



A CASE STUDY ON GENDER INEQUALITY IN A
DEFENSE SETTING

by

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Dissertation

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Abstract

Women are gaining education, skills, strength, and have adequate drive yet, gender inequality is still blocking their advancement into senior leadership especially in the United States (U.S.) Defense Industry. The purpose of this study was to explore gender inequality within organizational leadership, specifically within the Department of Defense (DoD) civilian sector, to identify potential barriers ceasing the advancement of qualified women. The main research question driving this research is, what internal and external barriers exist in the defense department regarding the professional advancement of women and what factors contribute to advancement into leadership. Follow up questions include how veteran status, education, and gender affect leadership status in the DoD. An ethnographic case study approach with triangulation was applied to answer the research questions due to having multiple data sources and the researcher being a participant in this environment allowing for an in-depth study of the culture. The findings indicate that gender inequality does still exist in the defense industry and male ($X^2=2471.03$, $p=0.000$), veterans ($X^2=775.52$, $p=0.001$) and those with a higher education ($X^2=2087.24$, $p=0.000$) are more likely to be promoted. Men are also more likely to become veterans ($X^2=30,523$, $p=0.000$) which has historically been the dividing line for women in the fight for equality. The findings of this research can be applied to all organizations to improve the lives of women and minorities who are underrepresented in top leadership positions by giving them a voice, supporting them, and making a way for them to advance. God says, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, see visions and dream dreams” (New International Version, Acts 2:17). We are all one Spirit and form one body, and the body is made up of many, many parts which does not function as a body without all of its parts (New International Version, 1 Corinthians 12:12-14).

Key words: Gender Inequality, Leadership, Women, Ethnography, Case Study, DoD

Dedication

It is in genuine gratitude and warm regard that I dedicate this dissertation to all the women careerists that have aspired to advance their careers through education, hard work, training, commitment and dedication to the United States of America and the men that have been supportive. To the women careerists that participated in this research for their transparency, compassion, support, and persistence that enabled them to take part in this research. To the women of Women's Initiative Network (WIN), my mentors Patti, Sara, and the senior executive team that led us all. To the US Navy seals and their families that treated me like a sister and friend and to the US Navy commanding officers that let me interview them and sit at their round table. To my mother who told me I was going to college right at birth, taught me to be morally and physically strong and to never give up. To my stepdad Gunny (Carl) who is I am pretty sure the toughest marine to ever live for keeping my sense of humor alive along the way. To my dad who raised me to know I could do anything and then expecting me to do it and for making me creative, disciplined, and strong and to my stepmom Leilani for her support along the way. To my amazing children Macayla and John and their spouses for being understanding and supportive through this process and my three sisters and brothers-in-law who supported me more than I ever thought anyone could. To my in-laws Jerry, Kay and Darwin for helping me in many ways throughout the years. Finally, to my husband Jim for your sacrifices and support both the visible and invisible throughout this entire process and for the past 26 years. To my extended family the Nelsons and the Downwards both those that have passed and those that are still on Earth, for developing strong roots love through generations to bring forth this generation and all the generations to come you do good work.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

This paper is an exploration of gender inequality in the DoD civilian sector. The U.S. federal government, including the Department of Defense, is a workplace that has long been inhospitable to women due to gender inequality and discrimination. Female leadership is underrepresented in the executive ranks that have a direct effect on the policies, skills, and perspectives of the U.S. (FP Analytics, 2019; Stamarski & Hing, 2015). The U.S. DoD has been recruiting, hiring, developing, retaining, engaging, and motivating people from diverse backgrounds to create a results-oriented, diverse, and high-performing workforce for many years (Office of Personnel Management [OPM], 2020c). The OPM believes that organizational performance will improve and create better customer value if they include people from diverse backgrounds (OPM, 2020c). Unfortunately, this diversity has failed to reach the higher ranks, and there is a lack of female Senior Executive Service (SES) and Supervisory level General Service (GS)-13 to GS-15 leaders (Nelson, 2016). This study aims to find possible reasons for this inequality and propose recommendations to increase diversity in the culture.

Gender is psychological, social, or cultural and refers to the social construct of being male or female, whereas sex is the biological property of being male or female (Kewir, 2015; Mascolo, 2019). Gender inequality refers to marked differences in the status, participation, and influence of men and women in society and organizations (Farrar, 2020; Kewir, 2015). Gender inequality dates to the beginning of time, and although females make-up half of the population, they are ill-represented in senior leadership positions (Farrar, 2020; Kiser, 2014). In most organizations, the primary decision-makers are predominantly male, and gender parity still seems to be a matter of the distant future if trends do not begin to change (Farrar, 2020).

The DoD is considered the role model and leader for other organizations to follow, setting the tone for the U.S. (Stamarski C. S. & Hing, 2015; Bolduc, 2019). Role modeling reflects what the leader values (Bolduc, 2019). Thus, leaders in the DoD and government should uphold the values of honesty, respect, hard work, good morals, and integrity so that the organization reflects these values in all that they do (Winget, 2017). Fortunately, the DoD is aware of its influence and consequently places great emphasis on strength, integrity, courage, honesty, and doing the right thing at the right time, although gender inequality persists, as males are valued above females (US DoD, 2019).

Gender inequality dates to the beginning of time, and although females make up half of the population, they are ill-represented in senior leadership positions (Kiser, 2014; Farrar, 2020). In most organizations, the primary decision-makers are still predominantly male, and parity between the genders is still in the distant future if trends do not begin to change (Farrar, 2020). Thus, this case study will focus on the DoD of the U.S. government, particularly its civilian sector, and the effects of gender inequality and the resultant limited access to qualified female leaders.

Background of the Problem

Since the beginning, women have been fighting for equality, such as from when God told Eve, “I will increase your pain when you give birth. You will be in great pain when you have children. You will long for your husband. And he will rule over you” (New International Readers Version, Genesis 3:16,). One of the main consequences of the fall into sin that occurred in the Garden of Eden as a result of eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge is patriarchy: a system of male domination over females, which evolves and adapts with the times (Myrttinen, 2018). God’s intention was for men and women to work together to cultivate, populate, and subdue the

earth and to be fruitful, multiply, and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and every living thing (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012; Sooy, 2020). It was almost forbidden or, at least, frowned upon, for women to work alongside men in the workplace until recently due to their responsibility for committing the original sin, although that was never part of God's great plan (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012; Payne, 2016).

Throughout biblical times and up until the 1800s, women were considered property and had very few rights (McDermott, 2018). In 1848, the first women's rights movement began in New York at the Seneca Falls Convention, which launched the activism for women's rights and eventually led to women being granted the right to vote in the 19th amendment ("History.com editors", 2019). The 19th amendment was passed in 1920 after women proved that they deserved the right to vote due to actions taken during World War I (WWI) (Olson, 2019). Until the start of World War II, women rarely worked outside the home, and there was negative stigma and a sense of shame associated with women who had to work (McDermott, 2018).

During World War II (WWII), women flooded the factories and military bases, doing man's work and making money for the first time. This became more socially accepted as more and more men went out to war, and women filled their shoes (McDermott, 2018). Although this represented some progress, women were told that when men came back from service, they would no longer have jobs, and they were paid less than men and faced sexual harassment while working in dangerous working conditions (Miller, 2011b). After the war, schools began to be closed off to women, and they were excluded from business, law, and medicine. Thus, women were forced to get married and have children with little opportunity for occupational advancement (May 2020).

There have been three waves or movements in feminist history, which have strived to eliminate inequality in various aspects (Olson, 2019). The first wave focused on property rights and the right to vote, the second wave on anti-discrimination and equality in the workforce, and the third wave dealt with the backlash from the second wave, which prioritized White, heterosexual women over all women in general (Olson, 2019). The second wave began in the 1960s, after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, more and more women began working and fighting for equal pay, and in 1963, the Equal Pay Act was passed followed by the Equal Rights Amendment in 1972 (“History.com editors”, 2019).

Unfortunately, the Equal Rights Amendment was not ratified by a sufficient number of states and, thus, failed to become a law (Olson, 2019). The Equal Pay Act and Affirmative Action were policies to help bring an end to women being paid less than men for equal work, ethnic disparities, and racial discrimination (EEOAC, 2020). However, the actions and policies did not guarantee equal pay or opportunities for promotion and were not specifically designed to assist in the fight for gender equality at all. Moreover, it is difficult to prove discrimination due to the elusive and complex nature of gender inequality (Frye, 2016).

The third and final wave in feminism concerns minorities, women of color, lesbians, and immigrants who felt that the second wave was only intended for educated White heterosexual women (“History.com editors”, 2019). During this movement, there were marches, including the 2017 rally against the Trump Administration in Washington District of Columbia (DC) that advocated for women’s rights. However, no new laws or legislation have been passed (Iqbal & Ramalho, 2019; McDermott, 2018). Unfortunately, the only ones who find gender inequality a real problem are the women who are being treated unequally, and the burden of fighting for equality is placed on each of them (Cook, 2020).

Today, the focus is on gender-neutral language such as equalism or becoming an equalist instead of feminism or being a feminist (Cairo, 2016; Iqbal & Ramalho, 2019). Feminism sees people in a binary system comprising men and women and fights for greater rights for women rather than seeing people as being quite similar in quality, character, and style, which keeps inequality alive (Cairo, 2016). Feminism emphasizes differences and inequalities between men and women; equalism looks at the broader picture, focusing on universal rights for all, regardless of gender, sex, age, physical features, or race (Squadrin, 2018). Many people believe that feminists fight for women's superiority rather than for equal rights, giving some people hard feelings toward the movement, whereas equalism fights for equality between men and women while respecting their differences (Squadrin, 2018).

The focus of this research is on the U.S. DoD's civilian employees and the SES overseeing them. The U.S. DoD civilian sector is still mostly militaristic and male-dominated, especially in its senior ranks, which require combat leadership experience as a prerequisite (Clevenger, 2018; Sasson-Levy, 2011). Women have only been invited to combat leadership roles since the 1990s, meaning that it may be a few years before we will see a woman eligible for filling the top defense roles (Clevenger, 2018). The DoD requires continuous demonstrations of commitment and dedication to the warfighting effort through discipline, hard work, aggressiveness, and integrity (Mattis, 2018).

Masculine cultures are driven by achievement, competition, and success, being defined as the best or the winner in any endeavor an acme of an individual's success (Hofstede, 2020). Male dominance often creates a culture where women are victimized or turned into martyrs for being more feminine (Berdahl et al., 2018). A martyr is someone who sacrifices their life or faces suffering and pain to persist in a course of action or hold a certain belief (Raypole, 2019).

Women are notorious for self-sacrificing to serve others at their own expense putting them in danger of over-stress and burnout ("WebMD", 2020). The U.S. ranks in the 62nd percentile for masculinity indicating a masculine culture (Hofstede, 2020). Moreover, the military has been identified as an organizational setting dominated by masculine identities, which play a significant role in shaping America (Huffman & Olson, 2016; Sasson-Levy, 2011).

Unfortunately, the military is said to embody society's most gendered group, and females are a definite minority in that group due to the military's inception in patriarchal times, creating massive barriers in women's advancement (Gustavsen, 2013; Huffman & Olson, 2016). The military must overcome these barriers and obstacles that prevent women from being integrated into combat units. There has been an increase in sexual harassment claims, perceptions of double standards, cultural stereotypes, incidents of unprofessional behavior, indiscipline, inconsistent enforcement of existing standards, and ignorance reported by current employees (Trobaugh, 2018). With the limited number of women allowed entry into the U.S. military, women are often not eligible for veterans' preference points, which would give them higher eligibility for employment in the federal government (Johnson & Walker, 2018).

According to General Robert B. Neller, the U.S. can no longer go to war without women (Trobaugh, 2018). The fight for equality has created groups of women who oppose entirely male domination in the military (Berdahl et al., 2018). Opposing the military is dangerous and reckless; however, creating an army with real diversity helps create a robust national force that adds to national power (Mattis, 2018; Weinberger, 1984). As long as America has freedom, there will ultimately be some group of enemies that threaten to take it away from us. Our military power is used to keep the peace, and it takes dedication and commitment to maintain that peace (Mattis, 2018; Weinberger, 1984).

Veterans' preference forces the U.S. government to hire applicants with previous service in the military or armed forces over those without it (Johnson, 2015). Veterans that were discharged honorably from service receive five points and those with purple hearts and a service-connected disability receive ten points when applying for federal positions (Civil Service Commission, 1955). Spouses and mothers of veterans also receive ten points if their spouse or child died or became disabled due to war (Veterans Preference Act, 1944). Around a quarter of all executive branch employees are also eligible for veteran preference points, and scholars have stated that these preference points undermine the quality of federal service, as less-qualified individuals are chosen over those with higher qualifications (OPM, 2017).

The SES began in July of 1979 with the enactment of the Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) to provide the citizens of the U.S. with a committed, competent, productive, and honest workforce that reflects national diversity (OPM, 2020b). The SES corps was constructed to form an elite group of leaders with similar values and excellent executive skills that would lead above the GS pay scale at an executive level providing supervisory and policy-creating positions (OPM, 2020b). The primary intent of forming the SES corps was to provide diverse leadership from all segments of America; however, this has not occurred, and women and minorities are still lacking in representation (Brown W. S., 2008; Nelson J. A., 2015).

Much research has been done on the underrepresentation of women and minorities, outlining the lack of diversity; nevertheless, there is no clear understanding of the barriers and experiences that prevent women and minorities from advancing (Reiners, 2020). Kohli et al. (2011) stated that double standards, gender stereotypes, and prejudice contribute to barriers to entry into the department of defense, and thus, there are fewer women and minorities who could serve, let alone get promoted. Even though women entered the SES corps at 20.4% in 1996, up

from 5.1% in 1979, today, there is still only around a 33.95% female population in this elite group of policymaking Americans (Dolan, 2000; Martinez, 2018).

The SES corps works with political appointees to make policy, and women in these leading positions will shape national policy to benefit American women (Martinez, 2018; Tamerius, 1995). Women and men prioritize and make decisions differently, use different leadership styles, and approach problems uniquely even though the outcomes are similar (Thomas, 1994; Horowitz et al., 2018). Female leadership at the executive level should improve women's quality of life, as women focus more on the issues and needs of American women (Dolan, 2000; Martinez, 2018). Current DoD leadership is derived from the Defense Leadership and Management Program (DLAMP) developed in 1997, the Defense Senior Leader Development Program (DSLDP) created in 2009, and the OPM's Federal Executive Institute (FEI) for developing civilian leaders through a defense-wise perspective of functions and missions (Nelson, 2016).

Five core qualifications of leadership expertise in the SES corps are required before a person is even considered for a position (OPM, 2020a):

1. Business Acumen: The ability to strategically manage all information, human and financial resources.
2. Ability to Lead People: The ability to meet organizational goals, vision, and mission while creating an atmosphere of inclusion for improving others' development; supporting the resolution of conflicts, constructively, and facilitating teamwork and cooperation.
3. Ability to Lead Change: The ability to make strategic change happen within and outside the organization to achieve goals; the ability to use the vision to implement continuous change.

4. Focus on Achieving Results: The ability to meet customer expectations and goals of the organization; the ability to make decisions that generate high-quality results by analyzing problems, calculating risks, and using technical knowledge.

5. Ability to Build Coalitions: The ability to build alliances internally and with other federal agencies, private and nonprofit organizations, foreign or international governments and organizations, and state and local governments to achieve goals.

Mentoring is a development tool in the defense department and is considered an inherent function of leadership (Knee, 2020). Caucasian men have more access to mentors than women and minorities, with male leaders paving the way for fellow men to get them into SES positions (Ibarra, 2004; Knee, 2020). Often, there are no female leaders or leaders from marginalized communities to help pass on information and advice to protégés with enough interpersonal sensitivity to guide executive behavior, emotions, and attitudes (Ibarra, 2004; Martin, 2015). The main advantage of a strong mentorship is that the employees develop trust in the leadership, which aids in growth and development so that leadership improves, especially if the relationship continues for at least a year or more (Cornell University, 2014).

Often, civilian DoD leaders are veterans who inadvertently mentor and coach people like themselves, such as other veterans (DoD, 2017). The absence of female leaders for guiding lower-level employees into leadership roles, the lack of advancement of qualified female leaders and the lack of veteran's preference points, and a patriarchal leadership style leave few opportunities for women to advance or even get in the door at any level in the DoD (Amis et al., 2018; Nelson, 2016). Women are demobilized and become extremely sensitive to leaders whose leadership styles enforce the status quo of gender inequality (Hardacre & Subašić, 2018).

Problem Statement

The general problem to be addressed is gender inequality within organizational leadership, which results in reduced access to qualified female leaders. Although the population split in America is 51% women to 49% men, only 11% of corporate leaders are women. Although females earn 57% of undergraduate degrees and 59% of master's degrees (Matias, 2019; Napolitano, 2018; Warner, 2018), women are less likely to emerge as leaders in male-dominated cultures and thus occupy high-level leadership positions (Bear et al., 2017). The U.S. government is a male-dominated culture with only 44% of jobs occupied by women, of which only around 37.8% make it to the GS-14 and GS-15 positions, and only 30% of them make it into a senior executive position (Fedweek, 2018; Moss, 2015). Furthermore, women occupy only 34.6% of the posts in the DoD, and only 20% make it to the senior executive level (DoD, 2017). The specific problem to be addressed, therefore, is gender inequality impeding women's advancement into leadership positions in the U.S. federal government, specifically in the DoD civilian sector, resulting in reduced access to qualified female leaders.

Research Questions

Women make up around 60% of the working talent and hold a majority of degrees; however, placing a woman in a leadership role is considered to make the company more "diverse" (McCullough, 2014). The DoD breeds a masculine contest culture designed to create alpha males, and they will generally only promote a woman that can compete with a man one-on-one (Matos et al., 2018). Veterans get preference points when obtaining a position within the civilian sector of the DoD. They get extra consideration during times when there is a reduction in force; however, when it comes to promotions, all civilians should have equal opportunity to get promoted (Guina, 2019).

Women face internal and external barriers that may hinder or help performance, which may impact the path to leadership, especially in the DoD. Current organizational leaders have created a team of diverse professionals to empower underrepresented groups of employees for leadership positions and encourage mentorship to this end (Moss, 2015). In this context, the main research questions identified in this case study are provided in the next two sections.

1. What internal and external barriers exist in the defense department regarding the professional advancement of women, if any?
 - a. What factors contribute to women advancing into leadership?
 - b. What are the perceptions of women regarding gender inequality?
2. What is the relationship between current civilian supervisors and veteran status, if any?
3. What is the relationship between education and supervisory status in the civilian sector of the DoD, if any?
4. What is the relationship between gender and supervisory status of the DoD, if any?

Hypothesis

- H0: There is no significant statistical association between a civilian supervisory position and veteran status.
- H2A: There is a significant statistical association between a civilian supervisory position and veteran status.
- H0: There is no significant statistical association between education level and civilian leadership position in the DoD.

- H3A: There is a significant statistical association between education level and civilian leadership position in the DoD.
- H0: There is no statistically significant association between gender and leadership status in the DoD.
- H4A: There is a statistically significant association between gender and leadership status in the DoD.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this exploratory case study is to explore gender inequality in organizational leadership, specifically in the DoD civilian sector, to identify potential barriers precluding the advancement of women. Any potential barriers and issues hindering women from becoming leaders will be explored and identified, and hopefully, new light will be shed on the culture to improve access to qualified female leaders. This study will explore the current leadership style and cultural elements in the DoD and their impact on female employee advancement opportunities. Any barriers and obstacles found will be brought to light with appropriate field-tested research and suggestions to help mitigate those barriers.

Furthermore, this study will examine the relationship between being female and being a veteran to see if any correlations exist. Women's leadership status will be paired with education level to determine if there are statistically significant correlations that may hinder women's advancement. Veterans' preference will be looked at to determine whether females that are in civilian positions are being advanced to leadership positions with or without prior military experience compared to males. Men's and women's education will be correlated to determine whether women with similar education levels are being promoted at the same levels as their male counterparts.

Nature of the Study

In this section, the case study research method will be discussed as a research design that combines qualitative and quantitative research styles through triangulation. The pros and cons of qualitative and quantitative research will be discussed, along with the rationale for using a case study for this paper. Organizational culture can be studied either objectively through quantitative methods or subjectively through qualitative methods using reality-based (ontological) or knowledge-based (epistemological) approaches (Janićijević, 2011). A case study combines quantitative and qualitative research using multiple sources of data or triangulation, raising the overall quality of the research method (Yin, 2018).

A case study is not a method in and of itself; it derives from other data collection methods, such as ethnography, grounded theory, narrative, or phenomenology, to generate data from which conclusions can be drawn (Yin, 2018). A case study allows for in-depth research into aspects of thinking and behaving that would be impractical or unethical to study using other methods (McLeod, 2016). This case study will then be advanced through triangulation using quantitative methods that focus on increasing social justice and power for women in the DoD civilian sector (Mertens, 2012).

Qualitative studies focus on studying things in natural settings and interpreting people's meanings through a narrative style (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative methods have been criticized for not incorporating scientific methods and using more observation and less numerical data as proof (Dantzer & Hunter, 2012). Qualitative methods are also very time-consuming, requiring the researcher to be immersed in the environment of what is being studied (Creswell, 2014).

Often in qualitative research, researchers do a self-assessment and reflect on their personal beliefs and reflections about an event before starting to investigate it to help eliminate researcher bias (Choy, 2014). This is because, in qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument used to collect, analyze, and interpret data collected from the complexity of human experiences observed (Ary et al., 2010). Qualitative research involves showing multiple perspectives in written passages without firm guidelines, unfolding meaning from the investigated phenomenon's effects on the participants (Janićijević, 2011). The qualitative portion of this case study will be ethnographically derived knowledge gained from personal experiences of working with the U.S. DoD as a civilian and participating as the site lead for the Women's Initiative Network (WIN).

The qualitative method's main advantage is the researcher's ability to explore topics in more detail and depth with flexibility and without a huge expense (Sheragy, n.d.). Ethnography allows for interviews, surveys, and observations for creating a detailed description of the whole culture under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research cannot quantify findings, making it almost impossible to statistically solidify findings and generalize them to a larger population (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative method looks at the how's and why's behind human behavior, which are interpretive; however, they are invalid for scientific evidence (Lamont, M. & White, P., 2005).

The quantitative method has been around since the late 19th century and is considered an actual experiment, where a researcher develops single or multiple hypotheses stating what they believe will happen to a dependent variable given the independent variable (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative research is more close-ended, and it relies on questionnaires or other psychological instruments to tabulate data and form conclusions from statistics, math, or other computational

tools (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative method quantifies the data being studied, bringing conclusiveness and purpose to what is being studied (Creswell, 2014).

Quantitative research generally takes a sample population that is representative of the general population to study and then projects the results to the larger population (Regoli, 2020). One of the main advantages of the quantitative method is the speed with which data can be collected and analyzed in a random sample (Sheragy, n.d.). The main drawback of quantitative research is the inability to probe deeper into situations; only some individuals will answer surveys, limiting results, and quantitative research is much more costly to conduct (Creswell, 2014).

Research Paradigms

This case study will be taken in-depth with a transformative paradigm to focus on the unequal power relationship in the Department of Defense civilian sector, where women experience oppression and discrimination (Mertens, 2012). A paradigm is a scientifically recognized assumption providing a model for problems and solutions (Kuhn, 1962; Vaushik, V. & Walsh, C. A., 2019). A paradigm is simply a worldview, framework or theory developed by researchers that changes over time as new ideas surface creating paradigm shifts (Shaw, R. L., Hiles, D. R., West, K., Holland, C. & Gwyther, H., 2018). This case study will have a transformative-pragmatic worldview that focuses more on creating actions from the research and researching out of bounds since there are no bounds (Creswell J. W., 2014).

The transformative paradigm focuses on gathering the opinions of oppressed groups to create social and political change (Creswell, 2013). The transformative-pragmatic worldview is based on four sets of assumptions: 1) the meanings of ethics and behaviors (i.e., what is worthy of knowing?) are axiology, 2) the nature of reality or being (i.e., what is there to know?) is

ontology, 3) the nature of knowledge or the truth (i.e., what is the nature of knowing?) is epistemology, and the process of systematic inquiry (i.e., how are we adding to our knowledge?) is a methodology (Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. S., 2005; Kivunja, C. & Kuyini, A. B., 2017). Under the axiological assumption, the research will be guided by the Department of Defense employees and the leadership team of DoD, other government agencies and male-dominated industries (Mertens, 2012; Vaushik, V. & Walsh, C. A., 2019). Different versions of reality will be experimented with through developed strategies to see how social change is altered through each reality (Mertens, 2012). Relationships will be established using the epistemological assumption to determine different ways to be more culturally responsive (Mertens, 2012; Vaushik, V. & Walsh, C. A., 2019).

Discussion of Design

Using a transformative method requires that the research begin with qualitative data collection to learn more about the community and establish relationships (Creswell J. W., 2014). As an employee, the researcher became part of this community for four years before the beginning of this research and developed many trusting relationships. The trusting relationships and time allowed the researcher to gain knowledge of the lived experience of participants firsthand. Quantitative data will be collected from surveys and government statistics such as the Management Directive (MD-715) while exploring the qualitative questions to help move the research into action and create lasting changes in the department of defense civilian sector.

The yearly Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results will be used to probe into gender, education level, veteran status, beliefs about promotional opportunities, ability to mentor and be mentored, and feelings towards advancement in

general. The population will include all civilian employees from GS-1 to GS-15 to SES level of the DoD. A sample of at least 342 employees may suffice as a small-scale representation of the population of 744,000, although at least 242,000 participants have responded to the FEVS giving a more than adequate amount for statistical relevance. Also, a maximum of 40 SES, leaders in other government agencies or leaders in male-dominated fields will be selected for an interview to probe deeper into successful mitigation techniques used to advance into leadership using the questions represented in Appendix D.

Discussion of Method

A case study method explores a single community, event, group, or person by an in-depth investigation with data gathered from multiple sources such as interviews, surveys, and observations (McLeod, S., 2019a). An ethnographic approach will focus on the collective experience of the civilian workforce in the Department of Defense by way of observations, interviews, review of current literature, and surveys (Creswell J. W., 2014). Triangulation will be used to blend the quantitative data received from the surveys with the qualitative case study to give more completeness to the study (Risjord, M. W., Dunbar, S. B. & Moloney, M. F., 2002; Yin, 2018).

A case study is considered qualitative; however, when used with triangulation, it becomes quantitative (Yin, 2018). Both qualitative and quantitative methods have weaknesses and using both mitigate the weakness of each method giving a more complete and accurate result since one method can be used to check the accuracy of the other (Creswell J. W., 2014). This case study will be taken in-depth with a transformative paradigm to focus on the unequal power relationship in the Department of

Defense civilian sector, where women experience oppression and discrimination (Mertens, 2012).

Discussion of Triangulation

The four types of triangulation include data sources, theories, investigators, and methods (Yin, 2018). This research focused on multiple sources of data and multiple theories triangulation which brought together survey data that had quantitative data which would not have been available otherwise. As more sources are brought together, the higher the construct validity rises in the research and more visibility becomes available to the case under study (Creswell, K. W. & Poth, C. N., 2018). Thus, use of data from multiple sources increases the confidence that this case study will adequately and accurately report findings of gender inequality in the DoD Civilian sector (Yin, 2018).

Summary of the Nature of the Study

Although a case study is qualitative, triangulation connects quantitative elements with a qualitative approach that deepens the findings and brings more in-depth meaning, reliability, and validity (Meixner & Hathcoat, 2019). The qualitative portion of this study will be used to make meaning from the quantitative results found. This study will begin with an exploratory qualitative method such as ethnography to study the complex phenomena in the DoD while gathering enough quantitative data to test the hypothesis and draw conclusions. The DoD civilian sector is rather large, with 744,000 employees; however, the representative sample is only 342 out of the around 242,000 people who respond annually.

Conceptual Framework

In this section, the concepts used to ground the research and provide avenues for exploration will be discussed and described. Concepts such as mommy track, gatekeeper, sexism,

glass ceiling 1 and 2, sticky floor, occupational segregation, and the dominance penalty will be discussed as barriers to advancement for women. A framework is conceptual structures or a system of ideas which help people “see” the social world so that they can explain it, understand it so that they can change it (Parpart, J. L., Connelly, M. P., Barriteau, E. & Barriteau, V. E., 2000). Women face many challenges that men do not face to include less pay and fewer promotions, more responsibility for childcare and other domestic duties, gender stereotypes depicting men as superior leaders and lack of access to mentors with enough power to actually help give them a boost (Carli, L. L. & Eagly, A. H., 2016).

Men are often praised for independence, while women are penalized, creating a double standard that makes advancement difficult for women (Lambert, 2005; Thomson, 2018). A more recent term for this double standard is the “confidence gap” that deems women to be less confident than men when, in reality, women who talk about their accomplishments are penalized (Thomson, 2018). In a male-dominant cultures such as the DoD, men hold all the power and resources necessary to elevate women and grant them independence or severely stifle them and hold them back (Cerrato & Cifre, 2019; de Beauvoir, 1949).

Often, women are barred from positions of political power, creating a lack of representation, and leading to a failure in establishing a real democracy with equality (Yap, 2009; Godfrey & Berman, 2019). It is up to each woman to define what womanhood means as they strive for independence, as even today, we are regarded as second-class citizens (de Beauvoir, 1949; Godfrey & Berman, 2019). Men, especially these in the DoD, tend to value social dominance, physical strength, work, and above all else, the absence of any type of weakness, which may not necessarily be the same values that women have (Matos et al., 2018).

Even if a woman does value all that a man does and goes about her day as men do, she will be penalized for doing so (Yap, 2009).

Concepts

A concept is the unification of multiple realities regarding a topic such as gender inequality (Blunden, 2012). A concept can only clearly be explained and understood when the multiple lines of development are considered (Vygotsky, 1994). Concepts cannot fully be communicated via words since words are only signs or representatives of concepts (Vygotsky, 1994). A concept is always a system of concepts that only has meaning in relation to other concepts forming a part of the system (Blunden, 2012). A concept thus must be defined by multiple different actions and definitions to gather the full meaning (Blunden, 2012). Therefore, a concept is the sum of all of the meanings it produces however, the meanings must be taken in the context in which they were produced (Vygotsky, 1994).

Glass ceiling. The term glass ceiling was first used by Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986) in a Wall Street Journal report, which called it a barrier that is so subtle and see-through, yet so strong that it keeps women and minorities from moving up the corporate ladder into executive positions. The “glass ceiling” effect has been broken up based on the effects on two distinctly different groups of women, those that are held back in the corporate world due to their gender and those women that break out of corporate America to open their businesses (Bosse & Taylor, 2012). Specifically, the glass ceiling refers to the wage gap at the top of the counterfactual wage distribution, which, research shows, is much broader at the top, indicating that women are more disadvantaged in better jobs (Christofides et al., 2013; Fang & Sakellariou, 2015). The glass ceiling creates invisible barriers and artificial obstacles that are made worse by stereotypes and other related issues (Bertrand, 2018; Zamfirache, 2010).

The reasons for the existence of the glass ceiling are multifaceted. To explicate, women bear 100% responsibility for childbirth and are generally the primary caregiver (Miller, 2019; Zamfirache, 2010). Therefore, women often miss out on work more, to care for their family, giving them a disadvantage in corporate America, especially in higher-level positions (Kiaye & Singh, 2013). Although these types of gaps are being filled in education, women still have difficulty getting and keeping well-paying jobs; in fact, the gap is much wider with seniority and pay (Holtz, 2014; Miller, 2019). Women face the invisible “glass ceiling” that acts as a barrier prohibiting women from entering into executive positions in corporate America (Bertrand, 2018; Johns, 2013; Morrison et al., 1992).

The second “glass ceiling” is experienced when frustrated female executives leave corporate America to open their own small businesses, only to find out that women have difficulty raising capital, which ultimately prevents them from fulfilling their business plans (Bosse & Taylor, 2012). Although the second glass ceiling is real, this concept will only briefly be covered to demonstrate the continuation of gender inequality and its detrimental effects, as it is not a problem within the DoD.

Mommy track. Mommy track refers to women taking reduced hours or jobs with less status to focus on family responsibilities (Heffernan, 2015). Even though 63% of women with children under six and 78% of women with school-age children are employed, women are still underrepresented in executive positions (Quesenberry et al., 2006; Horowitz et al., 2018). Women often fall into one of two categories—loving, devoted mothers or hard-cold career women leaving a good work-life balance next to impossible (Mason, 1988; Salva, 2018). From personal experience, this is utterly exhausting, and even though women often put in twice the effort, many men refuse to treat them as equals.

Women are still expected to juggle family responsibilities while working full time and attending school to achieve their dreams (Miller, 2011a; Salva, 2018). Often, women who decide to have children are forced to set aside their career ambitions to devote time and attention to family matters (Lommerud et al., 2015). Employers may place an employee on a fast track to career advancement if they can commit to working without any long breaks, such as due to childcare, leading many women to either not have children or leave the profession to become parents (Lommerud et al., 2015; Ettinger et al., 2019).

Often, women are placed on the slow track, as an employer automatically assumes that they will be taking more leaves due to childcare (Coate & Loury, 1993; Ettinger et al., 2019). Mommy track can be aided by the equitable division of labor between husband and wife so that the burden is divided more equally, and women can then progress up the career ladder (Lommerud et al., 2015). This is just one concept that demonstrates how gender inequality manifests, blocking qualified women from advancement into executive positions (Heffernan, 2015).

Sexism. Sexism is instilled during childhood, with boys being commonly taught to be strong, independent, and groomed for leadership and, conversely, girls being groomed for motherhood (Doob, 2015). Sexism comes from the beliefs that men and women are different, and thus, there are gender-specific roles for each sex, which implies behaviors and social norms that are gender-specific (Hellmer et al., 2018). There are three roots to sexism: The first is hostile sexism or misogyny, which justifies male dominance over women while simultaneously demonstrating benevolent sexism, that is, being obligated to provide protection (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Srivastava et al., 2017). The second root justifies women as being docile and warm or feminine, while men are composed and competent (Brandt, 2011).

The third root is the idealization of women into relational roles, that is, to be partners to men, completing them (Hammond et al., 2018). Sexism occurs when men develop resentment or a deep-seated dislike for women who reject traditional gender roles or challenge male power and control (Gaunt & Pinho, 2018). When girls are raised like boys and thus the opposite of gendered norms, they neither know that there are specific gender roles nor how to fit into them (Brandt, 2011). Therefore, when sexism occurs, it seems completely unjustified and makes no sense to the women experiencing it (Hammond et al., 2018).

Dominance penalty. The dominance penalty occurs when women step into traditionally male leadership positions (Brescoll et al., 2018). Women are subjected to social and economic penalties when they display authority as leaders, otherwise known as the dominance penalty (Koenig et al., 2011; Tinkler et al., 2019). The dominance penalty is a double bind or backlash that women experience when they display dominant behavior and manifests in the form of unfavorable evaluations, lower salaries, and less chance of getting promoted (Okimoto et al., 2010; Tinkler et al., 2019). White women are less suited to leadership roles due to their lack of fit even when they are dominant, ambitious, and independent like men (Brescoll et al., 2018). Black women face less backlash than White women for dominance, as Black women are stereotypically more aggressive than White women (Tinkler et al., 2019).

Black women are more similar to black men rather than white women, unfortunately previous research found that blackness is associated with masculinity ignoring the female properties of women (Coles, S. M. & Pasek, J., 2020). Black women that display high levels of competence receive less backlash than comparable white women displaying the same behavior (Tinkler et al., 2019). Asian women also possess double identities similar to black women however, Asian women are stereotypically more feminine and have high deference which are

both out of alignment with leadership roles (Ridgeway, C. L. & Kricheli-Katz, T., 2013). Like black women, Asian women face less backlash for dominance than white women however, Asian women will be evaluated as the least suitable for leadership (Tinkler et al., 2019).

When women display what are considered masculine behaviors such as independence, assertiveness, and ambition, they are refusing to accept the status given to women, which challenges male power, creating a “cause” for backlash (Brescoll et al., 2018). People are driven to keep the status quo of women having a lower status than men, which triggers backlash against women who threaten it (Rudman et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2019). The DoD penalizes women who stand up and declare equality and display dominant “male” behaviors by encouraging the co-workers of these women to keep the status quo and tamp those women down.

Occupational segregation. Occupational segregation involves an employer hiring predominantly one gender in specific careers or sorting people across occupations based on gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, or social life (Lockhart, 2010; Pothier, 2016). Generally, the gender selected has a specific character and task-orientation traits that an employer is looking for (Woods, 2015). Many women are forced to get into careers that fit their gender role, which also come with lower pay scales (Campos-Soria & Ropero-Garcia, 2016; Kalantari, 2012). Occupational segregation accounts for the gender pay gap in the U.S. (Alonso-Villar & Del Rio, 2015). Women take positions that are lower-paying even when they have higher education levels, keeping them at a disadvantage with regard to income (Campos-Soria & Ropero-Garcia, 2016; Klimova & Ross, 2012).

Women are getting an education in traditionally male-dominated fields such as engineering and hold 21.3% of the degrees; however, they are not being treated equally when it comes to respect and social acceptance in the corporate world (Bona et al., 2010; Ettinger et al.,

2019). Women who enter male-dominated fields such as science and engineering (S&E) face more disadvantages at every stage of their career even though they have more access to resources, and they have more occupational opportunities (Bona et al., 2010; Tao et al., 2017). Of the 21.3% of female engineers, only around 30% of them continue working in engineering for 20 years, and around 30% leave due to the workplace environment (Gabriel & Schmitz, 2007; Rincon, 2018). Occupational segregation contributes to wasted human capital by placing capable people into gender-specific roles, ultimately hindering the economies' ability to change (Woods, 2015).

Gatekeeping. Gatekeeping is defined as beliefs and behaviors inhibiting shared responsibilities for work by men and women (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Dwivedi et al., 2018). Women initiate gatekeeping while caring for their children at home, thus inhibiting a father's involvement (Radcliffe & Cassell, 2015). The reverse happens in the corporate world and the government, as men become the gatekeepers with enough power to have a detrimental effect on women who are in the process of gaining trust and access needed to advance (Cheng & Tavits, 2011; Slaughter & Binda, 2018). The duality of gatekeeping in both arenas contributes to gender inequality in the workforce and will be looked at in this study as a barrier to advancement in the DoD.

Sticky floor. Besides the numerous women who are trying to shatter the glass ceiling, there are innumerable more attempting to get off the sticky floor, which holds them down in low-paying, low-mobility jobs (Spaid, 1993; Jacobs & Padavic, 2015). The concept of the sticky floor refers to the pattern of male advancement while women sit back and watch, staying rooted in their low-level position (Baert et al., 2016). Men are promoted based on their future potential while women get promoted based on prior performance, making it even more challenging to rise

(Jacobs, 2019; Silva et al., 2012). Women will gush about their accomplishments and discuss their impressive resumes, while younger men show off their personal physical qualities that will make them the great leaders they think (Jacobs, 2019).

This double standard creates an unfair advantage by preventing employers from fully recognizing the potential that female candidates will bring to leadership, which contributes to the sticky floor (Jacobs, 2019). Sticky floors occur at the bottom of the wage distribution; however, they may occur at every occupational level, keeping women stuck in whatever level they are at (Baert et al., 2016). Women in the DoD civilian sector are at a marked disadvantage without even being aware of it, and even when they make huge contributions to the environment, they do not get recognized as potential leaders like their male counterparts that do half the work do (Baert et al., 2016).

Glass cliff. The concept of the glass cliff was first introduced in the literature by the authors Ryan and Haslam in 2005. It refers to women who get moved up into leadership roles when the organization is doing poorly, making failure much more possible. The heightened level of discrimination and unequal treatment sets women up for failure, and they face the glass cliff (Kulich, 2016; Ryan & Haslam, 2007). The glass cliff generally causes women to leave the organization, which is destructive to them and the organization (Sabharwal, 2015). Women often see these failing businesses as an opportunity to finally be able to lead and show their success; thus, they take the clean-up positions (Stewart, 2018).

In the DoD, females have historically been hired during difficult war times, such as during WWI and WWII, and now during the longest war in U.S. history, the war on terrorism. According to Cooke and Glass (2013), White women and women and men of color are more likely to get promoted when companies are performing poorly, to clean up the mess and get the

company on the right track (Stewart, 2018). The DoD is likely to promote women into leadership positions that need to be cleaned up or those that other men in command do not want. When women take these positions, men are less likely to help them succeed, and they will thumb their noses at these women and tell them that they will be busy doing the real work (Stewart, 2018).

Theories

The main theories this research will utilize in its investigation are the social learning theory (SLT) or social cognitive theory (SCT), social cognitive career theory (SCCT), cultural transformation theory, and servant leadership theory. The four theories apply to this research, as they explain the complexity of gender inequality and the best ways to overcome it. Servant leadership helps all organizational members overcome childhood problems, motivate people to achieve organizational goals while improving the community through Agape (Greenleaf, 1977; Allen et al., 2016). Serving others is what life is all about, and when that is programmed into individuals from their childhood, it is impossible to become aggressive, abusive, and treat others with disrespect. Fortunately, servant behaviors can be learned as an adult through the same mechanisms that a child can learn; however, the experience as an adult is generally a little bumpier and messier than it is as a child.

Social cognitive theory. The SCT began as the SLT, which began to be developed in the scholarly literature by Burrhus Frederic Skinner. He furthered this theory in the 1940s when investigating how language use and verbal behavior were tied to operating conditions (Day, 2016). Skinner's work showed that organisms in a specific environment learn to manipulate and control responses to that environment, which he termed operant conditioning (Fancher, 1979). During the same period, under the direction of Clark Lewis Hull, Neil Miller and John Dollard further developed this theory by combining the works of Pavlov's classical conditioning with

Thorndike's instrumental learning into the science of human behavior (Gondra & Sánchez de Miguel, 2009).

Miller and Dollard posited that many learned habits create a personality, where needs stimulate responses and the drive of imitation (Wiki, 2019). In 1954, Julian B. Rotter published a book titled *Social Learning and Clinical Psychology* that explored the holistic interactions between people and the environment, highlighting the relationship between physiological and psychological constructs (Crafts, 1955). In 1959, Noam Chomsky augmented this theory when he published a critique of Skinner's earlier work, stating that stimulus–response behavior does not account for how people acquire language, which led to the recognition of the cognitive aspect of the theory (Palmer, 2006).

Finally, in 1977, Albert Bandura and Robert Sears expanded the stimulus–response learning theory into an elaborate explanation of human behavior (Anderson & Kras, 2007). SCT involves learning through social behavior by observing and imitating others (Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978). Children grow up and observe different people in different roles, such as their mother, father, siblings, actors on television, and others that act as models (McLeod, 2016). The child may then encode individual people's behaviors and imitate that behavior later regardless of gender appropriateness, although usually, they copy same-sex people (McLeod, 2016). Society rewards and punishes children's actions based on gender appropriateness, setting the tone for future behavior (Bandura, 1977).

This theory is relevant to this investigation because the SCT posits that sexism, dominance penalty, occupational segregation, and gatekeeping are learned and reinforced during childhood (Bandura, 1986). The SLT is a combination of the cognitive learning theory where

learning occurs through psychological factors and the behavioral learning theory where learning occurs as a response to stimuli (Terrace et al., 2020).

There are four elements to learning: observation, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1977; Teach Thought Staff, 2020). Observation, attention, or focus is environmental, while both retention and reproduction are cognitive; additionally, motivation is a factor of both the environment and cognitive thought (Bandura, 1977; Teach Thought Staff, 2020).

Through his bobo doll experiment, Bandura (1977) concluded that children who watched the doll being treated violently or aggressively copied that behavior while children that witnessed kindness to the doll copied that behavior (Cherry & Swaim, 2020). Further research by Vygotsky (1978) called the arena for childhood learning the zone of proximal development where less skilled children could learn from more advanced children (Cherry & Swaim, 2020). This theory is vital to gender inequality, as it is often learned in childhood and carried out during adulthood (Mowat, 2019). Overcoming centuries-old role modeling is challenging; however, doing so is the only method by which equality can be achieved in the future.

Social cognitive career theory. The SCCT, which was put forward by Lent in 1994, piggybacks off of Bandura's SCT explaining thought and behavior and Hackett & Betz's landmark study where self-efficacy is tied to career development (Lent et al., 1994). The SCCT is a relatively new theory that expands on the existing knowledge of social theory with a focus on career and career choices (Kelly, 2009). Lent also combined work from Dawis and Lofquist (1984) on person-environment-correspondence, Vondracek and Schulenberg (1986) on developmental theory, Krumboltz et al. (1976) on social learning, Holland (1959) on personality typology, and Super (1992) on lifespan and life-space to develop the SCCT (Kelly, 2009).

Three distinct variables make up SCCT: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals (Lent, 2005; Wendling & Sagas, 2020). Self-efficacy is an individual's personal beliefs about their abilities to perform actions that are changeable over time. More exposure to activities increases the opportunities for skill mastery, which raises self-efficacy even more (Lent, Brown, et al., 1994; Lent, Ireland, et al., 2017). Goals are an individual's plan and intention to engage in an activity, career path, or certain behaviors (Lent, Ireland, et al., 2017). On the other hand, outcome expectations are an individual's personal beliefs about what to expect after embarking on an activity or career path that may or may not align with the actual outcome (Lent, Brown, et al., 2000a; Lent, Ireland, et al., 2017). A person's ability to realize their goals helps either confirm or change self-efficacy and outcomes in future events (Lent, Ireland, et al., 2017).

The SCCT posits that people are free agents who use self-direction to create career outcomes (Yusoff et al., 2019). It lists the three elements of career development (Lent et al., 2000a):

- Basic academic and career development
- Educational and career choices
- Academic and career performance success

Throughout life, people develop self-efficacy through success, failure, coaching, lots of practice, the right tools and support, and feedback that helps them choose a path in which they will gain success under basic academic and career development (Brown & Lent, 1996; Ibarra & Scoular, 2019). As people mature, the complexity of their decision-making increases as they begin making educational and career choices based on their earlier self-efficacy development (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018; Lent, 2005). The choice stage is where they decide what career

they are going to pursue and what education they must get to enter that field (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018; Brown & Lent, 1996).

The SCCT states that self-efficacy provides the motivation needed to reach goals and expected outcomes (Lent, 2005; Wendling & Sagas, 2020). People with high levels of self-efficacy will be more likely to achieve goals and overcome setbacks than those with lower levels (Lent, 2005). Behavior, personality, and thought are developed during the role modeling years of childhood (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018). Gender equality will improve as more parents' role model gender-equal behaviors for children, teaching them that both their mother and father are equally capable and important (Yusoff et al., 2019).

Cultural transformation theory. The cultural transformation theory was first discussed by Riane Eisler in 1987 in the book *The Chalice and the Blade* (Eisler, 2020). Douglas P. Fry further developed this theory in 2006 by publishing *The Human Potential for Peace*, which added the analytical tool, the Biocultural Partnership-Domination Lens, for collating research in neuroscience, anthropology, economics, gender studies, arts, and psychology. Currently, the literature uses cultural transformation theory to understand different cultures by looking at the continuum of domination, which ranges from fear-based partnerships to ones that are trust-based (Oehlert, 2015). In healthcare, domination is linked to a dislike of soft, caring values, and partnership is linked to shared leadership, interprofessional, and shared decision-making (Oehlert, 2015). With consistent monitoring, domination patterns can be recognized, behaviors can be shifted, and the cultural climate can be changed (Oehlert, 2015).

