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A Few Good Men: Narratives of Racial Discrimination Impacting Male African American/ Black Officers in the United States Marine Corps

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A Few Good Men: Narratives of Racial Discrimination Impacting Male African
American/Black Officers in the United States Marine Corps

by

Peter D. Freeburn

A Dissertation Presented to the
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Nova Southeastern University
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

This dissertation was submitted by Peter David Freeburn under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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Dedication

I dedicate the conclusion of this journey to my family. My parents, my mother Barbara Freeburn Jackson and father Raymond Freeburn: whom because of you, I am here! My twin brother Paul, you have been by my side in strength and I thank you. You all have shown me love, support and understanding over the years, even when you were not in full comprehension of my decisions, you backed me with empathy. Through the long years of pursuing my formal education, which reached its apex with this study, you all have done for me wondrously. Thank you once again and we press on this life's journey, together!

Acknowledgments

Reflections of Social Dissonance

Though we do not wholly believe it yet, the interior life is a real life, and the intangible dreams of people have a tangible effect on the world. (Baldwin, 1961) —

James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name*

“The Discovery of What It Means to Be an American”

Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe. (Douglass, 1886) —

Frederick Douglass, *Southern Barbarism*

We must become bigger than we have been: more courageous, greater in spirit, larger in outlook. We must become members of a new race, overcoming petty prejudice, owing our ultimate allegiance not to nations but to our fellow man within the human community. (Selassie, 1972) — **Haile Selassie**, *Important Utterances of H.I.M.*

The life of the nation is secure only while the nation is honest, truthful, and virtuous; for upon these conditions depends the life of its life. (McKivigan & Kaufman, 2012) — **Frederick Douglass**, *We Are Confronted by a New Administration*

The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it emotionally. (O'Connor, 1979) — **Flannery O'Connor**, *The Habit of Being*

The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom. (Asimov & Shulman, 1988) — **Isaac Asimov**, *Book of Science and Nature Questions*

I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain. (Baldwin, 1955) —

James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*

Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that His justice cannot sleep forever. (Maggelet, 2016) — **Thomas Jefferson**, *The “I” Judgments: Four Sins That Brings About the Fall of Nations*

I prefer to be true to myself, even at the hazard of incurring the ridicule of others, rather than to be false, and incur my own abhorrence. (Douglass, 1845) — **Frederick**

Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

I would like to thank my committee members Ismael Mvingi, Ph.D., Robin Cooper, Ph.D. and Robert A. Jones III, Ed.D. for guiding me through this dissertation. Dr. Jones, your role as Deputy TCM/ESD, mentor, and confidant allowed me the opportunity to remain on course with the research and see the study’s development into maturation. Dr. Mvingi and Dr. Cooper, your collaborative support further enabled me to grow as a researcher; a skill that I look to ensure continues to be utilized to contribute to knowledge. Thank you all for your expertise and guidance.

I would like to honor and thank all participants in this research. Your willingness to share your life stories for this study proved an invaluable contribution, not only towards an informative completion of this dissertation but to the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution. Your experiences gave insight to principles and values which has certainly provided a wealth of life lessons I know many will find helpful to reference in their own journey. Though racial discrimination may be a topic people would rather stay away from addressing, the observed honesty in giving testimony to your experiences

as service men in the Marines only speaks to your courage, dedication and valor as the true few and proud. Thank you! — *Semper Fidelis...*

