they used the direct approach to leadership. Several participants reported that they were considered an "angry female," or a "bitch." Cindy noted that "female soldiers sometimes took things more personal rather than professionally," when she used the direct leadership approach. Cindy also reported that:

> [Male soldiers] didn't like that approach at first. Many felt I didn't consult them or were frustrated about the decisions made. But, once they realized the approach was the best for the team, they often bought into the approach and support the decisions.

> Although Kim reported that she was labeled "a bitch" when she used the direct approach, her commander and first sergeants "appreciated my direct approach when I dealt with peers, other commanders, and soldiers. I remained professional and maintained dignity and respect." Kim also reported that, "No matter what those people have done, setting an example by communicating calmly yet firmly was always the best approach."

> Lisa reported that, "For the most part, female leaders who lead under the direct approach are respected just as much as their male counterparts. Females in leadership roles embody the same values as other leaders." However, Lisa noted:

> That there is still a small cultural gap when it comes to fully accepting female leaders who [use] the direct approach. The perceptions have changed greatly given the success of female leaders during the last 18 years of war.

Family. The IET environment is a 24/7 job, thus creating challenges for a female with a family. Becky observed the women she was around in the IET environment had a more

challenging time balancing being a wife, mother, and soldier. She stated, "Working long hours, you're away from your family. You put in the hours and something is not prioritized in your family and your personal life." Mary reported that males also had many family issues, "but the women couldn't bring those same challenges up to leadership." Carol stated that she believes the lack of female 1SG and CSM in the IET environment is because of family:

The other thing I believe for some time is women, our numbers decrease as we increase in grade, meaning we get married, we have children and I've got 20 and I'm probably going to leave the service. . . . It takes some sacrifices to be in that IET, and that's something they look at and say, "Do I want to do this?" That's where motherhood drops in. That's where "I'm a wife" jumps in, whatever the issues are, and that's when they decide that maybe "I don't want to do this." I think that's why we have less females [in the IET environment].

Fighting the stereotype. Females in the Army must fight males' perceptions of them. Participants reported that fighting the stereotype males have of females is challenging. Becky reported, "Stereotype . . . females don't want to deal with it . . . a different level of effort that is not required of a male." Becky stated the stereotype is about "how you're viewed by others and just doing double the work. You have to demonstrate double the effort than what your male counterpart is expected to do." Carol labelled her gender a barrier:

The barrier I had was that I was female. . . . "She's not going to be able to do this and she's not going to stay out overnight in the field training area." Those stereotypes were the barriers I had to overcome.

Mary discussed having to work with "all those type A personalities." She reported:

A few of my drill sergeants challenged me, "You can't tell me what to do." They all but said, "Because you're female." Then, along with that, my battalion commander also

made many public statements about how females should only take care of all the

paperwork, processing the soldiers in and processing the soldiers out and let the males do

all the training.

Kim and Carol reported that some males wanted to protect them. Carol stated, "I had one

guy say to me I just didn't want to hurt your feelings, I waited until everybody left so I could say

this." Kim stated:

> They automatically want to protect you, but we're all soldiers. You do your job, I do my
>
> job, we'll be okay. I think that's a natural male trait. There's nothing wrong with it until
>
> it becomes a barrier where he will not allow a female to do anything because he feels like
>
> he's got to be her protector.

Sue reported that communication between male and female peers can be misunderstood.

Sue stated she was "scrutinized" for "how you interact with them and how you deliver your

message in that environment." Later in the interview, Sue elaborated on how her male peers

found communication with females challenging:

> Some are not used to working with females, so they don't know how to talk to them.
>
> When I say they don't know how to talk to them, they automatically assume that if they
>
> make an on-the-spot correction that the female is gonna automatically say it's sexual
>
> harassment or sexual assault or they're gonna go running to somebody saying that they
>
> did something to them if they say something, you know, to do the correction on them.
>
> So, you have a lot of males that avoid making those corrections on females because
>
> they're kind of scared of what's gonna happen when they make that correction. Whereas
>
> you take a female working with males, specifically as a leader, if I'm saying something to
>
> a subordinate to make a correction or telling them they need to do this or holding them to
>
> a standard, they take our aggressiveness—and it's really not even being aggressive, it's

just us telling them you're held to a standard and I need you to do X, Y, and Z. They take

that as the angry black female whereas it's not even coming across as an angry black

female, it's just coming across as me doing my job, me holding you to a standard.

Whereas if you take a male that did the same thing, they would take it from the male

compared to the female. I've seen it over and over.

Beth described her experience as the only female:

They were sizing me up . . . I had to build a rapport with them. Once I built a rapport

with them and they saw that I brought some of the same experiences to the table that they

brought to the table and I was there to be a team player and a team member, we got along

well.

Research Question 3

What leadership attributes do participants identify as necessary to be successful in a BCT

unit?

Participants were quick to list a number of leadership characteristics that are necessary

for both males and female to be successful in a BCT unit. These characteristics were categorized

into five themes: (a) Army Values, (b) caring for soldiers, (c) selfless service, (d) integrity, (e)

toughness and tenacity, and (f) good judgment.

Army values. The participants discussed how the IET environment is designed to instill

the values of the Army into the troops. Cindy reported that character, a leadership attribute is

"living the values." Lisa reported that a leader must "embody the Army Values. You have to

really believe."

Caring for soldiers. Caring for your soldiers was another important leadership attribute

listed by the retired NCOs. Kim reported, "I think I was successful because I really and truly

cared about people that I was in charge of." Lisa also stated that a leader has to show she has "a

genuine care and concern about the folks that I lead and what you do in a unit contributes to the overall positive outcome or success." Debbie described caring for the team, "Take care of the people that work for you, because they're the ones that will do all the work and you're getting the praise. You've got to take care of your people that work for you. That's number one."

Both Debbie and Carol stated that leaders must be loyal to and take care of the team. Kim and Becky also described how they must care about their team. Kim stated that a leader is "caring about people and the mission and building trust; caring about people, caring about the mission, and building trust."

Selfless service. Carol and Cindy both described selfless service as a leadership attribute. Carol described selfless service, "Your soldiers know you're going to be there for them, you're going to take care of them, you're going to do what you have to do for them." Cindy described selfless service as a responsibility:

> It requires a different kind of responsibility that's placed in your hands that people are not willing and wanting to do that. So that's why I think you don't have a lot of leaders wanting to do that. It's really, no kidding, about selfless service and giving back to that type of environment.