Cultural transformation theory posits that early cradles of life followed an equal partnership way of life that has changed over the years to a dominant culture where men are superior to women (Eisler, 1988). Creating civilization has evolved technology, created new

strategies, and improved the marketplace while eroding personal relationships (Oehlert, 2015). Eisler (1988) claims that the human species is capable of rapid evolution due to its highly advanced brains with improved flexibility, cognition, information processing, memory, and versatility. This advanced brainpower allows for the rapid integration of information from society, which repetitively sends the message that dominance is not sustainable over time (Marinescu et al., 2014).

The cultural transformation theory is being used in this research to tie biblical foundations into the study while providing a possible theory for the cause of male dominance. Before biblical times, the original sin had men and women living in harmony; however, the fall into sin created dominance. Cultural transformation theory aims to put society and the human relationships back into pre-sin conditions, which is not possible without the aid of the Almighty. Nonetheless, striving on earth with our Christ-like lives is the right thing to do.

Servant leadership theory. The servant leadership theory was introduced by Greenleaf in 1970, who coined the term “servant leadership” according to Christian values (Tang et al., 2015). The real roots of servant leadership date 2000 years back, starting with Jesus Christ, who served humanity in everyday endeavors (Gandolfi et al., 2017). Larry Spears (2019) added to this theory when he extracted ten characteristics of servant-leader behaviors from Greenleaf’s work.

The ten characteristics include the ability to listen to others patiently, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, commitment to people’s growth, and community building (Spears, 2019). Furthermore, Joe Larocci (2020) extracted ten servant leadership priorities, including developing people, building a trusting team, and achieving results, which can be achieved by following the principles of serving first and using persuasion and

empowerment. The principles and priorities can be achieved by listening, delegating, and connecting employees to the mission (Larocci, 2020).

Additionally, Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) developed 11 dimensions of servant leadership, which can be viewed on a scale and be validated. These 11 dimensions can be reduced to five unique factors: altruistic calling (ethics), persuasive mapping, emotional healing, wisdom, and organizational stewardship (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). The 11 dimensions of Barbuto and Wheeler are non-exhaustive, and altogether, there are at least 20 attributes of servant leadership from different authors (Russell & Stone, 2002). Russell and Stone also extrapolated the nine functional attributes of servant leadership such as honesty, vision (conceptualization and foresight), trust, integrity, modeling, appreciation of others, service, pioneering, and empowerment (Russell & Stone, 2002).

Recently, literature on this theory has focused on developing and validating a multidimensional instrument to measure servant leadership in all its complexity (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Barbuto and Wheeler created a 23-item five-dimensional instrument that matches the characteristics put forth by Spears; however, more recent attempts to duplicate it have failed (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Moreover, Dennis and Bocarnea developed a five-dimensional instrument using only one sample, and Sendjaya introduced a 35-item and 22-characteristic instrument, divided over six scales (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Unfortunately, none of the studies that were constructed revealed a multidimensional structure that holds over multiple samples or one that captures aspects of the leader versus that of the followers (Lim et al., 2008). However, Van Dierendonck's instrument addressed all the previous shortcomings by focusing on the leader–follower relationship from the perspective of the

follower and thus was able to cover essential aspects of servant leadership, besides being easy to apply and psychometrically valid and reliable (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

The fundamental principle of the servant leadership theory is improving people's lives, which will end up building a better work environment through empathy, awareness, community building, conceptualization, persuasion, and growth (Smale, 2018). Servant leadership is based on caring and ethical behavior toward others, developed through choices made in life that grow into a desire to lead others (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Employees support servant leaders, as they are committed and devoted to improving lives (Spears, 1996). Servant leadership is also known as "primus inter pares" or first among equals, which uses power to empower or persuade and convince people to perform for their benefit (Coulter, 2003).

Servant leaders use persuasion to motivate rather than commands, and the skill of persuasion is a differentiating factor between servant leadership and the other authoritative styles of leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Smale, 2018). Servant leaders know that authority is given even though it has not been earned, and they are not entitled to it (Greenleaf, 1977). A servant leader empowers employees to handle mundane daily matters and begin to lead, while the leader plans for the future of the company and team (Fischer, 2010; Smale, 2018). Finding its roots in the Bible, servant leadership empowers employees to find and use unique gifts and abilities to grow and reach full potential in life (Greenleaf, 1977). There are six core tenets to servant leadership: humility, empowering people, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, forgiveness, providing direction and stewardship, which will be discussed at length in later parts of this research (Greenleaf, 1977).

Jesus was a perfect example of what servant leadership looks like, and as we grow in our knowledge, relationship, and faith in Jesus, we develop the heart, hands, head, and habits of

leading a great organization (Blanchard & Hodges, 2016). Servant leaders first serve God, then the sons and daughters of God (Duby, 2009). When a leader's head, heart, and habits align with God, they can use their hands to heal, praise, and motivate their subordinates in an uplifting manner (Blanchard & Hodges, 2016). Servant leadership is a mandate, not an option for all Christians and leaders (Liberty University, 2017). It extends beyond the organizational boundaries, as servant leaders set aside self-interest to improve the communities and lives, they intersect with (Newman et al., 2017). This servant leadership theory will be used to tie all the theories together and provide direction for improving the concepts leading to gender inequality.

Constructs

Constructs are different abstract entities that are created but are not directly measurable that are used to explain a phenomenon, so they get tied to variables for measurement purposes (Bhattacharjee, 2019). Many of the constructs such as sexism, dominance penalty, glass ceilings, glass cliffs, mommy track, the glass obstacle course, blocked pipeline, occupational segregation, and sticky floor explain where the barriers and obstacles that women face originate yet most are difficult to directly measure. The constructs are tied to the variables barriers and obstacles (covered during the interview process and literature review), veteran status (captured from surveys), education level (captured during interviews and surveys), gender (captured during all layers of research) and supervisory status (captured during interviews and surveys) as shown in Table 1. Constructs are tied directly to hypothesis and the directionality of those relationships are shown in Table 2.

Table 1*Constructs and Their Roles*

Construct Name	Independent Variables	Moderator Variables	Dependent Variables
Barriers & Obstacles		X	
Veteran Status	X		
Education Level	X		
Gender	X		
Supervisory Status			X

Table 2*Hypothesis, their directionality, and the constructs they represent.*

Hypothesis	Construct #1	Construct #2	Directionality
H1	Veteran Status	Supervisory Status	(+)
H2	Education	Supervisory Status	(+)
H3	Gender	Supervisory Status	(+)
RQ1	Barriers & Obstacles	Supervisory Status	(-)
H1 & H3	Gender	Veteran Status	(+)

Relationships Between Concepts, Theories, Actors, Constructs and Variables

The concepts presented provide a non-exhaustive example of how gender inequality is manifested in the DoD and the corporate world. Everyone differs in their reaction and responses to internal and external barriers, pressures, and circumstances (Hartzell, 2020). The executive ranks from the Pentagon down through the U.S. DoD have a long history of male dominance, favoring male candidates over females (Seligman, 2019). The defense industry is one of the worst, if not the worst, organizations for growing and creating female leaders (Seligman, 2019).

Much work has been done to overcome inequality, such as women being appointed to Capitol Hill to enact changes in the male-dominated culture within the DoD; however, much work remains to be done (Seligman, 2019). Women have been penalized in this group for taking maternity leaves, not having the knowledge or skills during the learning process, and for just being female (McCrary-Ruiz-Esparza, 2019). Each concept falls under the broad category of gender inequality, which will be explored in detail. Women now hold 38.3% of four-year college degrees in the United States although, women still only obtain around 30% of the degrees in the STEM fields (Jelks, S. M. R. & Crain, A. M., 2020).

Gender inequality creates a glass obstacle course ripe with barriers and obstacles both visible and invisible that halt the professional advancement of women especially in the DoD (De Welde, K. & Laursen, S., 2011). Female scientists typically encounter the glass obstacle course in the form of informal and formal barriers beginning in grade school (Sorokina, O., 2019). A dividing line for equality in the DoD is typically combat experience and although women's participation has been slowly increasing, senior leadership in the DoD still has an opposition to women in combat roles (Baldor, 2018). Women now occupy 382 marine combat roles, 1,055 army combat roles, 19% of Navy officers and enlisted, 21% of Air Force officers and enlisted

and the Coast Guard removed all gender based assignment restrictions in 1978 and has a 26.4% female representation (Moore, 2020).

Social-cognitive career theory is derived from the social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the importance of developing high levels of self-efficacy so that the best outcomes are realized (Lent et al., 1994). Self-efficacy is developed during childhood, and it is vital in choosing careers and specific attitudes related to careers (Kaminsky & Behrend, 2014).

However, some cases cannot be explained by both theories, for instance, when a person has low-efficacy but still reaches career goals or when a person has high-efficacy but opts out of the specific career they are suited for (Kaminsky & Behrend, 2014).

Barriers to advancement for women begin during childhood and are learned from adults and peers. The only way that social and cultural transformation can come about is through a strong belief in and relationship with God, which is the foundation of servant leadership. A radical change in society needs to happen to bring about gender equality, which requires leaders that are committed to that cause. Servant leaders put the well-being of employees and society above self-interests, which provides the mechanism for social change during adulthood. This social change will trickle down from adults to children, changing their future beliefs and behaviors.

This research will address the research gap regarding the extent of gender inequality in the DoD civilian sector and carve out a path toward equality. The DoD civilian sector has been a male-dominated culture and offers veterans points to vets and spouses of injured or deceased vets, giving them a shoo-in. Although veteran points are good for vets, not many women are vets, which is a barrier to entry for women. Although women in this group are highly educated,

they will often spend their whole career in the position for which they were hired, without options for advancement.

Summary of Research Framework

Barriers and obstacles that keep women rooted in dead-end jobs such as the glass cliff, mommy track, glass ceilings, sexism, dominance penalty, and the sticky floor were explored to highlight the severity of gender inequality and the many forms in which it can present itself. Although many steps have been taken by corporations to improve inequality in the workforce, the problem is far from solved. Women are still disadvantaged when seeking leadership positions, especially in the defense industry, which has been historically male-centric. Learning about the contributing concepts leads us to the theoretical framework, which will discuss the roots of inequality and the possible means of overcoming it through different leadership theories.

The SLT, cultural transformation theory, and the SCCT posit that social behavior, ambitions, goals, and beliefs begin developing in childhood through feedback, imitation, memory, growth, and self-efficacy from adults working in the corporate world, creating barriers for women. Gender inequality begins in childhood, and most children are unaware that they are being led down this path. Fortunately, paths can be altered through cultural transformation and education. To this end, servant leaders who value women equally as men can help initiate changes in organizational culture and the culture of an entire neighborhood.

Definition of Terms

The terms defined in the following section were chosen to provide clarification and meaning concerning their application to this case study research.

Agency or Agentic

Agency is the ability to exercise control over nature and the quality of one's life at all levels, including group, organizational, individual, and sometimes societal (Bandura, 2001). Agency is critical for adaptation, self-renewal over time, and self-development (Bandura, 2001; Yoon, 2019). Agency is a person's capacity, condition, or state of exerting power and influence (Yoon, 2019).

Axiological

Axiology is the philosophical study of values and the roots of those values (Tucker, 2018). The primary concept of axiology is intrinsic goodness, derived from nonmoral features such as facts or states of affairs (Tucker, 2018). Axiology is one of four philosophical assumptions guiding qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The term *axiological* means *of or pertaining to axiology*.

Benevolence or Benevolent Sexism

Benevolence dates to 1473 when Edward IV used it to describe a gift that was taken by threat or force, that is, without consent (Britannica, 2020). Benevolent sexism refers to a man's willingness to provide, protect, and commit that underscores the undermining and patronizing effect it has on women, as it reinforces the notion that women should remain in their traditional gender roles (Gul & Kupfer, 2018). Benevolent sexism can make women view themselves as less competent and decrease their performance in a work setting (Gul & Kupfer, 2018). Benevolence of this type includes providing kindness, gifts, and protection, taking a dominant role, and forcing women into a submissive or relational role (Gul & Kupfer, 2018).

Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory that states that people acquire knowledge and learn through experiences, allowing them to make predictions about the world and design plans to change it (Gopnik & Wellman, 2012). Piaget introduced constructivism in 1926, claiming that he had developed evidence to support constructivism; although his evidence was overturned, new evidence has emerged that using a theoretical framework enhances validity (Gopnik & Wellman, 2012).

Counterfactual

Counterfactuals are mental representations of possible alternatives to past actions or events that produce beneficial and adverse consequences to people (Roese, 1997). Counterfactuals involve expressing what is not the case or what has not happened (Roese, 1997). Counterfactual wages are being provided more and more due to the favoring of highly skilled workers, especially in the use of computers, over low-cost, unskilled workers that accept lower wages (Machado & Mata, 2005). Women are subject to counterfactual wages due to gender inequality, with men being favored over women, even though women are just as highly educated as men (Machado & Mata, 2005).

Critical Theory

Critical theory seeks to confront ideological, social, and historical structures and forces that constrain and produce a culture (Crossman, 2019). Its goal is to change or alter society instead of explaining or understanding it (Crossman, 2019). It aims to dig deep into social life to help humans understand the world and how it works (Crossman, 2019). Critical theory is one of the roots of qualitative research (Creswell, 2014).

Epistemological

Epistemology is the study of the limits, nature, and origin of human knowledge (Stroll, 2020). This word comes from the Greek word *epistêmê*, meaning knowledge, and *logos*, meaning reason (Stroll, 2020). Epistemology is one of the four main branches of the philosophy and assumptions in qualitative research, and it is used extensively in this research to derive knowledge from a group of people experiencing a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The word *epistemological* means *of or pertaining to epistemology*.

Ethnographic

Ethnography is the analysis and recording of a culture or society based upon observations, which results in a written account of the institution, place, or people involved (Howell, 2018). Ethnography is a qualitative research method that involves on-the-scene learning about a culture or social setting (Creswell, 2014). *Ethnographic* means *of or pertaining to ethnography*.

Gender Identity

Gender identity refers to each person's sense of being male, female, or alternate gender identities such as transgender, tomboy, or genderqueer (Mascolo, 2019). One's gender identity is not visible to other people; it is internal and may or may not correspond to a person's biological sex or primary sex characteristics (Mascolo, 2019).

General Schedule

The general schedule (GS) is the white-collar working group in the federal government that is broken up into broad subdivisions covered by Title V of the U.S. Code, Section 5332, which ranges from a GS-1 Step 1 to a GS-15 Step 10 (OPM, 2009).

Ontological

Ontology is the philosophical study of being, which applies to everything real (Simmons, 2020). It is based on the nature of reality and its characteristics (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ontological means *of or pertaining to ontology*, one of the four philosophical assumptions underlying qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Positivism

Positivism is the scientific study of the social aspects of the world, which is confined to the data of experience and excludes metaphysical speculation or a priori or metaphysical speculations (Feigl, 2020). Positivism is based on the affirmation that all knowledge of facts is based on “positive” data and that there is logic and mathematics behind facts (Feigl, 2020).

Post-Positivism

Post-positivism is one of four philosophical assumptions guiding qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Post-positivism is a combination of positivism and interpretivism with a focus on researching issues experienced by the majority of the people and writing results based on what the majority deems acceptable (Panhwar et al., 2017). Post-positivists believe that the absolute truth cannot be found, as all experiences are multidimensional and from multiple directions (Panhwar et al., 2017).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to a person’s belief or capacity to achieve specific results or produce certain effects (Flammer, 2001). High self-efficacy is a principal element of happy and successful people, as these people have strong feelings of well-being and high self-esteem (Flammer, 2001).

Senior Executive Service (SES)

The SES is a group of people with executive-level skills, which enable them to lead the U.S. (OPM, 2020a). SES employees are the top tier of federal service, above the GS and Wage Grade (WG) pay scales, and they hold key positions below presidential appointees that operate federal agencies (OPM, 2011b).

Typology

Typology refers to the grouping of items based on the similarities shared among all members (Shibatani, 2001). For example, women share the negative aspects of gender inequality, and men display different patterns of behavior that continue to enforce gender inequality.

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

As this research study is on gender inequality, many assumptions will be made about its participants, the validity of its research questions, and how this research can be applied to a general population. Gender inequality is also difficult to prove, which limits this study's ability to link the lack of promotions to unequal treatment. Moreover, this research will focus on civilian DoD employees only, which might limit generalizations to the greater population; however, as the DoD is considered a role model of the U.S., many corporations follow the DoD's leadership examples.

Assumptions

Numerous assumptions will be assumed in this study. First, honesty on the part of participants will be assumed. Second, the survey questions will be developed and effectively worded to help identify current barriers and gather data to make correlations. Third, it will be assumed that participants understand gender inequality and can recognize the many different types so that they can respond to the questions with accuracy. The fourth assumption will be that those who have experienced gender inequality have done so during employment with the DoD,

other government agencies or male-dominated industries and will openly discuss them. Fifth, female leaders are willing to take part in the study due to its significance. Lastly, the researcher has assumed that the generalizations of the findings from this study will apply to similar populations of women executives external to the DoD civilian sector, and thus, the results can be used to bring about positive changes to culture.

Limitations

Gender inequality is difficult to prove, even though women occupied only 25% of corporate officer positions in 2016; moreover, it is difficult to say that gender inequality is completely to blame (Warner & Corley, n.d.). This study will be limited in its ability to prove the underlying variables that may affect gender inequality, as its focus will be on more common causes. This study will rely on career selection, case studies, role evolution, task suitability, relationships between the variables, and the field of study to assess the DoD as a system. Another limitation might be that this study's results may not be generalizable to a different population due to the complex nature of the DoD and the different limiting factors associated with this specific group.

The limitation of the participants only comprising of civilian DoD employees will provide a foundation for future research on gender inequality as it pertains to this group and the broader population that emulates this group. This study will have no restrictions other than the participant must be a current DoD civilian employee in the GS rank, a senior executive or a leader in another government agency or other male-dominated profession. WG employees will not be included, as they would have to transfer over to the GS to be considered for promotion to an SES position. This study will have no controls in place for ethnic bias and hopes to capture gender inequality experiences from the women in the population.

Delimitations

The scope of this research will include all GS and SES employees in the DoD, that is, all men and women. All DoD personnel, leaders from other government agencies and leaders in male-dominated industries will be included for the purpose of describing mitigation strategies although the main area of study is the civilian sector of the DoD.

Significance of the Study

Research on gender inequality leading to reduced access to qualified female leaders in the civilian sector of the defense department can be improved by gaining knowledge about the barriers to entry and obstacles prohibiting advancement. This study explores possible ways to remove these barriers and eliminate obstacles, creating an equal opportunity for women to get promoted to high leadership levels and thus gain higher levels of compensation. Many changes have occurred over the years in the number of women allowed entry into the DoD civilian sector, and in 2016, all military and civilian positions were opened to females; however, frequently, they are held static in entry-level positions once hired (Pellerin, 2015; Rosen et al., 2003). Females routinely experience a disadvantage in the DoD labor force due to the “male-only” culture of the organization and rarely make it into the leadership ranks (Booth, 2003; Waldrop, 2016).

This research will fill the gap on the DoD civilian labor force by exploring the barriers and obstacles holding women back and exploring theories to help find answers to the problems plaguing the DoD. This research will explore the current culture to determine whether women are attempting to move into leadership, and if so, what barriers and obstacles exist impeding their progression. This research will also explore whether people are being promoted regardless of their veteran status and if women who have undertaken higher education are getting stuck on the

floor in administrative positions. The participants' past experiences will help tie their lived experiences to the case study so as to understand this culture better.

This research will also look at current percentages of the male to female ratios in the DoD, especially in leadership positions. Participants in this research that experience gender inequality when attempting to get promoted will offer insight into the culture so that suggestions can be made to improve it. The participants' past experiences will help tie their lived experiences to the case study so as to understand the culture better. The DoD is a leader and role model for organizational leadership that many others try to copy. This research aims to improve the leadership and make it more inclusive of women and boost promotional opportunities countrywide.

Reduction of Gaps in the Literature

The purpose of this study is to add to the existing body of knowledge on gender inequality within organizational leadership, specifically within the DoD civilian sector. Many studies have focused on the persistence of gender inequality and the inequality experienced by women in the defense sector (Padavic et al., 2019; Woods, 2015). Klasen (2020) found evidence of the glass ceiling, with women still being underrepresented in executive positions, and mommy track, where women bear the burden of care for children and the elderly, thus sacrificing their career prospects.

Many recent studies have also focused on a greater work–life fit, its effect on well-being (Riva et al., 2019), and how the social-status gained from competition affects gender inequality (Schram et al., 2019). Klasen (2020) also found that occupational and sectoral segregation continues at alarming degrees in countries with greater abundance, and barriers are not being broken down. Klasen (2020) also focused on the recent spikes in workplace sexual harassment

accusers' impunity, which drives women out of organizations furthering gender inequality. One civilian DoD co-worker spoke of a time about a year ago that she had a man keep asking her out and she said no multiple times. Then one day he followed her home and she reported it and he was terminated however, that man now knows where she lives.

Padavic et al. (2020) recently discovered that both men and women prohibit gender equality by holding onto cultural beliefs and sociocognitive interests that maintain differences. Furthermore, social defenses and wider cultural beliefs that are resistant-to-change keep the genders from becoming equal (Padavic et al., 2020). However, few studies have focused on gender inequality in male-dominated organizations such as the DoD, including both men and women, using a quantifiable/quantitative method to bring greater validity to the findings. One employee in the DoD civilian sector mentioned a co-worker from another country striking her during the performance of duties on more than one occasion,

Klasen (2020), who took a recent survey of the trends and levels of gender inequality in the world today, suggested that the current stagnation in gender equality that the world is currently facing needs to be reassessed to see if it is only a temporary calm before the storm whereby exponential growth may occur. Woods (2015) suggested that further studies on the defense industry should use a quantitative method to analyze numerical data related to this specific group. Likewise, Schram et al. (2019) suggested more research to establish consequences of the effects of rivalry and comparison to others on both men and women to establish how it affects the occurrence of gender inequality.

Padavic et al. (2020) pitted both work and family against each other, and their results suggest that leadership blames societal norms for the lack of diversity among top leadership. Furthermore, leadership usually claims to be concerned for people by offering more flexible

work-life policies rather than focusing solely on the bottom line (Padavic et al., 2020). Padavic et al. (2020) suggested that more research should be conducted to investigate how organizations can successfully disrupt men's and women's social defenses to improve equality and that future research should include men in research on gender inequality. As Woods (2015), Padavic et al. (2020), Schram et al. (2019), and Klasen (2020) say, through learning about inequality, leaders can learn how to alter the culture successfully and use quantifiable data to capture statistics.

Therefore, the research gap of this study is the lack of literature on gender inequality in the DoD civilian sector regarding the reasons for stagnation in promoting female leaders, and men's and women's insight into social defenses. Through learning about inequality, leaders can learn how to alter the culture successfully and use quantifiable data to capture statistics, as Woods (2015), Padavic et al. (2020), Schram et al. (2019), and Klasen (2020) say.

This gap relates to the purpose and Research Questions (RQs') because the DoD is an exemplar for leadership that many organizations in America attempt to copy. Thus, the DoD should model equality for the world's leading country. Many women in this industry are more highly educated than their male counterparts, yet the dominance penalty, glass ceiling, mommy track, occupational segregation, glass cliffs, sexism, and other forms of inequality make it impossible for them to move into leadership. Most forms of inequality come from social defenses taught during childhood, which are carried over into adulthood.

This study will contribute to the literature by providing a greater understanding of the social defenses and barriers in this population, which will help teach the next generation, one family and one organization at a time, until enough has been done to achieve gender equality. The wars in this century will not be fought by brute force, which is why the DoD has been

primarily male dominated. The wars of the future will be either biological or technological, and women are equal for the task of fighting against both.

This study will advance the current literature or body of research by using qualitative and quantitative data to analyze the current state of gender inequality in the DoD while capturing the voice and inputs of men and women. This study will advance the understanding of theories of social defenses that create barriers, male-dominated constructs that create complete blockages, and all concepts that contribute to gender inequality.

Next, this study will look into theories that contribute to inequality and theories that improve inequality by creating surveys and questionnaires to capture the viewpoints of both men and women and statistically analyze the data to draw valid conclusions while using a qualitative construct to understand the phenomenon. This study will contribute to society by improving equality in the organization that illustrates how we are to behave in the world. When the leaders model equality, these behaviors disseminate out into the rest of society and down to children who then automatically embrace equality, thus improving lives now and in the future.

Implications for Biblical Integration

Gender inequality causes distrust and injustice on the gender that is being disadvantaged, usually women, yet God created both man and woman in his image with equal worth (New International Version, Genesis 1:27). Sin is the culprit for inequality between the genders since Adam blamed Eve for his eating the apple (indirectly God) and Eve blamed the serpent (indirectly Satan) (New International Version, Genesis 3: 2–3). God’s punishment for the sin of Eve was that she would desire to control her husband, but he would rule over her (New Living Translation, Genesis 3:16,). Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (New International Version, John 16:7,33).

When Jesus came into the world, he elevated women wherever he went, healing and defending them and building friendships with them (Mathis, 2019). The Bible states that in Christ Jesus, we are all children of God through faith; there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor male and female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus (New International Version, Galatians 3:28). In early biblical times, women were put into leadership positions to spread the gospel's words and lead the church. Studying the Bible through the lens of gender reveals that the church should reflect unity and equality at home, in church, and throughout society.

When women step up into leadership roles or take up leadership, they take steps toward changing a systemic inequality that has been around since the beginning of time; naturally therefore, they will face resistance (Power, 2019). The knowledge gained from an organizational leadership degree at a Christian University prepares students for the challenges that lay ahead, as they now realize that work is done for God's glory (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012). Christian leaders know that sin is the culprit of difficulties but through God, leaders can raise the organization to higher ground so that followers strive to become more Christ-like in all endeavors (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012).

Benefit to Business Practice and Relationship to Cognate

Organizational leadership involves setting the stage for an entire organization, including formulating, and executing strategies, creating organizational climate and culture around the vision, putting in place policies and practices for all to engage in, and designing the structure needed to reach corporate goals (Daft, 2016). The leadership cognate is designed to expand the knowledge of business operations and practices while strengthening leadership skills in working professional students. The leadership cognate at liberty includes a biblical integration tie that

shows biblical proof for ethical leadership to give students a firm foundation. Gender inequality ties directly to the creation of organizational culture. Either the leader values both males and females, or values one more than the other, which creates a culture that is dominant in one direction (Waber, 2014).

Leadership is the systemic ability to find direction while harnessing creativity and innovation through a nurtured and distributed organization (Bolduc, 2019). Historically, women in male-dominated cultures adopted leadership styles and practices commensurate with a patriarchal organization (Painter-Morland, 2011). Becoming a more gender-equal organization requires the leadership to be gender-sensitive in all managerial tasks, such as activities associated with mentoring, setting performance targets, and conducting performance reviews (Radu et al., 2017). Organizations that adopt gender-equal policies and practices outperform competitors and improve innovation and employee satisfaction with spiking in revenue growth (Dadras, 2019).

Summary of the Significance of the Study

This case study research explored the barriers, obstacles, and inequalities of women in the civilian sector of the DoD. Gender inequality within the realm of organizational leadership is still present, and barriers blocking the path or sticking women in their tracks still exist. The DoD has a long history of male dominance, limiting females from advancing through the ranks, although more and more females are now in the workforce. This research will explore the role of women in the DoD through a case study framework to shine a light on the issues women face with the intent of finding viable solutions to make leadership opportunities for women a possibility in the future.

Currently and historically, gender inequality has taken on many different forms across many different fields. The next section is an exhaustive review of literature on all the aspects of

gender inequality. Many of these concepts aim to stop equality, and several theories explain both the origin of inequality as well as solutions to overcoming it. The DoD has a long history of male dominance, which contributes to inequality from the top of the organization all the way to the lower echelons.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The material explored and covered within this literature review includes gender inequality and its manifestations in organizational leadership and human and social development throughout life. This literature review will also highlight the need for social change, that is, to improve equality and provide better opportunities for women, especially in the civilian sector of the U.S. defense industry. Women continue to have low representation within the defense industry, and several factors contributing to this will be explored, including family/work-life imbalances, gender stereotypes, biological differences, different forms of inequality, and theories that can be used to overcome inequality and progression into the SES corps of the federal government.

Diversity helps corporations stay accountable and even keep a competitive advantage while maintaining a results-oriented leadership team that strategically uses human resources and improves policy-making processes (Anestaki et al., 2016). Despite efforts to improve diversity, women and minorities continue to be underrepresented in the higher echelons of the defense industry, such as the SES corps (Anestaki et al., 2016; Clark et al., 2015). As of 2010, women held 30% of the SES positions, which is more than double of the 1992 figure—12.3% (Sabharwal, 2015). The plan is to raise that to 41% by 2030 (Sabharwal, 2015). However, these women face many challenges, including being excluded from essential networking opportunities, being evaluated unfavorably, receiving more criticism and scrutiny than necessary, and getting

less support from peers, which adversely accentuates inequality (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Sabharwal, 2015).

Strategy for searching literature. The literature review was guided by questions created (See Appendix A) that closely align with the topic of gender inequality in a defense setting. Key search terms were generated from the questions generated in Appendix A, and many databases were searched, including ProQuest Central, Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCO) quick search database, Gale Academic OneFile, Credo, Journal Storage (JSTOR), and ScienceDirect. Literature was selected based on the study's relevancy to the topic and keywords, all articles were peer-reviewed, and all were written within the last five years unless they were seminal work in which the concept or theory originated. Part of the literature review strategy included searching the U.S. Government websites for statistics and information, the DoD Pentagon Library database, and Liberty University Library for related articles. Several books were purchased and read to gain a deeper understanding of theories, concepts, and the creation of the DoD.

Both quantitative and qualitative sources were used to bring validity to this research. Included in this literature review are many different research designs, such as ethnography, case studies, phenomenology, and scientific studies. Literature was chosen both within the U.S. defense industry and the private sector to illuminate issues occurring in the defense industry, which have not previously been documented. This literature review begins with a broad and in-depth look at the issue of gender inequality and the different forms it may take, such as glass ceilings, mommy track, dominance penalty, sexism, and glass cliff, sticky floor, and occupational segregation.

Next, this literature review takes an in-depth look at how gender inequality is tied to leadership through examining theories such as the SCT, SCCT, cultural transformation theory, and servant leadership theory. Next, this review examines the barriers to career advancement that women face, especially within the DoD. The next section covers the background of the US SES Corp to provide a fundamental idea of the executive leadership process and the qualifications needed to make it into this executive group. Finally, the literature review explores the current diversity policies in the DoD and the gaps in diversity that need to be filled to improve inequality.

The Problem

Gender inequality allows different people different opportunities, creating an imbalance of power, status, and pay based solely on gender (Beneria, 2010; Kolb, 2020). Often gender inequality manifests in a skewed division of labor, bargaining power, political leadership, and access to education (Esmaili et al., 2011). A concerning issue for society, gender inequality leads to significant gaps between men and women in areas such as leadership positions, lower wages for women, and less representation in government (Anisman-Razin et al., 2018).

According to survey results, many people think gender inequality no longer exists; however, women are still underrepresented in corporate leadership positions, indicating that inequality is still very much present (Marken, 2016). Much of the progress made between the 1970s and 1980s has slowed to a standstill in the 2000s (Padavic et al., 2019). Back in 2002, 15.7% of Fortune 500 company Corporate Executive Officers (CEOs) were women, which decreased to 14.6% in 2013 (Padavic et al., 2019). According to the annual Global Gender Gap Report from the Economic Forum (2018), a gender gap still exists in political empowerment and

economic status, even though the gaps in social areas such as health and education have evened out (Goetz, 2020).

Gender inequality began to improve during the 1990s, when globalization created positions requiring long hours and low pay to fill because of the unavailability of other jobs (Klasen, 2020). While income improved for women, the burdens on their time did not, and women are often already stretched thin with the responsibilities of caring for the family and other domestic responsibilities (Klasen, 2020). In the U.S., the drive for equality has stalled, and according to the annual Global Gender Gap Report from the World Economic Forum (2017) the Gender Gap Index indicates that the trend of providing women with equal rights actually started reversing, keeping women below men economically (Goetz, 2020; Goldin & Mitchell, 2017). In some parts of the world, women are still forced to subjugate themselves to men, and those men thrive on the backlash against gender equality (Brown, 2018). The only area where equality has been steadily improving worldwide is in education (Klasen, 2020).

In a seminal work, Eisler (1988) found gender inequality to originate from patriarchal or matriarchal societies where one sex dominates another. The U.S. is a patriarchal society where women have a long history of being considered a commodity either through marriage, prostitution, or pornography that men can purchase (Collins & Rothe, 2017). From movies to music to online surfing, U.S. society has been set up to objectify women and men and depict them in gender-specific stereotypes, such as men being powerful, violent, and aggressive and women being submissive, vulnerable, dependent on men, and weak (Brown & Campbell, 1986; Garland et al., 2016).

Many people view strong independent women as a threat to the prevailing male-dominated culture, right in line with communism, and think that it must be eradicated (Garland et

al., 2016). Women today often take on roles of the traditional male hero to gain empowerment; however, they are never wholly victorious due to the constraints of patriarchy (Garland et al., 2016). Unfortunately, whatever a person thinks, and feels is evident in how they treat other people (Collins & Rothe, 2017). People with entitlement issues expect people to do things for them because of how much money and power that they have especially if they have reached a certain level of success (Cuncic, A., 2021).

Gender is taught during early childhood through the types of toys prescribed for each gender, such as G.I. Joe for boys and Barbie dolls for girls; moreover, boys are encouraged to play video games where men act rough and tough, while girls are encouraged to act like Barbies with curves and made-up perfect faces (Messner, 2000; Tulinski, 2017). Gender stereotyping determines what behaviors are appropriate for each gender (Gray, 2014). Just the threat of knowing that gender stereotypes exist and could cause negative feelings can cause anxiety in women, causing decreased or failed performance (Schram et al., 2019). As children, men are taught to be brave, while women are taught to be perfect (Saujani, 2019).

Gender roles are socially constructed and determine psychological behavior, needs, and place within society (Kliuchko, 2011; Mascolo, 2019). Although gender roles are dynamic, and people are free to identify their gender freely, society determines what is masculine and feminine (Mascolo, 2019). Gender roles are derived from a limited ability to process information, and they satisfy people's motivational needs, hide ignorance, and assign social structure to the whole world (Alev et al., 2010). Society places people into concrete "normal" boxes according to gender, which makes up a person's behavior, psyche, and place in the social hierarchy (Kliuchko, 2011). People can then choose to conform to these stereotypical gender roles or behave in non-conforming ways (Blair, 2018).

In American society, gender inequality and male dominance can change, adapt to, and reassert themselves in new forms when old forms erode (Maktabi & Lia, 2017; Ridgeway, 2014). The gender hierarchy in the U.S. is a system that places men above women in power, material resources, authority, and status even when social and economic status change, including women entering into male-dominated careers (Catalyst, 2020; Reskin & Roos, 1990). The layers of inequality and difference exist at multilevel systems such as class, race and gender which include the distribution of resources and cultural beliefs learned at the macro level, behavioral relations at the interactional level, and identities and traits learned at an individual level (Ridgeway, 1997; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004).

The categorization of an individual's sex into male or female is a biological distinction created at birth, whereas gender is constructed socially within society (Cole, 2019; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). In terms of gender stereotypes, two masculine roles and one feminine role exist for appropriate behavior (Morales et al., 2015). The masculine roles are social and personal, where practices such as bullying stem from social control or the masculine social traits of men that require them to exert dominance and control to establish a pecking order or hierarchy (Choi et al., 2009). The feminine role is social and includes being gentle and understanding others' needs (Morales et al., 2015).

This gender division is called a three-factor model, from a 23 factor-analytic study on gender using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1979; Kachel et al., 2016). In this regard, Choi et al. (2008) confirmed that three factors make up gender with two for males and one for females. Dominance, aggression, and force are masculine traits, which can be used to exert power and control over other people (Morales et al. 2016). Studies show that boys gain in

masculinity during elementary school, learning to display masculine power in manners that sexually objectify girls while repressing a girl's expression of agency (Mayeza & Bhana, 2020).

Gender is a multilevel, socially created system of disadvantages and differences, which includes cultural beliefs, ways of interacting with others, and personal identities (Bécares & Priest, 2015; Ridgeway, 1997). Interactional processes that are limited based on personal circumstances are the most significant contributors to inequality, as gendered behaviors are situational and interactionally based (Martin, 2019; Ridgeway, 1997). Gender is not a choice; we are each born into one, and we are all created in God's image; therefore, no child should be forced into a gender identity that limits the good that they may do (Hunnell, 2017). Men can have traits that are considered feminine, yet they are still men; women can have masculine traits, yet they are still women (Hunnell, 2017).

Gender and race systems are constructed by the twin pillars of resources and cultural rules or schemas (Ridgeway, C. L. & Correll, S. J., 2004). Men are typically viewed as more competent and thus worthy of higher status while women are viewed as nice and communal (Ridgeway, C. L. & Kricheli-Katz, T., 2013). Gender gets institutionalized in government policy, the media, and normal views of what family means (Ridgeway, C. L. & Correll, S. J., 2004). Gender acts as an implicit, cultural, and cognitive presence affecting activities, behavior and evaluations in a social context (Ridgeway, 1997).

Diversity. Diversity refers to the practice of including all the experiences and characteristics that define each individual, and all people fall under the diversity umbrella (U.S. Department of Commerce & Gore, 2020). The primary forms of diversity are covered under the acronym REGARDS, which stands for race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disability, and sexual orientation (U.S. Department of Commerce & Gore, 2020). The secondary forms of

diversity include geographic origin, role or level in the organization, communication style, economic status, and work style, and all people possess qualities in both dimensions (U.S. Department of Commerce & Gore, 2020).

Many companies are using resources to create teams dedicated to improving diversity and, consequently, inequality in organizations, although many do so to enhance their reputation instead of improving diversity (Scarborough et al., 2019). Failure to address issues regarding inequality may harm a company's reputation, leading to expensive lawsuits for discrimination (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). To mitigate risks, companies are adopting policies that support and encourage diversity (Scarborough et al., 2019). Even with these programs in place, companies continue with the same practices that were put in place in the 1960s, preventing improvements in the sexist organizational culture (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

Diversity programs may increase bias rather than remove it, as most people believe that diversity is forced is forced upon the whole organization (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). Diversity training has been the focus of most organizations over the past thirty years, to reduce stereotypes, biases, and prejudices experienced between different employees (Fujimoto & Härtel, 2015; U.S. Department of Commerce & Gore, 2020). When diversity programs are used effectively, employee morale is boosted along with productivity (Herring, 2009; Li et al., 2019). When organizations embrace diversity, they outperform similar organizations that utilize only like-minded thinkers due to increased innovation and economic performance in the city and region where the organization is located is bolstered (Bersin, 2015; Eswaran, 2019; Herring, 2009).

Unfortunately, workers in a diverse workplace are less cohesive and experience higher intergroup conflict levels, leading to a lower level of commitment (Li et al., 2019). A positive, diverse climate may improve commitment by including minority group members and supporting

them (Li et al., 2019). Women and racial-ethnic employees view organizational diversity management less favorably and feel less supported than White men (Li et al., 2019). Often, women, older employees, and minorities are less committed to organizations due to unfulfilled promises of the diversity programs (Li et al., 2019).

The main goal of a diversity program should be to fix the organization to be more inclusive rather than trying to ensure the diverse people fit into the organization (Matsui, 2019). Many organizations use an identity-blind decision-making process, a dominant form of diversity management in which all employees are the same (Li et al., 2019; Plaut, 2010). Different departments in the DoD use different types of diversity management; one department may use identity-blind diversity management, while the other may use identity-conscious; however, neither are without issues (Li et al., 2019; Shore et al., 2018). Real diversity success begins when there is no longer a need for diversity programs to manage the respect and kindness accorded to marginalized employees and the inclusion and fair treatment of all members in an organization (Matsui, 2019).

Work-life balance. Many companies have been pushing the work–life balance (WLB) onto employees, which feels like another barrier to advancement, as it often takes extra time, attention, and dedication to climb the corporate ladder. When WLB is used as a reason people do not advance, it creates tension (Riva et al., 2019). WLB is pushed onto women regardless of their children's age, or rather, organizations use children as an excuse to keep women below men (Ely & Padavaic, 2020; Sharabi & Harpaz, 2013). A stereotypical belief is that women have more difficulty continuing employment due to childcare, yet men encounter the same difficulties in balancing family life with careers and still get advanced in careers (Ely & Padavaic, 2020; Sharabi & Harpaz, 2013).

Women are often expected to handle most of the labor inside the home, which saps their energy and decreases their ability to grow professionally in the workforce (Sharabi & Harpaz, 2013; Germano, 2019). The three levels of responsibilities of women include being a mother, a wife, and a worker; this often results in women dropping their roles as workers to dedicate more time and attention to the family (Sharabi & Harpaz, 2013). Women have been steadily increasing their numbers in the corporate world; however, having children still harms economic growth (Klasen, 2020; Stewart, 2003). Moreover, an association exists between higher education and fewer children: educated mothers invest their time more heavily in health, education, and corporate success, which leads them to have fewer children (Klasen, 2020).

One of the best ways to improve equality is to create organizations with flexible working hours so that working parents can integrate family and work more efficiently (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2018). Historically, women have arranged their lives around children with an inability to disconnect from their family life, while men have arranged their life around work while being able to disconnect from their family life (Ely & Padavaic, 2020; Mellor, 2003). The division of labor for parenting ends up being allocated to the parent based on the time available and resources earned, which most often results in women being primarily responsible for raising children (Gloor et al., 2018; Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2005).

Most leadership positions require dedication in the form of time, energy, and commitment, which conflicts with the maternal role, creating a barrier for many women (Ely & Padavaic, 2020; Harris, 2010). Men have all of the benefits such as promotional opportunities, better pay, a greater tendency to be selected for employment, and positive performance evaluations, whereas women do most of the domestic engineering without pay (Gloor et al., 2018). Moreover, men may experience some backlash from co-workers and peers, including

men, if men begin taking leaves being offered for family care (Gloor et al., 2018; Horvath et al., 2017).

Intersectionality. Intersectionality refers to the relations between social identities such as race, class, and gender that merge or have fuzzy boundaries, creating a system of disadvantage or discrimination (Clark et al., 2018). A social identity is an identity that each person decides to claim membership to, such as gender, race, class, or sexuality. (Ashmore et al., 2004; Onwuachi-Willig, 2016). Black activists and critical thinkers conceived the concept of intersectionality to explain and handle the oppressive experiences of Black women (Gkiouleka et al., 2018). Since its beginnings, the concept of intersectionality has expanded over the past 20 years, now being known as a strategy, a lived experience, a way to analyze inequality, a movement, and an aspiration (Al-Faham et al., 2019).

Individuals and groups are located at different places in the systems of power, and their location shapes their point of view of other people's experiences as well as their own (Gkiouleka et al., 2018). Identity relates to individuals' self-esteem, self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-image, and it is how people form social relations (Cherry, 2020; Shields, 2008). Group membership and social positions often overlap and change the whole experience of social identity. The more a person identifies with an oppressed group, the higher their oppression; for instance, a Black woman faces discrimination not only because she is a woman, who places her at a disadvantage, but also because she is Black, which heightens her oppression (Crenshaw, 2016; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Women face inequality based on their gender, race, religion, and age; for example, the median age of female Corporate Executive Officers (CEOs) is typically slightly lower (by two years) than their male counterparts (Withisuphakom & Jiraporn,

2017). Women usually must possess extraordinary abilities and skills beyond those of the competition to even be considered for the top spot (Al-Faham et al., 2019).

Recognition of the power relations between race and gender led to the second wave of feminism, as White women were mainly being promoted and given opportunities in the corporate world (Collins, 1990; Herr, 2014). Group membership and social positions created by race and gender frequently overlap changing social identities and influence a person's experience with and beliefs about gender (Moore-Berg & Karpinski, 2019; Shields, 2008). An example of intersectionality is the nursing profession, where women in the nursing profession will push fellow White male nurses up into leadership positions; however, Black male nurses undergo discrimination instead (Gooding-Williams, 2013). In male-dominated professions, women are rarely ever promoted to leadership positions; instead, they are treated as less than men and are further discriminated against (Riva et al., 2019).

Inequality stems from the desire to have power, status, money, and public recognition regardless of what a person has to do to get it. People prefer equal outcomes even if everyone gets less, as opposed to unequal outcomes where everyone gets a little more (Starmans et al., 2017; Ridgeway, 2014). Status is about the esteem and respect gained for work, life choices, religion, ethnic group, schoolwork, or any other thing, compared to those of other people. Often, people will do anything to get a higher status when it makes no sense and they have done nothing to earn it (Gooding-Williams, 2013; Jackson, 1998). The status that comes from organizational resources and control is unstable, constantly being in flux due to the ever-changing people, skills, abilities, and lifestyles that create it (Empson, 2017; Tilly, 1998).

Throughout history, men, especially White men, have received higher status, better jobs, and higher incomes than women, even when women work ten times harder and display the same

level of competence (Bazon, 2019; Cuddy et al., 2007). Inequality stems from status beliefs associated with race, age, gender, occupation, education, and class (Bécares, 2015; Fiske, 2011). People of higher status eagerly speak up, while those of lower status remain silent, as ideas sound better coming from someone of high status. The division between high and low status and class is becoming wider rather than narrower (Manstead, 2018; Ridgeway, 2014). Speaking up results in more privilege and higher status, increasing the inequality between people of high and low status (Voss, 2010; Ridgeway, 2014). People gain status through either economic capital such as money, material resources, and income or cultural capital such as education, skills, knowledge, and expertise (Waterfield et al., 2019).

Historically, White, middle-class men have been considered better at social skills than people of the working class, women, or people of color, which legitimizes and reinforces inequality (Waterfield et al., 2019). Status and class rankings make it even more difficult for the working class to benefit from education and employment opportunities that will help improve material issues (Manstead, 2018; Thye, 2000). People will align themselves with a person they believe has a higher status to make themselves seem like they are of higher status (Thye, 2000; Waterfield et al., 2019).

Social stratification consists of the following three components that contribute to inequality: power, class, and status (Weber, 2019). Power refers to a person's ability to get their way regardless of resistance from others (Weber, 2019). Class refers to a person's economic position based on their individual merit and what they were born into (Weber, 2019). Status refers to a person's honor, prestige, or standing compared to other people, which may or may not be influenced by class (Weber, 2019).

Social stratification has a closed and an open component (Fialová & Želinský, 2019). The closed component, which is also known as the vertical component, does not permit people to change their classes or have social relationships across classes (Griffiths et al., 2015). The open component or horizontal component is merit-based, and movement is allowed between layers and classes (Griffiths et al., 2015). Most sociologists agree that four types of social stratification are present: status, slavery, estate, and social class (Barkan, 2016). Today, America embodies more of a class system in which people can move up or down based on personal effort, skills, knowledge, or lack thereof (Barkan, 2016).

Social differentiation encompasses spatial and regional disparities affecting education and post-graduate job opportunities (Fialová & Želinský, 2019). It refers to the process used to develop a status hierarchy in a group or organization (American Psychology Association, 2020). Social stratification and differentiation in the DoD have led to further discrimination for a person with lower status and class, as those of higher status, power and class determine who gets what, when, and why (Little & McGivern, 2012; Thye, 2000).