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Abstract

In the United States of America (U.S.), institutional marginalization and racial discrimination remains an arguably difficult subject to understand, both conceptually and pragmatically. Regarding governmental sectors, U.S. Armed Forces are institutions where discrimination must be critically explored in an attempt to provide an understanding of the reality faced by those who actually serve. This study involved the examination into racism within a specific elite governmental sector that emphasizes a philosophy of a unified oneness of all its members. Using a phenomenological approach, the study delved into the actual impact of racism within the Marine Corps, on the lives of individual members of a historically marginalized populace, African American/Black. The research explored and analyzed the life stories of three male members of the aforementioned population group, hence seeking to answer the research question: How has Integrated Racial Diversity in the Armed Forces Impacted Experiences of Discrimination Antagonistic to Male African American/Black Marine Corps Officers as Members of a Population Historically Marginalized and Discriminated against in the United States of America? Theories incorporated in the research offered meaning to the experiences of the individual participants. Discoveries illustrated the necessity of adaptation by the individual in coping with the impact of racially charged hostilities in an environment supposedly operating with an objective of oneness of its members. Through the findings, a theory of socio-psycho-bio dissonance was developed by the researcher. This research provides recommendations on practical ways to transformatively address and seek probable resolution in conflict – institutionally.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The writer's gift can make us see ourselves and our moral possibilities differently than what our reality suggests. (Dyson, 2009) — **Michael Eric Dyson**, *Can You Hear Me Now?*

If you resist reading what you disagree with, how will you ever acquire deeper insights into what you believe? The things most worth reading are precisely those that challenge our convictions. (Chernoff, 2010) — **Author Unknown**, *Manual for Living: Reality*

Background

In societies with historic occurrences of institutionalized social injustices, the pursuit of resolution may be a complex endeavor for generations. However, with social injustices, before resolution is determined at any capacity, there must be a willingness to identify and understand the dynamics related to prejudices that may have spawned from traditionally unaddressed injustices. In the United States of America (U.S.), institutional marginalization of people has remained an intricate subject both conceptually and pragmatically. Though the U.S. is presented as a society of diversity, discrimination has been interwoven into the operational narrative of the country, be it socio-political, socio-economic or socio-structural.

Regarding a sector of a country established to safeguard the interests of the state through armed defense, the military is one institution of the U.S. where discrimination must be critically explored in an attempt to provide an understanding of lived experiences of those who are impacted and serve. In the U.S., the arguably reserved approach to dealing with the issue of discriminatory practices has consequentially presented one of

the most difficult challenges for human resource management in military leadership (Rand, 2013). Though most people may choose to ignore the facts or deny what may be a traumatic reality for people prejudicially targeted, the narrative of racism, classism and consequent structural violence that has violated much in human rights has been the lived reality of people who have been subjugated to classifications as minorities, indigenous and/or others (Hajela, 2006). In the armed forces, the need for greater diversity in recruitment, development and employment challenges the traditional military norms, values, beliefs and attitudes (Rand, 2013). This study will lend directive insight to militaries as they continue to adapt and revise human resource policies, philosophies, programs and practices in an attempt to facilitate change.

The content of this dissertation discusses the real life experiences of service men who have been impacted by racial discrimination in the United States Marine Corps, while exploring meaning and offering insights into how they understand their lived reality of racial discrimination. Upon review of previous research on the topic of racial discrimination, there is evidence of studies that incorporate generic reviews and generalizations on minorities historically discriminated against. Though prior research has assessed the variances of discrimination in the armed forces from both quantitative and qualitative stances, a study has not been done that specifically examines the lived experiences of racial discrimination towards African American/Black men in the Marine Corps, a defensive unit that is operationally based on the philosophy of oneness. This scenario creates a fundamental conflict which inspired the interest of the researcher to pursue this study. Therefore, the aim of the research was to understand the impactful context of racial discrimination in the United States and its influence in her armed forces,

specifically the Marine Corps. Consequently, racial discrimination had to be described, along with essentials, as it relates to an identified group.

Statement of Problem

Based on centuries of socio-structural dissonance in the U.S., people racially categorized as Black/African American have had to contend with reconstructing meaning to their lives as members of a society where they are institutionally marginalized.

Additionally, throughout the history of the U.S. Armed Forces, marginalized populations have had to contend with complex acts of discrimination against them in the various sectors of society (Hampf, 2004; Stiehm, 1998; Jensen, 2005). As such, populations discriminated against have had to endure consequent stigma while attempting to fully partake in the freedom spoken of by citizens of the country. Members of the armed forces are considered service men and women of the country (Stiehm, 1998). If it is arguably an honorable duty to serve one's country, should not then being given the opportunity to serve be a fortunate position for those willing to embrace such offerings? However, if because of the color of their skin some of those faithful to duty serving with dignity and honor have to seek refuge from ill-treatments they face in the very sectors they serve in, then where should these marginalized turn to receive protection or assistance when abuses are coming from the same structure they are charged to protect?