Integrity. Integrity was cited by several of the retired NCOs as a leadership attribute. Mary stated, "They have to have strong integrity. There's a lot of shortcuts in the IET environment and there's also some challenges. Strong character will take them a long way." Sue reported, "You've got to know how to be trustworthy, you've got to be loyal, and you've got to have integrity." Beth elaborated on how essential integrity is for a leader:

> When a leader has integrity, it will cause them to be truthful. It'll cause them to be honest. It'll cause them to do what is right, even when no one is watching or even when they don't think anyone is watching, that it will cause them to treat not only their peers,

subordinates, and superiors with dignity and respect and how they want to be treated or how they would want someone to treat their son or their daughter.

Toughness and tenacity. Toughness and tenacity were described in various ways by the participants. Many comments that define how tough the retired NCOs were during their years of service are mentioned in other sections of the results. The comments made by Becky and Debbie highlight how tough and tenacious the participants were during their service. Becky reported that, "Physical fitness is paramount in an environment like that. Soldiers have to be fit and lead by example. Your ability to demonstrate knowledge, your skills, your attributes of the environment, the subject areas." Debbie believed that leaders had to "go out there and lean forward in the foxhole and do your job. Lead and train soldiers to the best of your ability and you will be successful." Becky also described how toughness and tenacity is translated into passion and confidence:

> You've got to be confident. You have to have passion for what you're doing, you can't just do it because somebody tells you to do it; you've got to do it because you believe that that is something that you're passionate about, something that you can excel at.

Good judgment. Leaders must have good judgment in the IET environment. This judgment is valuable when working in mixed gender basic combat units and with young recruits. Carol reported, "In the basic combat, I think they have to display some kind of judgment. They need to be able to make a decision and make the right decision and follow the rules, the regulations." Beth stated that judgment is essential because "leaders find themselves in situations when they may not have known themselves as well as they thought they knew themselves when it comes to dealing with opposite sex and some same sex trainees." Judgment also includes knowing how to handle the issues trainees come to the Army with. Jane stated:

They bring all their baggage with them and you have to let them know, this is one team,

one fight. This is not just about you. This is about all of us. All of us agree and you

really have to be honest with them to let them know upfront this is the Army life. This is

what you've chosen. This is what you're buying into.

Research Question 4

What challenges and barriers, if any, exist that prevent senior enlisted females from

attaining senior leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment?

Two themes arose from the comments the retired NCOs made about the challenges and

barriers to attaining senior NCO leadership positions in the BCT environment. The barriers were

similar to those reported in the results for Research Question 2. However, the participants also

discussed how the IET positions are coded and how male perceptions of females can interfere

with how females attain senior leadership positions. These two themes are presented in this

section.

Coding of positions. Participants reported that the way the positions are coded is a

hindrance for females. Beth stated, "I think a major reason why there were fewer women in that

environment is because of how the positions were coded to be filled." Jane reported that, "They

feel like that environment needs a combat MOS [military occupational specialty] in order to run

a basic training brigade or training battalion. We don't have enough combat service support

MOSs for females to get in." Mary suggested a way to alleviate the lack of females in senior

positions: "Change the books. That's easy. Change the books. You don't have to code them

female, just don't code them armor and infantry." Mary elaborated on how leaders should be

evaluated for leadership positions in the IET environment:

All of the first sergeant positions were infantry. So, that's one of the issues at that time. I

don't know what it is now but at that time they were coded for males. I don't know why

but I guess someone said in order to be a leader in this environment you have to have

infantry skills. [But] you just have to have TOE [Table of Organization and Equipment]

skills [TOE units are normally tactical units that can be deployed, which include more

than just infantry units.], you don't have to have infantry skills. For some reason it

seemed like everyone that came through there was infantry or armor. So, it has to be

some kind of code in the books. I don't want to believe that no one is volunteering.

Jane also described how the coding of the MOS should be changed:

Change how it's structured. Change how the slotting is structured, that you should have

more combat service support MOSs that are in those environments to be a first sergeant

or to be a command sergeant major. That's the whole thing. It goes by the MOS and

how they have everybody slotted so until they change that, you won't see more females.

All they see are males all the time so until you change the MOS structure, then you won't

see more females down in basic combat training.

I think what the Army really needs to do is stop thinking that you have to be

combat arms to be in IET. Know what you should know, all the standards on the ranges,

and then just start putting people in those positions instead of letting our male

counterparts be in those positions and they get promoted extremely faster than we do.

Carol stated, "We have tagged those positions as combat positions . . . untag those

positions. Give them [females] the opportunity. Look at the experience they have. If they want

to do it, give them the opportunity to do it." Beth stated that, "Changing the MOS requirement

for those positions, I think could change the ability for females to serve in those positions."

Debbie reiterated the sentiment of the retired NCOs, "Stop being so selective and just put the

name in the position and drive on. Don't try to figure out if it's a male or female."

Male perceptions of females. Male perceptions dominate the way women are viewed in the Army. During the focus group, Becky commented on this male view:

It's about the male view of females in what is predominately a male-dominated environment. It's how they view us . . . some of it is cultural, it's environment. We're trying to change the narrative by having them focus on us as soldiers, not female soldiers or male soldiers, but soldiers with the same leadership attributes. It's a cultural perspective, their environment that they were brought up in. We're trying to change the paradigm, we're trying to shift that and it's hard when you're dealing with years of being acculturated to think that way, to act that way and to be that way.

Sue reported that this male view sometimes directly influences how females are selected. She stated, "The outside influences need to stay out of it. You have sergeant majors that literally go up there [to Human Resources Command] get involved in picking the person that goes to the unit." A way to combat activity reported by Sue, Lisa suggested that, "Until you get a lot of women in those positions like battalion commander, brigade commander in IET, you're not gonna have that trickle down and get more females in those positions. You will always, always have more males." Lisa also suggested that selection is sometimes based on the point of least resistance. She reported:

When selecting soldiers for career development, keep in mind that there are female soldiers out there. [Don't] go to the least point of resistance and go to the first male that's eligible to fill a position. Make a conscious effort to look at those females and their career map and get those females in there. That message has to be communicated to the folks that are putting these folks in these types of positions.