As each profession is based on specific merit and, thus, a different pay bracket, inequality must be studied and analyzed categorically (Tilly, 1998; Voss, 2010). It is kept alive through the four processes of exploitation, opportunity hoarding, emulation, and adaptation, which are the engines that drive it (Kinder & Dale-Riddle, 2012; Le Galès & Pierson, 2019; Voss, 2010). Exploitation involves the wealthy and privileged maintaining control over and using resources while making the less privileged work to keep resources flowing and restricting their access to the resource by whatever means necessary (Pazzanese, 2016; Tilly, 1998). Opportunity hoarding involves finding an opportunity, such as an oil field, keeping it in the in-group, and then profiting off it (for example, selling the oil to make a considerable profit) (Voss, 2010).

Emulation is the process of actually copying an organizational model or in-group, such as is done with the DoD, then starting it in a new setting, thereby passing on the organization's credo and practices, in this case, gender-based inequality, to other groups of individuals (Laloux, 2014; Tilly, 1998). Adaptation is the difference between relevance and obsolescence in the industry today, and it involves creating procedures and practices to cope with categorical distinctions, which results in a new form of institutionalization (Boss, 2015; Tilly, 1998). Inequality falls within the four organizational processes, and in an organization such as the DoD, exploitation and hoarding both occur in the in-group. All others are left to adapt and possibly try to emulate the behavior of the in-group, no matter how awful it is, to try and rise in social status or commit to being in the out-group (Boss, 2015; Mann, 1999).

In the U.S., White people, men, and the middle and upper classes are considered to be more competent than women, working-class people, and people of color (Cuddy et al., 2007; Durante & Fiske, 2017). When women believe that men have higher competence, it gives credibility to that higher status, which exacerbates inequality and the adverse feelings associated with it (Durante & Fiske, 2017; Ridgeway, 2014). Although organizations have put in place measures to prevent inequality, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy such that the disadvantaged group still feels like it is unequal due to other people's stereotypic expectations of them (Cuddy et al., 2007; Lumen Learning, 2020).

Recent survey results show that 60% of male executive leaders say that they feel uncomfortable "dealing" with women, and tough women are not indeed women; however, a woman who is not tough is not worthy of having around (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986; Tandon, 2019). Most women hit barriers, limiting their advancement way before they hit boardroom levels and usually before they come near to managerial positions where they can influence

company policies (Blair, 2018; Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986). Barbe and Rice suggest the following three reasons women fail to make it to the top:

- Structural causes such as discrimination.
- Women cannot perform executive skills; however, without getting an opportunity to practice, they will not be able to acquire the necessary skills.
- Women do not want to move into top positions due to their fear of the glass cliff and the negativity associated with it.

However, other authors agree that there is only one reason women do not make it to the top, that is, their gender (Barbe, 2016; Rice, 2011).

Human development. Sex is a biological condition assigned at birth based on an infant's physical reproduction functions (Holzer, 2019; Sharabi & Harpaz, 2013). Unfortunately, this designation of sex places an infant into a pre-assigned social role and identity, leaving modern parents uneasy about giving their child a gender (Newberry, 2017). As children grow and mature, they are given gender-specific toys and are told to like gender-specific movies, games, and clothes (Perri, 2018; Rigney, 2011). This heterosexual gender classification system maintains the gender hierarchy and inequality between women and men, and anyone who transcends the boundaries of gender is regarded as odd by those that do not (Cameron & Kulick, 2003; Kritzinger, 2005; Perri, 2018). Essentially, the fact that women can get pregnant and bear children creates the quintessential female image, leading men to view women as subordinates (Danjuma et al., 2011).

Equality for women is a prominent area of focus according to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) created in 2000 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) created for the 2016–2030 time period (Willis, 2018). The third MDG aims to empower women

and promote equality, while goal five of the SDGs aims to empower women and girls and achieve gender equality (SDG, 2018; UN, 2000). One action taken to improve equality was changing the term *sex*, which dated back to the 1940s, to *gender* after recognizing that being male or female is not just biological, but dynamic, with changes over space and time (Willis, 2018). Gender equality is vital to international development for a couple of reasons: First, universal human rights require the equality of the genders, and second, requires gender equality to improve economic and social development (Willis, 2018).

The gender stereotypes and practices of inequality that have historically been set in place create a dynamic termed “economic violence,” whereby men use income as a method of control over women (Willis, 2018). The National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics Violence claim that violence embodies many forms and affect many women: from being shouted at to embarrass or humiliate them (58.4%), Sworn at (15.3%), being hit or pushed (20.8%), being ignored or treated with indifference (82.6%), being threatened (5.4%), been scared (3.3%), having objects thrown at them (8%) and being insulted or called rude or hurtful names (9.7%) (INEGI, 2016). In addition to these things, women in the DoD have had their tires slashed while at work and have dealt with micro-bursts of aggression from male colleagues routinely during the performance of duties.

As more women pursue higher education and, consequently, more corporate doors open to them, violence against women should decrease because women can take care of themselves (Willis, 2018). Unfortunately, women still face a similar dynamic in the corporate world from male co-workers, especially those who may come from different countries and thus have different social skills (Barlow & Akbarzadeh, 2008). Global equality is a challenge due to cultural differences associated with other countries and the spatial and scale differences between

other countries and the U.S. (Willis, 2018). Many women in other countries embrace and accept the subservient role assigned to them whereas women in America do not (Prenner, L. A. & Anh, T., 1977).

Barriers to leadership for women. Barriers include structural barriers put in place by the leadership to develop only those people who are considered a cultural fit into future leaders (Washington, 2011). In male-dominated industries such as the DoD, these structural barriers are almost impossible to overcome unless the leaders feel generous to women that day (Kliuchko, 2011). Barriers can be either internal or external, and internal barriers have to do with personality and traits, while external barriers refer to situational and structural variables (Washington, 2011). As they grow older and begin to marry, have children, and attempt balancing it all with a career, many women who would make inspiring leaders start recognizing the conflicts they will have to face and the barriers they will have to overcome (Reis, n.d.).

The internal barriers are linked to socially imposed stereotypical roles that affect people in the workforce (Washington, 2011). Often, women are assigned jobs that are in alignment with their needs, personality traits, and behaviors that do not exist in top leadership positions (Alev et al., 2010). Thus, professional growth can be hindered or completely blocked by both internal and external barriers (Woods, 2015). Women earn over half of all degrees, including master's and doctoral, yet they still earn only 81% of what males earn (Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2019).

Historical background of the DoD and SES corps. The SES corps was created as the result of a reform that created Title IV of the CSRA in 1978 (Ingraham & Ban, 1984). Once the CSRA was officially activated on July 13th, 1979, the SES corps was established to create a diverse group of members with shared values, strong executive skills, and a broad governmental perspective (OPM, 2017). The primary purpose of the SES corps was to respond to the nation's

goals, needs, and policies with the highest possible quality (Ingraham & Ban, 1984). Moreover, the SES corps has the final responsibility for overall organizational performance, including oversight and direction, which endows them with the necessary resources and power to succeed (Ingraham & Ban, 1984). Unfortunately, the original group of SES members included 8,004 people, with 1,143 linked explicitly to the DoD; women and people from minority communities were completely sidelined in this group, and in the years that have passed, there has been very little change, except perhaps some regression (Davidson, 2018; Miller, 2013).

Recent analyses by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) have found that while controlling for education, occupation, and years of service, there has been a change in the promotional outcomes for women and ethnic minorities compared to those of White people from 2002 to 2018 (GAO, 2020). Promotional opportunities for women compared to men were also lower in the civilian sector; however, in the foreign service, they were higher, and in fact, women were more likely than men to be promoted (GAO, 2020). According to the GAO (2020), the percentage of women in the civil service decreased from 61% in 2002 to 54% in 2018. Unfortunately, as of the end of FY 2017, of the 7,906 SES members, only 2,689, or roughly 34%, are women, which suggests a downward trend from FY 2016 (OPM, 2017).

Knowing that the purpose of the SES corps was to represent America as an executive team of diverse professionals, having a culture dominated by males limits the range of perspectives and approaches to policy implementation, problem-solving, decision making, and strategic plans (GAO, 2020). The Defense Business Board (DBB) established in 2002, is responsible for the oversight of the SES corps. It reports to the secretary of defense and the deputy secretary of defense, providing objective advice and reflecting America's best business practices and the potential it has for DoD leadership (Defense Business Board, 2019).

Additionally, the Defense Science Board (DSB), established in 1956, provides information, advice, and recommendations about the acquisition of goods, science, technology, and manufacturing to keep the government abreast in the quest for new technology and the applications of that technology (DBB, 2019).

Another group established in 2016 is the Defense Independent Advice and Recommendation Board (DIB), responsible for finding innovative ways to address future challenges due to changes in processes and structures as technology and business grow (DBB, 2019). Essentially, the role of the SES and the oversight boards is to improve business relations in the government and overcome any threats to our country's infrastructure, both physical as well as cyber (DBB, 2019). Adversaries such as China and Russia are beginning to catch up with the U.S. in technology, posing a potential threat that must be mitigated by whatever means necessary (DBB, 2019). Both the military and civilian sectors are essential for leading the American people and ensuring that voices of minorities and women are heard, which cannot be adequately accomplished without representation in leadership (DBB, 2019). Thus, the SES is focusing on increasing its diversity and incorporating several talented, qualified people from diverse backgrounds into the SES (DBB, 2019).

Qualifications for leadership in the SES corp. Effective leadership is a dynamic and adaptable topic, and the criteria for measuring it vary between researchers (Nelson, 2015). Leadership entails interacting with groups responsible for improving expectations, competencies, and goal attainment and may be measured by the skill set of the people who choose to follow the leader (Kolzow, 2014). Leaders are role models who have honed the art of getting others to do what needs to be done for achieving corporate goals and creating a vision for the organization (Khoshhal & Guraya, 2016; Kolzow, 2014). SES leaders must possess leadership and

management qualities to effectively lead change across the DoD workforce (Nelson, 2015).

Moreover, SES members must be effective at leading, which would necessitate working with other leaders to motivate, innovate, inspire trust, and influence employees to reach goals and act (Bennis & Goldsmith, 2010; HUD, 2017).

Factors that contribute to a promotion into the SES corps include having an advanced degree beyond a bachelor's, strong family support that validates qualities, abilities, and character positively, support from mentors, ability to work independently as well as with others, strong technical abilities, and mobility (Nelson, 2015). Being ready to jump in at a moment's notice wherever needed is crucial (Nelson, 2015). Additionally, potential SES members should possess excellent communication skills, both oral and written, have excellent work ethics, be able to take on challenging assignments, and excel at every part of their job (Nelson, 2015).

Women seeking an SES position must step outside of their comfort zone, be willing to seek new and innovative assignments that advance change and refuse to let themselves become complacent with the status quo (Nelson, 2015). SES members must also possess all five executive core qualifications: results-driven focus, business acumen, and the ability to build coalitions, lead people, and lead change (OPM, 2020a). The fundamental competencies include excellent oral and written communication and strong interpersonal skills, with strong motivation for continual learning (OPM, 2020b). Another competency is the motivation to serve the public so that public needs and interests align with organizational practices and objectives (OPM, 2020a).

DoD's framework on diversity and inclusion. The diversity and inclusion framework in the DoD derives from President's Executive Order 13583, which directs agencies and departments to create an integrated, strategic, and comprehensive focus on diversity and

inclusion (DoD, 2019a). The DoD (2019) claims that diversity is critical to the success of its mission and its preparedness and keeping in mind the complex nature of threats America faces, all kinds of people should be considered while designing defense strategies (DoD, 2019a). Strategic advantage is gained and maintained through diversity, which brings with it optimization, mission success, and technological innovation (DoD, 2019a). The DoD (2019, p. 3) defines diversity as “the different characteristics and attributes of the DoD’s Total Force, which are consistent with our core values, integral to overall readiness and mission accomplishment, and reflective of the nation we serve.”

The DoD has developed three goals for diversity; goal one is to ensure leadership commitment to an accountable and sustained diversity effort (DoD, 2019a). Goal one was created to enhance the capability of ensuring that the right systems are in place and monitor progress while keeping diversity progress within legal limits, keeping diversity visible throughout the department, and keeping senior leaders focused on diversity program priorities (DoD, 2019a). The second goal is to use strategic outreach to attract and recruit the best talent from the nation that the DoD serves (DoD, 2019a). The third goal is to mentor, retain, and develop the top talent that has been recruited, making it an employer of choice (DoD, 2019a).

In August 2011, President Obama put forth an executive order to coordinate a government-wide effort to improve diversity and inclusion in the Federal workforce (DoD, 2019a). The three goals are to increase workforce diversity from all areas of society, improve workplace inclusion, encourage collaboration, fairness and flexibility, and sustainability, and equip leaders to manage diversity (DoD, 2019a). Even with an executive order regarding the top management, little movement happens below without movement at the top occurring first, and

the status of the executive corps has not increased diversity to a level that is considered equal (Lim et al., 2008; Martinez, 2018).

The main ingredient for maintaining a diverse workforce is inclusion, which preserves people's identities while allowing them to maintain their differences (Lim et al., 2008). Diversity then becomes the means of accomplishing the DoD's mission, which is to provide the military forces needed to deter war and protect the security of our country (DoD, 2020). To fulfill the vision, the DoD engages in enabling strategies such as accountability, culture, and leadership engagement necessary for the success of the process strategies of development, promotion, retention, and career assignments (Martinez, 2018). Creating a diverse workforce requires the leaders of the DoD to go beyond their comfort zones and take risks in hiring and retaining diverse applicants (Lim et al., 2008).

Gaps in diversity. Board positions across America are under scrutiny for their lack of diversity, as shareholders have been filing proposals and investors contesting the status quo with policy statements (Harris et al., 2010; Karpf et al., 2020). Diversity in leadership and on boards enhances effectiveness through shareholder engagement and greater responsibility and accountability, which spurs change in traditional practices (Creary et al., 2019; Perrault, 2014). Homophilous (all-male) networks compromise legitimacy, which then affects stakeholder trust (Perrault, 2014). With reference to the DoD, stakeholders are anyone with a concern or an interest in the DoD, such as its employees, suppliers, directors, customers, unions, the community, and creditors (Boesso & Kumar, 2016).

The DoD is very homophilic in its executive ranks. Even though the lower ranks have increased diversity, the executive ranks reinforce and produce networks of people where men are put in higher ranks over anyone different (Ibarra, 1995; McDonald et al., 2008; Perrault, 2014;

Sorenson & Stuart, 2008). Known as “the good old boys club,” these networks keep the climate of exclusion alive and aim to point out flaws in others while being oblivious to the mistakes made by members of the network. They also halt any recognition of women and their capabilities unless those women are part of the club (Roberts & Brown, 2019). The networks that have been created in the DoD continue to create pressure on the organization; thus, it is inevitable that the status quo will continue, making it difficult for lasting, long-term change to occur (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Perrault, 2014).

Gender bias. Research continues to explore and find evidence for barriers that make it difficult for women to rise through the ranks in the corporate world in proportions equal to men (Salin, 2020). Gender bias refers to the implicit or unconscious discriminatory behaviors that people often engage in without any type of conscious intent (Pritlove et al., 2019). Although training on implicit bias helps a little with gender inequity, it has proved largely ineffective mainly because of discriminatory laws, culture, regulations, and rules created by the patriarchal society that governs social structures in institutions (Pritlove et al., 2019).

More focus should be placed on improving hiring practices to make them more equal and transparent, improving pay equity, improving equality in promotional opportunities, creating equal distributions of parental leave for both sexes, expanding mentorship opportunities, making work more flexible, and improving child-care policies rather than focusing on implicit bias (Pritlove et al., 2019). Women feel less qualified as leaders due to the gendered expectations of the *women take care of* as against *men take charge of* stereotypes (Dublin, 2019). Men also believe that if more women get promoted, fewer opportunities will be available for them, placing their careers in danger (Campbell, 2009). This creates a blocked pipeline for women (Campbell, 2009).

Eliminating gender bias threatens the existence of the “good old boys club,” whose members will go to extreme lengths to protect their place in the system (Carr et al., 2015). Some women have found that getting mentoring, coaching, and education, self-promotion, and networking strategies help them deal with or overcome the barriers and obstacles produced because of gender bias and prejudice (Kulik, 2015). However, the only way remarkable and significant changes can occur throughout the entire organization is through deinstitutionalization or unfreezing the culture (Desmond & Wilson, 2018). To explicate, organizations should increase diversity from top to bottom and change rules, laws, regulations, and cultural norms and make them more gender equal (Schein, 2010). Finally, the organization needs to be reinstitutionalized or refrozen into its new diverse culture with a strong vision to strive toward it (Desmond & Wilson, 2018; Schein, 2010).

Concepts

Gender inequality is the unequal treatment of people based on gender. Gender inequality manifests in many forms, with differing effects on the career progression of women. Some of the more recent concepts found in the literature are covered in detail as they pertain to the defense department. Others found in current literature are briefly discussed due to their existence; however, as they do not apply to the group of individuals in this research, they will be dismissed as factors contributing to gender inequality. Other concepts are being developed present day to help bring meaning to the term gender inequality to establish a full understanding of the concept.

Glass ceiling. Although women have made tremendous progress in entering and maintaining their presence in the labor market, a 2017 census found that only 19.9% of board seats were occupied by women (Bertrand, 2018). The glass ceiling refers to the invisible barrier blocking women from advancement into top executive positions and the high pay brackets that

come with it (Bertrand, 2018). It continues to perpetuate gatekeeper behavior, keeping women from moving up the corporate ladder (Bertrand, 2018; Taylor & Tyler, 2012). Gatekeepers today have learned to manipulate the social landscape, keeping up the pretense that they are fostering the growth and promotion of women while continuing to block their paths (Bertrand, 2018; Taylor & Tyler, 2012).

The invisible barrier of the glass ceiling is heightened by women's media presence, stereotypes, and natural boundaries (Ellemers, 2018; Zamfirache, 2010). Glass ceilings often occur due to a woman's responsibility of bearing children, which takes up the bulk of her time and prevents her from dedicating more time and attention to work (Blau & Kahn, 2017; Risper & Singh, 2013). The most rapid improvements in women's equality occurred between 1980 and 2000, and then there was a steady decline (Bertrand, 2018). Today, the glass ceiling affects women's pay in the following ways: 25% of women with a college education that work full-time year-round only earn median pay, while men earn the top 20%; only six percent of women make enough to put them in the top 20% pay bracket; and only 2.7% make enough to put them in the top 10%, as shown in Figure 1 (Bertrand, 2018). Gender wage gaps at the top of the distribution are proof enough that the glass ceiling is still in effect in the labor market, and gender inequality is still very much potent (Bertrand, 2018; Klassen, 2020).

Recently, studies have been performed to quantify the economic growth lost due to inequality and the underrepresentation of women and minorities. Studies estimate that corporations have lost one-quarter of the growth in U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per person between 1960 and 2010 due to gender inequality (Hsieh et al., 2016). Historically the gender pay gap was blamed on a disparity in education between men and women (Bertrand, 2018). However, women have overtaken men in the completion of advanced schooling for the

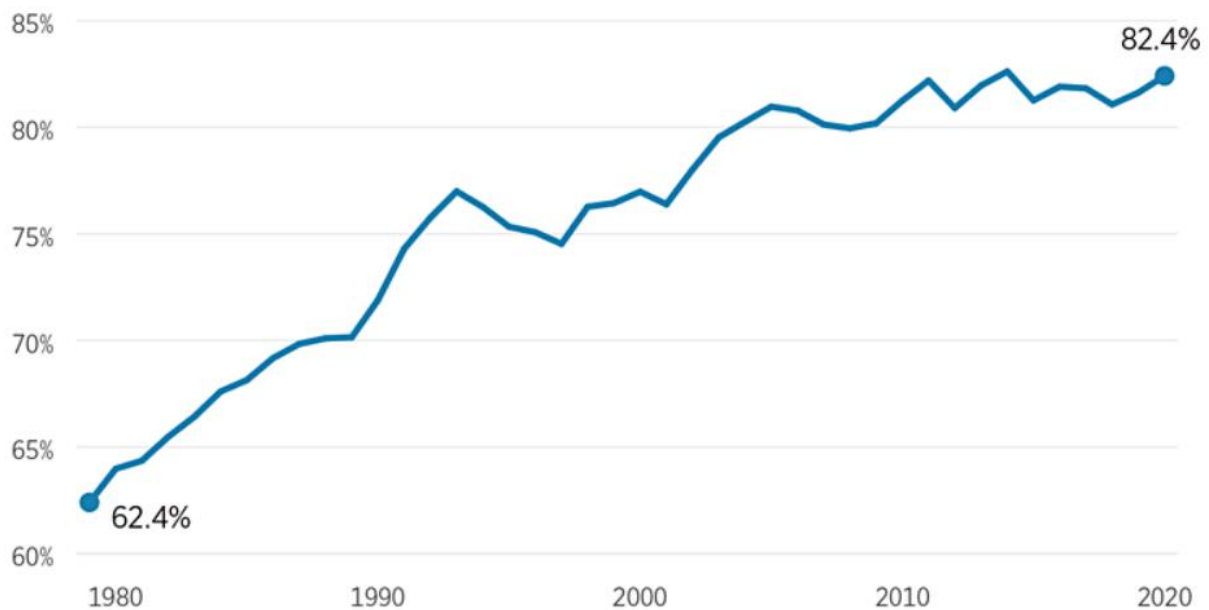
past four decades; yet that strength has so far not been reflected in the workforce where men dominate (Goldin, 2006; Matias, 2019).

According to some studies, women tend to be more risk-averse than men, while men will take riskier chances that provide higher payoffs than women (Eckel & Grossman, 2002). Levy and Boron (2005), for example, found that there is no empirical evidence supporting risk-averse behaviors of women and have found that women only tend to be more sensitive than males to the outcome of risks (Kean-Siang et al., 2019; Nelson, 2015). Women prove to be more risk-averse and pessimistic when the stakes are high yet more optimistic when they are low (Kean-Siang et al., 2019).

A quantitative study by Dohmen et al. (2011) showed that gender is quantitatively significant for the willingness to take a risk. A positive relationship also exists between earnings volatility and career earnings, believed to be caused by women staying away from jobs that pay more, which involve higher risk and higher levels of difficulty as shown in Figure 1 (Dohmen et al., 2011; Tyson, 2019; U.

Figure: 1

Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's for Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers. Figure has been converted to real 2020 dollars using data from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis



Gneezy et al. (2003) showed that women fail to perform at high levels when competing against men; however, they compete just as high as men when only competing against other women. Other studies show that women have less desire to compete than men, possibly due to the extreme demands of their family commitments (Niederle & Vesterlund, 2007; Tyson, 2019). Many high-paying jobs require long hours and inflexible schedules; this is a problematic combination for women, who are usually the primary caregivers of children (Bertrand, 2018). Non-market work, which demands a huge chunk of women's time, is disruptive for women when they try to compete with men for high wage occupations; additionally, when women leave the corporate world to have children and then return, it is often at a pay disadvantage (Aguilar & Hurst, 2007; Tyson, 2019).

The glass ceiling is a manifestation of sexism and discrimination against women (Bertrand, 2018). Women are starting to get the education that will open doors for them to compete in the labor market; however, the conservative norms that are applied to women still create barriers to advancement (Bertrand, 2018). With women starting to shatter the glass ceiling through education and by joining “man” jobs, it has been found that women with higher education are being discriminated against 13% of the time, whereas women with less education experience discrimination 7% of the time (Harnois & Andersson, 2020). Many women have had careers derailed by the glass ceiling, which may send the message to other women that they should not even try, thus slowing the upward trend (Bertrand, 2018).

People also put limitations on their daughters as they begin to ascend the corporate ladder, fearing that they will face immense challenges, some so terrible that they may cause personal destruction (Aguilar & Hurst, 2007; Herr, 2014; Huang et al., 2019). Lack of support from all directions keeps women from rising; thus, the one thing that is paramount in eliminating gender inequality is a supportive system (Lommerud et al., 2015; Eckel & Grossman, 2002; Huang et al., 2019). School age girls are facing the glass ceiling due to schedules that leave little time for investigation, exploration, or to even get important questions answered (Christakis, 2020).

Mommy track. Mommy track is another manifestation of gender inequality that takes on two different forms (Lommerud et al., 2015). The first form of mommy track is women opting out of working long hours to care for children (Lommerud et al., 2015). Although choosing to work fewer hours does not equal inequality in and of itself, women are expected to take care of children and give up their careers (Yerkes et al., 2017). Motherhood is a key trigger to gender stereotyping and is a risk factor for unequal treatment (Newman et al., 2017).

The second form of mommy track occurs when women who have had children are halted from leadership roles; however, women may be promoted to leadership roles if they do not have children and do not plan to have any (Yerkes et al., 2017). Men rarely experience mommy track and usually only do so if they take longer than the customary two-week paternity leave (McCrary-Ruiz-Esparza, 2019). Data from a study done by the Institute for Labor Market Policy Evaluation, (2017) shows that when men share the burden of childcare, the mother's earnings increased by around seven percent for every month that the father took time off from work, which would create an equal distribution of duties (Crisp, 2017; McCrary-Ruiz-Esparza, 2019).

There are two types of women: those who live to work and those who work to live or survive, for whom it is not easy to find a healthy Work-Life-Balance (WLB) (Kolakowski, 2019; Mason, 1988; Quesenberry et al., 2006). Unfortunately, women who live to work and focus on their career progression are often dissatisfied, as corporate rules have not changed to include them, especially in careers that have historically been considered men's work, such as engineering and other Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields (Quesenberry et al., 2006; Tyson, 2019). Having children at the pre-kindergarten age can negatively impact women's career progression by as much as eight percent (Ginther, 2007; Tyson, 2019). Single women without children are 11 to 21% more likely to advance, indicating that becoming a parent is detrimental; in contrast, men do not encounter any penalty for having children (Ginther, 2007; Johnston & Johnson, 2017).

There is a slow and a fast track to employee advancement (Lommerud et al., 2015). Employees are placed on either path depending on their expected output, and often, women are placed on the slow track due to expected long leaves (Lommerud et al., 2015). Many companies put family and affirmative action policies in place to help break the discrimination problem;

however, often, hiring practices are unfair and discriminatory and reinforce gender inequalities (Amis et al., 2018; Konrad & Lommerud, 1995). Although men experience delays due to family life, they do not experience halted advancement as women do (Padavic et al., 2019). Recently, studies have explored the relationship between the work–family narrative with evidence showing that men who are subjected to more hours at home with family and fewer hours at work still get promoted, which is not the case for women (Padavic et al., 2019).

Sexism. Gender inequality refers to men’s superior power and status, placing them in control of women’s behavior and sexuality (Zhu & Chang, 2020). Although many forms of inequality, such as mate preferences and economic power, have declined in recent years, sexism is still a thing in many parts of the world (Zhu & Chang, 2020). Sexism and sexual harassment are the justification of attitudes, behaviors, and stereotypes keeping women in their gendered role, which holds them back from corporate success (Amis et al., 2018; Wood & Eagly, 2012).

Women earn more degrees, including bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral, and have higher grades than their male counterparts; yet the pay gap remains (Goldin, 2014). Women are also a minority in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields such as engineering, math, and science (Margheri, 2015). Education is essential for women to boost their independence and increase their ability to fight against gender inequality (Kabeer, 2005). Education should remove unfairness for women while creating opportunities to achieve economic security; however, gender wage disparities are still present at all levels (Davis & Gould, 2015; Gupta, 2006).

Institutional sexism begins in kindergarten, as young children are taught that boys are supported in their academic endeavors to a greater extent than girls due to unchecked teacher biases; furthermore, boys often receive higher grades for less work (Alexander et al., 1997;

Chemaly, 2015). Education is supposed to liberate women from rage, fear, anger, and hate by giving them the skills and means to get away from any form of hostility, and in most organizations, except for extremely male-dominated ones, it does (Kabeer, 2005; Daskal, 2018). Women enter the workforce as engineers, scientists, technology specialists, and mathematicians with a positive outlook, a huge heart, and a desire to change the world for the better (Margheri, 2015). Women have characteristics such as passion, collaboration, empathy, enthusiasm, the ability to reach consensus, and engendered support that makes them an excellent fit for most organizations and enables them to be influential leaders (Margheri, 2015). However, when they enter organizations that are male-dominated and where sexism, harassment, and other degrading practices are rampant, their hopes, lives, and dreams are destroyed (Hellmer et al., 2018).

Sexism is the belief that women and men are different and, thus, should stick to gender-specific roles, behaviors, and norms (Hellmer et al., 2018). Often, men will view women as less deserving and less competent than men, which furthers inequality and injustice (Doob, 2015). Sexism falls right in line with a dominator culture with a preference for hierarchical systems, the subjugation of minorities and women, and indifference toward various types of inequalities (Pratto et al., 1994). Women generally assign a higher value to tolerance, appreciation, and the enhancement and protection of society, which are considered less sexist (Feather & McKee, 2012).

Men often assign more importance to the value of power, social status, dominance, and control than women, displaying stereotypical sexist attitudes (Feather & McKee, 2012). Men who score high on surveys regarding hostile sexism will accept partner violence, harassment, and rape, which are ultimate violations of women's health and rights (Begany & Milburn, 2002; Megias et al., 2017). The reverse of aggressive sexism is benevolent sexism, which is the belief

that women are more delicate and moral and in need of protection from men (Mastari et al., 2019; Sibley et al., 2007). Men who have high scores on benevolent sexism will score women lower on evaluations and believe that women deserved to be raped for some reason (Megias et al., 2017; Viki & Abrams, 2002). Men and women can both be guilty of sexism (Hellmer et al., 2018).

Internalized misogyny involves the devaluation of women, bias in favor of men and distrust of women in general (McCullough, K. M., Wong, Y. J. & Stevenson, N. J., 2020). Women use internalized misogyny to project sexist ideas onto themselves and onto other women subconsciously setting unhealthy relating patterns that lead to tearing each other down rather than empowering each other (Cherry, 2018). Internalized misogyny is a byproduct of the societal view that women are inferior causing them to doubt, shame, and undervalue not only themselves but others in their gender as well (Weiss, 2015). Men will typically use this internalized misogyny to their advantage in their relationships with women keeping the upper hand in the fight for superiority (McCullough, K. M., Wong, Y. J. & Stevenson, N. J., 2019).

Dominance penalty. For women to be taken seriously when competing for a leadership role, they must exhibit agency or confidence and competence in decision-making, which may come with economic and social penalties; these are also called backlash effects (Infanger et al., 2014; Rudman, 1998). Leadership roles are male dominated even today and are believed to be more fitting for males than females (Brescoll et al., 2018). Women who exhibit leadership behaviors are often viewed as unlikable, rigid, inadequate, and cold, leading them to get lower pay, receive inadequate evaluations, and have a lower chance of becoming promoted (Flora, 2017). Women who conform to gender stereotypes are rewarded for maintaining the status quo (Connor et al., 2018; Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010).

People will demonstrate contempt, disdain, disgust, and revulsion when encountering women who act in a dominant or masculine manner (Brescoll et al., 2018). An example presented in literature was the outrage and disgust shown toward Hillary Clinton when she ran for president against Donald Trump (Brescoll, 2016). Although some other factors led to her loss, many things also occurred that were specific to gender discrimination, such as the dominance penalty or a community deficit (Beinhart, 2016). People often perceive that women's low gender status cannot go together with men's high-status leadership roles (Flora, 2017; Rudman et al., 2012).

An explanation for the backlash. Theories such as the lack of fit model (Heilman, 1983) or role incongruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) attempt to explain the prejudice experienced by female leaders. Any challenge to patriarchy, such as when a woman runs for president or gains a position of power and authority, results in backlash (Flora, 2017; Myers, 2013). Women cannot merely overcome bias and prejudice by being more agentic and displaying more dominant leadership traits (Brescoll et al., 2018). Recent studies have proven that women are penalized for dominance, while men are not (Williams & Tiedens, 2016). On the other hand, some studies have suggested that only attention-seeking, dominant behaviors of women are penalized, while other behaviors, which are less noticeable, are not (Williams & Tiedens, 2016). One explanation for backlash is that when women entered the corporate world, many less-skilled men lost their jobs, causing resentment (Klasen, 2020). Dominance behaviors are nonverbal and manifest in the form of reduced eye contact, body openness or expansion, touching others, pointing or other intrusive gestures, and physical proximity such as towering over them at their work station (Cashdan, 1998; Hall et al., 2005; Williams & Tiedens, 2016).

Dominance behaviors can also be para verbal, such as a lack of hesitation in speech, shorter conversation duration, interruptions, and high volume of speech (Cashdan, 1998; Dovidio et al., 1988; Kalma, 1991; Van de Sande, 1980; Williams & Tiedens, 2016). When men display these behaviors, they are accepted; however, a woman displaying those behaviors is immediately disliked (Bradley, 1980; Costrich et al., 1975; Williams & Tiedens, 2016). The backlash stems from the violation of the typical social order roles for men and women (Rudman et al., 2012).

In terms of regular social roles, men are seen as ambitious and assertive breadwinners, while women are regarded as nurturing and warmhearted caretakers (Williams & Tiedens, 2016). Women who take leadership positions in politics or business may seem to threaten the status of men and thus score low in warmth or generosity, receiving derogatory names (Eckes, 2002; Fiske et al., 2002; Williams & Tiedens, 2016). Other women attempting to compete for leadership positions will impose a dominance penalty against other women trying to compete to discredit them rather than empower them (Williams & Tiedens, 2016).

Women who take a dominant role break both the norms for men and women, which often has an adverse reaction (Ellemers, 2018). Clear dominance is displayed as a direct verbal demand for a specific behavior, while implicit dominance is nonverbal and communicated less directly (Williams & Tiedens, 2016). Studies show that women are liked until they break the prescriptive stereotype and take a dominant role; then, dominance penalties are applied to women more often than men (Koenig, 2018). Angry and moral outrage is caused by the perceived violation of a prescriptive stereotype and is a method of maintaining the status hierarchy (Koenig, 2018; Williams & Tiedens, 2016).

Another study found that female discussion partners perceived men who use higher pitch variation and more agentic behaviors as being more influential; however, those same men

viewed the women as being less influential (Zhang et al., 2016). Women who used higher pitch variation also perceived their male discussion partners as less influential and thus women more influential (Zhang et al., 2016). In either case, the higher pitch variation is associated with higher competence levels but less dominance (Hodges-Simeon et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2016). There are two types of prescriptive stereotypes that lead to a backlash for men, that is, displaying weakness or lacking agency, whereas for women, there is only one, displaying dominance (Koenig, 2018).

Moreover, men accept assertiveness from women and are willing to concede when women are highly communal; however, when college identity is similar, communal behavior no longer helps (Zhang et al., 2016). Women who display agency and competence while also being communal fare better in male-dominated fields than women who are only communal (Zhang et al., 2016). Research also shows that women are penalized for perceived dominance and suffer discrimination for being too dominant (Infanger et al., 2014).

Due to differences in their perception by dominant men in organizations, around 75% of women experience bias and discrimination, which creates gender-related barriers (Roberts & Brown, 2019; Groysberg & Bell, 2013). Gender discrimination can be perpetrated by a man or a woman, and it is an overt action taken against a woman (Bruce et al., 2015). Around 63% of women also experience harassment or negative interpersonal interactions, which are used to create an offensive or hostile working environment for women (Roberts & Brown, 2019). Millennials, children born between 1981 and 1996, have experienced a broader gap in inequality than the previous generations (Baralt et al., 2020).

Occupational segregation. Occupational segregation is a term used to explain people's sorting across occupations based on their ethnic, religious, gender, or social identities (Pothier,

2016). The dynamics of occupational segregation have not changed much, and few women enter professions considered male-dominated due to perceived discrimination (Couppié et al., 2014; He & Xiaoping, 2006). Women are especially not likely to take white-collar positions, even though they possess the necessary educational qualifications for filling these positions, due to the perceived lack of fit between these positions and their gender (He & Xiaoping, 2006; Heilman, 2012). Occupational segregation most likely stems from American society's patriarchal nature that determines the power structure of the genders (Pothier, 2016).

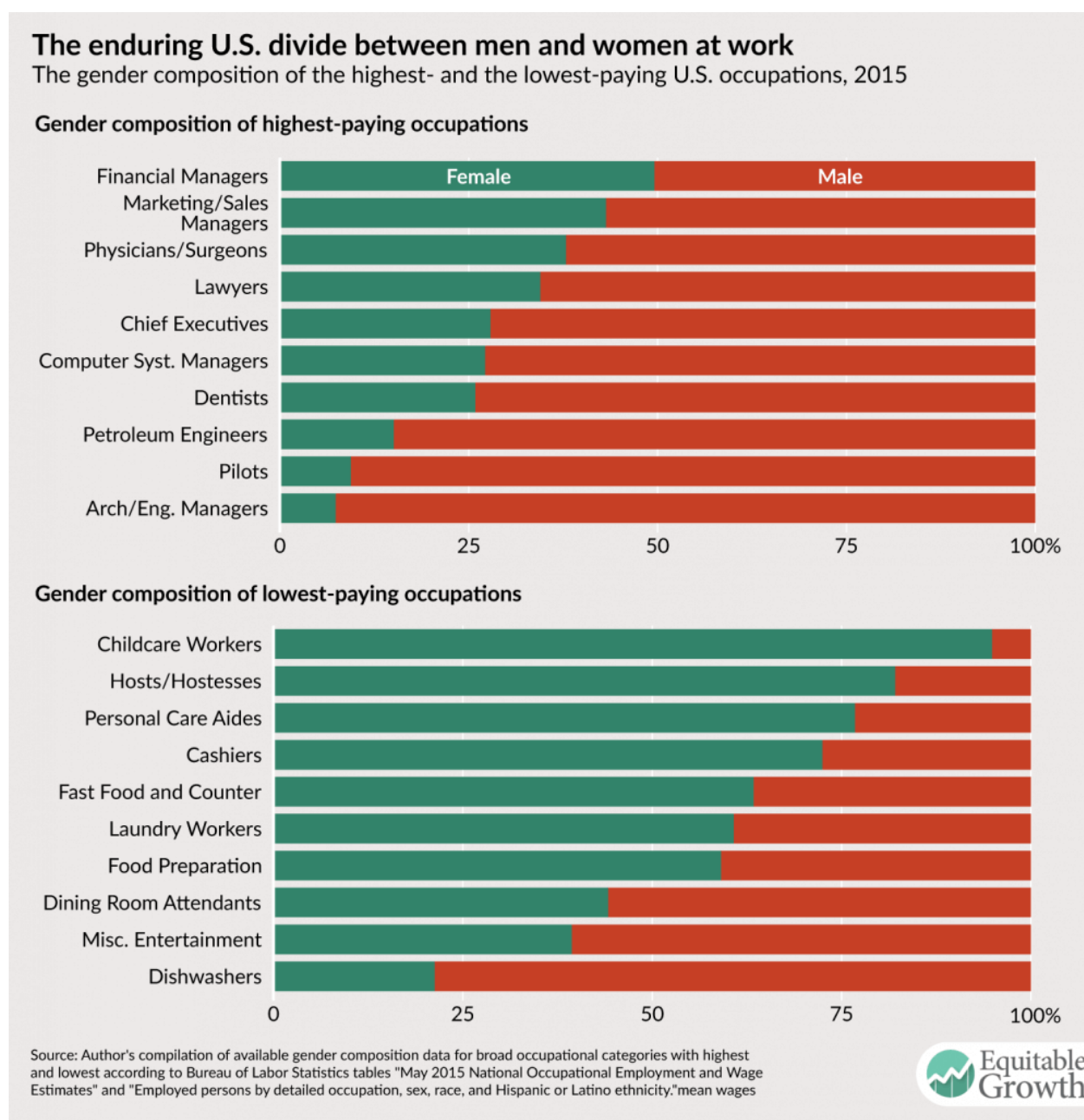
Occupational segregation is developed during the childhood years as part of the social system that tells boys how to be boys and girls how to be girls (Ridgeway, 2014). Without measures to help prevent segregation from occurring, gender differences will continue to cause problems arising from inequality in employment (Sultana & Loftus, 2020). Thus, women and men are indoctrinated into two distinct cultures because of different social circumstances, making their life experiences completely different (Millet, 2000). Today, sociologists consider the issues of unequal distribution and occupational segregation as the primary factors of economic inferiority, while economists focus on individual characteristics (Mandel, 2016).

Occupational segregation damages and limits economic growth by not considering people of genders other than the dominant one in the industry, even though their skills align with the position (Equitable Growth, 2017). Occupational segregation also contributes to the gender wage gap by preventing women from getting jobs in male-dominated fields, which generally pay more, regardless of education and skill (Equitable Growth, 2017). Women's work is generally low paid and comes with negative biases, while men enjoy higher pay with more hours and facetime in the office, as shown in Figure 2 (Equitable Growth, 2017).

Figure: 2

Highest and Lowest Paying Jobs in US Occupations in 2015, Broken Down by Gender

(Equitable Growth, 2017)



The number of occupations where women are segregated against is much higher than that of men, and the higher the status of the position, the greater is the segregation, as seen in Figure

2 (He & Xiaoping, 2006). Work that has predominantly been called women's work is professions involved in providing nurturant care in the health industry, social work, and teaching, all of which require face-to-face service with someone who is physically, mentally, or emotionally ill and in need of care (Moore, 2017). Other supposedly women's work that is non-nurturant include laundry service, cleaning, and cooking, which typically pay much less than nurturant care (Moore, 2017). More recently, as manufacturing jobs have decreased in America, a cultural shift has begun occurring, and more women have started entering managerial jobs, the education field, and business and professional services (Goldin, 2006; "Pew Research," 2016).

With more women entering the corporate world, occupational segregation has increased, as most women enter female-dominated occupations, which have not begun to break down the barriers that separate them from male-dominated occupations (Blau & Kahn, 2017).

Furthermore, occupational segregation leads to women's work being paid less than men's work, which continues to keep the wage gap the same year after year (Klassen, 2020). Part of the wage gap comes from occupational segregation in the STEM field where women lag behind men in educational gains (Sassler et al., 2017).

Segregation affecting the DoD. The U.S. defense industry's focus is to compete, deter, and win all potential future fights (Klare, 2019). The U.S. military prefers males over females, as is evident in draft laws mandating that male U.S. citizens, aged 18–25, must be registered with the Selective Service but not females (Metz, 2006; U.S. Government, 2020). Thus, the defense industry favors aggression, power, and violence, which are the opposite of the feminine characteristics of kindness, sensitivity, and timidity (Burk, 2005; Stier, 2014). The DoD leadership system is set up according to rank, with lower ranks answering to and following the

orders of superior ranks (Morgan, 2003; U.S. DoD, 2019b). To be a leader in this industry, even as a civilian, it is often necessary to be a former warfighter, brother, and hero first (Terriff, 2006)

The civilian sector of the defense industry is still under the command of a senior military officer (Morgan, 2003; U.S. DoD, 2019b). Organizational cultures, especially the DoD, adopted models set forth by early European Americans, such as the Puritans, who were English Protestants committed to eliminating Catholicism, which was the foundation of our country (Cross, 1973; Khan Academy, 2020). This leadership style is White male-dominated, as demonstrated by the Mayflower Compact, which aimed to instill a disciplined work ethic and a strong maritime economy (Barclay, 2006; Khan Academy, 2020). The best way to create the ultimate national force with superior innovation is through diversity, and building said diversity under such strong male dominance is nearly impossible (Forsling, 2015; Morgan, 2003).

Asian Americans also experience occupational segregation in STEM-related fields: They are overrepresented in science and technology fields and underrepresented in other fields such as careers related to social services and the humanities (Kantamneni et al., 2017). Although Asian Americans only make up 5.5% of the American population, they also make up 15% of people employed in STEM fields (Kantamneni et al., 2017). Asian families impose STEM fields upon their children regardless of if they are truly capable of being excellent in those fields (Kantamneni et al., 2017).

Gatekeeping. A gatekeeper is a person or group with the power to control access to something or someone or to make decisions between who or what is in or out (Tandoc, 2015). Often, male leadership cultures create barriers for women getting into leadership roles via gatekeeping (Priyanka et al., 2018). However, it was also found that male CEOs who promoted gender-inclusive behaviors in their organizations led to the success and promotion of more

women (Priyanka et al., 2018). Gatekeeping was introduced in the founding editions of human relations, which explained the roles of different social events and actions that encourage change and maintain continuity (Cherry, 2019).

An organization's human resource department acts as its gatekeeper, controlling who is or is not employed with the company (Harris & Ogbonna, 2015). Gatekeepers have enough power to control employees' flow, which affects females attempting to enter male-dominated cultures (Cheng & Tavits, 2011). The majority of the gatekeepers in U.S. organizations, that is, those who hold the reins in determining succession planning, are White men; women are only reluctantly invited to be part of this team (Fischer, 2010; Van Den Brink & Benschop, 2013). Gatekeeping has been discussed to demonstrate how traditional and historical employment practices have reduced access to female leaders and acted as barriers to advancement.

Sticky floor. A sticky floor is a concept explaining the phenomenon of women being less likely than men to begin the climb to corporate leadership positions (Baert et al., 2016). Sticky floors complement the concept of the glass ceiling that prohibits women from reaching top positions, as it posits that women are kept stuck to the bottom positions they are working in (Baert et al., 2016). The ILO's Global Wage Report 2018/19 reports that the global wage growth is the lowest since 2008, and women earn 20% less than men. A study done in Belgium claims that women near the top of the job ladder have fewer barriers and obstacles to promotion than those in lower and mid-level careers (Christofides et al., 2013).

The pay gap between genders, which is wider at the senior most positions in America, is a manifestation of social injustice against women (ILO, 2018). In America, women's earnings are only 72% of men's earnings, with no signs of evening out (Goldin, 2014). Companies with high trade openness exhibit an even more significant imbalance of wages between women and

men, with men getting paid more, which is a topic beyond the scope of this study (Dutta & Reilly, 2008). This gender wage gap increases over time and embodies one-half to two-thirds of the total wage gap (Duraismy & Duraismy, 2016).

Women are treated unequally, even when they are as productive as men and especially when they apply for jobs above their current occupational level (Duraismy & Duraismy, 2016). Employers may discriminate against women based on the distaste for women by customers, employers, or coworkers who prefer men to women (Duraismy & Duraismy, 2016). Employers may also expect higher productivity from men in leading positions, leading to the more masculine characteristic of higher positions (Baumle, 2009; Budig & England, 2001). Studies also reveal a slight penalty of motherhood for women, which results in higher investments and exit costs for women (Budig & England, 2001; Kmec, 2011).

From the demand side, employers choose to fill highly productive positions with men, as the wages for the said positions are generally set, and they may believe they will lose money if they hire women, which signifies statistical discrimination (Fang & Sakellariou, 2015). Taste-based discrimination results in women being paid lower than men at the hiring stage, resulting in a sticky floor (Fang & Sakellariou, 2015). Some studies show that women take fewer risks and are less competitive, meaning they are ill-suited for executive positions (Eckel & Grossman, 2002; Niederle & Vesterlund, 2007; Tinsley & Ely, 2018). In contrast, other studies show that women in a mutual fund manager role take just as many risks as men and perform equally well, and as expertise and knowledge increase, their risk aversion diminishes (Gysler et al., 2002).