Training to get service personnel ready as combatants or to serve a role as part of combat forces is facilitated through combat preparation programs. In the U.S., the hopes of many to work hard to attain something good for themselves and their families need not come at the expense of human dignity (Strong, 2006). However, for those populations marginalized in society, service in the armed forces does not pardon them from the

realities of persistent discriminations they have to deal with on an ongoing basis (Strong, 2006; Stiehm, 1998). Arguably, a society seemingly functioning on racial discrimination may pose a complex dilemma in assessing, particularly where experiences of the marginalized have been historically ignored (Strong, 2006). Further complexities may arise if deliberate measures, principally in leadership dealing with such an issue are also overlooked. Moreover, if resolution to this dilemma is not amongst the priorities for said leadership, the efforts that may go into fashioning programs to get the marginalized personnel duly ready for service may not be effective, nor implementation of programs progressive. Therefore, institutionalization of programs that address the ensuing need for abrogating occurrences of racial discrimination, which many still struggle with in the work environment, is a problem of concern needing attention (White, 2012).

On both a macro and micro level, deep understanding of factors causing conflict that may have gone into perpetuating apparent negative experiences of people, if not carefully analyzed, may be misinterpreted, misrepresented, or ignored. Thus this research seeks, with a qualitative approach, to extend the voice of those who have experienced such conflict. Suppressing voices may lead to incidences such as intergenerational perpetuation of racist ignorance. Perpetuated obliviousness to the plight of the suppressed becomes evident in what people in a society eventually consider normal practice in human indignations, and with little to no progress made for those negatively impacted (Schellenberg, 1996). In outcomes of racial discrimination, the victims of racial discriminatory experiences serving in the armed forces may be left to try and find meaning of their own significance in a structure which they have sworn to defend, yet the entity does not reciprocally protect them. This underlines the main problem – to serve

with dignity, yet to face continuous incidents of targeted degradation within the same structure you are expected to protect. It is within the above context of evaluating experiences, analyzing activities and finding meaning and recommending changes towards resolution that is the basis of this research study. Hence the research question: how has integrated racial diversity in the armed forces impacted experiences of discrimination antagonistic to male African American/Black Marine Corps officers as members of a population historically marginalized and discriminated against in the United States of America?

This study captures the experiences of service personnel in the armed forces who are classified in the racial category as Black and/or African American and thus would be considered a minority in the conceptual governance and structural framework of the United States. The terms Black and African American are presented interchangeably or together throughout the research. The research explored and analyzed the stories of three Black Marine Corps service men. The study investigated how the overall aspect of Integrated Racial Diversity has influenced interactions and shaped the experiences of African American/Black officers in the Marine Corps. The following questions guided the research and generated further contributions to the inquiry of the study:

1. What factors may influence service personnel's perception of racial discrimination?
2. What are the challenges that have been faced from being considered a member of a historically marginalized population serving in the United States Armed Forces?
3. How do African American/Black service men perceive current equity training programs in the Marines?

4. How are adjustments made by the service personnel to address discrimination challenges faced in their work environment?
5. What recommendations can be made to effectively address the occurrence of racial discrimination of historically marginalized personnel in the United States Armed Forces?

The first research question sought to explore possible underlying factors that influenced how Marine Corps personnel may have perceived discrimination in their work environment. The second research question identified and explored probable difficulties faced by African American/Black service personnel in dealing with racial discrimination. The objective of the third research question was to investigate the dynamics of structural programs, if any, in impacting perceptions on discrimination. The fourth question assessed adaptation mechanisms that may have been created and implemented by service personnel in dealing with racial discrimination and the fifth question helped to determine recommendations to effectively address resolutions in reference to the impact of realities in discrimination on service personnel who wanted to work with honor. Throughout the research, conceptual offerings of terminology are provided which assist in gaining explanations related to the dynamics in meaning and understanding of participants' experiences.