During the focus group, Sue suggested that the higher tier leaders consider the example the Army should set:

We need to show those young soldiers coming in the Army what the Army really truly looks like, that you're gonna run into females, you're gonna run into males, and this is what a good female non-commissioned officer . . . looks like. Really think about what we want to show those young soldiers as far as how society looks. You have males and females out there doing great and wonderful things and in great leadership positions. We need to show the same thing in the military.

Both Kim and Becky advocated for active recruitment of females. Kim stated that, "It's important for the Army to recruit more women to fill those roles. We have more women serving and it's important for our young women to see us early in their careers—in basic training, IET, you name it." Becky advocated for career development and mentors:

We need to start advocating [the progression through the military] to young recruits, maybe pair them up with a sponsor or someone who has been there. We need more females, females who have gone through it to reach back and say, "I did it, now you can." It starts with a mindset, to planting that seed when female soldiers first get in the Army, their first duty assignment, advocate that they think about becoming a 1SG in the IET environment because young recruits want to see themselves in who is training them. Because they are more apt to excel when they say, "She's like me and she's there." So, I think advocating mentorship, planting that seed and eradicating the mindset, the stereotype, and let them know that they can do it.

Several of the retired NCOs suggested that how society views females has to change in order for more females to rise to leadership positions in the IET environment. Mary stated, "Society males look at us as incapable, but we don't look at ourselves like that. We know what we can do. We have to change society's view about us when it comes to leadership." Becky, during the focus group, described the situation:

We don't get enough representation of females for soldiers. There's still not enough representation in these critical positions where female soldiers will see representations of themselves and can identify with people that look like them. It starts from the initial entry when female soldiers see themselves represented and they're carried through the process at every critical stage of their military career, they see females in these top roles. If we don't change that optic, then it's gonna be the same continuously.

Summary

During the interviews and analysis of the data, my experience as a female 1SG in the BCT environment was bracketed. When the participants' comments touched on my personal experience, I wrote about my own personal opinions and biases in a journal. My journaling allowed me to focus on the topic and the questions. My reflections in the journal were then used as another piece of data for analysis.

Journaling was a great opportunity for me to self-reflect on my military career and the issues I faced moving up in rank. I was privileged to be able to obtain the highest rank as an enlisted soldier and to see how working hard and mentoring other soldiers paid off. My lived experiences and understanding of the Army promotion system and the IET environment gave me an insight into what other female soldiers may experience and the obstacles they may face in their military careers. Through this process I was able to analyze my thoughts and feeling about females in top leadership positions and how I can be a catalyst for change.

This chapter contained a rich description of 10 participants and the themes developed from the data. The participants' comments provided insight into their lived experiences as female senior enlisted leaders who served in the position of 1SG or CSM in the IET environment while in the United States Army. A discussion of the findings and implications of the study are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore and understand retired female senior enlisted leaders' experiences while assigned to the leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in IET to ascertain if their experiences may shed light on the underrepresentation of female 1SGs and CSMs in the BCT environment. For this study, the researcher examined the retired female 1SGs and CSMs' experiences to determine factors that led to their success in the IET environment. The researcher also sought to describe the challenges and barriers they may have faced. This chapter contains a summary of the findings from interviews and a focus group of 10 retired female 1SGs and CSMs who had experience in the IET environment. A discussion of the findings in light of the theoretical framework and empirical literature follows. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for theoretical, empirical, and practical implications, the study's delimitations and limitations, and recommendations for future study.

Summary of Findings

This study broadens the foundation of literature related to the under-representation of females in senior leadership positions. Eagly and Karau (2002) concluded the following regarding women and leadership roles, " (a) less favorable attitudes toward female than male leaders, (b) greater difficulty for women in attaining leadership roles, and (c) greater difficultly for women in being recognized as effective in these roles" (p. 589). Each of the participants indicated in their interviews that although they had served successfully as First Sergeants and/or Command Sergeants Major in the IET environment that they had experienced prejudice(s) described by Eagly and Karau (2002). The data collected throughout this study highlighted the participants' experiences while assigned to the IET environment. The participants described

leadership attributes they perceived to be necessary to be successful as 1SG and CSMs in the BCT environment. They also shared challenges and barriers that they believed exist that prevent senior enlisted females from obtaining the leadership roles of 1SG and CSM. Several themes emerged from the qualitative transcendental phenomenological study that explored four research questions.

Research Question 1

What factors contributed to female senior noncommissioned officers' success in the leader positions of 1SG or CSM in the IET environment?

The researcher sought to determine factors that led to participants' success in the IET environment. The themes identified were guidance from others, tenacity, setting standards for self, and creating a career plan. Participants reported that tenacity led to their success, whether that tenacity was in the form of being physically fit, being an expert at the program of instruction (curriculum), or being able to deal with male colleagues who did not necessarily believe that females should be leaders in the BCT environment. Another theme that emerged was setting standards for themselves. As a result of having to be physically fit and experts in their field, the participants set standards for themselves, sometimes beyond the established standards, to be successful. Some participants did indicate that the support of their team led to their success.

Research Question 2

What are the challenges or barriers experienced by females serving in the leadership positions of 1SG or CSM in a U.S. Army BCT unit?

The participants listed several themes, such as the lack of female senior enlisted leader presence in the BCT environment, fighting stereotypes, having to prove oneself, and the reaction to their use of the direct approach to leadership as challenges or barriers. Participants who either

were a single parent or married to other service members also listed having a family as a challenge.

Research Question 3

What leadership attributes do participants identify as necessary to be successful in a BCT unit?

The participants provided responses that helped the researcher determine leadership attributes necessary to be successful in a BCT unit. The theme that most prominently emerged was Army Values. They echoed that living and demonstrating the Army's core values in the BCT environment is essential to being successful in the IET environment.

Research Question 4

What challenges and barriers, if any, exist that prevent senior enlisted females from attaining senior leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment?

The researcher was interested in obtaining participants' points of view on the challenges and barriers that may exist to prevent senior enlisted females from obtaining the leadership position of 1SG or CSM in the BCT environment. Two themes emerged: (a) the coding of the positions and (b) the male perception of females. The majority of the participants seemed to believe that the senior enlisted leadership positions are coded for combat arms (i.e., infantry) soldiers. One participant reported that she believed the issue lies with the centralized selection process. This process is used to determine and select the Army's Sergeants Major population assignments. The participants believed that the people determining the assignments are not looking at background to make determinations and that is why females are not being selected for these positions. However, another participant noted that these positions are not based on gender and therefore believed there is no abuse in assigning females to these leadership positions.