Theories

Great leaders are created throughout life according to the SCT and the SCCT (Bandura, 1977; Cunningham et al., 2005; Lent et al., 1994). Once a person masters a skillset and gains a

desire to teach others, they become servant leaders and relinquish power to others so that they can lead (Greenleaf, 1977; Tarallo, 2018). When executive leaders are servant leaders, servant leadership flows down to lower levels of the organization through role modeling, based on the SLT (Wang et al., 2017).

Unfortunately, a lesson learned from life is that gender inequality limits the advancement of females into leadership roles. Although many great and talented women master skills equivalent to their male counterparts, they rarely ever rise into the executive ranks. Removing gender inequality or male-dominated leadership styles by adopting a partnership model of sharing responsibilities is the root of cultural transformation theory (Eisler, 1988, 2020). Together, these four theories explore the roots of gender inequality and propose viable ways to overcome it in a fair and considerate manner.

Social cognitive theory. Back in the 1960s, Bandura developed the original SLT, which evolved into the SCT in 1986 (LaMorte, 2019). Later in 1978, Lev Vygotsky contributed to the SCT by discussing the importance of learning (Barker et al., 2013). Learning occurs in social relations and dialogue within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is the distance or difference between what a person can do without help and the level of potential development with a skilled partner (McLeod, 2019b; Vygotsky, 1978).

The seminal work on SCT or just SLT focuses on individual growth and development during childhood, when children's beliefs, feelings, perceptions, and behaviors governing how they treat other people are formed (Bandura, 1977). Both Bandura in 1977 and Vygotsky in 1962 helped explain the factors that contribute to the inequality of women and their advancement into SES positions within defense agencies. Furthermore, the SLT examines different approaches to human development, especially people's cognitive processes (Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978).

Bandura's social learning theory. Bandura focused most of his attention on social learning and aggression, which shows that social role modeling is fundamental to human motivation, action, and thought (Calcutta, 2020). He took this a step further and focused on aspects that contribute to development and learning, such as foresight activity (Bandura, 1977; Park, 2018). As people grow and mature, they develop self-efficacy or beliefs about their ability to do things in the future (Bandura, 1977; Park, 2018). Additionally, a person's self-efficacy allows them to perform in whatever manner they can to achieve goals and reduce their fear (Bandura, 1986; Calcutta, 2020).

Bandura also discussed how self-reflection helps people evaluate and change personal behavior and thinking, as needed, to adapt to circumstances (Bandura, 1977; Wheeler, 2020). Children are a product of their environment, surroundings, and the way they get treated by others, all of which contribute to learning and development (Bandura, 1974; Calcutta, 2020). People learn from errors and mistakes, and those that regard abilities as things that can be acquired, will continuously seek challenges to enhance themselves (Park, 2018). Bandura bridges behaviorism and cognitivism with the four principles of social learning (Wheeler, 2020):

- Motivation can be both extrinsic and intrinsic
- A person's focus and attention matter
- The reproduction of skills and abilities occurs on demand
- The retention of skills and abilities depends on the context

Using Pavlov's theory, Bandura states that responses to events are automatic or involuntary and not in a person's conscious control at the time of the event (Bandura, 1974). Most of the behavior that will become automatic or involuntary is learned through observation and modeling during life (Bandura, 1977; Calcutta, 2020). When people learn about a new

ability or behavior, they interpret the ability and adopt either all or portions of that behavior or ability (Park, 2018). Other people consider abilities as inherent and seek to minimize errors and show off their expertise, competencies, and knowledge (Park, 2018). People who believe that ability is acquirable are more likely to develop high levels of self-efficacy and become more resilient in the face of challenges and difficulties (Park, 2018).

Leaders must develop skills to adapt to different situations, as all situations are different, and what may work in one may not in another (Allen, 2007; Kloefkorn, 2017). Opportunities to develop leaders should include assisting the leaders with understanding the environment and how others are affected (Allen, 2007). People learn what is acceptable in an environment and what is not and will do whatever is necessary to stay in that environment or leave (Nelson, 2016).

People with strong self-efficacy will learn new skills by practicing them until they are proficient (Park, 2018). As practicing involves many failed attempts, a person with low self-efficacy who lacks confidence may lose control when difficulties arise (Park, 2018). The SLT focuses on what a person can do if they acquire the necessary skills, abilities, and knowledge necessary to perform a specific task (Bandura, 1977; Ahrens & Cloutier, 2019). People have two-way control over their everyday behavior and the environment, which forms their personality (Bandura, 1974; Ahrens & Cloutier, 2019). Behavioral control is a matter of conditioning developed from social processes based on past personal treatment from others (Bandura, 1974). Conditioning refers to an individual's reaction to repeated exposures of different behavior types, which brings coherence to behavior and expectancies (Bandura, 1974; Ahrens & Cloutier, 2019).

Vygotsky's social learning theory. One main difference between Bandura and Vygotsky is that Vygotsky measures his proximal development zone in years (Kellogg & Shin, 2018).

Measuring ZPD in years requires age period schemes and tasking equivalent to a certain age (Kellogg & Shin, 2018). At the center of the development is language during the post-infancy years, and Vygotsky's age-specific zones occur during childhood rather than adulthood (Kellogg & Shin, 2018). Social interaction leads to continuous changes in children's behavior and thought processes in a stepwise manner (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky's version of the SLT stems from pedology or child science, which attempts to understand crises and contradictions occurring in children of all ages (Kellogg & Shin, 2018). Children can learn advanced skills by modeling other people with more advanced skills using scaffolding. However, this is applicable only if they know how to implement it; otherwise, it may hinder learning (Sarikas, 2020; Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding involves a teacher or a more advanced student partnering with a student to help them expand their learning boundaries and achieve their goals (Sarikas, 2020).

Women in defense agencies must use in-group and out-group structures to band together and support each other to advance toward SES positions (Brewer, 1999; Giles & Giles, 2013). A large amount of trust must be present among women to expand resources such as skills, knowledge, and abilities through each person's ZPD (Brewer, 1999; Kellogg & Shin, 2018). This relationship of trust formed between women must be more durable than the distrust of opposing entities (Brewer, 1999; Cannon, 2019). Women can build trust by understanding their fears and triggers and then use empathy toward other women who encounter those fears and triggers (Cannon, 2019). Furthermore, women need to come together so that more innovative policies toward women can be formed and implemented, creating an environment more reflective of America's diversity (Nelson, 2015).

When employees are led by a leader that has a higher skill level, they emulate their behaviors, which leads them to become better leaders themselves through the ZPD (McLeod, 2019b; Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD defines functions that are under development; however, they are not fully mature (Vygotsky, 1978). Mentoring relationships will help employees fill the gap between where they are and where they want to go (Dziczkowski, 2013). Both the mentor and mentee grow during a mentorship relationship, and both benefit; however, it is not always successful, and the relationships may fail (Nelson, 2015).

Social cognitive career theory. The SCCT is an expansive theory that focuses on and supports the relationships between vocational outcomes such as person-vocation fit and the cultural and environmental factors associated with making career decisions (Flores & O'Brien, 2002; Glosenberg et al., 2019). The SCCT also examines the connection between personal goals, self-efficacy, and expectations about outcomes (Kantamneni et al., 2017). Branching off from the SLT, which discusses the background contextual factors influencing self-efficacy and outcomes, SCCT looks at career interests, actions, and goals (Lent, 2013). The SCCT posits that factors such as race, ability, gender, family background, and socioeconomic status may affect career development activity (Flores et al., 2017; Lent et al., 1994).

Background variables such as ethnicity and gender and contextual variables such as barriers, social class, and perceived support shape how well a person progresses in their career (Flores et al., 2017). Currently, Asian Americans have the highest percentage of STEM field college graduation rates at 33%, which is almost double that of any other race (Byars-Winston et al., 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Although women earn more bachelor's degrees than men, 58% versus 42%, only 36% out of 64% are in STEM-related fields (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Contextual factors such as gender create learning opportunities that improve goal setting, actions, and interests related to careers (Kantamneni et al., 2016). Other proximal (e.g., school climate and familial influences) and distal (e.g., ethnic identity) contextual influencers have a profound impact on academic development, especially in STEM fields (Lent et al., 2000b; Sheu et al., 2018). Often, women who complete STEM degrees are first-generation college students with lower self-efficacy and more barriers hindering their academic trajectories (which usually result from their lower socioeconomic status) than students with parents that have a college education (Flores et al., 2017; Gibbons & Borders, 2010). An individual's socioeconomic status is negatively and quite strongly related to barriers in their future careers and the ability to overcome them, which are inherently stronger for women, especially women of color (Flores et al., 2017)

First-generation college students often receive less support from parents, which sets them up for less than favorable results in career-related outcomes (Ali et al., 2005). Studies have shown that students that received more significant support from parents, especially both, had higher educational and vocational outcome expectations and self-efficacy (Kantamneni et al., 2016). Parental support plays a huge role in the outcome and self-efficacy development of children; nonetheless, people without such support can get through the advanced educational process if they have a high enough self-efficacy and adequate determination (Kantamneni et al., 2016).

Ethnic identity refers to an individual's feelings of belonging or a sense of group membership and attitudes toward other ethnic groups (Kantamneni et al., 2016). Ethnic identity may or may not be a reliable indicator of vocational outcome due to mixed findings by various researchers (Byars-Winston et al., 2010; Gainor & Lent, 1998; Gushu & Whitson, 2006). All the

studies show that higher levels of ethnic identity development are related to career and academic development (Byars-Winston et al., 2010; Gainor & Lent, 1998; Gushu & Whitson, 2006; Sheu et al., 2018).

In general, mothers help children develop positive attitudes about their ability to find work, while fathers help develop self-efficacy about college and training (Kantamneni et al., 2016). Students with more barriers also develop higher self-efficacy and thus have better career outcomes (Kantamneni et al., 2016). Additionally, the SCCT is adequate for explaining how different contextual influences relate to expected outcomes and the vocational and educational self-efficacy needed to achieve them (Ali et al., 2005; Kantamneni et al., 2016). The U.S. has a macro systemic influence due to its high economic development and individualism, which corresponds to the high levels of educational attainment and personal vocation fit for citizens (Glosenberget al., 2019).

Prior scholars have focused on how SCCT relates to social class and personal vocation fit and have used it to understand the career development of people from areas of low socioeconomic status (Glosenberget al., 2019). An individual's socioeconomic status influences their career interests, development of self-efficacy beliefs, and expected outcomes; however, societal attitudes and actions, gender, and race are the primary drivers of inequality (Glosenberget al., 2019). The SCCT is concerned with the career development of people in a context, such as the DoD, allowing for the flexibility needed to incorporate all environmental factors that hinder or help career advancement (Glosenberget al., 2019).

Cultural transformation theory. The cultural transformation theory or the partnership paradigm aims to change the male-dominated culture of America and the world into a partnership model that values gender equality, equalitarianism, compassion, cooperation, and

mutual respect (Howells, 2019). The cultural shift would be away from the masculinist, authoritarian, unequal, and hierarchal system that maintains order through violence, fear, and coercion (Howells, 2019). Early on in their childhood, children are taught that a hierarchical social system of domination that prioritizes some men over other men, certain races over other races, men over women, humans over nature, and a few religions over others is the norm and that it is the correct way (Eisler, 2015).

Women in the male dominator model are devalued for being feminine, caregiving, and nonviolent, and children are then taught that boys need to grow up and be strong and tough, to resist adopting female traits (Eisler, 2015). In this system, parents consider the use of force or the threat of force for exerting control over children like the threat of violence and control in society (Eisler, 1988, 2015, 2020). Dominator societies can be either patriarchal or matriarchal, and both have been used and studied throughout history (Eisler, 1988). In the absence of a dominator society, an equal partnership can exist, where both sexes flourish and are considered equal (Eisler, 1988).

According to Eisler (1988), in Chinese culture, the division of power between the genders used to be balanced: *Yin* or the female half was not ruled by *yang* or the male half, and maternal wisdom was honored above all. *Yin* and *yang* imply that opposites can bind together to make a mutual, balanced, and harmonious whole (Huang, 2019). The Bible also describes a time during the Garden of Eden, when a perfect partnership existed between Adam and Eve, before sin caused women to be the property of men with few legal rights (Eisler, 1988; Huang, 2019). Then, a great uprising took place and altered our culture, replacing it with people who worshiped the blade and the lethal power that came with it (Eisler, 1988). Domination is power over other people and includes the power to take life rather than give it (Eisler, 1988; McCammon, 2018).

Large corporations often embrace the domination leadership style, putting hierarchies in place, segregating the sexes, becoming resistant to change, ruling in a patriarchal manner, and enforcing gendered power structures (Agapiou, 2002; Newman et al., 2017). Cultural transformation theorists suggest some systematic changes to transform this type of culture into one of equality and partnership by learning from the past and present and the expectations of the future (Frontiera, 2010). The cultural transformation theory dates back to times before the arrival of Christ, studying cultures such as the Cretan and Minoan ones, where the partnership model existed and violence was absent, with women being equal to men (Eisler, 1988; Eisler & Fry, 2019).

Leadership is a structured set of methodologies, skills, and concepts that can be taught to anyone (Hébert, 2019). A leader is formed during childhood, and everything they learn during this period is carried over into adulthood (Bandura, 1977). Later in life, a leader then forms an organization's culture with all the social inequalities learned during life (Frontiera, 2010). Culture is made up of rules, beliefs, values, prejudices, structures, habits, and perspectives that maintain, lead, and constrain human behavior (Bellot, 2011; Schein, 2010). American culture was formed in the course of the immigration of people from other countries, such as the Puritans. In the early 1600s, thousands of pilgrims from England colonized New England and North America, and its resident Native Americans, Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans (Cross, 1973; Zimmermann, 2017).

Most Puritans belonged to the Church of England; however, they were the Shakers and Movers who did not approve of how the church was reformed and made reliant on Catholicism (Cross, 1973). America was thus founded on religious freedom, and around 71% of Americans are Christians, 23% have no religious affiliation, and around six percent practice other religions

(Zimmermann, 2017). The early Puritan culture that created the American value system excluded women from the public sphere entirely, including any public expression of intellectual thought, and Puritans were hostile toward any type of art or culture (Harris & Scott-Baumann, 2010).

Therefore, the patriarchal beliefs of early American culture formed and shaped the country (Harris & Scott-Baumann, 2010). The Puritans' deep-seated beliefs about the gospel grew, which led them to believe that a partnership between the sexes was possible and that women's intellectual lives should be valued (Greaves, 1988). These early movements contributed to the inception of movements and the establishment of basic women's rights of today's society (Harris & Scott-Baumann, 2010). American culture has evolved and adapted to become world leaders in the arts since the 1950s, with the creation of the television and the movie industry (Zimmermann, 2017).

Domination cultures have characteristics such as the prioritization of men over women, belief that violence or the threat of violence is natural, moral, and inevitable, a cultural-wide acceptance of violence and abuse, and a rigid hierarchy in institutions, family, and politics (Eisler & Fry, 2019). A partnerships society's characteristics include a focus on equal partnerships between men and women, belief that empathy and respect are normal, the development and maintenance of peaceful relationships and an equal, democratic method of relating to families in institutions and creating policies (Eisler & Fry, 2019). The punitive nature of the domination style inhibits the development of qualities that improve the well-being of all people and harms society, such as violence and rage toward outgroups (Eisler & Fry, 2019).

Families that follow the partnership style of nurturing raise boys and girls peacefully, and both parents are equal in the eyes of the child (Eisler, 1988). Parenting and teaching are done through loving connections, trust, respect, ethical modeling, and guidance to enhance long-term

development, role modeling, patience, and considerate behavior (Eisler, 1988). Partnerships give children the physical and emotional safety necessary for development and proper brain function, which fosters creativity, exploration, empathy, and flexibility (Eisler & Fry, 2019).

The four cornerstones of the partnership model or cultural transformation theory that enable change to occur include gender socialization, child raising, economics, language, and narratives (Eisler, 1988). The partnership method in this paper is used to explain the type of relationships we all should strive for in the DoD setting. The DoD was established to defend our country, and it often takes some form of force and violence to accomplish that mission. The enemy comes to kill, steal, and destroy (NIV, John 10:10). Thus, a complete absence of violence may never be possible, as it would take force to defend the country from potential attacks.

Servant leadership theory. Servant leadership is a superior method of leadership, linking decision making, moral behavior, strategy, self-improvement, ethics, and virtues with motivation for corporate success (Coulter, 2003; Greenleaf, 1977; Tanno, 2017; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leadership evolved from trait theory (the 1950s–1960s), behavioral theory (1970s), transactional theory (1981), transformational leadership (1978), and the Bible (Tanno, 2017). Servant leaders focus on improving the lives of followers and creating a better work environment that trickles down into the community and, eventually, out into the world (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leaders are followers first who, after starting to excel, decide to step into a leadership role and show others (Coulter, 2003). The root of servant leadership is practicing ethical and considerate behaviors toward all others (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Originating from the Bible, the servant leadership theory has now transformed into a more secular leadership principle (Collins, 2001). Servant leaders use power to empower others to achieve greatness by improving their skills, abilities, and financial status through employment

at a company that improves lives (Rinehart, 1998). A servant leader uses authority to persuade employees and motivate them into action (Greenleaf, 1977). They know that authority cannot be earned, and no one is entitled to it (Greenleaf, 1977). Authority to lead comes from God even if a servant leader does not believe in God (Liberty University, 2017).

Servant leaders believe in turning their attention to followers and helping them attain success rather than taking glory for themselves (Rinehart, 1998; Tarallo, 2018). Essentially, servant leaders take the traditional leadership model and invert it, putting people or employees in the lead at the top and the leader at the very bottom (Tarallo, 2018). God gifts people with leadership skills, which equips them with abilities to invent structures and strategies that provide opportunities to empower others (Hybels, 2002; Zolow, 2014). Serving and leading are synonymous, as being a leader means serving people, and serving allows a person to lead (Focht & Penton, 2014). Leaders have the ability and gift to see the big picture so that they can help others find their place of service in it (Hybels 2002).

Servant leaders are called into leadership with direction, intent, and purpose, as demonstrated by Paul (English Standard Version, Paul 1:1) when he wrote a letter to the church in Rome saying, “A servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle.” Lately, leadership has moved away from the transformational leadership style, toward a style that has a stronger emphasis on relational, shared, and global initiative and focuses on the leader–follower relationship (Van Dierendonck, 2011). The critical difference between transformational and servant leadership is that servant leadership adds social responsibility to the mix and emphasizes the needs of the followers (Graham, 1991; Patterson, 2003). The result of servant leadership is improved performance such that virtually magic happens within the organization, as the leader actively develops and aligns every employee’s sense of purpose with the mission of the

organization (Tarallo, 2018). The empowered staff becomes more engaged and purpose-driven, which dramatically increases profits and retention while decreasing turnover costs (Tarallo, 2018).

Greenleaf (1977) provided at least ten core characteristics of servant leadership, which were expanded by various other authors. Later, Anderson and Sun (2015) reported a total of twelve listed characteristics:

- Listening: Communicating and putting in the effort to get in sync with the will of the people
- Empathy and agape love: Understanding and accepting others for what they are and not just seeing them as a means to an end.
- Forgiveness: Letting go of wrongdoings and not carrying grudges.
- Ethical behavior: Role modeling ethics by holding oneself to high moral standards and continuously displaying moral integrity.
- Persuasion or persuasive mapping: Relying on actual ongoing arguments rather than positional power to influence others and mapping issues and conceptualizing better results in the future through reasoning and using mental frameworks.
- Conceptualization: Considering the future while stretching the present to a possible future reality.
- Foresight: Being the crystal ball and seeing outcomes ahead of time while working to better them.
- Stewardship: Serving others and gaining trust by developing covenantal relationships.

- Emotional healing: Committing to nurturance and the spiritual and professional growth of people and helping in the recovery of trauma and hardship in broken relationships.
- Building community by creating value: Growing the community around followers to make a positive contribution to society.
- Altruistic calling: Attempting to make a positive difference in the lives of followers through service because of a leaders' deep-seated desire and call to leadership.
- Courage: Being able to see things differently and take the necessary risks to deal with the same old problems in a new and better way.

Van Dierendonck (2011) later trimmed the twelve characteristics to six essential ones that tied together conceptual models with empirical evidence. The first characteristic is empowerment and developing people, which is a principle focused on motivating and enabling people (Conger, 2000). The second is humility, which is the ability to place the personal talents and accomplishments of others after personal needs and interests (Patterson, 2003). The third is authenticity, which means expressing your "true self" or using integrity to adhere to a moral code (Russell & Stone, 2002).

The fourth is interpersonal acceptance, which is the ability to understand how other people feel and where they come from (George, 2000). It also pertains to forgiveness and not holding on to grudges for wrongdoing and having empathy for people (McCullough et al., 2000). The fifth is providing direction, which lets people know what is expected of them while also holding them accountable for their actions (Ferris et al., 2009). The sixth characteristic is stewardship or the willingness to take responsibility for the entire organization and community in which the servant leader resides (Block, 1993; Spears, 1995).

Servant leadership is the only leadership style with all six characteristics of a great leader (Andersen, 2018). Servant leadership is also the only leadership method that stems from a desire to serve as a foundation for improving the lives of followers without being overly concerned with the organization (Greenleaf, 1977; Sosik & Jung, 2018). Research shows that servant leaders improve the work and family life balance for followers, which reduces exhaustion, family, and work-life conflict, and improves personal learning (Tang et al., 2015). Furthermore, servant leaders also improve organizational performance (Tang et al., 2015).

Themes and Perceptions

American culture is built on the beliefs that people should strive to be the best that they can be and that the winner takes it all (Hofstede, 2020). The drive to be the winner and take it all results in a competitive environment in which there is no true winner apart from Christ. Continuing the power struggle actually widens the gap between the classes, genders, and races by increasing the power distance and pushing individualism down. Organizations worldwide can follow one of two overarching leadership styles, those of God or those of Satan, as shown in Table 3. All good and perfect gifts are from God, coming down from the father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows (New International Version, James 1:17), which overlaps with the theories in this study. By following Gods ways, we develop strong self-efficacy, compassion for those we lead, serve for the common good of fellow brothers and sisters, treat each other with equality, and choose careers that glorify God. In contrast, Satan is responsible for the roadblocks, he does not want God's people to honor the God that he hates and we love.

The Puritan and evangelical roots of America have begun to embrace gender equal roles as the push for equality strengthens (Bishop, 2019). This push for equality has been met with

conflict due to organizational design, the power struggle over organizational needs versus wants, and opposition from male colleagues. In Genesis 1:27 (New International Version), we read, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Nowhere in the creation does it state that women were below men or held back in favor of men. Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 1:27–29 (New International Version) says, “God doesn’t call the Qualified, he Qualifies the called.” When women get called to lead, God qualifies them for leadership. Likewise, if women get called into leadership, God will equip and qualify them to succeed. Although the world leads with brokenness and sin, God fills us with optimism and renewed vigor with a plan to prosper us, giving us hope for the future. God calls and equips everyone for His purpose, and we all have a different purpose. God requires obedience, faith, and oftentimes, huge risks, which, as Christians, we are to take. With God, women can and will lead with strength, pay attention to detail, and treat others with compassion.

The number of occupations where women are segregated against is much higher than that of men, and the higher the status of the position, the greater is the segregation, as seen in Figure 2 (He & Xiaoping, 2006). Work that has predominantly been called women’s work is professions involved in providing nurturant care in the health industry, social work, and teaching, all of which require face-to-face service with someone who is physically, mentally, or emotionally ill and in need of care (Moore, 2017). Other supposedly women’s work that is non-nurturant include laundry service, cleaning, and cooking, which typically pay much less than nurturant care (Moore, 2017). More recently, as manufacturing jobs have decreased in America, a cultural shift has begun occurring, and more women have started entering managerial jobs, the education field, and business and professional services (Goldin, 2006; “Pew Research,” 2016).

With more women entering the corporate world, occupational segregation has increased, as most women enter female-dominated occupations, which have not begun to break down the barriers that separate them from male-dominated occupations (Blau & Kahn, 2017).

Furthermore, occupational segregation leads to women's work being paid less than men's work, which continues to keep the wage gap the same year after year (Klassen, 2020). Part of the wage gap comes from occupational segregation in the STEM field where women lag behind men in educational gains (Sassler et al., 2017).

Segregation affecting the DoD. The U.S. defense industry's focus is to compete, deter, and win all potential future fights (Klare, 2019). The U.S. military prefers males over females, as is evident in draft laws mandating that male U.S. citizens, aged 18–25, must be registered with the Selective Service but not females (Metz, 2006; U.S. Government, 2020). Thus, the defense industry favors aggression, power, and violence, which are the opposite of the feminine characteristics of kindness, sensitivity, and timidity (Burk, 2005; Stier, 2014). The DoD leadership system is set up according to rank, with lower ranks answering to and following the orders of superior ranks (Morgan, 2003; U.S. DoD, 2019b). To be a leader in this industry, even as a civilian, it is often necessary to be a former warfighter, brother, and hero first (Terriff, 2006)

The civilian sector of the defense industry is still under the command of a senior military officer (Morgan, 2003; U.S. DoD, 2019b). Organizational cultures, especially the DoD, adopted models set forth by early European Americans, such as the Puritans, who were English Protestants committed to eliminating Catholicism, which was the foundation of our country (Cross, 1973; Khan Academy, 2020). This leadership style is White male-dominated, as demonstrated by the Mayflower Compact, which aimed to instill a disciplined work ethic and a strong maritime economy (Barclay, 2006; Khan Academy, 2020). The best way to create the

ultimate national force with superior innovation is through diversity, and building said diversity under such strong male dominance is nearly impossible (Forsling, 2015; Morgan, 2003).

Asian Americans also experience occupational segregation in STEM-related fields: They are overrepresented in science and technology fields and underrepresented in other fields such as careers related to social services and the humanities (Kantamneni et al., 2017). Although Asian Americans only make up 5.5% of the American population, they also make up 15% of people employed in STEM fields (Kantamneni et al., 2017). Asian families impose STEM fields upon their children regardless of if they are truly capable of being excellent in those fields (Kantamneni et al., 2017).

Gatekeeping. A gatekeeper is a person or group with the power to control access to something or someone or to make decisions between who or what is in or out (Tandoc, 2015). Often, male leadership cultures create barriers for women getting into leadership roles via gatekeeping (Priyanka et al., 2018). However, it was also found that male CEOs who promoted gender-inclusive behaviors in their organizations led to the success and promotion of more women (Priyanka et al., 2018). Gatekeeping was introduced in the founding editions of human relations, which explained the roles of different social events and actions that encourage change and maintain continuity (Cherry, 2019).

An organization's human resource department acts as its gatekeeper, controlling who is or is not employed with the company (Harris & Ogbonna, 2015). Gatekeepers have enough power to control employees' flow, which affects females attempting to enter male-dominated cultures (Cheng & Tavits, 2011). The majority of the gatekeepers in U.S. organizations, that is, those who hold the reins in determining succession planning, are White men; women are only reluctantly invited to be part of this team (Fischer, 2010; Van Den Brink & Benschop, 2013).

Gatekeeping has been discussed to demonstrate how traditional and historical employment practices have reduced access to female leaders and acted as barriers to advancement.

Sticky floor. A sticky floor is a concept explaining the phenomenon of women being less likely than men to begin the climb to corporate leadership positions (Baert et al., 2016). Sticky floors complement the concept of the glass ceiling that prohibits women from reaching top positions, as it posits that women are kept stuck to the bottom positions they are working in (Baert et al., 2016). The ILO's Global Wage Report 2018/19 reports that the global wage growth is the lowest since 2008, and women earn 20% less than men. A study done in Belgium claims that women near the top of the job ladder have fewer barriers and obstacles to promotion than those in lower and mid-level careers (Christofides et al., 2013).

The pay gap between genders, which is wider at the senior most positions in America, is a manifestation of social injustice against women (ILO, 2018). In America, women's earnings are only 72% of men's earnings, with no signs of evening out (Goldin, 2014). Companies with high trade openness exhibit an even more significant imbalance of wages between women and men, with men getting paid more, which is a topic beyond the scope of this study (Dutta & Reilly, 2008). This gender wage gap increases over time and embodies one-half to two-thirds of the total wage gap (Duraismy & Duraismy, 2016).

Women are treated unequally, even when they are as productive as men and especially when they apply for jobs above their current occupational level (Duraismy & Duraismy, 2016). Employers may discriminate against women based on the distaste for women by customers, employers, or coworkers who prefer men to women (Duraismy & Duraismy, 2016). Employers may also expect higher productivity from men in leading positions, leading to the more masculine characteristic of higher positions (Baumle, 2009; Budig & England, 2001).

Studies also reveal a slight penalty of motherhood for women, which results in higher investments and exit costs for women (Budig & England, 2001; Kmec, 2011).

From the demand side, employers choose to fill highly productive positions with men, as the wages for the said positions are generally set, and they may believe they will lose money if they hire women, which signifies statistical discrimination (Fang & Sakellariou, 2015). Taste-based discrimination results in women being paid lower than men at the hiring stage, resulting in a sticky floor (Fang & Sakellariou, 2015). Some studies show that women take fewer risks and are less competitive, meaning they are ill-suited for executive positions (Eckel & Grossman, 2002; Niederle & Vesterlund, 2007; Tinsley & Ely, 2018). In contrast, other studies show that women in a mutual fund manager role take just as many risks as men and perform equally well, and as expertise and knowledge increase, their risk aversion diminishes (Gysler et al., 2002).

Summary of Section 1 and Transition

Organizational success depends on balancing and resolving gender inequality to ensure equal and fair treatment for all employees. Currently, the leadership is male-dominated due to the absence of women in executive roles, which leads to the underrepresentation of women in organizations. Opening doors for women to lead will take a collaborative effort on behalf of both men and women. Women who have done the work and earned the qualifications deserve the opportunities just as men do. Gender should not matter; the best candidate should get leadership positions, and barriers to this advancement should be removed.

When girls are given equal opportunities as boys, communities are rewarded with peace, prosperity, and rapid development and are generally more successful (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). This literature review explored recent literature regarding gender inequality, different types of learning and leadership theories, leadership development, diversity, and the

history of the DoD's SES program. Gender inequality still exists, and barriers to advancement remain in the way of women attempting to advance their careers. Section 1 contributed to studies in organizational leadership by examining the highly correlated nature of barriers hindering women's advancement to leadership positions.

Women and men encounter social differences, which are assigned to them at birth; however, a woman's lot usually requires her to choose between family, education, and work. Although women can choose to do both, the road is challenging and is sometimes impossible. Luckily, God calls upon us to do the impossible. Women in the workforce will face many different forms of sexism, such as gender stereotyping that devalues female contributions in favor of male ones, dominance penalties that penalize women for trying to step up and being forced to act like a man so that they can be taken seriously and possibly get promoted.

Furthermore, Section 1 explored diversity and programs designed to improve diversity. Diversity programs were discovered to instill anger and resentment in the organization that is being forced to follow the rules regarding diversity. However, until diversity programs are no longer needed, they must be in place to fight for women and minority rights. This literature review intended to explore all aspects of gender inequality, including the social constructs developed in childhood and their impact in adulthood and on society in general, so that a clear roadmap could be created for women to follow to gain leadership positions.

The DoD leadership style and culture were also explored in this section, which highlighted the gendered nature of the defense industry, which is a target for change and thus an opportunity for future research. This research found relationships between gender bias, sexism, biological differences, division of domestic labor, lack of access to mentoring and coaching networks, lack of female leadership, penalties for trying to be dominant, being set up to fail, such

as by facing the glass cliff, and halted career advancement. The four theories explored in this section illustrate how inequality is developed and how it can be eliminated, and leadership possibilities reached.

All societies are assessed by the way they treat women and children (Traister, 2016). Ultimately, it is the U.S. government's responsibility to strengthen gender equality by creating and enforcing programs and policies (Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). Women are responsible for gaining an education, expanding their social network, improving professional development, and seeking opportunities for advancement. The organization is then responsible for minimizing and eliminating barriers that halt women in their tracks. Furthermore, gender equality will dissuade government corruption, increase economic growth, and improve children's educational performance (Dilli et al., 2019)

Section 2 opens with a discussion on the case study design and its selection for this research study. The gendered nature of the DoD is a multi-faceted issue that requires a double-pronged approach: a qualitative study to explore the phenomenon with the cold hard facts of a quantitative study through triangulation. Furthermore, the researcher's role and the data collection process will be outlined along with the criteria for population selection.

Section 2: The Project

Section two of this dissertation will describe how this case study derives from the research questions driving the investigation. It will also justify using a case study with triangulation, showing how research questions were created and structured by the research. Moreover, it will identify the sample population and procedures used for gaining access to participants. The measures that will be taken to ensure the ethical protection of participants will also be discussed here. Additionally, the researcher will establish a defense of the method used and the system designed for tracking themes and data. The final section of section two will focus on the development of reliability and validity and discuss the relevancy of the study before transitioning into Section 3.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this exploratory case study is to explore gender inequality in organizational leadership, specifically within the DoD civilian sector, for identifying the potential barriers obstructing the advancement of women. Any potential barriers and obstacles hindering women from becoming leaders will be explored and determined, and hopefully, new light will be shed about the culture to improve access to qualified female leaders. This study will explore the current leadership style and cultural elements in the DoD and their impact on female employees' advancement opportunities. Any barriers and obstacles found will be brought to light with appropriate field-tested research and suggestions to help mitigate those barriers.

Furthermore, this study will examine the relationship between being female and being a veteran and leadership status versus veteran status to see if any correlations exist. Leadership status will be compared to education levels to determine if statistically significant correlations are present that may hinder women's advancement. The next section will examine veterans'

preference points to determine whether women in civilian positions are being advanced to leadership positions with or without prior military experience when compared to males. Subsequently, data will be analyzed to determine if women and men with similar education levels are being promoted equally.

Role of the Researcher

During this case study, the researcher served as a participant-observer by being an employee of the DoD and a vital instrument for the qualitative portion of the data collection process. Direct contact was maintained with many of the participants by email, face-to-face meetings, and phone. The FEVS sent out annually to all DoD employees via the intranet that captures the opinions and demographics of the entire population was analyzed and coded. The researcher developed a structured interview and was responsible for transcribing, coding interpreting, and analyzing all data received.

All aspects of this research was conducted in conformity with the guidelines of the National Institute of Health (NIH) (NIH, 2016), and Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has established guidelines for using human participants in scientific research ethically, ensuring their protection. The researcher received a certificate for completing social and behavioral research courses through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) and received approval from Liberty University before collecting data. Face-to-face interviews were completed, which continue to be the most effective and universal survey mode, despite costs, and the participants will be protected in the following manner (Sztabiński, 2020). First, the participants will be aware of their surroundings and will receive an in-depth explanation of the topics discussed. Any biases projected from participants that may affect the research will be documented. No biases nor relationships exist with any potential participants

and the person conducting the research. Moreover, there is no supervisory working relationship with any of the participants nor is there a power differential between researcher and participants.

The interviews will be recorded via Zoom so that the interview may be replayed multiple times to gather information. Zoom provides a platform where the participant can click on a link sent by the host to join a meeting. A meeting maker will be created and sent out to all participants before the interview. Once inside the Zoom platform, three options are available for the conference: video, audio, or both. The Zoom meetings can and will be recorded during interviews for later use. Participants will be given the option of receiving a copy of the Zoom recording or having it deleted.

Research Methodology

This study explores participants' experiences with internal and external barriers if they have experienced any in the defense industry, impeding upward mobility in the chain of command through a qualitative research design. The case study research method has gained popularity over the past 40 years, although it's existence dates back to the early nineteenth century and is respected in mainstream management studies (Yin, 2018). The case study has been the topic of many books on its application and use (Perren, L. & Ram, M., 2004). This case study uses a qualitative methodology that explores gender inequality throughout time and is bound by the United States Defense Industry civilian employees and SES Corp team (Alpi, K. M. & Evans. J. J., 2019). The authors of a case study become instruments of the inquiry process in which real-life problems are analyzed through an in-depth collection of multiple sources of information (Alpi, K. M. & Evans. J. J., 2019). Qualitative research is used to explore different phenomenon to answer how

or what questions to gain a deeper understanding of issues relative to the topic (Stake, 2000). By using questions such as:

- What factors contribute to women advancing into leadership.
- What are the opinions of women regarding gender inequality?

These questions allow for exploring lived experiences, which would be difficult to extract from any other research method (Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N., 2018).

Case studies are expanded through triangulation to explore additional quantitative and qualitative questions to bring validity and strength to the qualitative research design (Yin, 2018). Data that may not seem relevant to the qualitative research portion can be investigated to determine the relevance through quantitative methods. Data sources for case study research include interviews, archival documents and records, direct observations, surveys, and formal and informal protocols, as seen by an observer (Alpi, K. M. & Evans. J. J., 2019). Gender inequality in a defense setting is a topic of personal interest, that has been studied qualitatively in previous work which is contrary to quantitative logic (Ridder, 2017).

Discussion of Flexible Design

Research designs are the procedures and plans that define research decisions based on applying methods and assumptions (Creswell, 2014). Once research questions are posited, the study's design should be based upon those questions and the nature of the problem. Knowing what the researcher wants to find out will help determine how to get the information (Cypress, 2019). Qualitative research is a method of inquiry created on the assumption that people construct their reality based on how they experienced an issue or phenomenon (Creswell, J. W.

& Poth, C. N., 2018).

Qualitative research is designed to capture the human experience helping both the participants and researchers to understand the social and cultural systems involved in creating a phenomenon (Cypress, 2019). The five qualitative research forms are case study, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative, and phenomenology (Creswell, 2014). A case study can be an individual, a process, an event, an organization, or a community that becomes known as the case (Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N., 2018). Case studies can be either instrumental, collective, or intrinsic (Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N., 2018). This case study helps focus on a single case, the effects of gender inequality on the Department of Defense Civilian sector, and the consequential reduction in access to qualified female leaders.

This case study's design includes four years of participant observation by the researcher, gathering of employee survey data completed yearly by the DoD, and interviews with SES Corps members, leaders in other government agencies and leaders in male-dominated industries in a single case multi-sample fashion. Of the 615,395 employees in the DoD, 42.6% or 262,115 completed the federal workforce survey in 2019 and 290,549 completed it in 2020, giving more than an adequate sample size (Ogrysko, 2019). The most useful research methodology for this study is a case study, a qualitative approach with the ability to understand, interpret, and describe women's experiences in the U.S. Defense Industry.

Discussion of Method

A case study method explores a single community, event, group, or person by an in-depth investigation with data gathered from multiple sources such as interviews,

surveys, and observations (McLeod, S., 2019a). An ethnographic approach will focus on the collective experience and culture of the civilian workforce in the Department of Defense created during the maintenance of military aircraft and vessels (Creswell J. W., 2014). Triangulation will be used to blend the quantitative data received from the surveys with the qualitative ethnography to create a case study providing a more complete overview of the study (Risjord, M. W., Dunbar, S. B. & Moloney, M. F., 2002; Yin, 2018).

A case study is considered qualitative; however, when used with triangulation, it becomes quantitative in nature deepening validity (Yin, 2018). Both qualitative and quantitative methods have weaknesses and using both mitigate the weakness of each method giving a more complete and accurate result since one method can be used to check the accuracy of the other (Creswell J. W., 2014). This case study will be taken in-depth with a transformative paradigm to focus on the unequal power relationship in the Department of Defense civilian sector, where women experience oppression and discrimination (Mertens, 2012).

This case study will have a transformative-pragmatic worldview that focuses more on creating actions from the research and researching out of bounds since there are no bounds (Creswell J. W., 2014). The transformative-pragmatic worldview is based on four sets of assumptions: 1) the meanings of ethics and behaviors (i.e., what is worthy of knowing?) are axiology, 2) the nature of reality (i.e., what is there to know?) is ontology, 3) the nature of knowledge (i.e., what is the nature of knowing?) is epistemology, and the process of systematic inquiry (i.e., how are we adding to our knowledge?) is a methodology (Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. S., 2005; Kivunja, C. & Kuyini, A. B., 2017).

Under the axiological assumption, the research will be guided by the Department of Defense employees and the leadership team (Mertens, 2012; Vaushik, V. & Walsh, C. A., 2019). Different versions of reality will be experimented with through developed strategies to see how social change is altered through each reality (Mertens, 2012). Relationships will be established using the epistemological assumption to determine different ways to be more culturally responsive (Mertens, 2012; Vaushik, V. & Walsh, C. A., 2019). Deriving from critical social science and feminism, the transformative or emancipatory research paradigm focuses on transforming organizations and communities making it the obvious choice for this research (Mertens, 2017).

Discussion of Method for Triangulation

The four types of triangulation include data sources, theories, investigators, and methods (Yin, 2018). This research focused on multiple sources of data and multiple theories triangulation which brought together survey data that had quantitative data which would not have been available otherwise. As more sources are brought together, the construct validity of the research rises and more visibility comes to the case under study (Creswell, K. W. & Poth, C. N., 2018). Thus, use of data from multiple sources increases the confidence that this case study will report gender inequality in the DoD Civilian sector accurately (Yin, 2018).

Summary of Research Methodology

The research method is a qualitative case study designed to capture women's experiences in the U.S. defense industry (Hill, 2017). A case study design was selected based on the research questions, which indicated that the organization may have barriers prohibiting women from entry and advancement based on a history of male dominance. The plan includes using the yearly employee viewpoint survey data, personal observations, and interviews to capture the data

required to make an analysis. The multiple data sources will increase the validity, reliability, and knowledge of the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2018). The next section will highlight the population and method of sampling.

Participants

The essential element for selecting participants is whether to work with a sample or include the entire reference population in the study, the sampling process, potential effects nonrespondents may have on study results and the sample basis (Martínez-Mesa, J., González-Chica, D. A., Pereira Duquia, R., Bonamigo, R. R. & Bastos, J. L., 2016). The government sends out an employee viewpoint survey to every civilian employee ranked GS-1 and up to include the SES Corps members annually. The entire population received a survey; a sample of 384 provides a confidence level of 95% with the real value of the entire population lying within ± 5 of the measured value (Calculator.net, 2020). The equation for sample size is $n = \frac{z^2 * p(1-p)}{(d^2)}$ when $p = \frac{1}{2 * 0.5}$ to calculate a proportion with a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 5% $n = \frac{1.96^2}{4(0.05)^2} = 384.16$.

Interviews conducted will reach the goal of saturation which should be attainable with no more than 40 participants (Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N., 2018). Saturation is used in qualitative research to develop a valid and robust understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Hennink, M. M & Kaiser, B. N., 2020). Saturation actually originated in the grounded theory approach where researchers used it to determine if they had enough data for theory development. It later began being used in other qualitative method studies.

Purposeful sampling allows for sampling within the case to select questions from the survey that align with research questions (Schoch, 2020). Purposeful sampling will allow for an in-depth focus on the phenomenon of gender inequality by carefully selecting artifacts, individuals, and documents within the case (Schoch, 2020). A purposeful sample is not a large enough sample to determine statistical relevance rather it is a small subset of participants affected by a common problem associated with a particular population of people (Creswell, K. W. & Poth, C. N., 2018). Of the roughly 615,345 civilian employees, nearly 34,096 work in duty stations located overseas, they will be eliminated from this sample, which should not affect the results nor skew the data.

The government leadership created the FEVS to address barriers and obstacles created from gender differences, education level, race, and other demographics reported by the OPM and in the DoD annual report the Management Directive 715 (MD-715). As a site lead for Women's Initiative Network (WIN), direct observations were made while being a mentor and being mentored by fellow staff members within the DoD, giving the researcher access to the barriers and inner workings of the DoD to apply to this study. Online survey data will likely include those that have experienced barriers to advancement and those who have not, which eliminates any bias in the data; however, only data that applies to the case will be selected and used.

Population and Sampling

Many challenges and difficulties have been encountered while implementing changes, treatments, interventions, programs, and innovative practices using a single approach to research (Palinkas et al., 2015). A mixed-method or case study through triangulation with purposeful

sampling will ensure that there is a comprehensive understanding of gender inequality in the DoD civilian sector with a map or direction for the implementation of gender-equal practices (Palinkas et al., 2015). A purposeful sample will be taken from the yearly employee viewpoint surveys distributed across the DoD to all civilian employees that fit the following inclusion criteria:

- male or female,
- civilian government employee of the DoD from GS-1 and up, including the SES,

and employees that have indicated that they have experienced gender inequality or have been affected by it.

The exclusion criteria include employees in this group who did not answer the survey.

A purposeful sample with a snowball approach was used to obtain a maximum of 40 participants to participate in the interview process. The inclusion criteria for interviews were:

- female in leadership position
- SES position in the DoD
- A leader (GS-14 or higher) in the federal government
- A leader in other government agencies (fire department and State Prison System)
- A leader in a typically male dominated field (Athletics, Education leadership)
- Commander in the military
- Leader in DoD Contractor Organization

The exclusion criteria are employees not in a leadership role and those not in a male dominated profession although, insight may be gained from information gathered from those in non-male dominated industries.

Discussion of Population

The U.S. DoD civilian sector consists of roughly 615,345 employees that are either part-time, permanent, seasonal, or non-seasonal across 83 agencies from small/independent to department-level and large (OPM, 2019). Employees are assigned a pay grade of either wage-grade, general-schedule, or contractor (OPM, 2009). General schedule employees are GS-01 up to GS-15, and SES corps members are the population group being included in this research. Last year, 42.6% of the employees or 615,395 responded to the survey, resulting in an adequate sample size for use in this dissertation. The survey begins on May 13th, and another copy is sent on May 20th, with a six-week window for responses (OPM, 2019). The FEVS was collected for both 2019 and 2020 since 2019 included education but did not include veterans status and the 2020 included veteran status but did not include education. Fortunately, anything in the last two to three years is still considered relevant and accurate to the current day environment, and older literature helps to set a foundation (Pautasso, 2013).

Additionally, the DoD has 1,208 SES corps members that cover top-level policy, managerial and supervisory positions in most federal agencies excluding the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (U.S. Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2016). The SES consists of civil service positions above grade 15 of the GS with 9,936 members countrywide in all departments (U.S. Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2016). There are two types of SES positions: career reserved, which consists of law enforcement and auditors, and general, which can be filled by either a career appointee or a limited, noncareer appointee; however, most are career appointees (U.S. Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2016).

A non-career appointment is approved by the OPM on a case-by-case basis and the authority to fill that position reverts back to the OPM when an appointee leaves that position (OPM, Office of Personnel Management, 2021). Non-career appointments are reserved to only general positions and may not exceed 25% of all SES positions for the agency and only 10% can be filled by noncareer appointees (OPM, Office of Personnel Management, 2021). Non-career appointments can be either limited term up to 3 years or limited emergency appointments which may be up to 18 months (OPM, Office of Personnel Management, 2021). Career appointments on the other hand can go to general or career reserved, and the incumbents get selected by the agency merit staffing process and qualifications must be reviewed by a Qualifications Review Board (QRB).

Discussion of Sampling

This population's required sample size is roughly 346 employees for the quantitative section, which will be gathered for triangulation only. For the qualitative portion, a maximum of 40 participants is required for the qualitative portion from the SES population, leaders in other government agencies or leaders from other male-dominated industries (Qualtrics, 2019). Choosing an adequate sample in a qualitative study is an area of much uncertainty and debate, although many guidelines, tools, and principles have been developed (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Researchers must analyze and evaluate the quality of the information gathered on the topic being studied to determine the best number of samples, observations, and interviews necessary to cover everything thoroughly with a high enough accuracy (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Qualitative sample sizes are generally large enough to allow for new and highly textured understandings of the phenomenon under study yet small enough to perform a "deep dive" on the issues at hand (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Typically, the sample size must be large enough to reach

saturation and cover the material completely (Creswell, 2014). The higher the quality of the data retrieved, the fewer participants there will need to be (Morse, 2000). Sampling can generally be terminated when no new information is elicited by taking more samples or when the information obtained starts becoming redundant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Malterud et al., 2016). Purposeful sampling involves choosing a sample of people in the right setting or profession and choosing a diverse pool to make it rich in information (Davidson et al., 2019).