The remaining content of this dissertation presents the literature review, methodology of the study, data analysis, findings, interpretations and conclusion. The review incorporates a synthesis of previous research on the topic of discrimination and on those classified minority populations (Wintermute, 2012) that have been historically discriminated against the longest in the U.S. The review further assessed the variances of

studies on discrimination in the armed forces. The first section of the literature review focuses on the historical context of discrimination in the armed forces, followed by sections within the review describing discrimination with specifics as it relates to identified groups. Review of other related literature were also employed in discussions. The methodology used in the study is discussed in subsequent chapters. A justification of the research design is offered along with strategy employed pertaining to data collection and subsequent data analysis. Further sections include challenges faced, validity and reflexivity. The concluding chapter of this study discusses the findings, offers interpretation, proposes considerations for further research and finally ends with what contributions the research will make to the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Of course innocent mistakes occur but the accumulated insults and indignations caused by racial presumptions are destructive in ways that are hard to measure.

Constantly being suspected, accused, watched, doubted, distrusted, presumed guilty, and even feared is a burden born[e] by people of color that can't be understood or confronted without a deeper conversation about our history of racial injustice. (Stevenson, 2014) —

Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*

Race is both an empty category and one of the most destructive and powerful forms of social categorization. (Morrison, 1992) — **Toni Morrison**, *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power*

Diversity in militaries all over the world is an intricate subject both conceptually and applicably in terms of its managerial implications. It is of utmost importance in challenges for human resource management in military leadership. The need for greater diversity in recruitment, development and employment tests the traditional military norms, values, beliefs and attitudes (Rand, 2013). Militaries continue to adapt and revise human resource policies, philosophies, programs and practices to embrace the changes.

In exploring the dynamics and impact of institutional discrimination in the armed forces, the readiness of military organizations may also be best ascertained in examining literature on the subject matter. Relevant articles and texts were searched. Accessing information included the use of databases such as *EBSCO Academic Search Premier*, *Military and Intelligence*, *African American Experience*, *ProQuest Military Collection*, *PAIS*, *PsycINFO*, *PsycBOOKS* and *Conflict Resolution & Peace Studies*. An assortment of search phrases was used to obtain relevant publications including institutional

discrimination, military readiness, institutional discrimination in the military, segregation in the military, workforce segregation, and elements of institutional discrimination among others. Various types of pertinent information were incorporated into the literature exploration process, inclusive of which were, peer reviewed journals, congressional reports, Department of Defense reports and others. Both descriptive and analytical techniques were used to evaluate the content of information gathered.

Conceptualizing Institutional Discrimination

Discrimination refers to any form of differential mistreatment related to specific groups of people (Ellen, 2013). Discrimination may follow the line of gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, race, social status, and other bases. Discrimination can be reinforced in an institutional setting. Discrimination can be supported in criminal justice systems, schools, internal security organizations, government agencies and financial institutions via institutional systems (Fischer, Hanke & Sibley, 2012). The institutional systems may promote social hierarchies, reinforce the status quo and punish individuals that challenge the hierarchy. Individuals subjected to these institutional control systems internalize the ideologies that create them.

Distinction between institutional and individual racism began during the Black Power Movement (Bradby, 2009). However, the task of distinguishing institutional discrimination from individual discrimination may be challenging. Henkel, Dovidio and Gaertner (2006) defined institutionalized discrimination as the intentional or unintentional toleration or manipulation of institutional policies that restrict the opportunities of a given group(s) of people. The Macpherson report described institutional discrimination as the collective failure by a given institution to offer

appropriate services to people of all backgrounds (Bradby, 2009). Lawrence and Keleher (2004) defined institutional discrimination as differential treatment, inequitable opportunities and unfair policies produced and propagated by institutions.

There are various aspects of institutionalized discrimination including prejudice and stereotypes. Prejudice refers to the unfair negative attitude toward a given individual or social group. Social stereotypes refer to a generalized belief about a given group or its members, which by default breeds unjustifiable discriminatory behaviors. Stereotypes reflect defective processes, inordinate rigidity, factual incorrectness or over-generalization for discriminatory behavior or prejudiced attitude (Bradby, 2009).