Participants also noted male perception as a barrier to ensuring more females in leadership roles in the BCT/IET environment. One participant noted that she had to measure up to not only the Army standard but to an arbitrary male standard. The participants reported that females just do not want to deal with that type of stereotype. In addition, because of the lack of females in leadership roles, the participants noted that there are few female mentors to help females achieve leadership roles.

Discussion

In the following section, I discuss how the study's findings reflect credence to previous research, extend the body of research, contribute to the field of study, and shed new light on theories informing this topic. The theoretical frameworks selected to guide this phenomenological study are based on Eagly and Wood's (1988) social role theory and Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. The connection between the theoretical framework, empirical research, and this study's findings is discussed. The study's findings highlighted barriers female leaders experienced in their military career. These barriers included soldiers' perceptions of their leadership styles, how policy creates obstacles for advancement, and stereotypes about men and women serving in leadership roles that continue to reflect historical biases that deter them from pursuing ranks and duty positions.

Theoretical Framework

The social role theory postulates that the expectations for men and women are based on sex differences that regulate behavior in an adult's work and family life (Eagly & Wood, 1988; Kiser, 2015). The theory also suggests that individuals will behave in accordance with preconceived notions about the roles they occupy (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Kiser, 2015). Regarding leader roles, researchers suggest that the social role theory determines leadership roles by gender (Bissessar, 2013; Lobpries et al., 2018). The findings of the study confirm the social

role theory. The participants' responses indicated that the positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment are male dominated. The participants who served as 1SG and CSMs in the BCT environment met resistance from their male colleagues and leaders because they were not male. Participants also indicated that their male colleagues "took care of them." The participants' responses also indicated that they were not expected to be as physically fit as their male colleagues were. There were also indications from the participants that females had to choose (make the decision) to raise their children and take care of their families rather than pursue the senior enlisted positions of 1SG or CSM in the IET environment.

The role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders suggests that women do not reach top-level positions because of two types of prejudice. The first prejudice is based on the perception that women are less capable than men are to occupy leadership roles. The second prejudice involves judging women more harshly when they are in leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The findings of the study confirm the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders.

The first prejudice perception of this theory, that females are less capable than men, is indicated resoundingly in the participants' responses that there are very few females in the IET environment. The lack of females in the environment was a challenge or barrier to the success of senior enlisted female 1SGs and CSMs in this environment. Many of the females indicated that they were not accepted by their male colleagues and male leaders because they were not males.

Participants also indicated the second prejudice was prevalent as well. They indicated when using the direct or authoritative approach to leadership that they were considered to be "a bitch." The participants also indicated that they had to be smarter and exceed physical fitness standards. One participant was told that she was being "sized up" to see if she knew what she

was talking about or "if she [was] just here filling a seat." As a result, she had to build a rapport with the male leaders in order to be accepted.

Empirical Literature

Empirical literature is based on experience, observation, and original research. This current study extends previous research on the representation of women in senior leadership positions because it includes a population of female leaders in a nontraditional educational (training) environment in the United States' largest branch of the military. The literature suggests leadership styles, policy, glass ceilings, family obligations, stereotypes, and physical fitness could contribute to barriers for women.

While conducting an examination of the results and reviewing the literature review in Chapter 2, new substance to the themes became known. For example, when examining the Department of the Army attributes (2015b), the study participants demonstrated the characteristics desired to be successful leaders. Their level of success built upon years of dedication to the values of the Army and their values led to their varying degrees of success. The participants listed toughness and tenacity, and good judgement. The Army Values, toughness and tenacity, and good judgement are all listed in the Army's leadership attributes and competencies (Department of the Army, 2015b). It is paramount for organizations to recognize what is needed to shape organizational policies and practices to promote or elevate the best person for a position, irrespective of gender (Stainback et al., 2016). A review of the literature indicates that the Army has articulated expectations (attributes and competencies) of its leaders in its leadership manual. The Army's attributes and competency model includes the need for both agentic and communal characteristics (Department of the Army, 2015b).

Another barrier participants listed that prevented senior enlisted females from attaining these senior leadership positions in BCT was the coding of the positions. Participants

recommended that changing the structure of how positions are coded in the BCT organization may increase the number of females in the BCT environment. Many of the participants suggested that the military occupational specialty identifiers were problematic. A review of the literature noted that, until recently, women were restricted by law and policy from serving in certain military occupational specialties and units below brigade level, where the primary mission was to engage in combat. The policy barred women from serving in infantry, artillery, armor, combat engineer, and special operation units of battalion size or smaller (Kamarck, 2015). Since the restrictions have been lifted, the 2017 demographics profile of the military community report indicates a 0.7% increase in active duty females in the U.S. Army (Department of Defense 2017). In addition, it is reported that the Army is actively recruiting more females (WDRB Media, 2017).

The glass ceiling, introduced in 1984, is a term used to describe the inequalities between men and women in the workplace (Gamble & Turner, 2015). A review of the literature shows that in the United States, women make up approximately 47% of the workforce and 51% of management and professional positions. In addition, women earn 57% of all bachelor's degrees and 60% of all master's degrees. However, women make up only 5% of CEOs in Fortune 500 companies and 17% of the U.S. Congress (Frye & Pham, 2018; Northouse, 2015). Women represent slightly more than 13% of Army active-duty enlisted personnel (DoD, 2014). Women account for only 10% of 1SG positions and 4% of the CSM positions in BCT units (Department of the Army, 2017d). Baxter and Wright (2000) suggested that women who get through the doors of management at some point hit an invisible barrier that blocks them from any further upward movement. Because there is no mandatory ratio requirement or limit to the number of female 1SG and CSM in BCT units, there is an indication of a glass ceiling in this environment.