The snowball or chain technique will be used in conjunction, which will be utilized to select SES members and leaders in other industries. Willing participants suggested others who are were willing to participate (Davidson et al., 2019). The snowball sample will be random such that only SES members, leaders in other government agencies or leaders in male-dominated industries that choose to participate will directly contact me. I will not contact anyone, and no one can give me any other leaders contact information. The leaders will be selected based on the following:

- willingness to participate,
- willingness to share their journey to the top, and
- willingness to discuss any barriers and obstacles encountered on the way and the methods used for mitigating them.

The quantitative data pulled from the FEVS data will be used for triangulation to bring more validity to the study. The FEVS sample will be completely unbiased, as it was a random survey given to the entire population, and only those who wanted to respond did. Fortunately, through personal observation of several hour-long presentations, watching many SES members tell their stories, including the barriers they encountered, allowed me to enhance my understanding, and much of this work has already been done. Surveying 10 DoD employees or

more requires permission from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) according to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1995 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020).

Two paths will be used to collect information: the traditional approach, which takes months to prepare reports and provide employees with adequate time to respond. On the other hand, the fast-track approach bears the following requirements (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020):

- The results are not to be publicly disseminated.
- Participant response is voluntary.
- No extensive, confusing scientific analysis of results is required.
- No significant burden is placed on participants.

If the requirements are met, it is necessary to obtain a general clearance from the OMB, authorizing the researcher to submit specific information on the research requirements and process (U.S. Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2016). The generic clearance process follows several steps, beginning with the creation of an information collection request (ICR), which may take up to 40 business days at a minimum to get finalized and approved. Then, the ICR package must also be submitted, which might take an extended period (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020).

Due to the lengthy process and multiple approval steps for surveying government employees, the FEVS, which has already been completed by a vast majority of the population and a maximum of 40 SES members, leaders in other government agencies, and leaders in other male-dominated industries interviews will suffice as the sample for this study. The DoD's approval is located in Appendix B, for interviews with a maximum of 40 SES members. No

other permissions were gathered from participants from other industries other than the consent form signed by participants.

Summary of Population and Sampling

The DoD has a vast employee base with around 615,395 in the civilian workforce (all of whom are invited to participate in an annual survey on viewpoints) and 1,200 SES members. Although pointed questions cannot be asked due to this survey's generic nature, the demographics and personal experiences are collected for departmental research (OPM, 2019). Every employee of the DoD is invited to fill out the FEVS; however, only those who want to offer their input respond.

Structured interviews were conducted with a minimum of 15 leaders voluntarily to capture barrier mitigation strategies and paths forward. Personal observations and experiences also led to a better understanding and were used to guide the data collection posited in the following section. Questions asked during the interviews will be drawn directly from the research questions to apply all the collected data. The list of leadership interview questions is provided in Appendix C.

Data Collection & Organization

Data collection and organization describes where the data for the research will come from along with how it will be organized and stored for use during the research process (Bhandari, 2020). Data collection for this research involved searching multiple databases for applicable literature by using key words, gathering employee survey data from OPM website, scheduling, recording face-to-face interviews with participants via Zoom and recording personal observations. To begin the interview process, I sent out consent forms to suggested participant

and once they were returned, I set up a Zoom meeting with that participant at a time that was convenient for them.

After the interviews were completed, transcripts were returned to participants to verify accuracy, credibility, and validity before committing them to storage. All data is stored in a private, locked computer without any personal identifiable information (PII) for identification of the participant. For the survey results, the 2019 and 2020 FEVS results were downloaded via excel and were scrubbed to narrow it down to DoD agencies. Then the data was uploaded into IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to capture relevant statistics to tie into the research. A journal was kept of observations made during the time working for the DoD. In addition, the multiple sources of literature are stored on a file on the locked computer so they can be easily accessed.

Data Collection Plan

The data collection process is essential in qualitative and quantitative research for gathering information on the variables posited in the research questions so that outcomes can be evaluated, and actionable items recognized (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a first step, the FEVS was collected, as shown in Appendix C, and the results from the year 2019 will be included in a separate excel spreadsheet (OPM, 2019). The FEVS has been given out annually since 2010 to capture employee perceptions of organizational practices, procedures, policies, and patterns of interaction and behaviors that support organizational performance (OPM, 2019). The FEVS has eight primary topic areas, including Demographics, Personal Work Experiences, Work/Life, Work Unit Satisfaction, Agency, and Leadership, to identify areas in need of improvement while highlighting strengths (OPM, 2019).

Interviews, which are secondary means of data collection, are an excellent method for collecting data on a phenomenon of interest (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019). The interview process will be explained with interview questions in Appendix D, tying it directly to the research questions. Finally, acquiring a lived experience requires observations that can be direct, participant, observer, or both, and they may be structured or unstructured (Trigueros, 2017). Both quantitative and qualitative data are used in this case study research, and the variables range from dichotomous to scale variables, as will be subsequently discussed.

Qualitative research is designed to help people understand a phenomenon of interest and explore how decisions are made regarding the phenomenon so that interventions may be made to improve experiences (Barrett, 2018). Data collection techniques involve interviews, focus groups, or questionnaires that should move from general to more specific questions, and the questions should also move in the direction of more relative importance to the research agenda (Gill et al., 2008). Quantitative research uses data gathered from surveys to test a hypothesis or specific questions and gain facts from the social phenomena (Leung et al., 2019). Both qualitative and quantitative data overlap, and although both approaches contribute to the study on gender inequality, when both are used together in a case study format, it brings a transformative nature that improves gendered power structures and norms that maintain the harmful status quo (Leung et al., 2019).

As a first step, the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey was collected and demographics were used, as shown in Appendix C, and the results of the 2019 and 2020 survey's will be included in separate excel spreadsheets (OPM, 2019). Next, an in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted with leaders as a secondary data collection source. For around a half of a century, interviews with elite members of organizations such as the DoD SES corps have been

a reliable method for studying strategic management and organizational leadership (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019). Leaders in male-dominated industries will be questioned about gender inequality experiences and their successful mitigation efforts to overcome them, as shown in Appendix D.

Interviewing helps uncover the main performance differences between the top people in the industry, helping shape people's behavior at the bottom (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019). The final form of data collection will come in the form of observation through the researcher's lived experience as an employee of the DoD and a leader of the diversity group WIN. Leading a government diversity group required attendance of many SES leadership career progressions in which much knowledge was gained on the path to leadership in the DoD. Observation involves recording and watching people's behavior at the research site and taking field notes, either mental or written (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a participant-observer, the researcher observed the women's behavior in the DoD civilian sector from the GS-1 level, including SES corps members.

There has been a push to quit using performance management observations in recent years and move to more of a coaching and developmental model to help all people improve (O'Leary, 2020). O'Leary (2020) provided a checklist of elements to incorporate in observations, which include the following:

- the content of conversations or communication
- the physical environment or setting
- any nonverbal, obtrusive, or unplanned factors
- the roles of the people observed and their responses to the phenomenon
- personal behavior as the investigator, and

- the researcher saw in factual and objective terms that someone should read and understand what the researcher saw

Fortunately, the participants being observed were not aware that field notes were being taken down, and observations were being conducted, which eliminated the observer effect of behaving differently than usual due to the presence of the researcher (Python Bloggers, 2016). Furthermore, all personal bias and preconceived ideas were disregarded to focus on identifying any common trends that participants had experienced; thus, it did not lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy of gender inequality based on what the researcher expected to see.

Instruments

Although many different research tools are available, the tools a researcher may choose must align with research objectives (Trigueros & Sandoval, 2017). Questions used for this study were based upon a demographic such as Veteran (1) or non-veteran (0), male (0) or female (1), below a bachelor's degree (0), bachelor's degree (1), or beyond a bachelor's degree (2), or supervisor (1), or non-supervisor (0). Additionally, detailed observation journals were kept and used to upload information to a computer file for analysis and interpretation. Audiotapes or Zoom recordings were used as an instrument to capture interviews with leaders to allow for more consistent transcription. Data was then be transcribed into a computer file for analysis after the interviews (ADJP Quad, 2016).

Data Organization Plan

Data from the FEVS survey was organized into an excel spreadsheet with a tab for each year for the years 2019 and 2020. Next, to analyze and draw significant relationships, codes were created for the data that was to be entered into the statistical tool for example 0-male and 1-female. Zoom meetings were recorded and transcripts were coded, written in Microsoft word

with one saved document for each participant's responses to questions. Each personal interview was an hour in length and the answers to each interview question was correlated in a single sheet as repetitive themes began to emerge from the data. The observations have been recorded in written format in an observation logbook and will be discussed throughout the entire dissertation process.

Three types of variables that were present include: independent, dependent, and moderating (Creswell, 2014). Independent variables include gender, veteran status, and educational level, characteristics that we think predict supervisor status outcomes. In all cases, the dependent variable will be supervisory status, which is the primary outcome or characteristic one wishes to achieve. Moderating variables help diminish or heighten relationships between independent and dependent variables, for example, coaching and mentoring relationships and successful methods of dealing with and mitigating barriers to advancement for women (Ben-Eliyahu & Rhodes, 2016).

Several data types emerged from employee surveys, such as gender and veteran status, which are dichotomous or categorical variables. Dichotomous variables are the simplest with normally two levels and typically have no overlap; they are mutually exclusive (Morgan et al., 2013). Most of the survey questions are ordinal variables that capture the DoD employees' opinions in an orderly scale that can be used to measure their attitudes toward gender inequality. The variable type for scale data is ordinal; however, it is treated as continuous (Morgan et al., 2013). Much demographic information is also available in the FEVS, which are ordinal variables, meaning that a number is not usually associated with it; however, they have a meaningful order (Biswas & Mandal, 2010). Different ways to correlate the data will be discussed in greater detail in the Data Analysis section.

Summary of Data Collection

Data is the backbone of any research process; however, this is so only if it is high quality, clean, and reliable (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This research's data collection is a three-part plan: interviews with elite representatives of male-dominated industries, annual employee surveys, and participant observation. Data collection in qualitative research is unstructured and flexible, which allows for comprehensive exploration in the case being investigated (Yin, 2018). During the data collection process, decisions were made based on the *what*, *where*, *when*, and *how* questions direct the research (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This three-pronged approach to data collection will lend well to the data analysis in the following section.

Data Analysis

Case study research uses empirical inquiry investigating a modern-day phenomenon in a real-life context to identify the *hows* and *whys* of a problem (Yin, 2018). One major issue in the data collection analysis portion of a case study is interpreting the resulting data using a wide range of sources (Atkinson, 2002). The first step of data analysis is to create a repository of the data gathered using a relational database theory. The data can then be given codes using a statistical calculator such as SPSS for ease of analysis (Yin, 2018). Next, the data can be examined, and final propositions and conclusions drawn (Atkinson, 2002).

The researcher chose survey and interview questions aligned to the research questions, creating a blueprint for the analysis process (Price, 2016). The process included making meaning of collected data through survey questions, interviews, and observations. Data analysis is the process used to answer all research questions by applying statistical, logical techniques, or both to illustrate, describe, recap, and condense all research data (Chapman, 2018). The first step in data analysis requires the collection of sample data. The researcher must then code and

categorize the data for analysis. The second step of data analysis required ongoing analysis of the data generated. The final step required an intensive analysis, followed by detailed descriptions of the information gathered and analyzed.

Emergent Ideas

An emergent approach should always be used when conducting qualitative research during every phase from concept to final publication (Pailthorpe, 2017). An emergent design allows the researcher to adapt to new concepts, ideas and findings that emerge as the writing and research process continues (Peraro, L. & Kritzer, J. A., 2018). As new ideas arise, notes were taken, and data was read to find scientific proof that the idea exists.

Coding Process

Coding data from both qualitative and quantitative sources is mandatory for organizing inputs into statistical databases (Yi, 2018). Without statistics to show the strength of the relationships between variables, research would be pretty much meaningless. The FEVS contains many more questions than are required for this study. To ensure that each item is aligned with this study's purpose, only questions regarding demographic information were analyzed, as shown in Appendix C. The questions above were broken down into demographics such as supervisory status, gender, military status, educational level, and pay grade as shown in Appendix C.

The FEVS variables are nominal and ordinal variables correlated by gender, educational level, veteran status, supervisory status, and pay scales such as the GS and SES. An independent variable is either an attribute or variable; however, it cannot be manipulated (Morgan et al., 2013). Such attribute variables include gender, education level, and veteran status, which are preexisting attributes of the people and do not change during the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Dependent variables are used to measure or assess the effect of the independent variable. For instance, the aim of this study is to determine if supervisory or SES status depends on any independent variables such as gender, veteran status and educational level.

Mainly, four types of variables are present, as shown in Table 3. Nominal variables are the lowest level of measurement. Each number assigned corresponds to the name of the category; for instance, a group such as race may correspond to numbers 1 for Asian Americans, 2 for Latin Americans, 3 for African Americans, and 4 for Caucasians. Dichotomous variables always contain only two levels and receive a 0 for the first level and a 1 for the next. An example is gender, where 0 is assigned for men and 1 for women, or veteran status, where 0 is for an individual with military past and 1 is for those with a non-military past.

Ordinal variables are mutually exclusive categories, and they are ordered from low to high such that a number from, in this case, one to five can be assigned (Morgan et al., 2013). Scale variables are approximately normally distributed variables with scores or levels that are ordered from low to high (Morgan et al., 2013). A Likert scale applies to this type of data, ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*, such as is used in the EVS. Only demographic information was used from the FEVS survey data and all other data was ignored.

Table 3*Variable Types (Morgan et al., 2013)*

	Nominal	Dichotomous	Ordinal	Normal (Scale)
Characteristics	3+ levels Not ordered True categories Names, Labels	2 levels Ordered or not	3+ levels Ordered levels Unequal intervals between levels Not normally distributed, often skewed	5+ levels Ordered levels Approximately normally distributed Equal intervals between levels
Examples	Ethnicity Religion Hair Color Curriculum type	Gender Veteran Status (Vet or Not)	Competence scale Education level	Height Survey responses

In addition to the FEVS, personal interviews were conducted with a minimum of 15 leaders in male-dominated industries with questions aligned to the research questions as shown in Appendix D. Questions 1–12 were crafted to gain an understanding of the reality of a woman who has experienced and successfully navigated the obstacles and barriers related to gender inequality in a male-dominated industry such as the DoD. The data analysis section is vital to a research study's plan and success, requiring considerable thought and attention.

The research question driving the conceptual framework is: What internal and external barriers exist in the defense department regarding women's professional advancement? To gain an understanding of internal and external barriers, other subcategories were developed, such as:

- What factors contribute to women advancing into leadership?
- What are the perceptions of women regarding gender inequality?

To successfully address internal and external barriers, information will be gathered from the FEVS, researchers' observations, and interviews with leaders. The first step in this process will be determining the correct sample size for the semi-structured interviews and the survey. After the data is gathered, the researcher will code the data into categories, sort the data into each category, quantify the categories and relate the themes and frequencies in the samples to the variable as the analysis.

There are five necessary steps in data analysis that play a crucial role in generating insights. The first step, defining why data analysis is even needed, usually begins with a business problem or question that someone is trying to solve (Pickell, 2019). For this research, the problem we are trying to solve is gender inequality. The second step involves collecting the data and cleaning the data before the third step (Pickell, 2019). Fortunately, the survey data will already be clean for me, leaving only the interview data, which will be recorded so that the data can be cleaned afterward. Clean data is of utmost importance, as the company will be relying on the data an employee collects to make company decisions (Elgabry, 2019). Once the data is clean, data analysis can commence, followed by an interpretation of the results. Once I have a transcript of the clean data, the transcript will be sent to each participant for member checking.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant statistical association between civilian supervisory positions and veteran status. Veteran status will be treated as a dichotomous variable in this study such that either a person has some military background, or they do not. Knowledge of an individual's veteran status is vital for this research because historically, many women have not been allowed to serve in the military. Most government positions give veterans preference points when being considered for employment; hence, more men get hired and then promoted. Although the veterans' preference points only help the soldier get their foot in the door, it is not supposed to help elevate them up the chain of command. Even when a qualified woman gets the opportunity, senior leadership positions often require combat leadership experience to be qualified. However, until around 2016, women had been denied access to opportunities for engaging in combat, let alone lead a combat operation.

The data for the FEVS and all results from it can be found at <https://www.opm.gov/fevs/reports/datareports/data-reports/report-by-demographics/2019/2019-demographic-report.pdf>. Data from two years had to be used to gather all information needed to answer the research questions. The statistical test suggested for use for veteran status and each employee's viewpoint survey questions is the chi-square analysis (Morgan et al., 2013). The chi-square analysis requires a large sample size and two nominal or dichotomous variables such as male or female, veteran or non-veteran, and supervisor or non-supervisor. The chi-square is used to evaluate tests of independence using a bivariate or crosstabulation table 4 (Morgan et al., 2013). The statistic compares a variable against a critical value, allowing the researcher to assess whether the observed cell counts are different from the expected cell counts (Glen, 2020).

Table 4

Statistical Test Choices for Between-Subjects Design with No Repeated Measures (Haq, I. & Nazir, A., 2016)

Variable 1	Variable 2			
	Dichotomous	Polychotomous	Ordinal	Scale
Dichotomous	Chi-Square	Chi-Square	Mann-Whitney U	Unpaired t-test
Polychotomous	Chi-Square	Chi-Square	Kruskal-Wallis	ANOVA
Ordinal	Mann-Whitney	Kruskal-Wallis	Spearman's Correlation	Spearman's Correlation
Scale	Independent t-Test	ANOVA	Spearman's Correlation	Pearson's Correlation

In addition, supervisory status will be paired with both veterans' and non-veterans' status to determine if any correlation exists, again by using a chi-square test. This test will answer the question, "Do veterans and non-veterans differ in supervisory status, and if so, how strong is the relationship?" Data for this test is treated as nominal even if it is ordered, and the test will disclose if the data has a statistically significant relationship but not the strength of the relationship (Morgan et al., 2013).

Hypothesis 2. A significant statistical association exists between education level and civilian leadership positions in the DoD. Many civilian employees have continued their education beyond what is displayed in their employee records yet remain in positions below the supervisory level. Most supervisors in the commands mention military service in almost every

conversation as justification for their leadership prowess. Military affiliation engages the employee while simultaneously letting them know that they are under the command of a military leader and will probably never be offered an opportunity to get promoted. However, not all supervisors with military experience have taken the time to get advanced education and training in leadership and often get discouraged when their leadership style fails.

An employee's education level and supervisory status will be classified, as shown in Table 5 below, as a *bachelor's degree*, *Bachelor's Degree*, and *Beyond a Bachelor's Degree* to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship. The non-supervisors will range from GS-1 to GS-12, and supervisors will be from GS-13 to GS-15 and SES. For this data set, the education level is paired with supervisory status to find the strength of the relationships between them. Supervisory status is dichotomous and educational level is nominal, meaning we can use a chi-square test to determine if there is a statistically significant relationship between them.

Table 5

Data That Will Be Used to Compute the Chi-Square Test

Independent Variable	
Below a bachelor's degree	37,212
Bachelor's Degree	45,380
Beyond a bachelor's degree	256,275
Dependent Variable Supervisory Status	
GS-13 to GS-15	575,927
SES	5,415

Hypothesis 3: There is a statistically significant association between gender and leadership status in the DoD. This research question and hypothesis will be determined based on a combination of data. For instance, previous research on the lack of female leaders in executive roles shows that this trend, which has been a critical issue over the years, is still ongoing, although tremendous progress was made during specific periods. Today, female executive leadership remains at 26%, mainly comprising women who have served in active duty, although the population split of the U.S. is 51% women and 49% men. This indicates that men are still dominant in the executive ranks (U.S. DoD, 2019).

In addition to current and historical literature, the FEVS survey uses probing questions on women's perceptions of the ability to gain promotions, which will be analyzed. The contributions of the SES members may provide information on the ways to help other women reach the executive ranks successfully, even without military experience. Military service requires recognition and rewards; however, other forms of service prepare women for leadership equally, and the lack of actual military service should not prevent them from leading. The appropriate statistical test for this data set is a chi-square. Once all independent tests are completed, a correlational analysis will also be completed to determine the strength of relationships between them.

Coding Themes

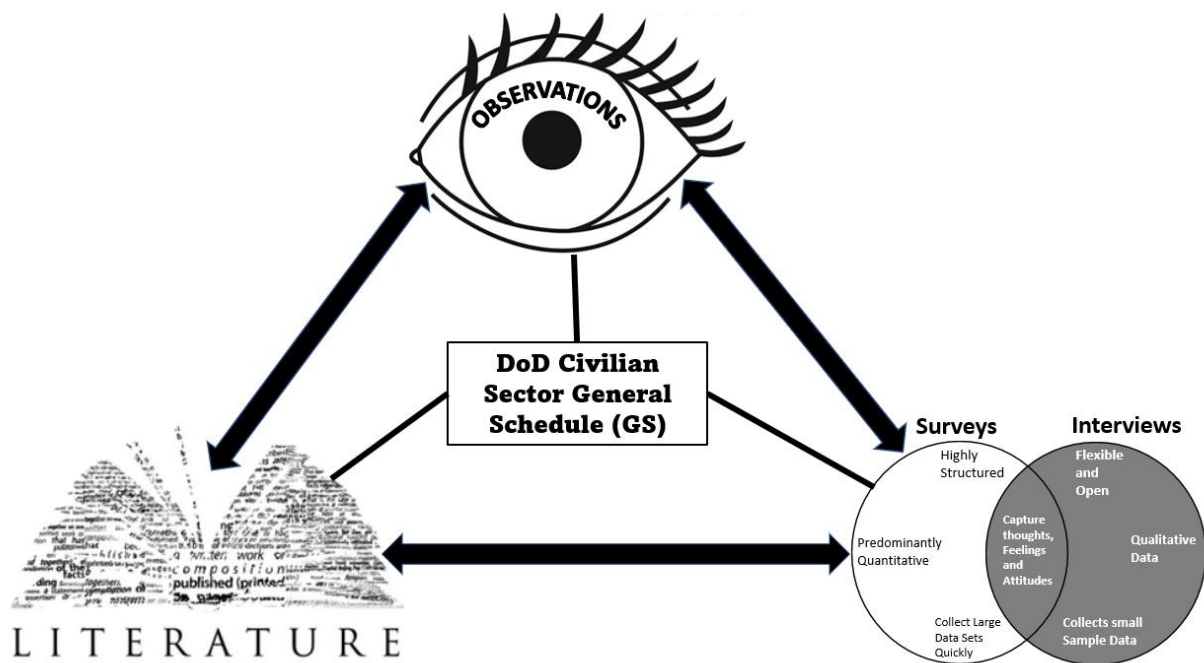
Thematic coding is a tool used in research to record and identify quotes, text or images linked to common ideas or themes, to establish a framework of ideas about a topic of interest (Gibbs, 2010). Interviews were transcribed and examined for common themes, topics, patterns, and ideas that cropped up repetitively throughout the interview process and during the literature review (Caulfield, 2019). The direct quotes from the interview process are shown in Appendix G

however, other information gleaned from interviews is written throughout the findings section, which derived directly from the transcripts.

Data Representation

Figure: 3

Data Triangulation for A Case Study of Gender Inequality in a Defense Setting



Analysis for Triangulation

In addition to the literature review which shows that gender inequality is a multi-faceted issue, the researcher spent four years emerged in this environment as Women's Initiative Network site leader as a diversity and inclusion representative. Observations were made and a journal was kept helping in the organization of the research project. The interview process was completed to show successful mitigation strategies to overcome gender inequality and move into

leadership. The FEVS data was used to address three hypothesis and bring in validity to the findings.

Summary of Data Analysis

The data analysis process involves mining data from existing sources and employing techniques such as clustering, association, detection of anomalies, and finding hidden patterns (Pickell, 2019). During this process, observation journals were coded and clustered into categories based on the research questions. The employee viewpoint survey questions and data were reviewed, relevant questions were selected, and the raw data was captured. The plan for the interviews was created and questions were organized according to the research questions. Subsequently, statistical tests were identified and most of the data was provided. The next section discusses the validity and reliability of this data collection and analysis method.

Reliability and Validity

As a researcher embarks on a research journey, they will eventually have to look at the reliability and validity of both the research methods and instruments (Middleton, 2019). Reliability refers to how consistent and repeatable a measurement is when the same method is applied to the same sample under the same conditions (Riege, 2003). Validity is broken down into internal and external constructs, which will also be examined in this section (Ekanayake, 2014). Validity also stretches across translation, criterion, and face validity.

Reliability

Reliability is the overall accuracy of the research measurement, which is only considered reliable if other researchers can produce the same results (Middleton, 2019).

However, the replication of a qualitative study will never produce the same results, and interpretations of the data are as numerous as the number of people conducting a study (Creswell, 2014). In this vein, unique findings maintain their reliability through triangulation, audit trails, peer review, member checking, and reflexivity (Nowell, et al., 2017).

Triangulation involves bringing in multiple data sources such as interviews, surveys, literature and observations, as is done in this study (Yin, 2018). Audit trails provide evidence of decisions and choices made throughout the process regarding methodological and theoretical issues that indicate the rationale behind such decisions (Nowell, et al., 2017). When other researchers can follow the audit trail and arrive at the same or comparable conclusions—not contrary—reliability is improved (Ekanayake, 2014). A clear audit trail can be created by keeping field notes, records of raw data and journaling (Nowell, et al., 2017).

In accordance with the above, peer review with many different people in the same field or at the same writing level of the study assists the consistency and reliability of the results (Middleton, 2019). Reflexivity involves keeping a detailed journal of all internal and external dialogue of the daily logistics involved in the process to include personal reflections of values, insights, and interests (Lincoln, et al., 2017). Furthermore, face-to-face interviews through Zoom allow the researcher to study body language and make judgments improving the reliability of the information being provided (Ekanayake, 2014).

Validity

Validity consists of internal and external construct, which refers to establishing and selecting the most appropriate tools and measures for the concepts under study (Davies & Beaumont, 2011; Yin, 2018). In this case study, it was necessary to refrain from making subjective judgments to enhance the construct validity. A construct is a characteristic or concept that cannot be directly observed but measured using other associated indicators (Middleton, 2019).

Since reality cannot be captured in a case study, validity must be assessed when studying the relationships between the research findings and purpose (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Internal validity is typically known in quantitative research as establishing cause-and-effect relationships (Riege, 2003). Another term for internal validity is “triangulation” or “crystallization” of data with an emphasis on constructing internally valid research by establishing the case in a credible way (Yin, 2018). Triangulation involves collating data from multiple sources and introducing different concepts (dominance penalty, sexism, glass ceiling, etc.), using multiple approaches (qualitative and quantitative) and methods of data collection (interviews, observations, literature review, and survey results).

External validity refers to establishing a domain for generalizing study findings (Ekanayake, 2014) and how well that data can be applied to more general circumstances and populations (Davies, et al., 2011). External validity refers to the observed associations that can be generalized from the sample to the population or other people, contexts, organizations, or even time (ecological) (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Propitiously, the large sample size in this research should be adequate to apply to the entire population.

In addition to internal and external construct, translational, criterion, and face validity are also required. The translational aspect of validity is the theoretical assessment, which focuses on how well a construct is translated into an actual measure assessed by an expert panel of judges (El Masri, 2016). Criterion validity refers to the degree to which a newer instrument type corresponds to existing instruments previously shown to be valid when measuring the concept (El-Marsri, 2016). No new instruments will be utilized in this research.

Face validity involves looking at the whole instrument and determining whether it seems like a good match for the concept as it is understood (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The burden of validity is on the researcher, who bears the responsibility of using valid instruments when measuring concepts in their research and then providing evidence of validity. Another form of validity is the respondent review in which the data derived from interviews is sent back to respondents for review of accuracy.

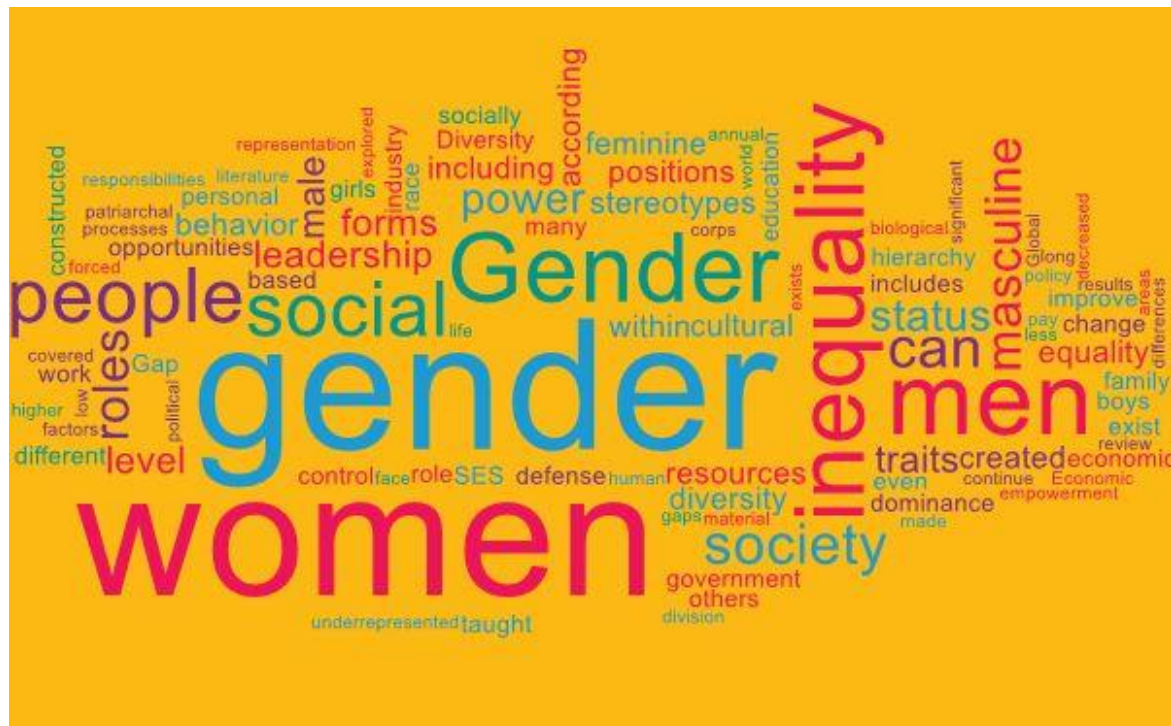
Qualitative research involves the researcher becoming both the collector and the analyst, opening up the potential for researcher bias (Creswell, et al., 2018). When the researcher is this heavily involved in the process, often they impart their interests and personal beliefs onto all the different parts of the research. This may also lead to the researcher's voice being cast into and onto other participants' input (Creswell, 2014). The method used to reduce the possibility of bias is member checking or respondent validation where the researcher will have respondents check results for accuracy and confirmation (Birt, et al., 2016).

Bracketing

Bracketing also known as “Phenomenological reduction” or “mind-mapping” is the process of developing a non-judgmental research process so as to not impede in the perception of the phenomenon (Spirko, 2019). During the bracketing process, the researcher used the research questions to brainstorm connections and relationships until all ideas were exhausted. A word map was created to show the relationship between the most prominent terms used in this research and the different sizes indicate the importance to each word or concept as it relates to the dissertation as shown in Figure 4.

Figure: 4

Word Map of The Case Study on Gender Inequality



Summary of Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are extremely important in the design phase of the research process to help judge the overall research quality (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Reliable findings can often lack validity if they consistently measure the irrelevant

factors (Creswell& Poth,2018). Findings can also be very valid but not reliable if they don't measure the right construct in a consistent and repeatable manner (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

In light of the above, when a study uses sound instruments and triangulation of multiple sources, gets peer reviews, and practices reflexivity through journaling, it becomes both valid and reliable. This method is applied in the present study in addition to respondent validation and proven instruments to bring credibility to the results. Throughout the dissertation writing process, every aspect of this research has been reviewed by committee chairs that have read, commented, and suggested corrections for different elements to ensure content validity. Panel members are expert PhD holders in the field of research with many years of experience. Accordingly, detailed journals of researcher observations and notes from interviews also add to the validity and reliability; however, if another researcher observed this organization, said researcher would introduce new perspectives.

Transition and Summary of Section 2

Qualitative and quantitative research have strengths and weaknesses; however, when used in a case study, the strengths of both are highlighted while the weaknesses are minimized. A case study design was chosen for this research due to both the researcher's interest in finding the underlying reason for gender inequality in the DoD as well as additional correlations. However, many women in the civilian sector of the DoD strive to become senior leaders and continuously get sidelined for various inequality-related issues.

There have been limited gains in gender equality over the years, and in recent years these gains have stalled, especially in the wake of Covid-19. Today, women need to stand up and return to the path of equality and build a gender-equal world, which can end discrimination. This case study is designed to look at gender inequality through a lens of equality, which can be modeled for women going forward. Section three will outline specific actions and real steps that women can take to stop inequality and ascend in their respective fields.

As with any qualitative study, this research required first-hand observations of lived experiences within the phenomenon to extract meaning from it. This section explains the case study method and the purposeful required sample. Although a sample of 384 participants is sufficient for the survey portion, the participants exceed the requirements, serving as a great example of the population. Triangulation was used in this case study to collate data from multiple sources such as literature, observations, surveys, and interviews for more validity and reliability. Interview participants were selected by their roles as leaders in historically male-dominated industries through snowball sampling.

The next section will present an overview and the findings of the study including themes discovered, interpretation of the themes, and representation and visualization of the data. Section three also covers improving general business practice, and potential application strategies. Finally, section 3 will cover personal and professional growth, biblical perspective, and summaries for reflections, section 3 and the study along with conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Organizational leaders set the bar or tone, directly impacting employee performance and engage in communication for the company goals and types of behaviors required of employees (Cornett, 2018). This requires leaders to participate through education, correction, and redirection toward gender-equal behaviors when gender inequality is encountered (Kelan, 2020). Accordingly, organizations must foster a culture that rewards values and provides support for individual differences and extending the opportunity for advancement to both men and women equally (Coury, S., Huang, J., Kumar, A., Prince, S., Krivkovich, A. & Yee, L., 2020). Most leaders live in denial that gender inequality exists in their organization, which allows it to fester.

This research can introduce positive social change in the DoD, other government agencies, male-dominated industries, and society at large. Until Biblical prophecy has come to fruition and all people are treated equally, there will be a demand for equality and programs to help foster that progress. This section provides a brief overview of the study, makes suggestions for applying it in the workforce, highlights the importance of equality, and discusses why it is important in improving business practice. In addition, this section delves into recommendations for future study, reflections of how the researcher grew both personally and professionally during the process, and how gender equality fully relates to the Christian Worldview.

The outcomes of this research can be applied across all organizations driving the need for organizational change in policies. Most laws regarding labor and the workforce have been created by men and for men, which prioritizes paid labor above all other forms of work, promoting gender inequality (May, 2018). As such, women generally do the

majority of non-paid household labor in conjunction with paid labor, leaving them little time for rest compared to their male counterparts. The dual work dynamic is usually unsustainable for most people in general. Hence, for lasting change and a more fair and balanced system, women will need to work together acting as change agents, having their voices heard and taking on the leadership tasking to begin making policy and workforce changes commensurate with female lifestyles.

As more and more women have advanced into corporate America, some would say that gender inequality is no longer an issue. However, a closer look at senior leadership in most organizations including the government, universities, churches, and the military reveals that inequality is still present (Ho, P. F. & Hallman, L. D., 2016). Although women often outperform men, the latter is elevated into a leadership status, leaving women without hope of a better future. All along the career path of women, obstacles remain that derail them from progressing toward leadership positions.

In addition to the above, overall social change to gender-equal language and behavior is required for vast improvements to gender inequality. Organizations can use gender-neutral language during the recruiting and hiring process and follow objective performance measures to help improve women's success (Ho, P. F. & Hallman, L. D., 2016). Organizational leaders can also start providing bonuses based on improving equal opportunities, pay, and promotions to males and females (SHRM, 2020). As changes in practices occur and senior leaders reinforce new behaviors, women will advance. Over time, new generations of children will be brought up in these altered behavior patterns, thereby improving the social norm for women in the future. As society grows and

develops, the new normal may sway back and forth; however, women's futures will be brighter as a result.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to gain an understanding of the many forms of gender inequality blocking the advancement of qualified female leaders in the U.S. Department of Defense Civilian Sector. Although there have been other studies on gender inequality in a Defense setting, none have looked at it through a case study lens that triangulates the data through multiple different sources; leaders who have risen in the face of such inequality have also not been interviewed to assess mitigation strategies (Creswell Poth, 2018). The researcher relied on a qualitative method using an ethnographic case study design to determine how the culture works during this specific time in the DoD civilian sector and other male-dominated professions. Women faced heavy combat restrictions until 2013 and less than 10% of all countries allowed women to serve in frontline combat positions (Cohen et al., 2020).

Data was gathered from an in-depth literature review, personal participant observations, and interviews with 22 women who persisted in the face of adversity and rose to leadership. Women represent just over half of the American population and should be representing just over half of the labor force. However, in 2019, women earned 82.3% of what men earned in the United States (Catalyst, 2021). Hence, although women make up half the population and hold half of the advanced degrees in America, there is an underrepresentation of female corporate directors (Liu, 2021). Among the Fortune 500 companies, only 7.4% are led by women and U.S. companies are only slightly higher at 15% (Liu, 2021).

Organizations and society benefit from the inclusion of women and minorities in leadership positions due to increased compassion and equalist orientations (Croft et al., 2020). Substantial progress has been made in promoting equality. However, recently the path to equality has taken a detour or stalled completely (England et al., 2020). Women have made great gains in education, and the ratio has gone from 0.76 to 1.34 for bachelor's degrees and 0.13 to 1.18 for doctoral degrees between 1970 to 2015 (Croft et al., 2020). As such, equality improves productivity, boosts confidence, leads to economic progress, and improves the social lives of people.

Presentation of the Findings

Although many affluent societies have realized a huge change in gender inequality during the last 50 years, there remains a gap in female representation at the top of most corporations (England et al., 2020). The United States Military is a highly gendered organization that provides job training, access to higher education, and other supports that are not as readily available to women as men, thereby reinforcing women's subordinate status in the U.S. economy (Saxon, 2021). Women continue to face discrimination, biases, and other forms of inequality in the DoD, government agencies, and other male-dominated professions ranging from subtle to overt (Diehl et al., 2020). However, despite the existence of gender inequality, some women find ways to mitigate and overcome obstacles to make their way into leadership.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 successful leaders via Zoom in government, STEM, or career fields historically filled predominantly with men; direct quotes and coding are shown in Appendix G. The Online Office of Personnel Management Survey results were gathered, coded, and interpreted via IBM SPSS statistics. Subsequently, personal observations and coding sheets revealed that gender

inequality, although getting remotely better, still exists, especially in historically male-dominated fields. The input of 22 women who have overcome the barriers associated with being a female in a male-dominated profession provided insights into measures that can be taken to increase the participation of women in gendered environments.

Themes Discovered

Seven main themes that women are forced to engage in emerged from the data: (1) women work harder than men; (2) women show massive displays of persistence to advance; (3) women have to have a desire to not only survive but become significant; (4) women must fight gender biases, norms, stereotypes, and discrimination. (5) While education is important, it is not paramount for women to advance. (6) Military experience may help initially but not long term and (7) mentoring and coaching are mandatory for success.

Interpretation of the Themes

Theme one. Women have to work harder than men just to gain the respect and right to be there. In a previous study, 38 women were asked, and all affirmed that women have to work harder than men to succeed (Topić, 2021). Furthermore, women have to work harder than a man because they are held to a higher performance standard (Hadsell, 2020). To succeed in male-dominated fields, women need problem-solving skills, authenticity, compassion and empathy, self-belief, they have to be steadfast, emotionless, have a good sense of humor, be strong, prove themselves, work harder than men, be able to handle obstacles, and be a team player (Norberg & Johansson, 2021).

The majority of the interview participants in this study have mentioned that they have had to work harder and put in more hours than men to advance in their fields ([P1],

[P2], [P3], [P4]). The literature review also mentions that most leadership positions require long hours, dedication, and commitment, which is often in conflict with motherhood (Ely & Padavaic, 2020). The majority of the participants in this study have been hard-working and resilient performers, generally from childhood. One participant shared that her family-owned and operated an Italian grocery store where her entire family (grandparents, parents, and 12 brothers and sisters) worked throughout their lives with no pay (P1). Today, when this participant returns home to visit, she goes and volunteers at the store. It is more enjoyable now and sort of refuels her spirit in the wake of her current gravely stressful position as a fire chief (P1).

Yesenia (P2) says, “The world is yours for the taking women, but you have to work harder to prove yourself in a man’s world” (P2). Unfortunately, women have to compensate for the feelings and attitudes of not being “real” workers that both men and women have toward them (Hasan et al., 2021). For women, compensation typically comes in the form of working harder and often even twice as hard as men for the same pay (Norberg et al., 2021). Deputy Warden Tina (P3) said, “I have routinely dropped everything at home and dedicated my time to department issues every day often with no credit and even receiving push back from co-workers for putting in extra time.” As such, the “prison system” requires long working hours, inflexible and slightly harsh working conditions with a culture that glorifies employees who are always present and give up their personal lives (Hunt et al., 2020).

In a male-dominated culture, men often get all the benefits such as promotions, better opportunities, and pay based on the fact that they can do the bare-minimum work (Gloor et al., 2018). In contrast, women have to prove their abilities before getting any

advancement opportunities (Topić, 2021). In addition to the above, women may be required to display masculine characteristics while maintaining their nurturing, warm, and caring properties to gain the same credibility as men (Diehl et al., 2020). Thus, being a female in male-dominated industries places women in a minority status, and they have to fight and work harder with a purpose and commitment to advance (Hällgren, 2005). More than half of women in the technology industry leave by mid-career giving a turnover rate of 41% compared to 17% for men (Williams, J. C., Su, L., Rincon, R. & Finn, P., 2016).

Shelly, the only female Warden in the prison system (P4), said: “I had to work way harder than other people to get where I am. I worked for many men who worked way less hard and got promoted over me. As a captain, I had to rekey a whole yard that was bifurcated (High custody violent inmates on one side and sex offenders on the other), and I had to do it in a timely fashion so these two groups would not intermingle. It took many extra hours to get accomplished, and I got teased by my coworkers for putting in extra time”. Glass ceilings exist for privileged women however, other less privileged women experience a concrete roof that they have almost no hope of breaking through or so it seems (Atcheson, 2021).

Shelly told her co-workers, “You do your job, and I will do my job,” and eventually, she got promoted to senior leadership. The inference here is that confronting a bully is rare for most women; usually, men have higher social power and a better chance at stopping unwanted negative comments and behaviors directed at them (Rosander et al., 2020). New employees tend to have a deeper organizational commitment and higher job performance that slowly decays over time (Lee et al., 2020). Furthermore, longer-term employees generally have knowledge of

procedures and processes that may put newer employees at ease or cause them to shift their career focus (Connell, 2005).

Sally (P5), an administrative assistant who has worked for many different CEOs, said she thought she had to work harder than a man until she worked as an executive assistant at Dole Foods. Her vice president, who ran the bagged salad section, told her, “We are not saving lives here; we are just bagging salads,” and when she perceived it as such, she stopped taking work so seriously. The truth is, “Whatever women do, they must do it twice as well as men to be thought of half as good” unfortunately, that typically means many, many more hours practicing in order to excel (Noria Corporation, 2021).

Jamie (P6), an associate deputy warden, says, “As a woman in this type of industry, you have to work harder to prove your worth and show that you are in the same caliber as a man in the department.” This indicates that when people in male-dominated industries conform to the social roles and perform “manhood acts” they are rewarded with status and power while those that do not do so are suppressed (Sweeney, 2014). “Men will often mistake your kindness and compassion for weakness, although that is the opposite of the truth” (P6). Moreover, excellent leadership is driven by empathy, altruism, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to the growth, well-being, and empowerment of followers (Lee et al., 2020).

Young millennials have taken a more traditional (old school) stance on family life than generation Xers and baby boomers; the men prefer women to be home and take care of the house (Wilcox et al., 2017). According to Larana (P7), the difference between her generation and millennials is that women are demanding their right to choose the

lives they want to live without judgment; it is not the men or other women forcing the issue (Wilcox et al., 2017). Larana said, “My husband didn't want me to work. He wanted me home taking care of four kids, and I did that for 15 years, but I wanted some financial stability. I decided I would go to work, and my husband said, if you go to work, I am not helping you, and he didn't. From that point on, I was a mother responsible for the whole house and an employee earning a wage even at times when my husband did not, and he was not supportive and did not help.”

Polly (P8) began her teaching career in 1993 on the Navajo Reservation and was let go after a few years due to a reduction in force. Her next position was in Cochise County, specifically Sierra Vista, where she stayed from 1994 to 2018, which is when she moved to Tucson. Polly spent 15 years in classrooms teaching upper elementary and junior high school. Then she moved into administration, where she became a charter school principal for about two and a half years until the parent company closed the school. She then spent some time as a substitute before receiving a call in November from a friend asking her to step into a science teacher position outside her comfort zone. Polly drove 86 miles each way to one school and always dedicated extra time, while still receiving negative treatment from co-workers. Polly finally became Director of Curriculum and Human Resources for the district but faced additional discrimination due to being gay and female, making her career journey very arduous.

Cora (P9) said, “I have always been fast at everything, and I literally can work circles around everyone. Eventually, my Captain sat me down and told me, ‘Cora, you do great work, and you do it faster than anyone; however, when you give commands to people, no one can keep up with your commands. You have to be a team player when

you are in Leadership and make sure your team keeps up with your commands.’ That was the day I learned how to lead, and I began tuning into where my people were and tasking them according to their timeline rather than mine. Fortunately, my drive for work is still strong, so now I learn to task more people in more areas to get the work done that I used to do.”

The literature review mentions that social equality and equity are still a goal or work in progress rather than a completed action leaving women and minorities in a fight for rights (Anestaki et al., 2016). Women are still marginalized and held to different standards than men while making 16% less money for twice as much work (Barroso, A. & Brown, A., 2021). In addition, women are expected to balance childcare, education, and career while maintaining their kind, compassionate, and nurturing behaviors, thereby setting an almost impossible standard (Savage, M., 2020).

Theme two. Women have to show massive displays of persistence to advance. One of the definitions of persistence is successfully staying a course of action until an overall end goal is met (Patterson, 2017). However, persistence can be negative when someone continuously does something irksome, for example, devaluing women or refusing to promote them (Brucker, 2015). As such, in this context, persistence can also mean ceaselessness, continuance, endurance, subsistence, and grit. Grit goes a step further than persistence in that it is usually considered positive and is acquired through the experience and reasoning based on an individual’s effort combined with the passion to reach a long-term goal or end state (Duckworth, 2021).