Tokenism is another form of institutional discrimination. Tokenism is a practice that entails making obligatory gestures for demonstrating inclusion of members of minority groups (McGinnis, McQuillan & Chapple, 2005). Tokenism is often geared towards creating an impression of inclusiveness so as to aid institutions in deflecting accusations of discrimination. Institutions that exhibit these practices may recruit members of minority groups just to fulfill societal expectations and legal obligation (McGinnis, McQuillan & Chapple, 2005). However, these members of minority groups are hardly integrated into the institution as significantly influential figures. Concerning this study, discussions will be centered on discrimination with a gender and racial premise.

Institutional Discrimination by Sectors

There are studies that have explored the phenomenon of institutional discrimination in various organizations. Griffith, Mason, Yonas and Parks (2007) examined institutional racism in healthcare organizations. These authors noted that

racism is embedded in the healthcare systems by existing practices, policies and procedures. They argue that in order to dismantle institutionalized racism in healthcare, there must be a shift in system's procedures, practices and policies. The claim that there is institutional discrimination in healthcare is supported by Bradby (2009). The Bradby (2009) Study reports how deficient conceptualization and pervasive breakdowns in education could be used in expressing institutional racism and how such conceptualizations could advance to iniquitous conclusions. For instance, through individual education, legislation based on an implicated conceptualization of institutional racism is unlikely to diminish racialized imparities and as such, in the expression of advancement for ethnic minorities elsewhere, these misguided notions may lead to the false conclusion that discrimination is no longer a reality.

In her study, Bradby (2009) explored institutional racism in the country's mental health services. The author noted that there were huge discrepancies in the mental health of majority and minority races in the country. She correlates that the rate of mental illness is an indicator of social cohesion. Therefore, a high rate of mental illness amongst minority groups indicates that society has failed to integrate minorities into its systems. The study also highlighted various institutional aspects that contributed to racism in the mental health services. These aspects include difficulties in defining racism and race, absence of interpreters and lack of culturally competent therapists (Bradby, 2009). She suggests that institutional racism can only be eradicated by reforming the healthcare policies and practices.

Cole's (2008) paper, *The Effect of Institutional Racism on the African American Drug Abuse Population in the U.S.*, provides an overview, whether deliberate or

incidentally, on the ways in which racism can affect substance abuse populations. She illustrates specifically how racism exists within political and social institutions, and how it has adversely impacted African American substance abusers. Cole (2008) also describes how disparate societal policies derived from the institutional dimensions of racism creates socioeconomic disintegration yielding deleterious effects with devastatingly higher incarceration rates as remedy or a form of treatment negatively targeting African American populations. Cole (2008) found evidence of institutional discrimination in the U.S. criminal justice system. In her study, she emphasized how institutions can unintentionally propagate discriminatory practices through the formulation of policies that disadvantage a particular group. For instance, she argues that the criminal justice policies of federal mandatory sentencing of drug offenders have propagated discrimination against the African American community. The mandatory minimum sentencing policies have resulted in major discrepancies in the incarceration rates between African Americans and other predominately non-White ethnic communities (Cole, 2008). These sentiments of institutionally targeting the African American population with discriminatory acts are echoed in Griffin's (2012) study.

In her study, Griffith (2012) examines the country's habitually disparate treatment of African Americans in the criminal justice system. She draws evidence of how Blacks are besieged and legislatively criminalized by the government as it creates permanent marginalization cultures in order to perpetuate racial hierarchy in the United States. For instance, Griffin (2012) highlights how the war-on-drugs policies that were initiated during President Reagan's era have contributed to racial discrimination within the criminal justice system. She points out that apart from forming the highest rate of

incarceration; African Americans have 22 times greater probability of getting shot by law enforcement agents than Caucasian Americans. Similarly, African Americans are more likely to be stopped by police while driving than Caucasian Americans.