When it comes to barriers and challenges, family obligations are both a perceived barrier and challenge to career advancements. Dindoffer et al. (2011) noted women contend with this challenge and sacrifice family life as Becky, in the current study, did in postponing a family to preserve her career. Such sacrifice aligns with Groysberg and Abrahams's (2014) assertion that women believe they will have difficulty when trying to balance motherhood and work. This was also indicated in the response of the research participants. Participants indicated that making decisions to put off having children and having to work long hours as challenges and barriers. In addition, the participants responded that female senior enlisted soldiers do not pursue 1SG and CSM positions because of family obligations. Although this does not dictate a woman cannot have a family and be successful, there is an imprint on the culture of many organizations, such as the military, that suggests otherwise. Because women are faced with the dilemma of taking care of their family or pursuing ranks and duty positions, there is an indication that senior enlisted females do not seek out 1SG and CSM positions in BCT because of family obligations.

Another common thread was male perception or stereotypes. Lane-Washington and Wilson-Jones (2010) found that women experienced challenges and barriers while aspiring, seeking, and serving in senior leadership positions in the American public school system. Women in the military have experienced similar challenges, as indicated by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, who stated, "When you get right down to it, you've got to protect the manliness of war" (as cited in Enloe, 1983, p. 153). Despite the increased presence and opportunities of women in military leadership positions (Orrick, 2016; Pellerin, 2015), there is evidence that social attitudes toward women serving in leader roles continue to reflect historical biases and stereotypes that may hinder their performance (Matthews et al., 2009).

In a study by Bensahel et al. (2015), female soldiers interviewed stated that pregnant women "aren't seen as real soldiers" or are seen as a burden and liability to their unit. Research

has also found that when women engage in agentic behavior, they often receive backlash because they are seen as insufficiently communal (Brescoll, 2016). This finding is supported by the participants in this study in their response to how they are viewed (perceived) when exercising the direct leadership approach and an indication of a lack of male acceptance of females holding the positions of 1SG and CSM in a BCT unit. However, women in this study indicated that when using an agentic form of leadership, they were viewed negatively. Stainback et al. (2016) suggested that women are *agents of change* and the more women in leadership reduce the gender separation in organizations. Efforts, such as inclusion of women in all military occupational specialties, will give male soldiers more interaction with female soldiers at the operational level, and in turn may reduce gender stereotypes.

In review and examination of the literature, physical differences were listed as a barrier. The literature suggested that the physical ability of women has been an ongoing issue in the Army's non-training environments (Chapman, 2008; Cohn 2000). Troubaugh (2018) noted that the results of a 2015 Army survey indicated that women were viewed as weaker than men because the current physical fitness test standard was so low for women. Troubaugh (2018) suggested that standard differences serve as the basis for institutional bias. Although participants did not, overwhelmingly, list physical differences as a barrier per se, tenacity and toughness did surface as a theme in response to what factors led to their success in the IET environment. Participants reported, resoundingly, that tenacity was needed to be successful in the IET/BCT environment. The participants indicated that they had to make sure they were physically fit and in the case of one participant, once she proved that she was a runner, she was accepted by her commander and male colleagues. Continuing a rigorous fitness program in the Army will continue to ensure females, despite physiological differences, are prepared to take on physically and mentally challenging positions.

Implications

Researchers can use the results to understand what factors may contribute to the underrepresentation of female leaders in senior leader positions in male dominant organizations. The implications of this study are supported by the themes that emerged from the data. This section contains the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study and recommendations for individual stakeholders.

Theoretical Implication

This study helped to clarify how the social role theory and the role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders applies to the factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of female leaders in the U.S. Army's basic combat training units of the IET environment. Those who are involved in the assignment of 1SGs and CSMs must understand the importance of assigning females to these positions in the IET/BCT environment (Kiser, 2015; Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2014; Tench et al., 2017; Violanti & Jureczak; 2010). The most common themes identified by the participants were tenacity, old boy network, having to prove oneself, reaction to leadership, fighting stereotypes, Army values, coding jobs, and male perceptions of females. The commonality of these themes supports the social role and the role congruity theory's postulations. The role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leader postulates that individuals are penalized when they do not perform according to the expectations of society (Ferguson, 2018; Skelly & Johnson, 2011). This is evident in the participants' responses to the question of how they were viewed, considered, or referred to when using the direct approach leadership style. All but one of the participants reported that women were referred to negatively (e.g., angry, aggressive, negative, bitch, too blunt, over the top, and too direct). The theory also suggests that women do not reach top-level positions because of two types of prejudice. The first is based on the perception that women are less capable than men are to occupy leadership

roles. The second involves judging women more harshly when they are in leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The themes support the theory.

Empirical Implication

The researcher used the interviews, focus group, and a reflective journal to understand factors that contributed to the underrepresentation of senior enlisted female leaders in the basic combat training environment. In this section, the empirical implications of the study are delineated by the factors that led to the participants' success, the challenges and barriers experienced by female senior enlisted leaders serving in the leadership positions of 1SG and/or CSM, leadership traits that the participants identified as necessary to be successful in BCT, as well as challenges and barriers the participants believed exist that may prevent senior enlisted females from attaining the senior enlisted leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment. Empirically, the study's findings corroborate much of the reviewed literature relative to challenges and barriers females face that contribute to the underrepresentation of females in senior leadership positions.

In terms of successes there are several take aways for leaders of male dominated organization, females in senior leader positions, as well as female leaders seeking to pursue senior leader positions in male dominated organizations. Relative to women currently in senior leader positions and those who may seek these positions in the future, participants strongly voiced, the importance of tenacity in the IET environment. So much so, that Carol recommended, female senior noncommissioned officers "be in their face and say "I want to be a first sergeant here. I want the job and I want to be a first sergeant and I need your support and ensure that I have it." Carli and Eagly (2015) suggests that women in leadership continue to face challenges that men do not. This implies that, in order to be successful, women serving in leadership positions will need to demonstrate confidence and determination, especially in male

dominated organizations. Participants also noted that proving oneself as an indicator of success. Becky noted that once she proved that she could run with the commander that he accepted her as his 1SG.