Much research has been done to find out what psychological factors drive a person to succeed, and the results show that grit is more important than skill,

intelligence, or ability (Schimshal, 2020). Although grit is favorable, perseverance is considered better since grit does not always develop consistently; some people develop a strong work ethic without long-term goals. At any rate, perseverance and grit continue to be the stick-with-it-ness required to become a great leader. Perseverance is mentioned 49 times in the Bible: James 1:4, N.I.V. says, “Let perseverance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing.” Likewise, Galatians (6:9, N.I.V.) says, “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

Sheila (P10), the only S.E.S. interviewed for this research, began working for the Navy right out of college at the age of 21 and worked her way up to the S.E.S. position as the Head of Air Worthiness for the Navy. Sheila mitigated many obstacles, that of being female in a male-dominated profession as well as a STEM-related field (Bergsieker et al., 2020). Sheila had a strong upbringing: her mother was an engineer and her stepfather a pilot; she was raised to believe that the sky is the limit and took to the sky as a pilot herself. As such, when women are born into a family that has already gained privilege in knowledge, wealth, and experience, it is much easier for them to rise in male-dominated cultures since they are already at the top of the pecking order (Dean et al., 2021).

Sheila continued being an engineer for the Navy and was not looking to become an S.E.S. when the opportunity presented itself; however, she was the best and most highly qualified individual for the position, so she felt that it was her obligation to take it. Sheila was lucky, in that she did not start life in survival mode and thus easily rose to her significance through perseverance. In this vein, although strides have been made for

social equity and inclusion, women and minorities are still underrepresented in many segments of society despite evidence that inclusion improves policymaking, competitive advantage, and produces a result-oriented organization (Anestaki et al., 2016).

Kelly (P11) was looking for a role model whom she wanted to emulate as a teenager when she started babysitting for a close family friend. She lived in Iowa at the time, and a close family friend just happened to have a career in medical records. She said, "I just knew that was what I wanted to do." So, when she finished high school, she enrolled in the premier college for medical records at St. Scholastica in Duluth, MN. Upon graduation, she went to work for the Catholic Hospital since she knew her boss was looking to retire, and she would groom her for her position. Kelly was persistent in pursuing the career path she wanted. However, doors flew open for her as she progressed until she reached her final position as the Director at AZ Department of Health Services in the Cancer Care Program. During this time, she helped to develop a coalition of cancer specialists to move the State of Arizona forward on early detection and prevention.

Shelly began her career in 1994 at the toughest max security prison facility in the State as a Correctional Officer I. She did her time in grade at the different levels and started making her way up from CO I to CO II, then to Sergeant, all under the security track. She then transitioned briefly into CO III, which is essentially an administrative non-security track, before returning to the security side as a lieutenant in three different units over eight years. Shelly served as a Captain for a while before being promoted to Associate Deputy Warden at a few different units. She became the state's first female Deputy Warden and the longest-standing administrator to survive some tough units. Shelly took on some other roles and even retired in that time and went back to begin

working toward her second retirement. Now Shelly is the only female Warden in the State.

Evelyn (P12) began life playing classical piano and singing opera before becoming a park ranger and then a wildland firefighter. Recent research provides evidence that music training improves both reading and math ability, indicating it is a strong proponent of high intelligence (Bergee et al., 2021). Evelyn realized during the Reagan Administration that she would have difficulties supporting herself with music, so she double majored in wildlife management. Next, she began her career as a park ranger, which was a Level II law enforcement position; she could write tickets but not carry firearms. Evelyn did anything she was asked to do and grabbed every opportunity that came her way). She then became a wildland firefighter and had to buy her own gear due to the scarcity of women in the field; all the equipment was purchased for men. Next, she took a position with the Bureau of Land Management and got to work at the White House for a few years before being courted into the position of Vice President of Natural Resources.

Wanda began her career in 1997 as a correctional officer at Cook and stayed in that role for five years before being promoted to COIII and was transferred to Meadows Unit (P22). At the new yard she promoted up to COIV and then was transferred back to her original yard (P22). She then moved to the East Coast for a while but did not like it and moved back and took a CO position at SMU I for a while before promoting up to COIII at SMU I (P22). In 2013 she transferred to complex and worked on special projects then she promoted to COIV at Meadows and did a stint in Complex doing special projects (P22). She then promoted to ADW at the Phoenix Complex (P22). The

department then promoted her to DW of Santa Cruz but they transferred her after about five months back to the Phoenix complex and then on to Rynning Unit where she is now serving with about 25 years' worth of persistence.

Lani (P13) started developing math skills at a very young age and was able to skip levels in junior high school and enter more advanced classes. Lani grew up in a small North Dakota town and enlisted into the Army right out of high school. She applied to West Point after a company commander asked her to do so. Lani went to USMAPS in New Jersey from '84 to '86 and graduated in 1991. She majored in mechanical engineering and was one of three girls to graduate out of 100+ engineers. Women make up only 28% of the STEM workforce and those that are gifted with the ability to thrive in this type of work face gender stereotypes and have to enter male-dominated cultures that are not very supportive of women (Bergsieker et al., 2020).

Lani then got commissioned into the Army Corp of Engineers in 1991 and was stationed in Fort Hood, TX, as a platoon leader in an engineering company doing vertical construction. Lani said, "I had carpenters, plumbers, painters, and people like that. Then I transferred to horizontal construction, where I led a team of bulldozers, scrapers, graders, bucket loaders, and things like that. After that, I decided to leave the military and take a position with Texas Instruments in Lewisville." She had three children. In 1999, Raytheon bought and merged Hughes and Raytheon, so she moved to Tucson in 1999 and has been a Program Manager ever since, living in her significance as she nurtures and grows a team of professionals.

Larana (P7) grew up on a small farm in the tiny town of St. Charles, Iowa. She had 11 brothers and sisters and was not allowed to go work out on the farm with the

boys, although she always wanted to do so. Instead, she had to gather eggs, kill chickens, try to milk cows, clean the house, and cook like the other girls. She got into sports in school and became the point guard on the basketball team. She also had a passion for reading; Larana said, “Farm life is boring, so I filled up my days with books. In fact, the library could not keep books coming in fast enough to keep up with my reading.” Larana went to a semester of college and worked part-time at the phone company before meeting her husband. “If I knew then what I know now, I would have skipped that dance and run a mile away when I saw him coming.”

She then got married and had four daughters and decided to go back to work for the phone company while raising them. Eventually, she grew tired of being a service representative and moved into payphone collections. Becoming a technician was a promotion for her into a male-dominated technician position, and she went above and beyond her male counterparts, which was noticed. Eventually, she retired from the phone company when the payphone section got bought out and went to work for the Department of Corrections at the age of 61. She worked as a correctional officer for a while but grew bored quickly. Then she applied for the inmate store and worked there until she was 74 and began training new employees and managers but eventually decided to retire for good.

Cora (P9) spent 10 years as a lifeguard before testing for the fire department. In 1998, she got hired by a Fire Department and began her career as a firefighter. She went to medic school and got bumped up to medic and continued working even after being promoted to engineer and driving the trucks. As an engineer, she led the team and excelled at organizing a scene; eventually, she tested for Captain and ran a station for

about four years before testing for battalion chief. A battalion chief is in charge of a whole function such as firefighting training, dispatch and deployment, emergency medical services, etc., and she enjoyed that for about 3–4 years. Cora said, “I have now been in my current role of assistant chief for about ten years now, but I want to move into the chief role that will be my point of significance, and if I don't get it in this department, I will go to another department so that I can take that role.” The fire service is much like the DoD in developing all-male, homophilic networks, limiting female participation in the industry, especially the executive ranks (Perrault, 2014).

Theme three. Women have to want to not only survive but become significant. There are five steps that people can find themselves in throughout life: survival, stability, security, success, and significance (Martell, 2020; Ziglar, 2007). Survival is usually the starting point for a person, although some people never get past the point of survival and continue to struggle to get basic life supplies (He, 2019). For example, Jenny said, “My mom saw an ad in the paper that said the State was hiring Corrections Officers and showed it to me; I told her I didn't know about working in prison but, I was a single mom with little kids, so I applied.” Another participant (P2) said, “I came to the agency as a young mother of two boys looking for some stability.”

Stability is either for the lucky people who skip fighting for survival through parents who provided and paid for school or those who got through survival and are now stable, which is mentally very hard to accomplish (Martell, 2020). Some people make it past the first two stages and find themselves in the security stage, which comes with nice houses, cars, trips, and money in the bank; however, they are most likely lacking purpose (Richard, 2020). The security level encompasses the middle-class that have some savings

and job security and rarely worry about basic needs like food and water as those in the survival mode (He, 2019).

One of the participants (P4) who made it to significance and is living their purpose on this earth is Shelly; she was born breech at birth and found out she had dyslexia, which challenged her all through childhood. She always struggled in academia but is still working toward her bachelor's degree with only two classes to go. Since childhood, she has been called names by people who are supposed to be leaders and supporters of children, yet she has risen through the ranks to become a warden. Shelly is living in significance; she was born to be in the career field that she is in; she no longer strives for herself; she is pouring out her heart and soul for others to grow and work toward greatness.

The sports arena in America is still dominated by men when making vital decisions, and women continue to lack representation (Evans et al., 2020). Although some progress has been made, women are still undervalued, underpaid, and discriminated against in most sports arenas (Moawad, 2019). Jillian (P15) was a child-athlete who grew up and got her college degree in Physical Education [P15]. For a long time after college, she was successful but not quite living in her significance. Now she owns a company and is living in significance as she trains others and watches others grow; she is also looking at expanding her platform to be more of a 360-degree fitness arena to enhance the lives of her customers. Unfortunately, despite having trained men, most of her clientele are female. Jillian has embraced this and is role-modeling the fact that women wanting to step into leadership must be willing to take on innovative and

new assignments, continuously learn, improve, and never be satisfied with the status quo (Nelson, 2015).

Although Jenny (P14) started her career with the Department of Corrections at the survival level, she persisted, got an education, fought against discrimination, dealt with stereotypes, and is now the Director of Operations. Jenny has reached significance by turning her ambitions into empowering, equipping, and developing women to rise and lead in a department that has been historically male dominated in the senior ranks. Women often have self-limiting beliefs, lack the ability to “lean in” to obtain leadership roles, lack confidence and often deal with guilt from leaving children to work (Rodrigo, D., 2020). When women form a coalition and empower other women, they create an unstoppable force that creates lasting change in the lives of all women.

Danae (P16) began her career in broadcasting after completing her bachelors of science in broadcasting. While on a story at the Miami FBI office, an agent in the field asked her if she ever considered a career with the FBI. She said that she hadn’t and thought that she was already living her dream, but she was really living in success. She applied for the job when her co-worker at the studio dared her to do so. She went through multiple steps to get through the hiring process and eventually got a letter that informed her she had the job, so she quit at the broadcasting company. A few weeks later, she received a letter saying that they had miscalculated something, and she wasn’t going to start. Danae then went back to the studio and got her job back. A few months after going back to work, she got a letter telling her she needed to report to Quantico, and that was the beginning of her journey to find significance as an undercover FBI agent.

Theme four. Women have to fight gender stereotypes, biases, and discrimination in their pursuit to rise. Maria (P1) began her career as a firefighter and progressed through the ranks to the chief. Maria was told by men that there was no way a woman would beat them in the test for Captain. She said, “That drove me to work even harder to succeed.” Maria also experienced stereotyping when she would show up to the grocery store in her firefighting uniform. People would ask her, “Why aren’t you home with your kids?” Once while pumping gas, a man asked her if she was Maria, and when she agreed, he said, “You took my job back in 1983.” She then proceeded to ask him how many times he tested for it. When he answered “seven,” she asked him who took his job the other six times.

Another time, Maria was giving a presentation, and had her deputy chief shirt on. She said, “A man asked me, ‘Is that your shirt you are wearing?’ I just politely told him, ‘Yes, I don’t usually go around wearing other people’s shirts to work’. There are many stereotypes, and I think it has gotten better, but they do still exist.”. The fire service typically has a man-club culture that operates with outright sexism especially in aging fire stations (Totty, 2019). Maria also mentioned that she had 12 brothers and sisters; after dinner, the girls would do the dishes and cleaning while the boys watched T.V. and did the yard work. At the store she worked, the girls did the cashiering, and the boys stocked the shelves. This implies that there is a double standard for boys and girls, in that girls are raised and taught to clean and cook while the boys get cleaned up after; girls engaging in behavior typical for boys are judged harshly (Harvey et al., 2020).

Boys in Maria’s family were automatically enrolled in Catholic school, but girls went to public school because her dad felt like it was more important for boys to get a better education. Sexism values the education of boys more than girls and rewards the efforts of boys for less work (Chemaly, 2015). It is possible to reduce some bias in the fire service by changing the idea

of what a firefighter is as firefighters have to display remarkable compassion and teamwork while delivering medical care. Therefore, there is a place for women in the fire service (Totty, 2019).

Sally said (P5), “Women in an organization that are not taken seriously do not produce like they do when empowered. Often, women are not offered the opportunities to lead like young, good-looking guys. Older men in the department will mentor the young men but not the women. Women who do make it into leadership develop high confidence due to all of the struggles they face getting there.” Sally said that when she was younger, she was “Always outgoing, cute and curvy, so there was a lot of harassment which played into the ‘women are objects’ stereotype.” Women are typically seen as kinder, empathetic, and gentler, and less analytical, competitive, and independent; thus, they are seen as less likely to have the qualities needed to succeed in male-dominated cultures (McKinnon & O’Connell, 2020).

Jenny (P14) says that she tries to empower and promote women, although many will not take advantage of it. Jenny said, “I had a boss that brought me in to be his deputy warden, and he would tell people yep, she acts as my right-hand man when I am not here and then turn to me and tell me to go and get his coffee. So, I took this as his idea of what a male-female relationship looks like and decided to be even more determined to rise and become his boss someday as I got him his coffee.” Gender harassment involves negative comments and putting women down to convey that women are lesser than men (Bergsieker et al., 2020). Jenny also mentioned that because she kept her hair cut short, her co-workers would say, “You look like a dyke. You must be a dyke.” But they paid no attention to her professionalism and the quality of work she was doing. As more companies shift to a strengths-based approach to leadership, more focus will be

placed on a person's potential and capacity, and gender-based assumptions will erode (Beheshti, 2019).

Yesenia (P2) says, "In a crisis situation where people could get injured and force needed to be used, a man could tell employees not to use force, and that would be the end of it, but from a woman, they will automatically think she is too soft to get the job done even if she is following orders." She added that in high school, "I remember some communication from classmates that indicated that I would not do anything beyond high school and that I would be a stay-at-home housewife." Typically, women are less violent and enforce more equitable forms of law enforcement although, decades of research shows that women can handle hostile and violent situations equally as well as male counterparts (Brooks, R., 2020). Wanda said, "I have seen female wardens act just like a man, all cocky and abrasive and I have seen the backlash against them when they do" (P22).

The COVID-19 crisis has interrupted America and through this, women have played a pivotal role in the decision-making process in crisis response, proving their ability to lead again; this time, it is being noticed (UNDP, 2021). Lisa (P21) says, "We did not experience gender inequality from the guys; however, the wives of the guys were always concerned since we were sharing living quarters with their husbands. In my family growing up, my mom encouraged me to do things, but my dad expected me to do them. The stereotype in the department now is that women will promote faster than men since they have become so strong emotionally and mentally from all of the barriers and obstacles they have overcome."

Lisa added, "In high school, they would not let me play baseball or take shop. My counselor told me to take home economics, and I told her that I already made a blueberry pie and

won first place at the state fair, and I sewed a jumpsuit and won first place on that, but I want to play ball and fix stuff.” Wanda said, “Gender inequality is when men get better everything just for being a man. I pay every single bill in my house, but my husband’s credit score is 15-20 points higher than mine always.” Wanda also mentioned that women have to act a certain way, or they will be perceived as being too aggressive, too sensitive, or too assertive, there is a fine line they have to walk to be taken seriously (P22).

Jamie says, “Women are only kind of given the opportunity to lead, women have to work harder to prove their worth to be in higher positions, but it does not happen as often as it should. I tell young recruits that the department will offer you the world, but you have to not give in to the gender stereotypes. I tell them they have to ignore the stereotype and do the work given to them” (P6). She goes on to say, “I have had people come against me saying I am too young to be a captain or an ADW, but I tell them no I am not, I have put in the work and the years.” Jamie also mentions, “Back in the academy, I got comments like she will not be able to run since she has a large chest, and she will never be able to do all of the push-ups and sit-ups. So, I push back on that by showing them and letting my accolades and reputation speak for themselves” (P6).

Four participants (P2, P4, P14, P19) indicated that glass walls are put in place to segregate women in the department into different positions, due to their gender identity (Hunt, Rucker & Kerr, 2020). The glass ceiling is linked to these glass walls, and as more women enter male-dominated environments and start being promoting into leadership, these glass walls are weakened, which greatly affects the strength of the ceiling (Hunt, Rucker & Kerr, 2020). Jenny stated, “When I started working in the department, they didn’t allow females to be in the inmate population, but eventually it

changed” (P14). Yesenia and Angela said that the department was very male dominated when they started, and some of the deputy wardens and wardens thought that while the women could be COIII’s (inmate counselors), they needed to let the men handle the security side of things (P2, P19). Shelly said that when she was a brand-new officer, her lieutenant thought women needed to stay in control rooms and not have inmate contact, so she became the squeaky wheel until she got to go work the units (P4).

Jessie also experienced some gender stereotyping in the industry; she said, “I went to board a ship, and the captain of the ship said she is not coming on my boat but my commander at the time said, “I will send all of the ladies to your boat if you don't watch it” and that pretty much ended that” (P18). The boat captain was displaying an implicit stereotypical reaction by processing the fact that Jessie is a women, and automatically indicating his opposition to having her around (Pardal, 2020).

Jessie also mentioned, “I may be creating some gender stereotyping in my head but, a lot of the women in my unit have young kids at home, but they put in all of these extra hours, and I don’t want to do that. I want to go home and hang out with my husband and son, so I do” (P18). She further added, “I didn’t experience any issues during childhood since my family had many strong female leaders. My mom taught math; one aunt works on computer things for NASA, one writes code, and another is the Vice President of Banks” (P18). Even though the issues surrounding gender stereotyping have improved, many people only accept equality at the explicit or outwardly expressive level, while at the implicit or subconscious level, they may still hold onto negative beliefs about gender equality (Pardal, 2020).

Tina says, “I think women want to think we are being treated fairly. However, there is only one female warden, and many female deputy wardens that have been waiting for years to be promoted. Still, the department promoted a man that has been here for less than a year” (P3). She continued, “The department promoted a woman to regional operations director but only to shut people up. They also tell people that they will not promote you to deputy warden unless they are considering you for warden, but that is not what happens” (P3). Women in male-dominated industries, such as correctional institutions, often face bias or “tokenism,” whereby there is increased visibility or an exaggeration of differences, and they face promotional barriers; if they do manage to get promoted, they are viewed as a token and not taken seriously (Collica-Cox & Shulz, 2020).

Tina further added, “I experienced gender inequality in the form of receiving 20 thousand dollars less per year than a man that they promoted and moved from Lewis to Perryville. I got moved several times but never got a pay raise” (P3). The gender wage gap is proof enough that women and men are not paid equally, and the inequality thrives (Klasen, 2020). Another area where Tina experienced inequality was with a male supervisor who was extremely lazy and would not let her work a minute past quitting time. However, when bad things happened, he would blame it on her (P3). She adds, “I am a single female, so my male supervisors tell me that I cannot date subordinates although almost every male supervisor I have ever had either flirted, dated or slept with subordinates and even when they were married, and nothing happens to them” (P3). Women are held to a double standard of likeability that creates a glass ceiling that results in ambitious women being perceived less favorably (Beheshti, 2019).

When an organization employs too few women, they are put under the spotlight, creating increased performance pressures and scrutiny, thereby establishing negative stereotypes and perceptions (Collica-Cox & Shulz, 2020). “As a captain, I was interested in someone, but I did not act on it until they left the department, and I still got in trouble. Men, on the other hand, do it all the time, and nobody cares; there is a double standard” (P3). Women are stigmatized for having multiple sexual partners, while men are rewarded (Lakritz, 2020). As a child, Tina recalls, “I had to wear dresses and act a certain way. I was told I should not play outside with the boys since I am a girl. My mom hated men and would not let me wait on them or serve them. She did tell me that I can do anything that I want to do, but I was supposed to act like a girl” (P3).

Polly stated, “In the field of education, up until the past five or six years, women were notoriously known to belong in elementary” (P8). Good leadership in academia has historically favored the normative masculine role, seeing men as a resource and women as negative equity (Morley, 2012). She went on to say, “America still has a creepy factor when it comes to men having a close relationship with little people; women often get forced into the little people teacher role for that reason” (P8).

Polly also said, “Men are often better at networking than women, and even when women do network, they do not have the power behind them to help other women rise in that network. Women instead often feel threatened by women coming up under them and attempt to sabotage them instead” (P8). She further added, “I faced double discrimination due to being gay, although it is not nearly as bad for a gay woman as it is for a gay man in education” (P8). If men employ aspects of traditional femininity to

improve their leadership styles, they are rewarded, while a woman will be seen as doing what is expected (White, Bagihole & Riordan, 2012).

Martina said, “I heard many times throughout the testing process that I was the golden child and that I was being brought up by a lot of my co-workers. They were not looking at the fact that I did a ton of casual overtime over the years to keep the department strong” [P20]. Some people are better at building relationships and influencing others by presenting their skills, beliefs, and knowledge in a way that people want to partner with them, making them more appealing to organizational leaders (Byrne, Fattoum & Garcia, 2019). Martina went on to say, “Gender roles are socialized, if I go into a classroom and ask girls what they want to be they say female roles like teachers and nurses. If I ask the boys, they say things like firefighters, police, pilots, and things like that. I don't really care what people think or say about me; I do lose sleep over it sometimes, but when someone does not like me, it is usually because they are not doing their job, and I call them out on it, and they don't like it” (P20).

Martina further added, “I usually notice gender inequality the most in public, I would go to grocery stores and stand in line with a team of men in full uniform, a radio on my hip, and people in the store would ask me ‘what do you do, are you the cook?,’ it was pretty annoying. I even had a man ask me if I had actually really been in a fire. I also got told one time that I was too old to go into fires although I was only 49 and men go into them even when they are 69 years old, and nobody questions that” (P20). Women in the fire service face ‘prototypes,’ and the typical stereotype—when people think about a fire-fighter, they imagine someone who can carry a person from a burning building and

that usually takes traditionally masculine properties of extreme strength, although this type of skill is only necessary 4% of the time (Totty, 2019).

Jillian says, “There is a huge gender disparity in the fitness industry. Most sports arenas think men will coach better, especially at the collegiate and national level, leaving women greatly disadvantaged” (P15). Social media helps improve gender equality by creating opportunities for women to have a voice in the sport industry and demonstrate their authentic selves in all roles of life (Schaillée, Derom, Solenes, Straume, Burgess, Jones & Renfree, 2021). When asked if women are given equal opportunities to lead, Jillian replied, “Absolutely not, not by a long shot” (P15). The statistics in the business world show that less than 24% of college level head coaches are women, and in the NCAA that number is reduced to 5% (Bassett, 2020).

Most women that do reach leadership roles, do so by developing a traditionally masculine leadership style and not by being authentically female (Bassett, 2020; Collica-Cox & Shulz, 2020; P15). Ambitious women get pigeonholed by men in current power positions (P15), and women who stand up for themselves against these powerful men are labeled the ‘B’ word” (P15). Jillian also mentioned that the culture in sport maintains gender stereotypes by requiring women to wear bikinis while playing beach volleyball (P15). She said, “Women are starting to push back and wear one-pieces, however, viewership demands a bikini which I don't have a problem with, but many qualified women do.” (P15). In 2020, the International Volleyball Federation updated the dress code to allow female players to choose to play in the uniform in which they felt most comfortable (Grunge, 2021).

Danae states, “I believe that qualified people are given equal opportunities. I think people in the hiring position hire the most qualified person, and women have to prove themselves in that area. Unfortunately, a lot of people today lack people skills and fail to use good eye contact. When I wanted to interview a subject, I wouldn't call them; I would go and meet them in person so I could read their body language” (P16). She also mentioned that the first time she ever really felt gender bias in action was when she lived in Seattle, WA. She said her boys were in first and third grade, and she was not allowed to go into the draft for a coaching position because she was a woman, although she had been coaching her boys for a long time already (P16). “I don't want to be equal to a man; I already think I am better than that. I always try to figure out what I can do to get the ball farther down the field than everyone else” (P16).

She also mentioned that women often want to have things both ways—they want the responsibility and clout that men get, but then they want to act like the damsel in distress and blame not getting promoted on some other reason (P16). Gender bias is the culprit for most women that creates “the broken rung,” where qualified women get passed over for early management roles, creating a gap in the leadership pipeline (Caleo & Heilman, 2019). “A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way” (Maxwell, J.C., 2015). As more women become the faces of leadership, they can show the way, and equality can continuously improve.

Theme five. Theme five indicates that education is essential to growth and promotion, although full degrees are not mandatory. Every participant in the interview portion of this research has attended some form of higher education. They may not have finished a complete degree, but most are really close, and some have gone on to obtain

master's degrees or even two master's degrees. Only two participants had no degrees, however, they led in a female-dominated industry or a lower-level male-dominated position. Perhaps, Martin Luther King, Jr. (1947) was right when he said, "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically." He further stated, "Intelligence plus character- that is the goal of true education." In fact, according to Nelson Mandela, education is the most powerful weapon anyone can use to change the world (Duncan, 2013).

Sheila, the SES, received her bachelor's degree in Engineering, followed by a master's degree in Aviation Systems Engineering [P10]. Women are a minority in STEM fields, and education is the only way to fight inequality in these industries (Margheri, 2015). Evelyn has a master's in Public Administration and a secondary degree in Wildlife Management and is the Vice President of Natural Resources in a government entity that oversees many engineers and other employees (P12). Maria double majored in Elementary and Physical Education for her bachelor's before receiving her master's in Organizational Management, and she is the City Fire Chief (P1). Jenny has two associate degrees and a bachelor's degree, and she is the Director of Prison System (P14).

Jessie recently got promoted to the rank of Commander in the Coast Guard, and she has a double master's degree in Quality Systems Management and Industrial Administration (P18). Polly has a master's degree in Educational Leadership with a principal's certificate, and she is the Director of Curriculum and Human Resources at an outreach for troubled teens (P8). Martina, an extremely busy Fire Chief, has a BS in Exercise Science, an MBA with a focus on Healthcare Management, and a real estate license (P20). Kelly first received a double bachelor's degree in Psychology and Medical Record Science, before returning to school for her first

master's in Education with a focus on Counseling (P11). She then returned to school and got her second master's degree in Health Administration, which put her on the path to her final career position as Director of Cancer Care at the Department of Health (P11).

The following group of women all have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and have risen through the ranks at their jobs. For example, Darla is a Sales manager in finance who earned her BS degree in Business and Finance [P17]. Jillian received her BS in Exercise Science and is currently an entrepreneur in the athletics industry (P15). Wanda a Deputy Warden received her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Correctional Administration and is an ADW in the prison system (P22). Finally, Danae, an undercover FBI Agent, made it to the rank of a GS-15 equivalent in the Federal Government, received her bachelor's degree in Broadcasting and now volunteers to help the needy and give the world hope (P16).

Lani is a Program Manager for a missile manufacturing company, and she obtained her bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering (P13). Tina, a Deputy Warden, received her bachelor's degree in Sociology, focusing on family dynamics (P3). Lisa, a retired Engineer for the fire service, and now an entrepreneur, received a double bachelor's degree in Art and Dance with a teaching certificate in both, and went on to and complete medic school [P21]. Finally, Jamie, an Associate Deputy Warden, received her bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice Administration (P6).

The rest of the participants either have an associate degree or are close to obtaining a bachelor's degree. Moreover, they have all taken many leadership classes and read books to help enhance their leadership styles. Shelly, the only female Warden, is two classes shy of a bachelor's degree, but has taken on so many leadership roles and read so much material that she is a force to be reckoned with (P4). Yesenia is a Co-

deputy Warden of a large prison complex, and she has an associate degree but does not plan to attend any more school, she is looking forward to retirement (P2). Angela is the other Co-deputy Warden of the same large prison complex, and she also has an associate degree with no desire to go higher in her educational pursuits (P19). My final participant Shari only has minimal education, but she reads a lot and is married to an intelligent man; however, she has served as the right-hand woman to many CEOs as an Executive Assistant (P5). Shari now runs a non-profit organization where she establishes grants to help non-profits succeed (P5).

Theme six. Theme six indicates that military experience may help get you started but not necessarily promoted. Danae said, “I think military experience gives applicants a leg up in the hiring process at the FBI; we use a lot of military tactics” (P16). Veterans get veteran’s points and special consideration in the hiring process, and those with a valid top-secret clearance are already ahead of the game since it’s an FBI requirement (Stillwell, 2021; Bergsieker, Wilmot, Cyr & Grey, 2020). Polly said, “I think there tends to be some favoritism toward military members. It gives people an extra checkmark compared to others. In fact, there was a pipeline called ‘vets to teachers’ that was geared toward moving vets straight from service into a classroom to teach. But, unfortunately, not all military members are suited to being in a classroom and being responsible for the future and growth of America’s children” (P8).

On the contrary, Lisa said, “No, I don’t think military experience has any impact on career progression in the fire service, although folks with military experience do fit in well. Like most male-dominated professions, the fire service operates on a pecking order, and the military trains people in the pecking order, so they fit in well” (P8). Male-

dominated industries use dominance and control to establish a pecking order or level of the hierarchy within the organization (Choi, Fuqua & Newman, 2009). The fire service is a para-military organization that uses military ranks and words like integrity, commitment and honor, and mandates employees to stay in good shape (Military.com, 2021). Evelyn said, “I didn't serve in the military. However, the fire service is the closest thing to being in the military that you can get; we slept on little mats out in the wilderness and had to learn to count on each other as a unified team” (P12).

Tina said, “I did not serve in the military, and it does matter; a few years ago, a new director stepped in and began promoting ex-military in the Department of Corrections, especially if they were marines” (P3). The Department of Corrections (DoC) is paramilitary, of which 14.7% are veterans—it is an easy transition from keeping the country safe to keeping a state safe (Friederich, 2018). Four of the participants interviewed had served in the US Military (two Army, one Coast Guard, and one Navy), while ex-military family members have raised most of the other participants. However, only one participant indicated that being part of the military helped with promotion. Darla said, “No, I did not serve in the military, but my dad was a fighter pilot in the Navy before he got married to my mom and got kicked out. He was on a full-ride scholarship for electrical engineering but lost it all to marry my mom. We were pretty grateful that he got kicked out because all of his classmates went to Vietnam, and none of them came back” (P17).

Kelly said, “No, I didn't serve in the military; I think it is more of a male-dominated profession. My dad did serve in WWII in the Navy, and he enlisted twice” (P11). Yesenia said, “No, I have not served in the military, but I don't think that has

anything to do with it. Tactical Support Unit is mostly military, but they are the only predominately military group in corrections [P2]. Sheila did not serve in the military however, she is the head of Air Worthiness for the Navy, and she has worked for the Navy since college [P10]. Wanda served in the Navy for an extended boot camp due to an injury and left the military shortly after although, she was raised by a dad who served his whole career in the Navy. Only a few participants had no military affiliations in terms of parents, grandparents, or personally, while military beliefs seemed to have forged the rest.

Jenny said, “I did not serve in the military, but my mom was a WAC in the military, and she was a single mom, so she ruled the roost” (P14). Shelly mentioned that although she did not serve in the military, her grandpa served in the Army during WWII, and raised her dad to be very disciplined (P4). “My dad had four daughters; however, we were all raised like little boys, he did not take it easy on us. I married an Army ranger, and it just doesn't get any more military than that. I was one of the only females to ever work on Tactical Support Unit (TSU) in the prison complex, which was predominately military members, and I fit right in and got the job done” (P4).

Mentoring and coaching. The final theme that emerged was that mentoring, and coaching are extremely important to rising successfully. Research shows that women’s networks are more social compared to those of men, and women usually make fewer connections than men (Greguletz, Diehl & Kreutzer, 2019). One participant said mentoring and coaching are important for everyone, not just women (P4). Another participant had very few mentors, however, she wished she had more at the lower levels (P12). Now, she has an executive coach assigned to her who is very supportive and helps

her think through things differently, especially when dealing with challenging employees (P12).

Evelyn went on to say that her coach also helps her be more authentic and display her whole self as a leader (P12). Coaches also help you clearly understand where the line is; leaders are not psychologists, sociologists, or doctors, and they have to deal with people with that limitation in mind (P12). As a leader, it is important to help an employee seeking help and trying to improve however, if they continue down the wrong path, they must be called out on it (P12). The role of a coach is to help leaders make conscious choices and gain clarity about personal and professional priorities and have a better work-life balance (Grier, 2021).

Effective mentors must be accessible, trustworthy, approachable, willing to tailor the experience to the mentees needs, help the mentee cope with stress, be willing to teach skills, be encouraging, vulnerable and humble, and genuinely care (Li, Malin & Hackman, 2018). Jamie mentioned that she had four to five key mentors in the department, and if she grouped them in one room, they would all be very similar (P6), they are all compassionate and kind but strong enough to go up against any man (P6). “From the very beginning, they took me under their wing and helped me grow” (P6).

Sally said, “The trick is getting the right mentor and applying what you are learning (P6). Mentoring and coaching helps women create networks that will enable them to overcome barriers and obstacles produced by gender bias and prejudice (Kulik & Metz, 2015). She also mentioned that she thinks mentoring plays a role in the development of soft skills and not hard technical skills (P6). Mentoring is more about role modeling, counseling and empathy, and people can observe how you tackle tasks

and emulate that (Clayton & Thessin, 2017). A good mentor also models how a successful person navigates the working world and introduces the mentee to people who can help them advance. “The more people you have to help you on your path, the better” (P5).

Maria said, “Everybody needs mentors. I had great fire chiefs that I could go to and ask questions and talk to them about anything. Having folks you can trust, be honest with and ask questions throughout your career is crucial. You have to have someone you feel comfortable with and share what you are thinking. You need to talk to people who are where you want to be to get your eyes opened and be ready to grow into those types of positions. Relationships are critical as you go through your career. Even when people are wrong to you, you need to be respectful and let things go” (P1). “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32, NIV).

Mentoring is a give and take, personal relationship between a seasoned leader acting as a guide, role model, sponsor, and teacher to a new, less experienced recruit (Sellers, Amatullah & Malin, 2021). A mentor can provide the mentee with counsel, knowledge, challenges, advice, and support to help the mentee become a fulfilling member of their profession (Pozzi, Marzana, Marta, Vecina & Aresi, 2020). Tina mentioned, “I have had several mentors that showed me a lot. Some were more refined, and others were more to the point almost like a man. Some showed me the importance of caring for your staff” (P3).

Lani stated, “It is important for women to both mentor and be mentored. Women help other women and let them know that they are capable and that these opportunities

are available. I have not had any formal mentors, but I have had many great examples of great women that I have watched and am inspired by” (P13). One study found that both male and female STEM professionals rate male applicants as more hireable and competent than female counterparts and offer more mentoring and money to male applicants (Williams, J. C., Su, L., Rincon, R. & Finn, P., 2016). Women and people of color felt more disadvantaged with respect to mentoring, networking, performance evaluations and compensation (Atcheson, 2021).

Jessie stated, “Mentoring and coaching is huge for women that want to advance. I think you have to reach out and talk to people that will see something in you and pull you up. Nearly every advancement or step in my career, I have had people that have pulled me aside and told me how I could improve” (P18). Lisa said, “Yes, going back to oral interviews, I had so much trouble with them that I decided to sit on some interview boards to improve myself. That helped me understand the system, and then helping people through that process also helped me understand why things are done the way they are (P18).” They try to figure out how people think and determine how they react in certain situations. “So, not only getting mentored yourself but also mentoring others is the recipe for success” [P21].

Jillian said, “Women need to see women in power, be mentored by them, and let them help you get to the next level. I love training young girls and empowering them to be strong. I show them a strong female business owner and try to role model good leadership skills for them” (P15). Angela said, “I think a formal mentorship program should be started in the department to help young officers find mentors. I didn't have a formal mentor, more just people I chose to follow and model my life after. I learned that

I had to let people seek me out because when I tried to go to them, they were not as receptive to it” (P19).

Jenny stated, “Choosing a mentor has more to do with how the mentee and mentor click. It has to do with leadership styles and getting buy-in for whom you are rather than just showing you how they do it. I think anyone can be a mentor to a person such as peers, acquaintances and supervisors” (P14). Polly stated, “I became better at what I do because I got mentored by people that were outside the realm of education. I was able to learn to speak a language that helped me stretch and grow” (P8). The three themes associated with successful mentorship are, the longer the length of the relationship, the better; humble mentors are relevant to the mentee’s success; and caring mentors are affectively and empirically productive (Sellers, Amatullah & Malin, 2021).

Danae mentioned, “I participated in a group that helped counsel people and helped them be successful. I was mainly used when difficulties of the field roles caused emotional conflicts for people. Sometimes people need to verbalize what they are going through as a way of coping. Mentorship is important, and trust in that mentor is even more important. Sometimes it is not what is said, it is what is not said” (P16). Cora stated, “Mentoring was huge, gargantuan for me. Also, getting involved as a union leader myself was a huge piece of my growth. I had a male executive chief that valued intelligence and drives above everything else, and he was the most amazing mentor I have ever had” (P9).

Wanda said, “I was really lucky with who I had raise me in this department. I had some awesome mentors that inspired me to move into leadership. They were really strong leaders: fair, good communication, not intimidating, always encouraged you to

make the decision. One of my mentors was hilarious, he never stepped on my toes, and he never pulled the rug out from under me. The good old boy system was a positive thing for me. I had good DWs, but I get along with most people. Now we have created a good old girls' system and are doing for others what has been done for us" (P22).

Representation and Visualization of the Data

Figure: 5

Visualization of the Interview Data

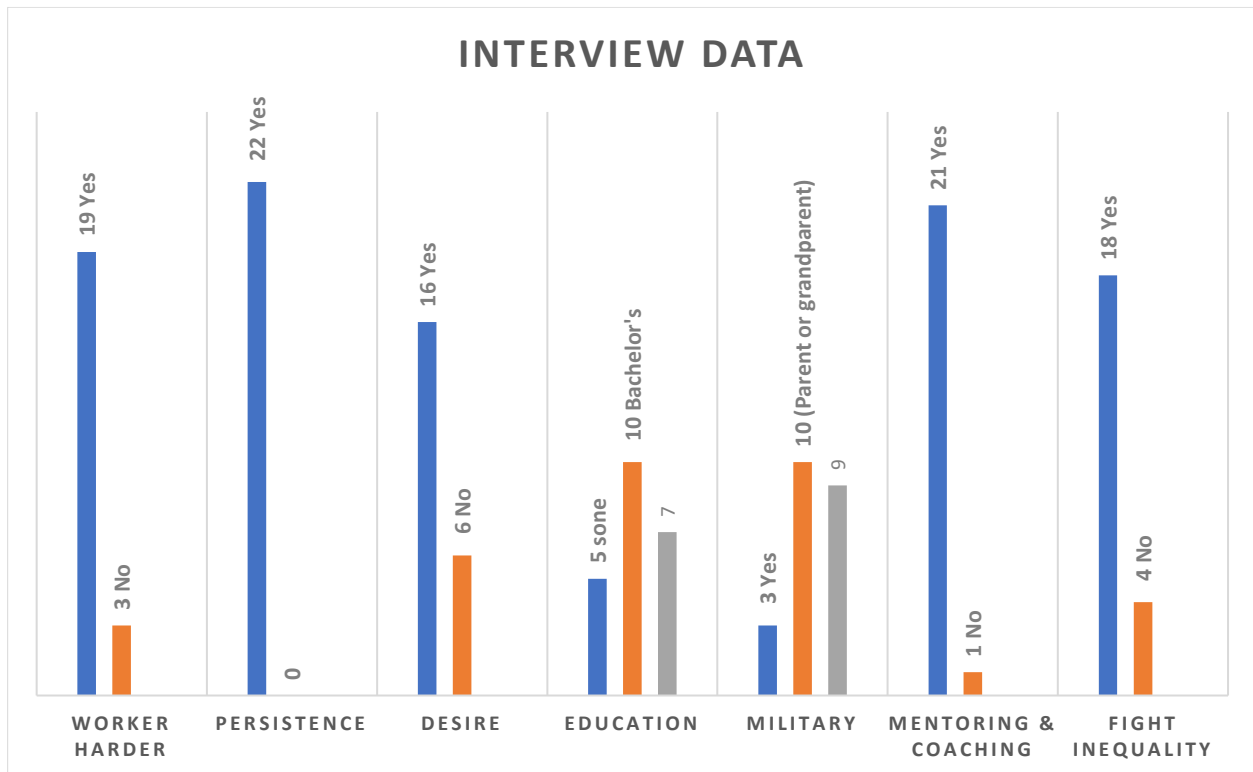


Figure: 6

Percentages of Males and Females Broken Down by Tenure, Education and Supervisory Status from 2019 FEVS data

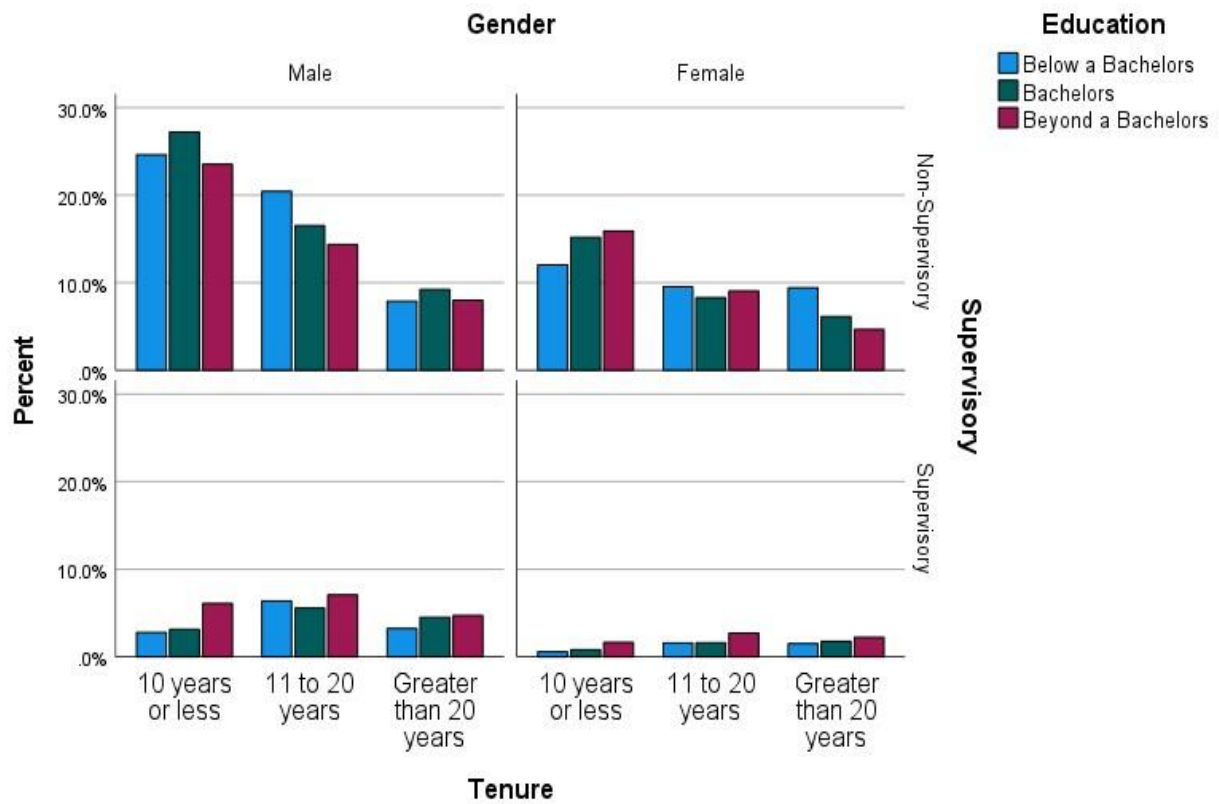
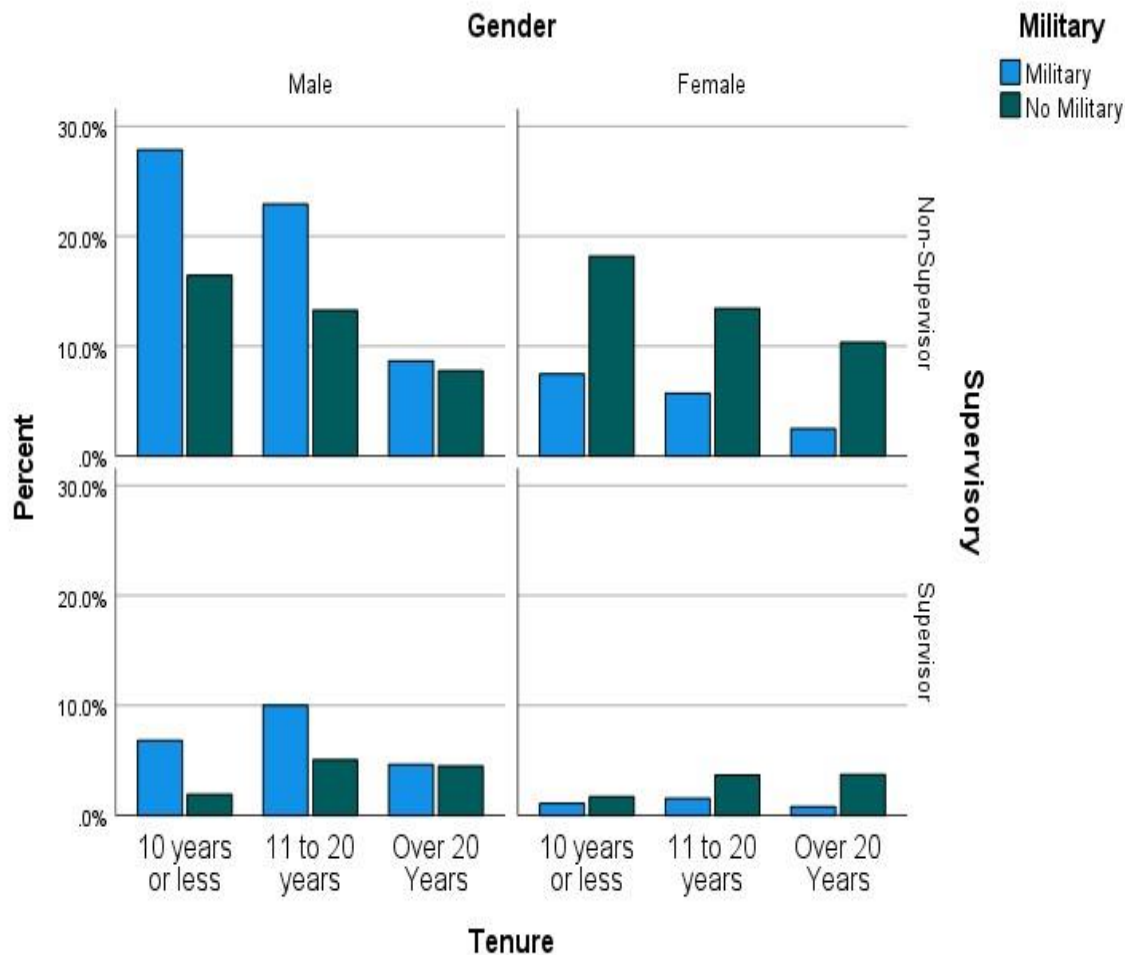


Figure: 7

Percentages of Males and Females Broken Down by Tenure, Military Experience, and Supervisory Status from 2020 FEVS data.