Institutional Discrimination in Armed Forces Organizations

There is abundant evidence of institutional discrimination in military organizations in existing literature (Jensen, 2005; King, 2013; Jacobson & Jensen, 2011; Antecol & Cobb-Clark, 2008, and Kimbrough, 2007). The most addressed form of discrimination may be discrimination along gender lines (Jensen, 2005). Women have faced a hostile work environment in the military. The military is a cultural institution and a workplace. While a number of women are recruited into the U.S. military, the institutional culture of the military reinforces masculinity. The military culture is driven by male perceptions and sensibilities, male anxiety, male psychology and power, and the affirmation of masculinity. The U.S. military utilizes women in ways that do not offset the masculinized status. According to Jensen (2011), women are incorporated as less capable and inferior workers and, being such, are seldom permitted to participate directly in combat situations, a male dominated role. Authors such as King (2013) further argue that a woman's full participation in the military is undermined by a masculine culture that characterizes the military institution. He advocates for the elimination of these masculine structures so as to facilitate full participation of women in the military. Conversely, a section of scholars have expressed concerns regarding the idea of the full integration of women into the U.S. military.

However, according to Anthony (2013), women's participation in the military workforce has increased since 1970. In Afghanistan and Iraq, women Soldiers have

served on the frontline and engaged in combat. During these wars, women were judged by their competence rather than gender. However, the author noted that the full participation of women in the military is still constrained by limitation in the infantry. The masculine conditions that typify infantry activities limit the number of women who pass the selection tests. Only one percent of Soldiers in the infantry are women. These sentiments are echoed by Jacobson and Jensen (2011), who examined how reproductive policies in the U.S. military propagated discrimination against service women. In 2002, federal laws prohibited abortion in military health facilities. This law meant that service women who needed abortion services while on missions had to obtain an emergency leave so as to procure legal abortion or seek illegal abortion services.

Further Look at the History of Women in the U.S. Military

Women continue to be underrepresented in the Army (Rand, 2013). Although women constitute 50% of the national population, statistics from the Department of Defense report that they constitute 14% of active-duty military. The role of women in war and military activities has been well documented in American society. Dating back to 1775, women used to accompany men in war serving in support duties such as nursing, cooking and laundry. Deborah Sampson, disguised and recognized as a man by the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, was the first woman to serve in the military (1782-1783). She was later discharged honorably after she was wounded in combat. In 1812, Mary Marshall and Mary Allen served as nurses aboard the USS United States. During the Mexican War (1846-1848), Elizabeth Newcom enlisted in the Missouri Volunteer Infantry but she was later discharged. The Civil War saw many women enlisted as cooks and nurses. Women served as spies, as well.

One of the periods that show the largest enrollment of women into the service is the First World War. During the final two years of the war, it is estimated that 33,000 women served as nurses and support officers, with 400 nurses who died during the war (Dixon, 2010). During the Second World War, 400,000 women served in different positions in the Army. They served as pilots, ambulance drivers, nurses and other non-combat positions. Until the 1948 law integrating the military, the Army accepted few African American nurses, all of whom served in segregated units and treated only African American wounded combatants (Dixon, 2010).

In 1948, Congress passed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act that gave women permanent status in the Army subject to military authority. The purpose of the Act was to set up the Women's Army Corps in the Regular Army. The Act authorized the enlistment and appointment of women in the regular Air Force, Marine Corps and Reserve components of the Navy and Army (Rand, 2013). However, the Act did little to increase women representation in the military. It limited the number of women in services to 2% of the services' authorized strength and prohibited the promotion of women above the rank of lieutenant colonel or commander. In addition, the Act barred women from serving on Navy ships, except hospital and transport ships, and from serving on Navy and Air Force aircraft while such aircraft were engaged in active combat. However, the Act did not prohibit women from serving in active combat roles but as a matter of military policy, women were not assigned such roles.