Concerning challenges and barriers experienced by the participants and the challenges and barriers participants believe are factors that prevent women from seeking out senior enlisted leader positions in BCT, the overarching themes that emerged from both the individual and focus group interviews are that female senior enlisted leaders continue to fight stereotypes and that male perceptions of females may prevent senior enlisted females from seeking out these position. Beth shard that there were times that she was the only female at the table. She stated that , " male counterparts, African American and Caucasian, had no issue in letting me know that they had issue with me being at the table and when I said that they had issue with me being at the table, almost as if I took one of their brother's position". Carol shared, when she showed up to the unit and they expected a male, her counterparts assumed, she's not going to be able to do this and she's not going to stay out overnight in the field training area, so those were these types of stereotypes I had to overcome."   Mary noted that a few of her subordinates challenged her, they didn't challenge her technical abilities, but they challenged her (authority) stating, "You can't tell me what to do. All because you're a female." Mary went on to share that her battalion commander made many public statements about how females should only take care of paperwork, processing the soldiers in and out of the unit, and let the male drill sergeants do the training. These themes imply that challenges and barriers are prevalent in the BCT environment. This also implies that these challenges and barriers prevent females senior enlisted soldiers from seeking out senior positions in BCT. These become barriers to advancements for females senior enlisted leaders thus implying a glass ceiling may exist in the BCT environment. The glass

ceiling metaphor implies that women face obstacles once they have risen to very high levels of leadership which prevent them from advancing to higher level positions (Carli and Eagly, 2015).

When discussing attributes necessary to be successful in the BCT environment participants overwhelmingly expressed (themes) Army Values and having a genuine care for soldiers and their well-being. The Army Values consist of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honesty, integrity or personal courage (Department of the Army, 2015b). Lisa stated, "I know it's almost cliché' but it goes without saying, you have to embody the Army Values. Kim believed that caring about people was the main attribute. She stated, "if you care about people and you care about the mission and they (the people) know that, I believe people will go to the ends of the Earth to do what needs to be done". Physical fitness was also viewed as an attribute. Becky stated, "Physical fitness is paramount, while I don't believe it is the most important, it is paramount in the sense that in an environment like that soldiers have to be fit so you have to be fit in around to lead by example". These takeaways imply that both agentic and communal attributes are necessary to be successful in a male dominated environment. The coding of 1SG and CSM positions in BCT was highlighted as a barrier that prevented female senior enlisted females from being assigned to 1SG and CSM positions in BCT. The participants implied that the positions were coded for combat arms soldiers. Since, combat arms positions were only opened up to females, it will take some time for females to advance to senior enlisted leader ranks in those specialties. Based on the participants' comments, removing the military occupational specialty coding would allow more non-combat arms senior enlisted personnel to be assigned to the positions of 1SG and CSM in BCT units.

Practical Implications

The meanings constructed from the data collected during the study can help researchers understand ways to increase the representation of female senior leaders in male-dominated

organizations. This section contains a discussion of the practical implications related to underrepresentation of female senior enlisted leaders in BCT environment. The practical implications are related to participants' successes, challenges and barriers they experienced, as well as, challenges and barriers that affect female senior enlisted representation in the BCT environment. The implications are also related to the participants' perceptions of leadership attributes needed to be successful in the BCT environment.

With diversity and inclusion at the forefront of any organization's success, the Army must continue discussions on how to make the organization more inclusive. Of particular importance is the discussion of assigning senior enlisted females to positions that are typically regarded as male-dominated positions. Nanton (2015) asserted the need for decision makers to have continuous diversity and inclusion conversations when considering the pipeline of available talent. It is clear from the results that the military cannot merely be about business as usual. The literature is clear on what it takes to produce success and that leadership is, in fact, gender-neutral (Frye & Pham, 2018; Sahin et al., 2017; Sims & Morris, 2018).

There is an underrepresentation of female senior enlisted leaders in the positions of 1SG and CSM in BCT environment. The participants' responses indicated that females who have held these positions faced challenges and barriers. The participants believed that these challenges and barriers prevented other senior enlisted females from seeking these positions. The participants also believed that current policy and procedures need to be changed to ensure that selection for these positions is not based on gender, but on the record of the soldier. Based on the participants' responses, the themes that emerged from this study, and the current representation of female 1SGs and CSMs, it could be perceived that only males make great 1SGs and CSMs in the Army's BCT environment.

Recommendations

Because of the underrepresentation of senior enlisted females in 1SG and CSM positions

in the BCT environment and the responses of the participants, the Army should begin or continue

discussions of diversity and inclusion of female senior enlisted soldiers in leadership positions, to

include BCT and OSUT units. Matthew et al. (2009) noted that despite increased presence of

women in military leadership positions, there is evidence that social attitudes toward women

serving in leader roles continue to reflect historical biases and stereotypes that may hinder their

performance. This discussion should be at the decision-making levels of senior Army

leadership. Nanton (2015) suggested bringing diversity discussions to leaders in policy or

decision-making positions. The Army may also benefit from instituting mentorship programs for

senior enlisted female leaders in the BCT environment. Hill and Wheat (2017) reported that

university women leaders benefitted from having mentors and role models. Female university

presidents reported that mentors and role models "served to increase their self-confidence by

providing encouragement, career advice and information, and skills or training" (Hill & Wheat,

2017, p. 2104). Establishing a mentor program comprised of females who have successfully

served in the position of 1SG and CSM, may increase the number of females in BCT units.

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Delimitations and Limitations

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Delimitations are purposeful choices the researcher makes to restrict the boundaries of

the study. The main delimiting parameter set for this study was to include only females as

participants for this study. Another delimiting factor was to select only participants who had

retired from the U.S. Army in the previous 10 years and had been assigned as a 1SG or CSM in

the IET environment. The delimiting factors were important to ensure the data captured were

current and included the lived experiences of participants who had firsthand knowledge of the

phenomenon. In addition, the participants must have served on an installation that conducted

basic combat training or OSUT. These boundaries were also established to solicit rich information from participants for the study. Exploring the experiences of women who have obtained senior positions in the IET environment shed light on the underrepresentation of women in senior leader positions in BCT units. Moustakas (1994) suggested that exploring what the participant's (lived) experiences mean is significant to a study.

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study that cannot be controlled. A major limitation was the number of participants who met the requirement of having served in BCT as a 1SG or CSM and had retired in the past 10 years. During the initial recruitment process of this study, I could not find 10 participants who had served specifically in the BCT environment; therefore, I included participants who had served as 1SG/CSM in IET. I recruited on Facebook and LinkedIn. In addition, I used the snowball sampling technique. I was able to recruit only 13 interested women and only 10 met the criteria for the study.