Relationship of the Findings

The findings of this research confirm that gender inequality exists and persists in traditionally male-dominated organizational cultures. The social structure of these cultures directly impacts the lives of the next generation, keeping inequality alive. As more women are allowed to step into upper leadership roles, thereby, more women are invited to the leadership team below them. Thus, as more women rise in ranks, more and

more women are filled with hope and are refueled to rise. However, men have traditionally held the power in these organizations to allow or not allow women to advance. In today's organizations, this power issue is termed buy-in, where organizations make women question their abilities to lead, due to their lack of buy-in. Buy-in is controlled by influence and it is fairly easy to get people to or stop people from buying-in.

Traditionally male-dominated organizations present more barriers to women and create more obstacles towards them rising, establishing stricter rules for women. At least 61% of women surveyed in a STEM study indicated that they have to repeatedly prove themselves to gain the same respect as a man (Williams, J. C., Su, L., Rincon, R. & Finn, P., 2016). A large percentage of women interviewed confirmed that men can do what they want without penalty, but if a woman does anything even close, the penalties are steep (P3, P4, P14, P19). When interview participants were asked where they saw themselves in the leadership hierarchy, 18 of the 22 said either at the top or very near the top of their organizational ladder (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16, P18, P19, P20, P22). Only four participants mentioned that had reached the height they wanted and had no desire to go any higher (P7, P13, P17, P21).

2. What internal and external barriers exist regarding the professional advancement of women, if any?

Almost unanimously across the board, all leaders pointed to themselves as their only barrier to advancement. Angela said, "I would have to go to another facility to promote; I am looking more at retirement rather than promotion" (P19). Darla said, "I think there are roadblocks; however, they are only roadblocks if you let them stop you" (P17). There

are subtle gender biases in society that interrupt the learning cycle toward becoming a leader; companies must support a woman's motivation to lead, even if her current behavior is not like that of current senior leadership (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013). Larana said, "My barriers are my own; I am trying to decide if it is even possible for me to open Tiny Village Assisted Living" (P7). Sheila said, "I never really faced any barriers other than personal barriers such as having children. I believe most barriers for women are perceived or self-created, but they do not truly exist. Women need to speak up and have a voice even when it is difficult to do so. Some women have internal barriers that prevent them from having a voice at the table, but when they learn to speak up, the sky is the limit" [P10].

Maria stated, "Nobody can put limitations on you; you can only limit yourself if you allow other people to have a voice in your decisions" (P1). Men are often rewarded more for going the extra mile and networking with senior managers, causing women to lose their ambition over time (Evans & Maley, 2021). Sally said, "My obstacles are my desire to do the next thing, I think a woman has to truly want it, and if she does, she will make it happen" (P5). Jenny mentioned the barrier of limited positions and heavy competition surrounding them (P14). Jenny also said that when you reach executive leadership, you are at a global level, and you see things from a different perspective and handle things from a system level (P14).

Evelyn said she had many crew bosses who did not want her there solely because she was a woman, and she had to learn to pick her battles carefully and use humor skillfully (P12). She also had to learn how to stand up for herself when she needed to, but not turn everything into a battle (P12). She also said she had to seek out supporters who

would watch her back along the way (P12). Evelyn went on to say, “I hit barriers in almost every job I have ever been in except the one I have now. I had to prove myself twice as hard, and there were times I almost lost it” (P12). As women face a lifetime of exposure to stereotypes and biases, they are at risk of having their confidence crushed rather than developing thicker skin (Dean & Forray, 2021).

Danae said, “Most of my barriers and obstacles were my own. My insecurities or my thoughts that I am not good enough attempted to stop me from progressing. I finally learned that I could only control how I react to what people do to me; I cannot control what they do to me. Stress is self-induced” (P16). Cora said, “Strong men want to promote strong women and not so strong men want to promote ‘yes’ women. The world is making strong women, and until men become less intimidated by that, it will stay hard. Unfortunately, women are still required to stroke egos and maintain soft skills” (P9). An affinity bias in many male-dominated cultures fosters the “boys club” culture and provides men with career support, while excluding women (Evans & Maley, 2021).

Wanda said that when she first started in the department, she was really shy and soft spoken, but she had a female DW tell her that she will never get listened to or respected if she stays that way (P22). At that point she decided to really focus on becoming more assertive and bolder. Today people tell her that she has resting “B-face” and she is much more assertive (P22). Research done by Tom Jacobs back in 2008, found that men earn respect when they express anger but women doing the exact same thing lose respect (Dahl, 2015). Women tend to have higher ethical standards, have less favorable attitudes about cheating and have higher standards when it comes to business practices (Kennedy, J. A., Kray, L. J. & Ku, G., 2017).

a. What are the perceptions of women regarding gender inequality?

Most participants in the study thought gender inequality is slowly improving and that we have come a long way. Larana pointed out that we are letting an 82-year-old woman go into space, although she should have gotten to go way sooner, at least she is there (P7). For the first time in naval history, four women of color were promoted to commander of naval warships (Goldstein, 2021). Another first for American women is the first female Vice President, daughter of a Jamaican father and an Indian mother (Wagmeister, 2021). As women get lodged into power, they must use their “Queen” status and empower as many women as they can to rise to make vast improvements in areas with inequality (Liu, Iwelunmor, Gabagaya, Anyasi, Leyton, Goraleski, Wei, Otmani del Barrio, Olaleye, Launois & Tucker, 2020).

One leader said, “Stereotypes get embedded in people's brains during childhood, and they are unaware that they are even there” (P1). Children become aware that the world is divided along gender lines and learn that there are two categories (male and female), and that they belong to one of them (Halim, Ruble, Tamis-LeMonda, Shrout & Amodio, 2017). “We as leaders have to demand that all people put their biases in check and embrace complete inclusion of all people, so organizations can come together in a united front” (P1). Another participant, who is now the deputy warden of a complex, said, “I experienced some barriers mainly because the prison system is male-dominated” (P19).

What factors contribute to women advancing into leadership?

The participants were asked, “What are the top things that got you to the leadership position you are in, and what drives you to that next level?” and the compiled

list of internal and external factors, in no particular order, for all leaders, are shown in Appendix F. Most of the factors that the participants provided as the top ways to succeed can be found in many leadership books. Leadership challenges come at you from all sides, from every angle, around every corner, and then you have your internal issues as well (Community Toolbox, 2021). True leadership takes a really brave and courageous soul to step-up in terms of honesty, authenticity, and hard work, to drive a team toward a unified vision (Greenleaf, 1977).

Every leader interviewed shared their struggle with self-confidence and humility. Humility is about self-deprecation or gaining new knowledge, whereas having self-confidence is more about arrogance or already being competent, and the best leaders can balance both (KrumreiMancuso, Haggard, LaBouff & Rowattg, 2020). The scripture is the best source for the balance between humility and confidence (God-fidence): “If God leads you to it, He means to lead you through it” (1 Timothy 4:16, NIV). Leaders can silence the internal voice that tells them that they are not enough, that they are failing, or that they are a fraud and tell themselves, “I am enough.”

Rewarding employees can come either in the form of financial bonuses and incentives or be non-financial in the form of extra leave or other gifts (Kuczmarski, S. & Kuczmarski, T., 2019). Each leader finds unique ways, such as Shelly comes prepared with \$20 bills in her pocket every day, and if an employee brings up a birthday, fundraiser, or anything that they may be participating in, she hands it over (P4). Another leader strongly engages in mentoring employees, especially young women, who tend to enter the prison environment and leave for the lack of proper support (P19). Some leaders use internal functions for recognizing employees, and others write letters of

recommendations to supervisors. Leaders must hunt for and find ways to recognize others to make the team feel better about themselves, and become more efficient and effective (Kuczmarski, S. & Kuczmarski, T., 2019).

Every participating leader had also formally mentored new officers, and each other to empower each other to keep growing. Each leader has also committed their career and life to continuous improvement. Either the leader continuously improves the unit they are in, or the leader moved due to issues. All of the leaders in this study are gung-ho super troopers who continuously improve and strive for excellence, while practicing open and honest communication with their subordinates. The communication patterns of these leaders stretch across multiple departments. Each one discussed the importance of trusting people under them to practice decentralized command and smoothly run organizations by empowering others (Willink, J. & Babin, L., 2017).

One participant said, “I think Tim McGraw got it right, and everyone needs to listen to his song Humble and Kind and practice that every day” [P7]. The term servant leadership was coined in 1977 and indicated that leadership should be people-centered and attend to the needs of followers and stakeholders above one’s own needs (Greenleaf, 1977). Every leader interviewed empowers people all around them through communication, noticing strengths, listening, and engaging them so that they can grow. When employees feel pigeonholed, they are more likely to leave the organization, but when they are empowered, greatness can be reached across the whole organization. Each leader also uses the diverse skillset of each and every person on the team, actively looking for the good in all of them.

Women who want to lead have to fight gender stereotypes. Research shows that most Americans think men are better at professional sports or running large oil and gas companies (54%) (Horowitz, et al., 2018) while women are better at running hospitals or major retail chains (Kennedy, 2018). Every leader interviewed has experienced some form of stereotype or bias that they had to shrug off and ignore to rise. One common stereotype is that the men do the business and women do the caring, and it is so strongly embedded into our culture that women have to prove that they can handle it, and then change will slowly follow (Tinsley, C. H. & Ely, R. J., 2018). Women have to play the game that men put in place because if you refuse to play, you will never win, although it is crucial to learn the strategy and use it to your advantage (Lee, M., 2018). Women will never win the game designed by men with the deck already stacked and marked against them, they must learn to be crafty and sly (Lee, M., 2018).

Quantitative questions and triangulation. Triangulation is important for enhancing the validity and credibility of the case study method, which was done by bringing in multiple sources of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, with triangulation comes the possibility of making type-I and type-II errors during data analysis. A type-I (α) error is the rejection of a true null hypothesis, also referred to as a false positive finding (Woo, Yim & Chirayagh, 2018). It means concluding that results are statistically significant when, in reality, they come about purely by chance or because of unrelated factors. Type-I errors typically occur when the significance level is lower than the p-value. In the case of this research, the significance level is 0.05 or 5%, and the *p* values all hovered around 0.000, indicating that all results were statistically significant and consistent with the alternative hypothesis, and there was a 0% or at most 0.001% of a 5% chance that the null hypothesis could be true.

A type-II (β) error means not rejecting the null hypothesis when it is false (Woo, Yim & Chirayagh, 2018). A type-II error means failing to conclude the presence of an effect when it is there. It is possible to get a type-II error when you do not have a large enough sample, so the higher the statistical power, the lower the probability of making a type-II error. Statistical power is determined by the size of the effect and sample size. This study uses a huge sample size, and the effect sizes were small, medium, and large, so the risk of a type-II error is minimal.

Question 1. What is the relationship between current supervisors and a veteran status, if any?

- H0: There is no significant statistical association between supervisory positions and veteran status.
- H2A: There is a significant statistical association between supervisory positions and veteran status.

To investigate whether veterans and non-veterans differ in supervisory status, a chi-square statistic was conducted, where assumptions were checked and met. Table 6 shows the Pearson chi-square results and indicates that veterans and non-veterans do significantly differ in terms of making it to supervisory status ($X^2 = 775.52$, $df = 1$. $N = 320,897$, $p = 0.001$). Veterans are more likely to be in a supervisory role, given the numbers present. In addition, since both veteran status and supervisory status are both binary variables, and neither alternative is rare, an odds ratio (OR) was computed. The OR was 0.782, indicating that the odds of employees getting a promotion if they have military experience are 0.782 times higher than those without. The 95% confidence interval was 0.769 to 0.796.

Table 6*Chi-square Analysis of Supervisory Status among Veterans and Non-Veterans from 2020**FEVS Data.*

Variable	n	Veteran Status		X2	P
		Military	Non-Military		
Non-Supervisory	233,442	93,142	140,300	775.52	0.001
Supervisory	67,018	30,766	36,252		
Totals	300,460	123,908	176,552		

In addition, another Pearson chi-square was computed to investigate the relationship between gender and veteran status. Table 7 shows the Pearson chi-square results and indicates being male versus female does have an impact on veteran and non-veteran statuses ($X^2 = 30,523.53$, $df = 1$, $N = 290,549$, $p = 0.000$). Males are more likely than females to have veteran status. In addition, since both veterans' status and gender are binary variables, and neither alternative is rare, an OR was computed. The OR was 4.41, indicating that males are four times more likely to be veterans than females. The 95% confidence interval was 4.335 to 4.487. The results of both statistics lead us to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant statistical association between supervisory position and veteran status.

Table 7*Chi-square Analysis of Gender and Military Service from 2020 FEVS Data*

Variable	N	Veteran Status		X^2	p
		Male	Female		
Military	119,937	96,978	22,959	30523.53	0.000
Non-Military	170,612	83,463	87,149		
Totals	290,549	180,441	110,108		

Question 2. What is the relationship between education and supervisory status, if any?

- H0: There is no significant statistical association between education level and supervisory status.
- H3A: There is a significant statistical association between education level and supervisory status.

To investigate whether education has any impact on supervisory status, a chi-square statistic was conducted. Assumptions were checked and met. Table 8 shows the Pearson chi-square results and indicates that education did impact supervisory status ($X^2 = 2087.24$, $df = 2$, $N = 238,564$, $p = 0.000$). In addition, people with higher education are more likely to be promoted. The results lead us to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant statistical association between education and supervisory positions.

Table 8*Chi-square Analysis of Education and Supervisory Status from the 2019 FEVS Data.*

Variable	N	Education			X ²	p
		Less than a Bachelor's	Bachelor's	Beyond a Bachelor's		
Non-Supervisory	192,641	66,365	67,741	58,535	2087.24	0.000
Supervisory	45,923	12,639	14,289	18,995		
Total	238,564	79,004	82,030	77,530		

Question 3. What is the relationship between gender and supervisory status, if any?

- H0: There is no statistically significant association between gender and leadership status.
- H4A: There is a statistically significant association between gender and leadership status?

A chi-square statistic was conducted to investigate whether men and women differ on supervisory status in the DoD. Assumptions were checked and met. Table 9 shows the Pearson chi-square results and indicates that women and men do significantly differ on making supervisory status ($X^2 = 2471.03$, $df = 1$, $N = 190,961$, $p = 0.000$). Under the null hypothesis, men are more likely than expected to be supervisors than females.

In addition, an OR was computed since both variables are binary, and neither alternative is rare. The OR was 0.558, indicating that the odds of men getting promoted are 0.558 times higher than women getting promoted. The 95% confidence interval was

0.545 to 0.571. This result allows us to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant association between gender and leadership status in the DoD's civilian sector.

Table 9

Chi-square Analysis of Supervisory Status among Males and Females from 2020 Data

Variable	N	Gender		X ²	p
		Males	Females		
Non-Supervisory	190,961	119,801	71,160	2471.03	0.000
Supervisory	45,448	34,132	11,316		
Totals	236,409	153,933	82,476		

Mommy track. Almost every participant either became a mother over the course of their career or became a mother and then had to choose a career to support their family. Four of the participants did not have children by choice and have been penalized for that in the form of judgment and labeling ([P6], [P8], [15], [P21] [P22]). For instance, Jamie says, “I have had people push against me for being a woman and not having kids. I never wanted to have children, and so I chose not to. I decided to have a career and not have children. People judge that and sometimes seem horrified that I will not have children. My question to them is, ‘why would you want a woman who does not want children to have them?’ That would not be fair to her or the child” (P6).

Another participant who opted not to have children became a schoolteacher and eventually an administrator, so she gets to parent everyone else's children without the personal responsibilities and burdens (P8). Lisa did not have any children of her own and put her energy and attention into her firefighting career. However, she married a man who had a daughter from a previous relationship [P21]. Thus, Lisa received the benefit of having a child without the full-time responsibility of giving birth to one so she could focus on her career [P21]. Although Lisa could have been promoted up to senior ranks, she decided to stay at her current position due to her passion for driving the fire truck and being a medic [P21].

Lani mentioned during her interview that she kind of gave up trying to get a promotion when she had three children (P13). Women who opt out of work and promotions instead to have children choose the first form of mommy track (Newman, A., Schwarz, G., Cooper, B. & Sendjaya, S., 2017). Lani works alongside her husband, and she supported him while raising her boys, instead of pursuing higher levels herself (P13). On the other hand, Jessie spent 18 years growing and being promoted in the Coast Guard, before deciding to have a child (P18). As a result, she said, "I get to take advantage of all the new rules and benefits that women fought for all the years ahead of me, such as extra time off and workforce support" [P18].

Women are penalized for being mothers, but even when a woman decides not to have children, she is penalized for not having them. When a woman opts out of motherhood, then she "lacks soft skills," or she is a "B-word," or "selfish and thinks only of herself." All of these stereotypes and backlash hold women back in the professional industry, and all of it hurts the output of an organization (Williams, J. C., Su, L., Rincon,

R. & Finn, P., 2016). None of those stereotypes, biases or discriminatory thought processes help the organization succeed; they are simply drama created by others to make themselves feel more powerful. A Bright Horizons Modern Family Index report claimed that 41% of working Americans view working moms as less devoted to their jobs; however, 85% of the surveyed people also think motherhood is the needed preparation for facing challenges of leading a business (“Kelton Global”, 2018).

Sheila waited until several years into her career to have children, and by that time, things improved so much in the DoD for women that she kept her full-time position while working part-time [P10]. She said, “After about 4-5 years, they told me if I want to keep my full-time status, I had to come back full time, so I did at that time” [P10]. The majority of the participants had children and started their careers without letting mommy track stop them from reaching the top ranks in their respective industries. The DoD has improved the culture for women with children to the point that it is no longer a discouragement for women to exercise reproductive rights and take the required time off to care for them (Robinson, L., & O’Hanlon, M. E., 2020). In fact, men are even encouraged to take time off to support and care for children.

Gatekeeper. The gatekeeper concept still exists in male-dominated industries; however, now that women have gotten into leadership positions, the gatekeepers have started to equal out. Now, many historically male-dominated industries such as the State Prison System, the Fire Department, Sports, and other government agencies promote women who empower and encourage other women. Empowered women empower other women below them and help them rise which benefits the social development and health of communities and countries (Harrington, P. H., n.d.). Women are interested in gender-

equality reform, and men are typically not involved or take a “don't care” stance (Connell, 2005). One powerful female leader said, “When I mentor people, I treat both males and females the same. There are no gender differences in prison, and if there are, your biggest problem may become me” (P4). Women are beginning to create good-old-girl networks to help support and foster the growth and promotion of other women (Kelan, 2020).

Sexism. Sexism still exists, for girls are still raised knowing that they will bear the burden of reproduction although thank God since they are also looked at indifferently for having anatomical differences from men defining them as defective, faulty or deficient (Cleghorn, E., 2021). However, even though men are becoming more supportive, The study of sexism has deduced that the solution to dismantling sexism and gender inequality is by changing organizations that capitalize on one gender over the other. Gender truly reveals very little about a person and what they are capable of. The only way to tackle sexism is by getting all people involved in the change. Men are 44% more likely to be actively engaged in stopping sexism when they are confident in their ability to do so, they are aware that positive things will happen if they do, are committed to ending it, and realize the impact it has on the good of the entire organization (Sattari, Shaffer, DiMuccio & Travis, 2021). Conversely, men are 41% more likely to do nothing to stop it if the organization breeds a culture of silence, futility, or is combative (Sattari, Shaffer, DiMuccio & Travis, 2021).

Sexism can be intentional and visible or hidden and subtle since it is built into the culture. Everyone is capable of sexist thinking and acting and may be guilty of it either unconsciously or unintentionally. One participant of this study said, “I am 5'11,” and I

was always put in the back with the boys. I didn't get beat up a lot, but I did have a boy punch me in the solar plexus and runoff. Unfortunately, society teaches little girls to let boys violate their boundaries” (P15). Although both forms of sexism are detrimental to an organization, women are more tolerant of benevolent sexism than hostile sexism. From personal experience and observation, when a woman beats male co-workers at producing and seems to be “winning” whatever battle men think is being fought, men will turn to hostile sexism based on their insecurities. In most work environments, such an act from a man would most likely result in his termination; however, in a male-dominated culture, this behavior is rewarded by promotion or pay raises.

The primary sexist issue that exists for women is the double standard that “women who seek to climb to the top have to do more than their male counterparts to prove themselves” (Coury, Huang, Kumar, Prince, Krivkovich & Yee, 2020). Even today, many people think girls cannot do all of the things a boy can do, although women have proven otherwise, over and over again (Scharff, 2020). The Bible says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (English Standard Version, Galatians 3:28). Almost every participant that has made it into leadership role has had to devote tons of personal time. They are living proof that great achievements are usually born of great sacrifice and are never the result of selfishness (Napolean Hill, 1883).

Glass ceiling. Women experience an uneven playing field, and the odds of advancement are not in their favor for numerous reasons (Coury, Huang, Kumar, Prince, Krivkovich & Yee, 2020). The glass ceiling is the artificial barrier that blocks the advancement of women who already hold good jobs. Women who run into the glass

ceiling are already educated and privileged (Atcheson, 2021). The DoD has a glass ceiling for women; even when they get advanced education, male counterparts who do half the work end up promoted. While some of the women in the command work extra-long hours, go to school fulltime, volunteer to lead command groups, and even sign up to represent the union, when a promotional opportunity arises, a man who takes an hour and a half for lunch every day gets the promotion. The message women receive is that it is okay for them to be here if they work harder than anyone; otherwise, they need not bother, which is very demotivating. It also sends the message to everyone that working hard and getting the backlogs under control is pointless; it will not do anything for you, so why bother.

The participants in this research have risen through the ranks to reach the top positions in either the DoD, other government agencies (city, state, and federal), male-dominated industries, or in their respective fields. Every participant has faced the glass ceiling, and all of them shattered it except the two women who chose not to. Though they all had to work harder than other people, stick with it even when it was the last thing they wanted to do, persist in the face of biases, stereotypes, and inequality, and spend more time at awful levels, they persevered and are now living their legacy in the organizations that they command.

Sticky floor. Many women are allowed entry to do the “work,” however, when they excel and are ready to move on to the next challenge, they are given more work. The DoD and other male-dominated industries have a sticky floor, mainly due to co-workers and their glory-seeking. When a person comes in and changes the status quo in the command, and work starts getting done, the current employees start thinking that the

new person is making them look bad, although the only person that can make someone look bad is themselves.

They manufacture all kinds ways to point out to supervisors the faults of the new person to discredit that person so they can continue to steal the glory. This holds the new person down, and they get more work piled on top of them so co-workers can point out more weaknesses and issues, and the cycle continues. The sticky floor concept in the DoD is shown in the statistic on gender versus supervisory status, and in Figures 1 and 2. Women are allowed entry into the DoD civilian sector and other male-dominated industries but are not promoted to a supervisory status, like their male counterparts.

Often, the DoD allows people entry into whatever position they apply for, and then they remain in that position up to the highest pay step. Usually, gaining new skills and getting higher education helps with advancement. This group seems to be accurate according to the statistics; however, women are still promoted less often and at lower rates than men. The sticky floor positions in the DoD are administrative assistant positions, and some of the human resources functions that provide women with clerical work with no real promotional potential, unless the women fight for it by getting higher education and developing some additional skills. Every leader interviewed had to overcome the sticky floor by getting some level of higher education, sticking with the floor even when they wanted to walk out and never come back, and by building a coalition of powerful women, such that they rose to become the new face of leadership.

Occupational segregation. Male-dominated occupations and industries are vulnerable to keeping gender stereotypes alive and reinforcing masculine stereotypes, making it very difficult for women to excel (Catalyst, 2020b). Women are over-

represented in support functions like administration, while men tend to concentrate on profit and loss, operations, and research and development. Around 40% of human resource directors are women, compared to the 16–17% that make it to other chief officer positions (Catalyst, 2020a). One participant of the study indicated that she had worked more hours for years, giving up her time to handle departmental issues (P3). She was moved multiple times with no pay raise, while a man moved one time to a new complex and was offered an annual \$20,000 raise (P3)

The DoD is occupationally segregated toward men, thus many women who were raised as tomboys persist in this industry. Unfortunately, not all women are raised as such, and therefore do not even apply to the DoD ([P11] & [P17]). Many women have significant skills and talents to add to an outstanding team like the DoD, so becoming more gender-neutral and inclusive can actually improve the competitive advantage. The DoD must maintain a competitive advantage for America to stay free and have a defense system in place to retain that freedom for every generation.

Blocked pipeline. Despite modest improvements in gender inequality, women are still underrepresented at every level of the corporate pipeline, with the greatest disparity in the senior ranks of leadership (Coury, Huang, Kumar, Prince, Krivkovich & Yee, 2020). The pipeline gets blocked by the leaders currently holding the leadership positions, since the average tenure of an organizational leader is 9.7 years, and it takes roughly three years for them to make their mark on a company fully (Dwivedi, Joshi & Misangyi, 2017). Shelly says, “I had to wait until all of the old male leaders left before I got my chance to rise. I used to be mentored by them. However, they left me in really tough positions for so long that I am pretty annoyed by them. Now I have been given my

complex, and I realize that all those years in the tough spots have prepared me well” (P4).

As women step up and learn more and more skills in the DoD, they start getting more and more work. Nobody is perfect, and when the work piles up such that you cannot keep up, mistakes happen. When mistakes happen, co-workers point them out strongly to discredit the women, while brushing male co-workers’ mistakes under the rug. The blocked pipeline is part of the “good old boy” system that “keeps women or the troublemakers in their place.” Although most women never do anything wrong, they are referred to as troublemakers in this culture and are held back. With no supervisors interceding, any forward progression for women is blocked.

Dominance penalty. Very few women are launched into leadership, creating a “gender imbalanced leadership team,” usually in favor of men. The consequence of this is that women’s contributions to the decisions made are considered marginally at best (Kemp, 2020). Angela said she received pushback when she first started, since there was a mass underrepresentation of women (P19). The majority of the women interviewed learned to take on the more masculine properties of leadership and got promoted, despite being female ([P1], [P2], [P4], [P6], [P7], [P8], [P9], [P12], [P14], [P15], [P16], [P18], [P19], [P20], [P21], [22]). Every participant mentioned facing some form of dominance penalty, where there was backlash for doing or saying something usually a man would have said or done. Thus, they learned to say and do things a little bit more diplomatically and started to thrive.

The glass cliff: Women are likely to fail as CEOs only because organizations put them into those positions when the company is in trouble, and at the worst times, setting

them up to fall off the glass cliff (Dwivedi, Joshi & Misangyi, 2017). Although this concept affects many women, there was no direct evidence that this had occurred in the lives of the leaders interviewed. Therefore, no tie-in or conclusions can be drawn from this research regarding this aspect.

Findings and the Literature Review. Gender inequality is evident in the DoD and other male-dominated industries, giving men the power, status, and pay while women work in circles around them, trying to advance and gain that same status (Kolb, 2020). However, women are starting to rise into leadership positions, and as this happens, they get to help other women advance and inequality begins to improve. Women who are given these opportunities need to appreciate what has been given to them, make the most of it, and empower others. “Be thankful for what you have, you will end up having more. If you concentrate on what you do not have, you will never, ever have enough” (Oprah Winfrey, 2019). “The one who faithfully manages the little he has been given will be promoted and trusted with greater responsibilities. But those who cheat the little they have been given will not be considered trustworthy to receive more (The Passion Translation, Luke 16:10).

The roots of gender inequality are very deep; America was built on a patriarchal system, giving men dominion (Eisler, 1988). Several participants and the literature review mentioned that gender roles are socially constructed and determine what is considered masculine and feminine, which is enough to cause some women to fail or show decreased performance, and it begins from childhood (Schram, Brandts & Gërkhani, 2019; Kemp, 2020; [P9] & [P20]). Many participants mentioned a “new director” coming in and recreating a gendered male-dominated culture ([P2], [P3], [P6],

[P14], & [P19]). As mentioned in the literature review, gender inequality and male-dominance change, adapt, and reinsert themselves as and where needed, to reestablish male dominion when old forms erode (Maktabi, & Lia, 2017)).

Most participants indicated that the level of time and effort required to get promoted cut into their time and interrupted their work-life balance ([P1], [P2], [P3], [P4], [P6], [P7], [P9], [P14], [P19], [P20]). These women were often balancing being mothers, wives, and workers, which improved their economic conditions and increased stress and time conflicts (Klasen, 2020). One participant mentioned that men are intimidated by strong women, and since women are becoming stronger now, until this fear changes, women will continue to have difficulties (P9). Many people view strong, independent women as a threat to the male-dominated status quo, which is a thought that must be beaten down or eradicated.

Organizational structures are put in place in male-dominated cultures to perpetuate subordination and privilege and determine how power will be distributed (Hirudayaraj & Clay, 2019). The exclusionary practices establish a “pecking order,” as indicated by Lisa (P21), that thrives in patriarchal organizational systems. In addition, the patriarchal system often reinforces subtle and hidden forms of sexism that keep oppression in place and keeps privileged people in power (Hirudayaraj & Clay, 2019). As a result, women today take on more male-like roles and develop more male-like leadership qualities when they step into lead, rather than bringing their authentic female selves. Today’s leaders were raised to be tomboys who played and interacted with the boys, making them very strong leaders (P1, P2, P6, P8, P9, P12, P14, P15, P16, P17, P19, P20, P21).

Many women get put into a category based on motherhood; they are automatically assumed to be off the fast track to promotion, regardless of the age of their children (Collins, 2020). Men face the same difficulties and problems balancing careers and family life, but still manage to gain promotions and advancement opportunities (Ely & Padavaic, 2020). Most of the women who made it to leadership roles devoted extra time to work in the form of casual overtime (on their own time, without pay) to improve the organization and help it thrive (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P8, P9, P14, P17, P18, P20).

Men in an organization will make the biggest scene when women work on their own time, even take it as far as saying that they are breaking the law, which of course is false. The federal overtime law sets no limits on how many hours a day or week an employer can require a person to work (Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 U.S.C. § 201). Under section 13(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), (2019), employees employed as executives, administrative or professional such as engineers and scientists are exempt from both the minimum wage and overtime pay laws meaning they are free to work as many hours as it takes to create intellectual works without judgement or discretion.

Intersectionality is where race and gender meet and compound the inequality experienced (Brahm, 2019). Two participants indicated that they did not experience as much inequality from gender but more from being Hispanic. Jamie shared a story about her childhood while attending a private catholic school (P6). She mentioned that she is half white and half Hispanic and the Hispanic mothers would not let her play with their children because she was half white and was called a “half-breed” (P4). Yesenia mentioned that she did not really experience gender inequality but was definitely

mistreated for being Hispanic (P2). Intersectionality for both Jamie and Yessenia is much like the Sojourner Truth's oration of 1851, where she mentioned "Ain't I a Woman?" Sojourner indicated that people do not see her as a woman because she is black; men generally helped women over ditches and into carriages, but nobody ever helped her (Brahm, 2019). Yessenia and Jamie overcame not only barriers to advancement as women, but also barriers to advancement in terms of race.

Gender is a biological condition that a person has no real control over, yet men somehow use it to dominate and control women (Willis, 2018). Men in male-dominated industries engage in many different forms of violence, including shouting at women (58.4%), hitting, or pushing (20.8%), ignoring them (82.6%), or even throwing things at them (INEGI, 2016). Although most of the women interviewed did not experience any of the violence, some women experience them in every company they work in. Although they persist in the face of it, they are overlooked for leadership, and the cycle starts over again until they give up or move on and hope for a better outcome.

Almost every leader interviewed mentioned being raised as tomboys, and boys learn to aggressively go after what they want (Calcutta, 2020). The social learning theory would then posit that the girls raised as tomboys developed strong self-efficacy and beliefs about their ability to do things like lead a prison, a fire department, a school, a cancer center, an organization, a government agency, an inmate store, or anything they want to do (Bandura, 1977). All children are a product of their environment, how they are treated, and their surroundings, which all contribute to development and learning (Calcutta, 2020).

When women are raised tough, beat on, shouted at, or handled aggressively, one of two things happens: They either give up becoming failures, or they rise and become very compassionate level 5 leaders, driving organizations to success (Wheeler, 2020). People who believe that they have the ability or that they can attain the ability are more likely to become more resilient when challenges arise, since they developed high levels of self-efficacy (Park, 2018). Every leader interviewed has faced trials and tribulations associated with being female, and some even double discrimination, yet had the high levels of self-efficacy required to gain the skills necessary and rise.

The findings of this research do not necessarily prove that the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) applies. Although some participants took on learning-related directly to their careers (P1, P6, P8, P10, P11, P16, P22), most of them took completely unrelated learning journeys, but still reaped the benefits (P2, P3, P4, P6, P15, P16, P21). The majority of the participants, except for (P10, P13, P16, P17, P18) are all first-generation college students who usually received less support from parents, and thus had somewhat lower expectations and self-efficacy about higher education (Kantamneni et al., 2016). Although typically and historically, fathers help children develop high self-efficacy, in this particular group of leaders, it was the mother that drove these women to attend college and go for gold.

The only relationship to the cultural transformation theory found in this research is that more women are starting to lead, and although it is through the lens of male domination (Howells, 2019), they lead with more compassion, empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect. However, they also behave much like a man in a leadership position. In Chinese culture, a balance of power exists between men and women, where the Yin or

female half represents wisdom, and the Yang or male half represents power (Eisler, 1988). For that reason, many Americans have difficulty believing that the power in America should be balanced. Their idea is that this balance leads to communism rather than looking at the good parts of the system that worked and incorporating that.

Transition to a cultural transformation theory type of organization would involve systematic changes to establish a culture of equality and partnership, where people learn from past failures and know what to expect in the future (Eisler & Fry, 2019). Every leader discussed themselves using the characteristics of servant leadership such as listening, empathy, forgiveness, ethical behavior, using persuasion, using foresight to predict outcomes, stewardship or serving others, emotional healing, or commitment to growth, building community, courage, deep-seated desire, or calling, and conceptualizing what the future holds (Greenleaf, 1977). This list was shortened by Dierendonck (2011) to empowerment and developing people, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, providing direction, and stewardship. Shelly says, “I don't really like to tell people what to do; I want them to decide what to do on their own with some subtle prodding” (P4).

Summary of the Findings

Advancing into executive leadership is challenging for everyone. However, it is almost an impossibility for a woman who is also a mother, and often a single mother. Typically, women have a high level of devotion to family, and reaching a high-level positions requires extremely long hours, so women's careers often suffer. This chapter was framed by the study's four research questions addressing gender inequality, overcoming it, and persisting in senior leadership positions. Concerning the 22 women

interviewed, the experiences were similar, in that all struggled with some form of gender inequality in some area of their life. However, even amid difficulties and adversities, they persisted to significance in most cases.

Every woman interviewed had personal reasons for sticking with it, although they watched many throughout the years quit or have their positions be terminated. Most of the participants spoke of family support being a strong proponent of their success and giving them that internal grit needed to make it. Others talked about great mentors who they were able to emulate or learn from. Most of the women interviewed also came from families that originated on biblical principles. No matter their being actively engaged, they realized that “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17, NIV). Most of the women in this study, when faced with inequality, dug in their heels, and became more determined than ever to become the boss of the person creating the inequality.

Yet, the fact remains that in 2020, the proportion of women in senior management roles globally is still only 29%, which is the highest it has ever been, although the population of the world is 51% female (Catalyst, 2020a). In addition, the data from the Employee Viewpoint Survey shows that the DoD still favors the employment of men, values the leadership of veterans who are predominately men, and still tends to promote people with higher education. Most women will not even consider going to work for the DoD, where one participant said, “that is like going to the cigar shop and smoking with the boys” (P11).

Many organizations turn to the DoD for leadership advice, largely due to the length of time they have been in business and the strength of their organization. The

main thing that all organizations in America have to recognize is that if our DoD or warfighter fails, then our entire country fails. Historically, since it has been male dominated, it remains so. However, that is slowly beginning to change as women are being raised to be stronger, more resilient, and more willing to do what it takes to be there. Unfortunately, they do have a ways to go when it comes to funneling equality down the chain for women, but they must also take a no-nonsense approach to any form of violence toward co-workers to help elevate women up the chain.

Applications to Professional Practice

Women make up half of the world's working population and learning to develop women in the working world virtually ensures future growth and competition. However, women still face barriers and implicit bias in most professional organizations (Refo, 2019). Many STEM related careers experience a high turnover rate for women at every rung of the career ladder, generally a consequence of the male-dominated environment (Hill, Corbett & St. Rose, 2010). Human rights were established and agreed upon at the United Nations shortly after WWII to stop any leader from committing abuses against people (United Nations, 2020). Some basic human rights include the right to work and education, the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, the right to work in just and favorable conditions, and the right to social protection and an adequate standard of living (United Nations, 1948).

After the first Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, many more agreements and covenants have been adopted. Almost all governments have signed official documents promising to uphold those rights for their citizens and have created laws and policies to protect those rights. Human rights are based upon the belief that all

people are of equal value and dignity regardless of gender, race, religion, culture, age, disability, sexual orientation, or intelligence. With these rights come great responsibility to respect others' rights through behavior, speech, and thought. Governments are also responsible for creating and upholding the laws that protect the rights of citizens. Laws are open to interpretation, and not all countries derive the same meaning from those laws.

Nevertheless, gender inequality is still a global issue that has significant impacts, in the lives of girls, women, GDP growth, productivity, human development, and the labor market as a whole (Woetzel et al., 2015). Gender inequality is a socially constructed, human-made problem. America is tied with Oceania as having high levels of gender inequality, with a gender parity score of 0.74 out of 1.00 (Woetzel et al., 2015). Parity is considered equality between men and women. Forty out of 95 countries with a substantial female population have high or extremely high levels of inequality (Kazis, 2021). Nondiscrimination toward others is part of equality; Jesus displayed nondiscrimination toward women by engaging in theological debate with a woman, even when such things were shunned by society (New King James Version, Matthew 15:21-28). Women in the workforce are facing the pull factors of family and push factors such as unsatisfying work and long hours and this tug-of-war often results in taking an off-ramp from careers (Hewlett, S. A. & Luce, C. B., 2005).

Businesses boom beyond what they formerly were as women are invited to the leadership party. Many studies have been conducted on the gender gaps in employment and economic participation, with the findings showing stymied economic growth due to inequality (Woetzel et al., 2015). In recent years, the halted advancement of women has

resulted in a decrease in the GDP; however, if women begin to participate in the labor force, equal to that of men, the GDP could rise by as much as \$28 trillion or 26% (Maday & Novak, 2019).

Improving General Business Practice

The more an organization focuses on innovation and strategy, the more female representation can improve company performance, since diversity helps businesses align more effectively, with diverse stakeholders in the market (Dezsö & Ross, 2012). Actively supporting gender equality leads to better business decisions 87% of the time, and eventually leads to higher gains (Carosella, 2020). The global GDP could increase by \$12 to \$28 trillion by narrowing the gender gap and allowing women equal access to financial gain (Woetzel et al., 2015). Maintaining connections with talented women and supporting them during the off-ramps while opening doors to them during the on-ramps without being marginalized will keep them more loyal and productive (Hewlett, S. A. & Luce, C. B., 2005). This type of flexibility may mean allowing women to work part-time for periods of time while maintaining the same benefits of full-time work.

Equality means equal treatment, pay, representation in leadership teams, access to training, and career-building opportunities for all employees (Kemper, Bader & Froese, 2019). When women get opportunities to grow their careers, they make organizational changes that improve the lives of women and minorities (Carosella, 2020). When corporate boards employ diverse members, they can create external network connections that enhance the ability to formulate positions and strategies in a competitive environment (Vairavan & Zhang, 2020). Gender equality and diversity not only increase the number of women in the workforce, making

for a diverse work culture, but it also requires organizations to create equal opportunities and pay, regardless of gender or ethnicity (Kemper, Bader & Froese, 2019).

Female leaders tend to adopt a more democratic and participative leadership style compared to the male “task-oriented” style (Garikipati & Kambhampati, 2021). Some research indicates that the overall societal demand for gender equality is too low to stop using male-dominated leadership practices (Mensi-Klarbach, Leixnering & Schiffinger, 2021). Equality is linked to the willingness to fight and die in combat, however, there are restrictions on who can serve in the armed forces and in what capacity (Cohen, Huff & Schub, 2020). Women are fighting for the right to have more women serve in combat, since it is the dividing line keeping women from reaching full civic equality (Cohen, Huff & Schub, 2020).

Gender-inclusive environments value employees for who they are, treat them fairly in the decision-making processes, and remove stereotypes, leading to improved morale, job commitment, job retention, and job satisfaction (Le, Johnson & Fujimoto, 2021). Equality among the genders is a human right that every organization should embrace (Horton, 2018). The Bible states, “I came that all may have life, and have it in abundance” (John 10:10, NIV). Gender equality is a critical economic challenge with social and moral components. Equality means allowing every person to realize and use their full potential, or using their life and talents to the fullest, regardless of combat experience (England, Levine & Mishel, 2020).

The climate and culture in an organization must reflect and support gender diversity, which are the shared values and beliefs that can help shape employee behavior (Coe, Wiley & Bekker, 2019). Companies must address both the climate and culture, since just a positive culture will not produce good results if the procedures and policies

are not organized around unitary beliefs and goals (Groysberg, Lee, Price & Cheng, 2018). Mark Fields, the President at Ford, repeated and added to an original quote, “Organizational culture eats strategy for breakfast, lunch and dinner so don’t leave it unattended (Peter Drucker, 2014).” Culture is constantly in motion, will grow and evolve over time, and is created by action and reaction as work is performed (Torben, 2020). Culture always trumps strategy, so good leaders define the strategy and then build the culture to support it (Coe, Wiley & Bekker, 2019).

Potential Application Strategies

In professional practice, women want to be part of an environment that invests in recruiting, outreach, and other activities that draw them in (Harrington, n.d.). Organizations should have evident and apparent gender and diversity strategies that include goals, activities, and objectives with a culture that demands certain values, behaviors, and practices that can breed equality throughout the organization (Torben, 2020). All forms of inclusion start at the top and funnel down, so the executive team must desire a diverse culture and cultivate it, or it will not happen (Fallon, 2020). True leadership requires equipping others with leadership skills to carry on the movement in the organization, leaving a lasting legacy in place (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003).

Often, women are elevated as the “only woman”—a scapegoat to blame when trouble arises and these women may experience micro-aggressions due to increased pressure (Coury et al., 2020). Overall, success increases women coming to work and viewing the workplace as an excellent place to work. Success can be measured through retention, employee surveys, and externally through social media platforms. The US government can directly influence gender equality nationwide by awarding contracts to

companies that foster gender-equal working environments (Wright & Conley, 2018).

When one woman rises into leadership and begins empowering the women below her, the glass walls begin to erode and women transcend the glass ceiling, increasing the numbers of women in elite corporate positions (Fodor, Glass & Nagy, 2019).

More women need to go for it and do what scares them, there is a whole world out there and they can do whatever they want to do (P16). Gender biases are out there at every level, and as women rise into leadership, those biases become less vocalized, but are still present. Leaders have to maintain strong faith that they can and will succeed in the end, even in the face of extreme difficulties, and still have the discipline to face the brutal facts of their current reality (Collins, 2001). Women need to take back the power of their bodies and bring their authentic selves and not let people violate their boundaries (P15). Women must liberate themselves from internal barriers and constraints and step into their realities as leaders and achieve their own professional success (Fodor, Glass & Nagy, 2019).

Organizations can help support women's advancement into leadership as follows: The first action is educating both men and women about gender bias, to include all of the situations and structures that are in place to put women at a disadvantage (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013). The second thing they can do is create safe identity-neutral workplaces that women can grow and thrive in (Glass, 2000). By creating a safe space or a culture of inclusion, an organization can get the best out of all people and unlock every ounce of potential the organization embodies (Gilbert & Hood, 2020). The third thing an organization can do is give women a sense of leadership purpose, which will grant them

a vision that is beyond how they are perceived by others in the organization (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb 2013).

Women have a responsibility to other women and minorities to provide an uplifting and encouraging message in times of struggle, and to be a beacon of hope (P2). Although equality has not been reached, women need to keep working as if working for the Lord and not for man, keep going, and eventually things will be made right (P3). “Obstacles are not stopping gates, lace up your boots and jump over the thing, do not be a victim, rise, prepare for battle, and conquer” (P17). Keep advancing beyond the point of knowing how to do your job, until you reach the point in which you cannot do it, and then you will be leading (P10).

Women may not require reduced hours, they may just need flexible schedules such that they can decide how, when, and where to get their work completed (Hewlett, S. A. & Luce, C. B., 2005). Employee well-being, mental health and stress reduction should be a primary concern for employers rather than normalized overwork (Schulte, B. & Pabst, S., 2021). Organizations shall try to do more to help with caregiving needs of the workforce and hold themselves accountable for doing more (Schulte, B. & Pabst, S., 2021).

Summary of Application to Professional Practice

Awareness of gender inequality has become visible through many avenues, yet the problem still exists in the world. Globalization has improved opportunities for businesses to compete on a global scale, and including women in those opportunities could help raise the GDP significantly. Including women in an organization improves decision-making and productivity, and most organizations are now doing that but are

hesitant to invite them to lead at the executive level. Many men in an organization will try to use the female scapegoat to point out weakness and hold them back from moving into leadership. Women must learn that the barriers are there, and they are real, and that many women have already overcome them and so can they.

Recommendations for Further Study

This case study has explored gender inequality in the DoD and other male-dominated agencies which can be carried further through different designs and methods. The use of ethnography allows the interviews, surveys, and observations to create a detailed description of the whole culture under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation allowed multiple sources of data to be combined so that results could be quantized, increasing the validity and reliability of the study (Yin, 2018). Future research could be used to evaluate the DoD going forward to determine rather current activities and improvements are made in the advancement of women in the future.

Although most organizations are creating diverse action groups, most of the people in those groups lack the power to make the changes needed to truly make a difference in the way the organizations are run. Most of the changes, to date, in the DoD, have come in the form of laws and mandates rather than the men voluntarily welcoming women in. As more people in power empower women and minorities, the DoD will have to embrace its new reality. Future research should aim at guiding the DoD toward a new reality and share the progress along the way.

Reflections

Gender inequality is a real barrier blocking women's advancement into leadership; however, women have the power to overcome it. This research opened the

door for communication between successful leaders and the researcher to help with personal and professional growth, and to help readers with their challenges. The issues that women face have changed very little since the beginning of time, although more has been done to open up leadership opportunities to them. The Bible was written in the past with guidance and direction for the future (Yaholo, 2018). The Bible is leading humanity to the future of “equality” in the Kingdom of God (Rust, 2018). “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is not male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (English Standard Version, Galatians 3:28).

Personal and Professional growth

Personal growth and development are all about growing interpersonally so that you will be able to handle fears, confront bigger responsibilities and succeed at more difficult challenges (Berry, 2018). No one is absent of fear, courage is not the absence of fear, it is turning fully into that fear and working through it (P5). This research has provided the researcher with a more profound understanding of the full phenomenon of gender inequality which has caused tremendous personal growth. Leaning into God and deepening the reliance on him has taught her the ability to confront inequality with grace and mercy although it has not been easy, nor has it been two-way street. It has thus also been necessary to forgive often, love completely, and laugh when it would have been more natural to cry. During this doctoral journey, God has spoken to and asked for partnership on a huge task.