Recommendation for Future Study

Several countries have advanced arguments for the exclusion of female soldiers in combat and senior military positions (Marencinova, 2018). This is not the case with the United States military. With the growing number of opportunities for women in the military, as a result of the decision to open all combat jobs to women (Rosenberg & Philipps, 2015), it is imperative that the largest military force in the United States, the U.S. Army, conduct studies to determine how to increase the number of female leaders in senior enlisted positions.

Participants of this study identified several themes, including guidance from others and tenacity, that led to their success in the IET environment. Many studies document the experiences of women in positions of power (Doll, 2007; Eagley, 2018; Hill & Wheat, 2017). This researcher recommends that the military conduct studies that investigate successful strategies of female senior enlisted leaders. Studies by Eagly and Karau (2002), Matthews et al.,

(2009), Violanti and Jureczak (2010), and Snabjornsson and Edvardsson (2012) found that females in senior leadership positions face many challenges and barriers. Some of those challenges and barriers the leaders encountered are similar to those experienced by the participants of this study, thus this researcher recommends that the Army expand on those studies and this study to investigate the challenges and barriers women face. The expansion of this study could shed more light on challenges and barriers, and reduce, prevent, or even eliminate these challenges to them.

Based on this study's findings, the male perception of female leaders is viewed as a barrier to women seeking out 1SG and CSM positions in BCT and resulting in the continued underrepresentation of women in that environment. Gender stereotypes have been investigated by researchers to explore the underrepresentation of female leaders (Anderson et al., 2015; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016; Tench et al., 2017) in senior leader positions. Stainback et al. (2016) suggested that women in position of leadership are associated with lowering levels of gender segregation. Because the military has lifted its ban on women serving in combat units, thus increasing opportunities for women and decreasing gender segregation, this researcher recommends studies across military branches to explore male perceptions of females serving in senior leader positions. This recommended research might help identify and eliminate stereotypes that may exist in the U.S military and increase the representation of female leaders in male-dominated units.

Summary

History has shown that many women have chosen to support and defend their country by enlisting to serve in the U.S. military. Their roles have changed significantly since they were first formally recognized as military members in the early 20th century (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017). Although women have served in the military for well over a century, the U.S.

military is a male-dominant organization and military forces have exemplified a strong and authoritative leadership style, normally exemplified by males (Bass, 1990).

The female participants in this study were successful in the IET environment and attributed their success to their tenacity, genuine care for their soldiers, and guidance from others. The participants also experienced challenges and barriers, mainly from lack of female representation, gender stereotypes, and lack of acceptance from their male counterparts. Overwhelmingly, the participants listed one or more of the Army Values as the overarching characteristic needed to be successful in the IET/BCT environment. The participants believed that changing the coding of military occupational specialty of the 1SG and CSM positions in the BCT environment could help increase the representation of female senior enlisted women in BCT units.

Although the participants were successful in their senior enlisted positions in the IET environment, they all experienced challenges and barriers that they believe contributed to the underrepresentation of female leaders in the positions of 1SG and CSM in BCT units. This researcher hopes to encourage more women to aspire to attain the positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT units and that they pursue these positions to help the Army increase the number of females in this environment. More female role models and mentors are needed in the BCT environment to train female soldiers who will become the future leaders of our Army.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Greetings,

My name is Allison Smith. I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University's School of Education. I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of the study is to explore and understand retired female senior enlisted leaders' experiences while assigned to the leadership positions of first sergeant (1SG) and command sergeant major (CSM) in initial entry training (IET) to ascertain if their experiences may shed light on the underrepresentation of female 1SGs and CSMs in the basic combat training (BCT) environment. For this study, the experiences of retired female 1SG and CSMs will include factors that led to their success in the IET environment, as well as challenges and barriers they may have faced, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are female, a U.S. Army retiree, retired within the last 10 years, have experience as a First Sergeant (1SG) or Command Sergeant Major (CSM) in the Army's initial entry training environment that has basic combat training units, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a participant screening questionnaire, a recorded interview, and a recorded focus group with fellow retired female 1SGs and CSMs. The questionnaire should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. The interview will take place in a private setting most convenient for you and will take 45 to 60 minutes. Interview options such as skype, webinar, or teleconference will also be made available. The focus group session should last from 60 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes. Focus groups may also be conducted either in person or via conference call. Participants will be asked to review the transcripts of their interview and focus group contributions for accuracy. Your name and/or other identifying information will be collected as part of your participation, but this information will remain confidential.

To participate, please complete the attached participant screening questionnaire form and return to me via email or fax, 703-780-1477. If accepted, you will receive an acceptance email with a consent document attached. The consent document will contain additional information about my study. If you are selected to participate, you will be asked to sign the consent document.

*Please note that this research and program of study are not officially connected to any sort of Army or military funded, directed, or otherwise connected program and there is no perception of such. You are under no obligation to participate and may withdraw from the study at any time. If you have questions at any time, please contact me at asmith17@liberty.edu

Sincerely,

Allison Smith, Ed.S.
571-215-2318

APPENDIX B: LIBERTY UNIVERSITY'S IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Dear Allison Smith,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases are attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

> 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Your IRB-approved, stamped consent form is also attached. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

Liberty University, School of Education, Ed.D. Program

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE
SENIOR ENLISTED LEADERS IN THE U.S. ARMY'S BASIC COMBAT TRAINING UNITS
Allison Smith
Liberty University, School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study on the representation of female senior enlisted leaders in the U.S. Army's Basic Combat Training (BCT) units. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a female who has served as a First Sergeant (1SG) or Command Sergeant Major (CSM) in the U.S. Army's Initial Entry Training Environment and you retired from the U.S. Army in the past 10 years. Please read this form and ask any questions before agreeing to be in this study.

Allison Smith, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to explore and understand retired female senior enlisted leaders' experiences while assigned to the leadership positions of first sergeant (1SG) and command sergeant major (CSM) in initial entry training (IET) to ascertain if their experiences may shed light on the underrepresentation of female 1SGs and CSMs in the basic combat training (BCT) environment. For this study, the experiences of retired female 1SG and CSMs will include factors that led to their success in the IET environment, as well as challenges and barriers they may have faced. The researcher is hoping to answer the following four research questions (RQ) based on your military experience while assigned to the IET environment:

RQ1: What factors contributed to female senior noncommissioned officers' success in the leader positions of 1SG or CSM in the IET environment?
RQ2: What are the challenges or barriers experienced by females serving in the leadership positions of 1SG or CSM in a U.S. Army BCT unit?
RQ3: What leadership attributes do participants identify as necessary to be successful in a BCT unit?
RQ4: What challenges and barriers, if any, exist that prevent senior enlisted females from attaining senior leadership positions of 1SG and CSM in the BCT environment?