Since that time, God has shown visions of what that task involves, many fears have surfaced, yet the time has not yet come and turning into those fears and facing them head on is helping them become a reality. He is preparing her for a great work, and he is

equipping her to be able to handle it when it comes. All women need to look at the race that they are running and tune into what God is doing in that race so they can claim victory in their life (Rust, B., 2021). Comparison is the thief of joy (Roosevelt, T., 1898) when we compare ourselves to others, we take our focus off of our lives and give our competitor the win which is a very painful lesson to learn. That commitment to God has been daunting at multiple times during this process however Gods gentle tug on her spirit and his soft voice of encouragement letting her know that he is right there with her guiding her way. “God will never leave you nor forsake you” (New International Version, Hebrews 13:5).

“God seeks to draw us to him with loving kindness (New International Version, Jeremiah 31:3). Never has there been a time that she has been more willing to do anything in her life. The most difficult part has been the personal sacrifices that she has had to make along the way and the ones she will have to continue to make to do what he has prepared her to do. Bags have been packed and a moves have been done halfway across the country away from husband, children, and grandchildren several times to take positions to grow skillsets and become more marketable. God said, “If anyone wants to come after him, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow him. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for his sake will find it” (Berean Study Bible, Matthew 16:24-25).

To carry your cross daily can take on two forms: active sanctification or passive purification (Acsension, 2019). Active sanctification is saying yes to all of those things that you have chosen such as moving across the country to take a position in the defense industry, learning and developing engineering skills and helping the DoD keep a

competitive advantage. Passive purification is when we say yes to all of the things that we do not choose and that we do not want (Acsension, 2019) such as gender inequality, bureaucracy, the pecking order, and other social constructs in a male-dominated industry. Actively saying yes to work supporting the greatest team on Earth every day, however, comes with many challenges that were not wanted like gender inequality in the industry although God is doing great things in that journey.

Professional growth is about gaining new skills and experiences beyond your current role so that you become more valuable and avoid stagnation (Berry, 2018). This doctoral journey began as an engineer in the Civilian sector doing various duties for about four years before transferring to a public company where she has been doing many different types of assignments. Throughout this entire time of growth and development, she has had the privilege and honor of serving the US DoD and ensuring their success.

Prior to starting this doctoral journey, the researcher spent 20 years serving people as a cosmetologist and even ventured into opening and operating her own business. This drove her to learn continuously, and she has been in full time college since 2006, although she began her learning journey in 1992. She attended courses while working either part-time during engineering school or full-time during her masters and doctoral pursuits. The researcher has taken on many roles in life as a wife, mother, grandmother, student, coach, mentor, cosmetologist, manager, entrepreneur, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), meter reader, corrections officer I & II, electronics technician, quality engineer, electronics engineer, WIN site lead, union secretary, and systems engineer. But the most important role of all is that of being the child of God, her driving force throughout life.

She always takes on new challenges to learn and grow even when she does not particularly like some of them. She reminds herself that she is working for God and not for man, which generally changes her attitude and improves the quality of her work. She has learned that perfectionism is a goal, but it may take 30 tries to get there, and as long as she is learning and trying to get there, that is all anyone can ask for. Fortunately, most leadership teams are made up of great individuals who know that people must be grown and developed, which is the pillar of leadership. The researcher is living a blessed life and despite the personal sacrifices, she could not ask for a better group of people to belong to.

Biblical Perspective

Many Christians are divided over what the Bible indicates about the leadership roles of men and women. Women have always been pillars in the faith community and often practice leadership roles, although they have been historically suppressed by male-dominated patriarchal forms of leadership (Duncan, 2019). Women are typically forced to adopt male leadership practices, since many companies show a preference toward it, which is an injustice to a woman's leadership aptitude (Carbajal, 2018). Women are called helpers in the Bible. "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him'" (New International Version, Genesis 2:18). Some people automatically assume that women are inferior to a man; however, God is our helper and the protector of our souls, which means he can rescue us from adversities which is a superior quality rather than an inferior one.

The book of Judges tells of a female that was empowered by God to be a judge to the Israelites in the hill country of Ephraim (New International Version, Judges 4:4-5). Before Israel appointed Kings and Queens, they had judges; a judge in the Old Testament was a person who had power and authority to administer legal rulings and counsel the people of God (Nelson, 2020). After Joshua and his generation of people died, the Israelites lost their knowledge of God and began worshipping other gods, so God handed them over to their enemies (New International Version, Judges 2:10-22). “Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders.” (New International Version, Judges 2:16). Every time a judge died, Israel kept returning to sinful ways, such that they were in a constant cycle of sin and deliverance (Rust, 2018).

God handed over the Israelites to the King of Canaan, Jabin, who oppressed them for 20 years before they finally cried out to God for help (New International Version, Judges 4:3). God empowered Deborah, who was leading the Israelites at the time, to help them, so she appointed Barak, son of Abinoam, to command the Israelite army. She told him that God will give Sisera and his army to him, but Barak demanded that Deborah go with him (New International Version, Judges 4: 5-7). Deborah then prophesied, “Certainly I will go with you, but because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.” (New International Version, Judges 4:9). Barak took his 10,000 soldiers and slaughtered the entire army, however, Sisera hid in the tent of a woman named Jael who drove a spike through his head, thereby killing him (New International Version, Judges 4:21).

Women do not get the ‘white male privilege,’ leaving them with a lack of power and authority, especially in male-dominated industries (Duncan, 2019). The Bible tells us,

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. (New International Version, 1 Corinthians 12:12-14).

God is clear in his intention to have all of humanity working together in harmony and equally, despite our differences. Women have been appointed to many leadership roles throughout the Bible, such as being a Judge (Deborah), Reformer (Huldah), Queen (Esther), Witness (Mary M.), Disciple (Mary), Exodus Leader (Miriam), Teacher (Priscilla), Deacon (Phoebe), Businesswoman (Lydia) and Prophets (any daughter of God has the full rights and privilege to declare his work, testify to his salvation, and prophesy by his spirit) (My Healthy Church, 2019). For these women, and all leaders, the mission is the driving force that empowers and equips a person to accomplish great things, as the person humbles their heart to carry out the mission (Wilkes, 1998). Leadership is composed of three parts: an upward focus, an inward examination, and an outward manifestation (Rust, 2018).

The upward focus puts God at the beginning, middle, and end of all leadership. A person cannot become a servant leader until they submit their life to God and become a servant to the leader (Wilkes, 1998; Greenleaf, 2002).

Jesus called [his disciples] together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.' (New International Version, Matthew 20:25-28)

For God's children, servant leadership is not an option, it is a mandate (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003). The inward examination involves knowing yourself and improving yourself so that you can lead others.

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales, rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training has some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. That is why we labor and strive because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe. (New International Version, 1 Timothy 4:7-10).

Leadership is a spiritual matter of the heart, and when you have the capacity to affect other people's thinking and behavior, you must first decide whether to act out of self-interest or for the benefit of those you are leading (Blanchard, Hodges & Hendry, 2016). After a person examines their heart, they must examine their mind for beliefs and theories about leading and motivating others (Blanchard, Hodges & Hendry, 2016). This world will bring hard times for all, learning to focus on the positives is the most important lesson; 10% of life is what happens to you and 90% is how you choose to handle it (P1).

The outward manifestation happens as the leaders' hands start doing what is in their hearts and head (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003). Leadership is not about the leader, it is about the people that they are leading (Rust, 2018). Leaders have to have both being and doing habits, just as Jesus showed both (Blanchard, K. & Hodges, P., 2003). Being habits are studying God's word, solitude, prayer, supportive relationships, and applying the scripture to real life (Blanchard, Hodges & Hendry, 2016). One participant shared "When I go through struggles I pray, and I know I could not do it without Christ. I do believe that God works through us, and we never know when he will do that" (P1).

Doing habits include building a team through encouragement, grace, community, and forgiveness (Wilkes, 1998). Leadership is not a pursuit, it is a gift that is given by others—the follower holds the final power to determine the leader (Wilkes, 1998). Women often make more compassionate leaders with the ability to communicate the mission, so others will follow. "Always be kind and gracious with other people" (P1). When women step into male-dominated professions, they need to adapt to that culture. The cultural norms are in place, and this will affect experiences in that field (P21). Nevertheless, women must not give up during these hard times, and instead lean into them and learn to enjoy them; that is when God is doing work on your behalf (P6).

Summary of Reflections

Most US organizations favor male leadership styles and characteristics such as aggressiveness, power, and strength while minimizing the warm, compassionate, and communal behaviors of women. Most women that transcend into leadership are raised with more male characteristics in terms of behavior, so accepting gender inequality in the workforce just does not happen. Female leaders learn to go toe-to-toe with a man yet do

so with compassion and caring. The world is changing, albeit slowly, and leaders are learning to protect women and minorities in male-dominated industries.

Notwithstanding, there is much that still needs to be done.

US organizational leaders have the responsibility of creating and enforcing policies and programs that improve diversity and equality. Schools have the responsibility of educating people about equality and mandating that all students have equal access to education, including math and science. Women have the responsibility of getting an education, taking on new tasks and mastering them, and developing supportive networks that will help strengthen them. As all parties work together to make positive social change, the future will be much brighter for all. All ships rise during a rising tide, so we will all benefit from inclusion.

As organizational leaders look upward for direction from God, they must internalize what the Bible says and outwardly express it by creating safe zones for underrepresented groups, where they can be heard, respected, and protected, as long as they continue striving and performing. Women can take this window of opportunity and learn all that they can, so they become more and more valuable to the organizations in which they serve. Women will also want continual education through schools and churches and apply it to their lives.

As we apply the Bible in our life, we are free to be authentic since we belong to God who does not advocate being fake. In our weaknesses, God says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (New International Version, 2 Corinthians 12:8-9). Through our weaknesses, we are taught to fully rely on God and not just on our strength or wisdom. God does not wait for us to become

stronger, more confident, or more secure, He does his greatest work through our weaknesses (Schwenk, 2018).

Summary of Section 3

The purpose of this Case Study was to explore gender inequality within organizational leadership, specifically within the DoD civilian sector, to identify potential barriers ceasing the advancement of qualified women. The data leads the researcher to reject the three null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis indicating that gender, veteran status, and education are all statistically significant in their relationship with supervisory status in the DoD. Typically, the DoD will promote more men with previous military service and especially if they have an education. Women in this male-dominated industry still face barriers and obstacles at every rung in the career ladder in the DoD.

During the interview process with 22 successful female leaders in male-dominated industries seven recurring themes became evident: Female leaders work harder than men, women show massive displays of persistence to rise, women have to want to lead, women have to fight gender biases, norms, stereotypes, and discrimination, education is important but not paramount, military experience may help initially but not long term and mentoring and coaching are mandatory for success. All interview participants shared their experience and success overcoming gender inequality and success factors to rise into either leadership or executive leadership.

In addition, section three incorporated applications that can be applied to organizational practice to improve diversity and equality and provided the benefit of doing so. The researcher shared reflections of personal and professional growth and a biblical perspective on gender inequality. The Bible was written to help humanity reach equality and God sent Jesus to lead

what that should look like. As more and more humans turn their life to Christ, equality will happen, and it will become a thing of the past rather than something we are fighting for.

Summary and Study Conclusions

Gender inequality stems from a male-dominated patriarchal society and is taught to children instilling gendered social roles that each child is to adhere to. Children that do not adhere to those social roles receive some form of backlash from both genders. As women make it into leadership positions, they promote greater workplace diversity and improve the promotion of other women (Biswas, P. K., Roberts, H. & Stainback, K., 2021). When men are the gatekeepers, women get halted for whatever reason the men deem are justifiable reasons why they are not qualified to lead.

The literature demonstrates that women face numerous difficulties and must make huge sacrifices just to pursue professional careers (Pringle, J., Harris, C., Ravenswood, K., Giddings, L., Ryan, I. & Jaeger, S., 2017). As women get strong from overcoming all of the barriers and obstacles put in their way, they begin to rise and advocate for women at all levels (Guild, J. A., Kulik, C. T. & Sardeshmukh, S., 2018). Currently, women who make up 51% of the population comprise only 16.8% of board positions and only 5.6% of executive positions in both the U.S and Europe (Guild, J. A., Kulik, C. T. & Sardeshmukh, S., 2018). European countries have begun implementing quotas which have resulted in an increase of female representation to 42% on boards (Terjesen, S & Sealy, R., 2016).

The findings of this research clearly show that women are not being promoted like their male counter parts and face hiring challenges in the DoD organization due to the gendered nature of the organization. The DoD is beginning to appoint women to male-only posts in the military however, the civilian sector still severely lacks female representation in the lower-level

managerial positions. Without more women surfacing in lower levels, there will continue to be a lack of females or a gap in representation at the upper levels. Future research could continue to monitor progress regarding women advancing in this industry to see if changes are being made to create a more gender equal world.

Although military experience may help a person perform well in a leadership position in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), there is no guarantee that they will (Friend, 2020). Many non-veterans have the same training and qualifications as a veteran from other industries such as the fire service and the department of corrections with advanced education and training that make them suitable for leadership in the OSD or other SES appointments. The fire service and the Department of Corrections have para-military training academies much like boot camp where recruits have six or more modules like academics, physical fitness, firearms qualifications, self-defense, professional behavior, ethics, and hands on training for 7 weeks to equip them to become officers ("COTA", 2021).

Although Correctional Officers Training Academy (COTA) training is a starting point for a corrections officer, it does not prepare the cadet for the perils of being a corrections officer. Correctional Officers have one of the riskiest professions due to the immense institutional related dangers and mental and physical risks such as infectious disease (Picincu, 2019). Correctional officers (CO's) put their lives on the line every time they walk into a facility with minimal protection (pepper spray, a Maglite, and a radio) at least a soldier is equipped with weapons and is provided strategic guidance while in the field (Picincu, 2019). Between the years 1999 and 2008, 113 U.S. COs lost their lives while on duty in a correctional institution ("National Institute of Justice Staff", 2018).

The fire service or fire department require not only a 6-week academy but also a minimum of an EMT certificate, but paramedic training is preferred, and applicants have to pass a very difficult physical, written, and oral exam prior to even being considered (Grancicus, 2021). Firefighting is a dangerous profession due to job-related exposures to chemicals that cause cancer and heart disease as well as deaths and injuries that occur while on-the-job (Fahy, R. F., Petrillo, J. T. & Molis, J. L., 2020). In 2019, although less than previous years, 48 firefighters lost their lives while on duty and an average of 65 firefighters die in the line of duty every year (Fahy, R. F., Petrillo, J. T. & Molis, J. L., 2020). These dangers give the people trained in these industries strong survival and leadership skills that equip them to lead in any male-dominated industry.

Sometimes it takes only a small movement or a single moment in time to change a culture or nation into something greater than it is. “Progress is impossible without change and those who cannot change their minds, cannot change anything” (George Bernard Shaw). “There is no force equal to a woman determined to rise” (Web Dubons). Many will attempt to oppose that force making that force stronger and stronger although it would be better if people could learn to support and empower that force changing the way that the world perceives that strength (G.D. Anderson).

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Appendix A: Questions Used to Formulate the Literature Review

1. What is gender inequality and why is it important to leadership?
2. How does gender inequality present itself?
3. What is gender bias and how does it block the path for women to advance?
4. How does education help or hinder women in career opportunities?
5. How does the DoD create conditions that hinder women from advancing?
6. What are the barriers in the DoD that women must navigate to advance?
7. What can be done to improve inequality in a defense setting?
8. What are the gendered stereotypes and how are women limited or hindered by them?
9. What is diversity and what type of policies are in place in the DoD to improve it?
10. What is the historical background of the DoD and the US SES Corp?
11. What is the difference between male and female social structures?
12. How are women different than men in leadership roles?
13. What is different between men and women at work, post childbirth?
14. Do men experience the same backlash at having children that women do?

15. When exposed to inequality, how do women respond successfully and unsuccessfully?
16. What barriers exist for women when trying to reach top leadership positions?
17. What is sexism and what does it do to people exposed to it?
18. What is the mommy track and how does it apply to the DoD?
19. What is gatekeeping and how does it apply to the DoD?
20. What is the glass cliff and how does it apply to the DoD?
21. What is the sticky floor and how does it apply to the DoD?
22. What is occupational segregation and how does it apply to the DoD?
23. What can be done to improve gender inequality in the corporate world?
24. Do women receive the same mentoring and coaching opportunities as men?
25. What is the dominance penalty and how does it apply to the DoD?
26. How are women affected by the glass ceilings in the DoD?
27. Are there any other roadblocks or slippery slopes that women must navigate to reach the top?
28. What are the qualifications needed to make it to the SES Corp?
29. What gaps are there in diversity in the DoD and what affect do they have on employees in the DoD?
30. How do men experience gender inequality in the DoD?
31. Do men have any negative or hard feelings toward women at work?
32. Do men feel like there is any type of backlash toward them from any form of sexism?

Appendix B: Permission Letter

Reset Form		Print Form		Page 1 of 3	
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT GENERAL TERMS & CONDITIONS (GT&C) FS Form 7600A					
Agreement Between Federal Program Agencies for Intragovernmental Reimbursable, Buy/Sell Activity. In Accordance with TFM Volume 1, Part 2, Chapter 4700, Appendix 6, Section 9. https://www.fiscal.treasury.gov/fsservices/gov/accto/g_invoice/g_invoice_home.htm					
G-Invoicing Required Fields have an (*)					
NEW OR MODIFIED GT&C					
*General Terms and Conditions (GT&C) Number		GT&C Number: N/A Modification Number: N/A			
AGENCY INFORMATION					
1.		Requesting Agency (Buyer)		Servicing Agency (Seller)	
	*Agency Identifier (AID)	097			
	*Agency Location Code (ALC)	97008089			
	*Agency Name	DMOC-D&I, DHRA		Liberty University	
	*Agency Address	4800 Mark Center Dr, Alexandria, VA		1971 University Blvd, Lynchburg, VA	
	Cost Center	N/A			
	Business Unit	DHRAHQ OR DEOC USE ONLY			
	Department ID				
GT&C INFORMATION					
2.	GT&C Title	DMOC Diversity and Inclusion Agreement with Liberty University			
3.	Agency Agreement Tracking Number				
4.	*Agreement Period	Start Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 10/01/2020		End Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 09/30/2021	
5.	Termination Days	360			
6.	*Agreement Type	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Single Order <input type="radio"/> Multiple Order			
7.	*Advance Payment Indicator	Are Advance Payments allowed for this GT&C? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No *If "Yes", the Requesting Agency Advance Payment Authority Title and Citation are required upon creation of an Order against this GT&C.			
8.	*Assisted Acquisition Indicator	Will this GT&C accommodate Assisted Acquisitions? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No *If "Yes", the Servicing Agency provides acquisition support in awarding and managing contracts on behalf of the Requesting Agency's requirements for products or services. Lines 17 & 18 below for additional detail.			
ESTIMATED AGREEMENT AMOUNT					
9.	Total Direct Cost Amount	\$0.00			
	Total Overhead Fees and Charges Amount	\$0.00			
	*Total Estimated Amount	\$0.00			
	Enforce Total Remaining Amount	Should G-Invoicing enforce the total value of orders to remain below the Total Amount on the GT&C? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No If "Yes", G-Invoicing will not allow Order total to exceed the GT&C total.			

General Terms and Conditions (GT&C) Number: N/A

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ADDITIONAL AGREEMENT INFORMATION		
10.	Explanation of Overhead Fees and Charges	N/A
11.	Requesting Scope	See Attachment 1
12.	Requesting Roles	See Attachment 1
13.	Servicing Roles	See Attachment 1
14.	Restrictions	
15.	Assisted Acquisition Small Business Credit Clause	The Servicing Agency will allocate the socio-economic credit to the Requesting Agency for any contract actions it has executed on behalf of the Requesting Agency.
16.	Disputes	Disputes related to this GT&C and any related Orders shall be resolved in accordance with instructions provided in the Treasury Financial Manual (TFM) Volume I, Part 2, Chapter 4700, Appendix B; Intragovernmental Transaction (IGT) Guide, at http://fm.fiscal.treasury.gov/contracting/vol2/ch4700.html
17.	Requesting Assisted Acquisitions	N/A
18.	Servicing Assisted Acquisitions	N/A
19.	Requesting Clauses	See Attachment 1
20.	Servicing Clauses	See Attachment 1
CLOSE GT&C		
21.	Closing Date (mm/dd/yyyy):	
	Brief explanation required for closing this GT&C prior to the original End Date resulting in early termination:	
PREPARER INFORMATION		
22.	*Prepared Name	LTC Rhonda Jones
	*Prepared Phone	+1 (321) 323-4695
	*Prepared E-mail	rhonda.e.jones4.mil@gmail.mil

General Terms and Conditions (GT&C) Number: N/A

Page 3 of 3

AGREEMENT APPROVALS			
By signing this agreement, you authorize the General Terms and Conditions as stated, and that the scope of the work can be fulfilled. By signing, you agree to periodically review the terms and conditions of the agreement and make any necessary modifications to the GT&C and any affected Order(s).			
		Requesting Initial Approval (required)	Servicing Initial Approval (required)
23.	*Date (mm/dd/yyyy)		
	*Approver's Name	Ms. Kerri Grimes	
	*Signature:	GRIMES.KERRI.O.1 053438705	Robert Freeborough
	Title	Chief of Staff, DMOC	
	*E-mail	kerri.o.grimes.civ@mail.mil	
	*Phone	+1 (571) 372-0666	
	Fax		
		Requesting Final Approval (required)	Servicing Final Approval (required)
24.	*Date (mm/dd/yyyy)		
	*Approver's Name	Mr. Clarence Johnson	
	*Signature:	JOHNSON.CLAREN CE.A.1113801073	
	Title	Director, DMOC	
	*E-mail	clarence.a.johnson20.civ@mail.mil	
	*Phone	+1 (703) 531-9319	
	Fax		

Appendix C: FEVS 2019/20

1. 2019 Demographics: This year's public use file includes six demographics (sex, education, federal tenure, supervisory status, minority status, and planning to leave) and all but sex was collapsed from the full dataset to help protect confidentiality of respondents.
 - a. Education Level (DEDUC): Collapsed to three groups – Bachelors, above Bachelors, and below Bachelors.
 - b. Federal Tenure (DFEDTEN): Non-military federal tenure ranges; 0-10 years, 10-20 years, and 20+ years.
 - c. Supervisory Status (DSUPER): Non-Supervisor/Team Leader and Supervisor/Manager/Executive.
 - d. Minority Status (DMINORITY): A combination of the race/national origin and the ethnicity demographics. Those who identify as both White and Non-Hispanic are coded as "non-minority" and all other combination of responses are coded as "Minority."
 - e. Planning to Leave (DLEAVING): Recoded "Yes, to Retire" to merge them with the "Yes, Other" category.
2. 2020 Demographics: This year's public use file includes nine demographics. Details of each can be found in the codebook.
 - a. DRNO – Race/National Origin
 - b. DHISP – Ethnicity
 - c. DDIS – Disability Status
 - d. DAGEGRP – Age Group
 - e. DSUPER – Supervisory Status
 - f. DFEDTEN – Federal Tenure
 - g. DSEX – Sex
 - h. DMIL – Veteran Status
 - i. DLEAVING* – Intent to Leave, with modifications related to COVID

2019 Codebook		
Education	0	Below a Bachelors
	1	Bachelors
	2	Beyond a Bachelors
Tenure	0	0-10 years
	1	10-20 years
	2	20+ years
Supervisory Status	0	Non-Supervisory Status
	1	Supervisory Status
2020 Codebook		
Gender	0	Male
	1	Female
Veteran Status	0	Military
	1	Non-Military
Supervisory Status	0	Non-Supervisory Status
	1	Supervisory Status

Appendix D: Interview Questions

RQ 1: What are the internal and external barriers that exist regarding the professional advancement of women, if any?

- a. What factors contribute to women advancing to leadership roles?
- b. What are the perceptions of women regarding gender inequality?
1. Did you face any barriers or obstacles rising to a leadership position, and if so, what were they?
2. What level do you see yourself in the hierarchy of the federal system and why?
3. Are you currently trying to advance further up the leadership chain, and if so, what kind of things are you doing to prepare for that?
4. What obstacles or barriers are you facing reaching the next level you want to reach?
5. Do you believe that women are given equal opportunities to lead and are equally represented in top positions?
6. What does gender inequality mean to you, and what types of it have you experienced, if any?
7. Do you believe that women are equally capable of leading an organization as men?
8. Do you think women face gender inequality today, and if so, how?
9. What is your definition of culture in society and your organization?
10. Did you experience any gender stereotypes, and if so, what was your response to it/them?
11. Do you think that women have equal access to power that can launch them into leadership roles as men?
12. What does gender stereotyping and inequality mean to you, and do you think it affects women's professional development?

RQ 2: What is the relationship between current civilian supervisors and their veteran statuses, if any?

1. What is your veteran status, and do you think it has an impact on leadership potential?

RQ 3: What is the relationship between education and perceived gender inequality in advancing to leadership in the civilian sector of the Department of Defense, if any?

1. What is your current educational level and are you pursuing higher educational levels?

RQ4: What is the relationship between gender and perceived gender inequality in advancing to leadership in the civilian sector of the Department of Defense, if any?

2. How did mentoring and coaching impact your professional development, and do you think it is important to women trying to advance as well?
3. Do you think organizational culture influences or maintains gender stereotypes, and if so, how?
4. Did you experience gender bias, stereotyping, or discrimination throughout childhood, and if so, what types?
5. What are the top ten things that helped you achieve the success of rising to an SES position?
6. Do you have any further advice to offer to the readers of this paper?

Appendix E: Participant Invitation and Consent

Invitation to Participate and Recommendation Request

Dear Senior Executives,

My name is Nicole Hicks, the site lead of the Women's Initiative Network at NASNI and electronics engineer for code 4.2.1. However, I am writing to you outside of this role. I am currently a doctoral student at Liberty University, and I am exploring gender inequality in a defense setting through a case study. As part of my case study, I would like to interview a minimum of 15 SES corps members on their experiences with gender inequality, and mitigation techniques used to overcome it and be promoted to SES leadership positions. Although this research is not sponsored by the Department of Defense, I would appreciate your participation.

Interviews would take around an hour, and all of them will be done over phone or via Zoom, at a convenient time for the participant. Participants will receive an email providing the date, time and link to the interview session at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date. All information provided in the interview will be kept confidential, and there will be no identifiers in the prepared study. If you are interested in participating in the study and/or would like to recommend other senior executives or leaders to participate in this study, please complete the questions below and revert as soon as possible.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and assistance with my research project.

Sincerely,

Nicole Hicks

If you are interested in participating in the study, and/or would like to recommend other DoD senior executives as participants, please complete the questionnaire below.

What is your name?

1. What is your contact information?
2. Would you be willing to answer around 20 questions on your experience with gender inequality and ways that you successfully overcame some of the barriers from it via a one-hour phone interview?
3. If you choose to participate, a transcript will be emailed to you after the interview has been transcribed. At this time, I will require a verification of the accuracy of my transcription from you, via email.
4. Are there other SES members or leaders that you would recommend as participants in this study? If so, what are their names and contact information?

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an “electronic signature” can be the person’s typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature, if both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

Appendix F: Table of Participants' Leadership Traits

Path to Leadership				
Internal			External	
Desire	Going to work every day.	Taking advantage of opportunities that arise.	Having great mentors.	Having the support of your team.
Being Reliable	Not backing down or being stubborn.	Practicing, especially the difficult tasks.	Staying humble	Professionalism
Hard Work	Honesty	Being authentic	Education	Church
Integrity	Treating people with respect		Family support	Embracing change
Having a good sense of humor	Continuous learning	Learning your trigger points so you can overcome them.	Volunteering work to develop and grow	Developing your network: You can learn something from anyone.
Self-Confidence or God-Fidence	Strength of character for moments when being honed under fire.	Displaying kindness, empathy, and forgiveness to both yourself and others.	Being raised to believe you can do anything.	Constantly improving processes.
Experience	Good communication skills	Doing whatever job, they give you and doing it well.	Being a peacemaker	Being a good listener
Becoming an expert at what you do.	Sticking with it during the tough times.	Learning to see the best in people—it's the leader's role to bring out the good in others.	Being a good problem solver.	Speaking and writing well
Continuous improvement.	Knowing yourself—understanding the evil side of yourself.	Taking extreme ownership of everything.	Learning to use persuasion and negotiation rather than manipulation.	When you want to improve, asking for input from number one.
Always be friendly and personable so people will remember you.	Learning to read body language and improve your own.	Becoming your very own best advocate and writing great reviews on your performance appraisal.		

Appendix G: Direct Quote Coding for Interviews**Maria [P1]:**

Quote 1: “Everybody needs mentors. I had great fire chiefs that I could go to and ask questions and talk to them about anything. Having folks you can trust, be honest with and ask questions throughout your career is crucial. You have to have someone you feel comfortable with and share what you are thinking. You need to talk to people that are where you want to be so you can get your eyes opened and be ready to grow into those types of positions. Relationships are critical as you go through your career. Even when people are wrong to you, you need to be respectful and let things go.”

Quote 2: “Yes, I don't usually go around wearing other people's shirts to work.”

Quote 3: “There are many stereotypes and I think it has gotten better but they do still exist.”

Quote 4: “Nobody can put limitations on you, you can only limit yourself if you allow other people to have a voice in your decisions.”

Yesenia [P2]:

Quote 1: “The world is yours for the taking women, but you have to work harder to prove yourself in a man's world. The more you empower other women the better all women will do. I mentored a young girl that came into my command, and I watched her grow and become confident and now she has blossomed into a very positive role-model and leader.”

Quote 2: “I came to the agency as a young mother of two boys looking for some stability”

Quote 3: “No I have not served in the military, but I don’t think that has anything to do with it. Tactical Support Unit is mostly military, but they are the only predominately military group in corrections.”

Quote 4: “I do remember some communication from classmates that indicated that I would not do anything beyond high school and that I would be a stay-at-home housewife.”

Quote 5: “In a crisis situation where people could get injured and force needed to be used, a man could tell employees not to use force and that would be the end of it but from a woman, they will automatically think she is too soft to get the job done even if she is following orders.”

Tina [P3]:

Quote 1: “I have routinely dropped everything at home and dedicated my time and life to the department. I spent 3-4 extra hours of my free time working on department issues every day often with no credit and even receiving push back from co-workers for putting in extra time.”

Quote 2: “I have had several mentors that showed me a lot. Some were more refined and others were more to the point almost like a man. Some showed me the importance of caring for your staff.”

Quote 3: “I did not serve in the military, and it does matter, a few years ago a new director stepped in and began promoting ex-military in the Department of Corrections, especially if they were marines.”

Quote 4: “I had to wear dresses and act a certain way; I was told I should not play outside with the boys since I am a girl. My mom hated men and would not let me wait on them or serve them. She did tell me that I can do anything that I want to do but I was supposed to act like a girl.”

Quote 5: "I had to wear dresses and act a certain way; I was told I should not play outside with the boys since I am a girl. My mom hated men and would not let me wait on them or serve them. She did tell me that I can do anything that I want to do but I was supposed to act like a girl."

Quote 6: "The department promoted a woman to regional operations director but only to shut people up. They also tell people that they will not promote you to deputy warden unless they are considering you for warden but that is not what happens."

Quote 7: "I experienced gender inequality in the form of receiving 20 thousand dollars less per year than a man that they promoted and moved from Lewis to Perryville. I actually got moved several times but never got a pay raise."

Quote 8: "I am a single female so my male supervisors tell me that I cannot date subordinates although almost every male supervisor I have ever had either flirted, dated or slept with subordinates and even when they were married, and nothing happens to them."

Shelly [P4]:

Quote 1: "I had to work way harder than other people to get where I am. I worked for many men who worked way less hard and got promoted over me. As a captain, I had to rekey a whole yard that was bifurcated (High custody violent inmates on one side and sex offenders on the other) and I had to do it in a timely fashion so these two groups would not intermingle. It took many extra hours to get accomplished and I got teased by my co-workers for putting in extra time."

Quote 2: "You do your job, and I will do my job."

Quote 3: "My dad had four daughters however, we were all raised like little boys, he did not take it easy on us. I went on to marry an Army ranger and it just doesn't get any more

military than that. I was one of the only females to ever work on Tactical Support Unit (TSU) in the prison complex which was predominately military members and I fit right in and got the job done.”

Quote 4: “I had to wait until all of the old leaders left before I got my chance to rise up. I used to be mentored by them however, they left me in really tough positions for so long that I am pretty annoyed by them. Now I have been given my own complex and I realize that all those years in the tough spots have prepared me well.”

Sally [P5]:

Quote 1: “We are not saving lives here; we are just bagging salads.”

Quote 2: “Women in an organization that is not taken seriously do not produce like they do when they are empowered. Many times, women are not offered the opportunities to lead like young, good-looking guys. Older men in the department will mentor the young men but not the women.”

Quote 3: “Women who do make it into leadership develop high confidence due to all of the struggles they face getting there.”

Quote 4: “I was always outgoing, cute and curvy so there was a lot of harassment which played into the ‘women are objects’ stereotype.”

Quote 5: “My obstacles are my own desire to do the next thing, I think a woman has to truly want it and if she does, she will make it happen.”

Quote 6: “The trick is getting the right mentor and applying what you are learning. I think mentoring plays a role in the soft skills, not the hard technical skills. Mentoring is more about role modeling and people will watch how you tackle tasks. A good mentor also models how a

successful person navigates the working world and introduces the mentee to people that will help them advance. The more people you have to help you on your path the better.”

Jamie [P6]:

Quote 1: “As a woman in this type of industry, you have to work harder to prove your worth and show that you are in the same caliber as a man in the department. Men will often mistake your kindness and compassion for weakness although that is the opposite of the truth.”

Quote 2: “I have had people push against me for being a woman and not having kids. I never wanted to have children and so I chose not to. I decided to have a career and not have children. People judge that and sometimes seem horrified that I will not have children my question to them is ‘why would you want a woman who does not want children to have them?’ That would not be fair to her or the child.”

Quote 3: “From the very beginning, they took me under their wing and helped me grow.”

Quote 4: “Back in the academy I got comments like she will not be able to run since she has a large chest, and she will never be able to do all of the push-ups and sit-ups. I push back on that by showing them and letting my accolades and reputation speak for themselves.”

Quote 5: “Women are only kind of given the opportunity to lead, women have to work harder to prove their worth to be in higher positions, but it does not happen as often as it should. I tell young recruits that the department will offer you the world, but you have to not give in to the gender stereotypes. I tell them they have to ignore the stereotype and do the work given to them.”

Quote 6: “I have had people come against me saying I am too young to be a captain or an ADW, but I tell them no I am not, I have put in the work and the years.”

Larana [P7]:

Quote 1: “My husband didn’t want me to work, he wanted me home taking care of four kids and I did that for 15 years, but I wanted some financial stability. I decided I was going to go to work, and my husband said, if you go to work, I am not, helping you and he didn’t. From that point on I was a mother responsible for the whole house and an employee earning a wage even at times when my husband did not, and he was not supportive and did not help.”

Quote 2: “Farm life is really boring, so I filled up my days with books. In fact, the library could not keep books coming in fast enough to keep up with my reading.”

Quote 3: “If I knew then what I know now, I would have skipped that dance and run a mile away when I saw him coming.”

Quote 4: “I think Tim McGraw got it right and everyone needs to listen to his song Humble and Kind and practice that every day.”

Polly [P8]:

Quote 1: “In the field of education up until the past five or six years, women were notoriously known to belong in elementary.”

Quote 2: “America still has a creepy factor when it comes to men having a really close relationship with little people, women often get forced into the little people teacher role for that reason.”

Quote 3: “Men are often better at networking than women and even when women do network, they do not have the power behind them to help other women rise in that network. Women instead often feel threatened by women coming up under them and attempt to sabotage them instead.”

Quote 4: “I became better at what I do because I got mentored by people that were outside the realm of education. I was able to learn to speak a language that helped me stretch and grow.”

Quote 5: “I think there tends to be some favoritism toward military members, it gives people an extra checkmark compared to others. In fact, there was a pipeline called ‘vets to teachers’ that was geared toward moving vets straight from service into a classroom to teach. Not all military members are suited to being in a classroom and being responsible for the future and growth of America's children.”

Quote 6: “I actually faced double discrimination due to being gay although it is not nearly as bad for a gay woman as it is for a gay man in education.”

Cora [P9]:

Quote 1: “I have always been fast at everything, and I literally can work circles around everyone. Eventually, my Captain sat me down and told me ‘Cora, you do great work and you do it faster than anyone however when you give commands to people, no one can keep up with your commands. You have to be a team player when you are in leadership and make sure your team is keeping up with your commands.’ That was the day I learned how to lead, I began tuning into where my people were and tasking them according to their timeline rather than mine. Fortunately, my drive for work is still strong so now I learn to task more people in more areas just to get the work done that I used to do.”

Quote 2: “I have now been in my current role of assistant chief for about 10 years now, but I really want to move into the chief role that will be my point of significance and if I don't get it in this department, I will go to another department so that I can take that role.”

Quote 3: “Mentoring was huge, gargantuan for me. Also getting involved as a union leader myself was a huge piece of my growth. I had a male executive chief that valued intelligence and drive above everything else, and he was the most amazing mentor I have ever had.”

Quote 4: “Strong men want to promote strong women and not so strong men want to promote 'yes' women. The world is making strong women and until men become less intimidated by that it will stay hard. Unfortunately, women are still required to stroke egos and maintain soft skills.”

Sheila [P10]:

Quote 1: “After about 4-5 years they told me if I want to keep my full-time status, I had to come back full time, so I did at that time.”

Quote 2: “I never really faced any barriers other than personal barriers such as having children. I believe most barriers for women are perceived or self-created, but they do not truly exist. Women need to speak up and have a voice even when it is difficult to do so. Some women have internal barriers that prevent them from having a voice at the table but when they learn to speak up, the sky is the limit.”

Kelly [P11]:

Quote 1: “I just knew that was what I wanted to do.”

Quote 2: “No, I didn’t serve in the military, I think it is more of a male-dominated profession. My dad did serve in WWII in the Navy, and he enlisted twice.”

Evelyn [P12]:

Quote 1: “I hit barriers in almost every job I have ever been in except the one I have now. I had to prove myself twice as hard and there were times, I almost lost it.”

Quote 2: “I didn't serve in the military however, the fire service is the closest thing to being in the military that you can get, we slept on little mats out in the wilderness and had to learn to count on each other as a unified team.”

Lani [P13]:

Quote 1: “I had carpenters, plumbers, painters, and people like that. Then I transferred to horizontal construction where I led a team of bulldozers, scrapers, graters, bucket loaders, and things like that. I decided to leave the military and take a position with Texas Instruments in Lewisville.”

Quote 2: “It is important for women to both mentor and be mentored. Women help other women and let them know that they are capable and that these opportunities are available. I have not had any formal mentors, but I have had many great examples of great women that I have watched and am inspired by.”

Jenny [P14]:

Quote 1: “My mom saw an ad in the paper that said the State is hiring Corrections Officers and showed it to me, I told her I didn't really know about working in a prison but, I was a single mom with little kids, so I applied.”

Quote 2: “Choosing a mentor has more to do with how the mentee and mentor click. It has to do with leadership styles and getting buy-in for whom you are rather than just showing you how they do it. I think anyone can be a mentor to a person such as peers, acquaintances and supervisors.”

Quote 3: “I did not serve in the military, but my mom was a WAC in the military, and she was a single mom, so she ruled the roost.”

Quote 4: “I had a boss that brought me in to be his deputy warden and he would tell people yep; she acts as my right-hand man when I am not here and then turn to me and tell me to go and get his coffee. I took this as his idea of what a male-female relationship looks like and decided to be even more determined to rise and become his boss someday as I got him his coffee.”

Jillian [P15]:

Quote 1: “There is a huge gender disparity in the fitness industry, most sports arenas think men will coach better especially at the collegiate and national level leaving women greatly disadvantaged.”

Quote 2: “absolutely not, not by a long shot. The statistics in the business world show that. Most women that do reach leadership roles do so by developing a male leadership style not by being authentically female. Ambitious women get pigeonholed by men that are in current power positions. Women that stand up for themselves against those powerful men get labeled the ‘B word.’”

Quote 3: “Women are starting to push back and wear one-pieces however, viewership demands a bikini which I don’t have a problem with, but many qualified women do.”

Quote 4: “Women need to see women in power, be mentored by them, and let them help you get to the next level. I love training young girls and empowering them to be strong. I show them a strong female business owner and try to role model good leadership skills for them.”

Danae [P16]:

Quote 1: “I believe that qualified people are given equal opportunities. I think people in the hiring position, hire the most qualified person, and women have to prove themselves in that area. Unfortunately, a lot of people today lack people skills and fail to use good eye contact.

When I wanted to interview a subject, I wouldn't call them, I would go and meet them in person so I could read their body language.”

Quote 2: “Most of my barriers and obstacles were my own. My own insecurities or my own thoughts that I am not good enough attempted to stop me from progressing. I finally learned that I can only control how I react to what people do to me, I cannot control what they do to me. Stress is self-induced.”

Quote 3: “I participated in a group that helped counsel people and help them be successful. I was mainly used when difficulties of the field roles caused emotional conflicts for people. Sometimes people need to verbalize what they are going through as a way of coping. Mentorship is important and trust in that mentor is even more important. Sometimes it is not what is said, it is what is not said.”

Quote 4: “I don't want to be equal to a man, I already think I am better than that. I always try to figure out what I can do to get the ball farther down the field than everyone else.”

“Quote 5: "I think military experience gives applicants a leg up in the hiring process at the FBI, we use a lot of military tactics.”

Darla [P17]:

Quote 1: “No, I did not serve in the military, but my dad was a fighter pilot in the Navy before he got married to my mom and got kicked out. He was on a full-ride scholarship for electrical engineering but lost it all to marry my mom. We were pretty grateful that he got kicked out because all of his classmates went to Vietnam and none of them came back.”

Quote 2: “I think there are roadblocks however they are only roadblocks if you let them stop you.”

Jessie [P18]:

Quote 1: "I went to board a ship and the captain of the ship said she is not coming on my boat but my commander at the time said, I will send all of the ladies to your boat if you don't watch it and that pretty much ended that."

Quote 2: "I may be creating some gender stereotyping in my head but, a lot of the women in my unit have young kids at home but they put in all of these extra hours, and I don't want to do that. I want to go home and hang out with my husband and son, so I do."

Quote 3: "I didn't experience any issues during childhood since my family had a lot of strong female leaders. My mom taught math, one aunt works on computer things for NASA, one writes code, and another is the Vice President of Banks."

Quote 4: "Mentoring and coaching is huge for women that want to advance. I think you have to reach out and talk to people that will see something in you and pull you up. Nearly every advancement or step in my career I have had people that have pulled me aside and told me how I could improve."

Quote 5: "I get to take advantage of all the new rules and benefits that women fought for all the years ahead of me such as, extra time off and workforce support."

Angela [P19]:

Quote 1: "I would have to go to another facility to promote, I am looking more at retirement rather than promotion."

Quote 2: "I think a formal mentorship program should be started in the department to help young officers find mentors. I didn't have a formal mentor, more just people that I chose to follow and model my life after. I learned that I had to let people seek me out because when I tried to go to them, they were not as receptive to it."

Martina [P20]:

Quote 1: "I heard many times throughout the testing process that I was the golden child and that I was being brought up from a lot of my co-workers although they were not looking at the fact that I did a ton of casual overtime over the years to keep the department strong."

Quote 2: "Gender roles are socialized if I go into a classroom and ask girls what they want to be they say female roles like teachers and nurses. If I ask the boys, they say things like firefighters, police, pilots, and things like that. I don't really care what people think or say about me, I do lose sleep over it sometimes but when someone does not like me, it is usually because they are not doing their job and I call them out on it, and they don't like it."

Quote 3: "I usually noticed gender inequality the most in public, I would go to grocery stores and stand in line with a team of men in full uniform, a radio on my hip, and people in the store would ask me "what do you do, are you the cook?" it was pretty annoying. I even had a man ask me if I had actually really been in a fire. I also got told one time that I was too old to go into fires although I was only 49 and men go into them even when they are 69 years old, and nobody questions that."

Lisa [P21]:

Quote 1: "We did not experience gender inequality from the guys however, the wives of the guys were always concerned since we were sharing living quarters with their husbands."

Quote 2: "In my family growing up my mom encouraged me to do things, but my dad actually expected me to do them."

Quote 3: "The stereotype now is that women will promote faster than men since they have become so strong emotionally and mentally from all of the barriers and obstacles that they have overcome."

Quote 4: “In high school, they would not let me play baseball or take shop. My counselor told me to take home economics and I told her that I already made a blueberry pie and won first place at the state fair, and I sewed a jumpsuit and won first place on that, but I really want to play ball and fix stuff.”

Quote 5: “No, I don't think military experience has any impact on career progression in the fire service although folks with military experience do fit in well. The fire service like most male-dominated professions operates on a pecking order and the military trains people in the pecking order so they fit in well.”

Quote 6: “Yes, going back to oral interviews, I had so much trouble with them that I decided to sit on some interview boards to improve myself. That helped me understand the system and then helping people through that process also helped me to understand why things are done the way that they are. They are trying to figure out how people think and determine how they will react in certain situations. So not only getting mentored yourself but also mentoring others is the recipe for success”

Wanda [P22]

Quote 1: “I have seen female wardens act just like a man, all cocky and abrasive and I have seen the backlash against them when they do”

Quote 2: Gender inequality is when men get better everything just for being a man. I pay every single bill in my house, but my husband's credit score is 15-20 points higher than mine always.”

Quote 3: “I was really lucky with who I had raise me in this department. I had some awesome mentors Ernie Trujillo, Robert Patton, Kim Currier. They were really strong leaders: fair, good communication, not intimidating, always encouraged you to make the decision. Walt

Hensley was hilarious, he never stepped on my toes, and he never pulled the rug out from under you. The good old boy system was a positive thing for me. I had good DWs, but I get along with most people”

Appendix H: Acronyms

CEO	Corporate Executive Officers
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CITI	Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative
CNA	Certified Nursing Assistant
CO	Correctional Officers
COTA	Correctional Officers Training Academy
CSRA	Civil Service Reform Act
DBA	Doctor of Business Administration
DBB	Defense Business Board
DC	District of Columbia
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
DIB	Defense Independent Advice and Recommendation Board
DLAMP	Defense Leadership and Management Program
DoD	Department of Defense
DSB	Defense Science Board
DSLDP	Defense Senior Leader Development Program
EMT	Emergency Medical Technician
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigations
FEI	Federal Executive Institute
FEVS	Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GS	General Service
ICR	Information Collection Request
IRB	Institutional Review Board
MD-715	Management Directive
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NIH	National Institute of Health
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PII	Personal Identifiable Information
PRA	Paperwork Reduction Act
QRB	Qualifications Review Board
REGARDS	Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Age, Religion, Disability and Sexual Orientation
RQ	Research Questions
RTX	Raytheon Technologies
SCCT	Social Cognitive Career Theory

SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SES	Senior Executive Service
SLT	Social Learning Theory
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
U.S.	United States
WG	Wage Grade
WIN	Women's Initiative Network
WLB	Work-Life-Balance
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development