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Take part in an audiotaped individual interview with the researcher only. The individual interview should last approximately 45 to 60 minutes in duration. The researcher will ask you to answer question about your military experience. The researcher will also journal field (interview) notes during the session.
2. Participate in a focus group session with fellow retired female 1SGs and CSMs. The focus group session will be audiotaped. The researcher will also journal field (interview) notes during the session. The focus group interview should last from 60 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes.
3. The researcher will ask you to review the transcript of your interview to ensure the researcher has accurately captured your responses to the interview questions. The researcher will also ask you to review focus group transcribed comments captured during the conduct of the focus group session. You will be asked to provide any feedback within three days of receipt of the transcript.

*The individual Interviews will take place in a setting most convenient to you or you may also choose an alternate interview method, such as skype, webinar, or teleconference. The focus group interview will take place at a location convenient to all focus group participants. Focus group participants will also be given choice of using an alternate interview method, such as skype, webinar, or teleconference.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefit to Society: The benefit of this study is that it may encourage more women to seek out and take advantage of leadership opportunities in the military and other organizations. Another benefit is that it may influence policies that prescribe the assignment of women to more leadership positions.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- In an effort to protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms will be used for participants and locations where the participants served as first sergeants or commands sergeant major. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Electronic records will be stored on a password-protected computer. Any paper documents will be stored in a secured file cabinet. Only the researcher will have access to the records. The computer systems, and file cabinet will be secured in a locked private office accessible to the researcher only. The coding system linking the participant or location to their unique pseudonym or code will be stored on a separate password protected device to decrease the possibility of identifying the participants or locations used in the study. All files and data collected during the data collection process and will only contain pseudonyms for identification purposes. After three years, data will be destroyed using the following methods: Electronic data will be permanently deleted from my computer, audio recording wills be erased, and paper documents will be shredded.
- Interviews and the focus group will be recorded and transcribed. The interviews will be transcribed by a professional transcription service. Electronic recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer for three years and erased. Any audio tape recordings will be stored in a locked file cabinet when not in use. The file cabinet will be secured in a locked private office accessible to the researcher only.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Military Clause: Please note that this research and program of study are not officially connected to any sort of Army or military funded, directed, or otherwise connected program, that there is no perception of such, and that the participants understand that they are under no obligation to participate.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Allison Smith. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 571-215-23318 or you may contact her via email asmith17@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, James Fyock at jafyock@liberty.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INTAKE SCREENING TOOL

1. Why did you join the U.S. Army?

2. What was your military occupational specialty (MOS)?

3. Which type of initial entry training (IET) environment did you serve in as a first sergeant or command sergeant major? Gender-integrated or gender-pure?

4. What dates did you serve as a first sergeant or command sergeant major in the initial entry training environment?

5. Were you assigned to a basic combat training, advanced individual training, or reception station unit?

6. What date were you laterally appointed to the rank of first sergeant?

7. What date were you appointed to the rank of Command Sergeant Major?

8. Prior to becoming a 1SG/CSM in the IET environment, what was your experience with basic combat training?

APPENDIX E: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe your childhood (location, family structure, socioeconomic status, etc.).

2. What was your major motivation for joining the Army?

3. Prior to your assignment as a 1SG or CSM position in Initial Entry Training (IET), describe your experience(s) working with and reporting to male senior enlisted Soldiers?

4. Prior to your assignment as a 1SG or CSM in Initial Entry Training (IET), describe your experience(s) working with or reporting to female senior enlisted Soldiers?

5. What was your major motivation or interest for obtaining the senior enlisted rank and serving as a first sergeant or command sergeant major in the IET environment?

6. What do you feel are the major barriers and other challenges, if any, that you overcame to successfully serve as a first sergeants and command sergeants major in the Initial Entry Training (IET) environment? (i.e., family and financial responsibilities, leadership, gender acceptance, regulations and policies)

7. How do those barriers and other challenges in Question 6 differ from the challenges faced in the non - IET environment?

8. How do barriers and challenges differ for male and female first sergeants and command sergeants major in both IET units and non-IET units?

9. What leader characteristics do you believe strong leaders need to possess to be effective?

10. What leader characteristics do you believe leaders need to possess in order to be effective in the basic combat training environment?

11. How do these characteristics differ for men compared to women?

12. In your experience, what leadership style do most female Army enlisted leaders display?

13. In your experience, what leadership style do most male Army enlisted leaders display?

14. In your experience, how are female leaders described when they use the direct approach to leadership?

15. Based on your experience, are female leaders who serve in the leader roles of 1SG and CSM in BCT/OSUT treated differently from their male counterparts. If treated differently how and why?

16. What technical and tactical skills do you believe are necessary to be assigned as a first sergeant or command sergeant major in the basic combat training environment?

17. From your experience, discuss why there are so few women first sergeants and command sergeants major in the basic combat training environment.

18. What recommendations would you offer the Army, if any, to increase the number of female first sergeants and command sergeants major in the basic combat training environment?

19. What led to your success as a First Sergeant or CSM in the Initial Entry Training Environment?

20. As a former command sergeant major or first sergeant, what advice would you give a female senior enlisted soldier who is interested in obtaining a first sergeant or command sergeant major position in the basic combat training environment?

APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. [Introductory Question] Please introduce yourself and tell where you were assigned as a CSM or 1SG in the IET environment.

2. [Ice Breaker] Describe your most memorable experience as a first sergeant or command sergeant major in the IET environment.

3. What is your perspective of the roles of women and men? This could relate to society in general or specifically to their roles in the military.

4. How would you describe leadership differences between men and women?

5. What qualities of leadership are needed for a training environment?

6. What issues, if any, did you encounter achieving your rank?

7. What goals or position did you aspire to achieve while in the military?

8. Describe your role model(s) while in the military.

9. How did your experiences as a senior leader in the IET environment differ from your experiences as a senior leader in other units in which you served?