Before 1973, women in the U.S. were prohibited from enlisting in the Army. The late 1960s and 1970s signified a great change for women in the military. In 1967, Congress removed the 2% ceiling on regular line officers and enlisted strength and

eliminated the promotion restrictions. The Air Force opened its Reserve Officers' Training Corps program in 1969, and by 1972 the other services had opened theirs as well. However, since 1973, the government changed the military system from all-male conscription to a volunteer force and women were allowed to enlist in the armed forces. During the Vietnam War, the number of women in the Army almost doubled. Nonetheless, the place and number of women in the Army remained relatively the same. In 1978, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act was amended to permit women to serve on ships that were not expected to be assigned combat missions and to serve up to six months on other naval ships. Congress abolished the Women's Army Corps in 1978, and women were incorporated into the regular Army (Moore, & Webb, 2000). The 1981 Supreme Court decision, *Rostker v. Goldberg*, maintained that the exclusion of requiring women to register with the draft was not a violation of the due process clause (Fifth Amendment) of the U.S. Constitution (Moore, & Webb, 2000). However, to date, the Selective Service Law still does not require women to register for the draft because of the Department of Defense's policy of restricting women from direct ground combat. Though it must be noted, in 1988, the Department of Defense adopted the "risk rule" as a policy. The risk rule excluded females from non-combat units or missions if the risks in the combat and/or hostile fire were equal to or more than the risk in the combat units they supported. The aim of the policy was to standardize the criteria for determining which positions and units would be closed to women in the service. The Shannon Faulkner case was one of the landmark cases which instituted an action that transformed enrollment of women in military academies. The Citadel revealed it was unsuspecting of Faulkner being a female when it incorrectly admitted her to the then male-only military institution.

Once realizing her gender, they revoked her admission and Faulkner filed a suit. After a longstanding court case – the young woman helped set precedent – making women inclusion possible following the Supreme Court decision that mandated gender integration: Shannon Faulkner became the first woman admitted to the Corps of Cadets at The Citadel (Vojdik, 2002).

The Supreme Court stated that discrimination against women was illegal in state-supported military schools. In 1996, another four women enrolled as cadets. Although the ruling marked a positive step toward women enlistments in the Army, military institutions, as a whole, were slow to adjust to the new requirement and the number of women in the military remained the same. Consequentially, in 1991, the Tailhook scandal during a convention of Naval and Marine Corps Aviators unleashed a subsequent investigation that ultimately impacted policy and attitudes towards women service members in the Department of Defense. At the convention, a group of 83 female officers were physically assaulted by 117 naval officers. The consequent lawsuit led to the dismissal of 14 admirals and 300 aviators and instigated a zero-tolerance policy on discrimination and harassment of women in the Navy (Stiehm, 1998).

The debates continue as to what role women should undertake in the U.S. military. A Pentagon mandate prohibiting women from serving in ground combat units was loosened in 1994 to allow women to take on “supporting” combat roles. Although women have been involved as allied professionals, they are increasingly needed to supplement the shortages of men in active militarized zones. It is estimated that between 2002 and 2005, 33 women were killed in Iraq, 5 in Afghanistan and more than 250 wounded in action. In 2006, the number of females who died in Iraq increased to 48,

representing 2% of the total U.S. Soldiers who died in Iraq. Captain Kathleen McGrath was the first woman to command a U.S. Navy warship in 1998 while Colonel Linda McTague became the first woman commander of a U.S. Air National Guard wing in 2003. During the war on terrorism, Sergeant Leigh Hester was the first woman since World War II to be awarded the Silver Star for combat. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, women constitute 17.3% of the Selected Reserve contributing only a quarter of the Army and Air Force Reserve and 4.7% of the Marines.

Sexual Harassment

Comparatively, African American women, share the same deplorably devastating legacy of having no political power while also impacted by the equivalent worst effects of forcibly partaking in an American societal system that also regarded Black men as subhumans (Day, 2013). Branch exclaims, in the U.S. occupation structure, Black women's unique multiple negative historical intersect postures a dual subordinate phenomena – to exist at the very bottom of the American socio-economic structure i.e. *between a rock and a hard place*. This is particularly similar to the historic experiences of African American males in the U.S., thus, the experiences of African American women relate to elements of discourse within this study. Accordingly, America's "racist patriarchal society where Whiteness and maleness [are most] valued", everyone else therefore is unmistakably handled with less esteem. This "race/gender specific experience" connotes a historical dual status whereby Black women often experience intersectional discrimination – the combined discriminatory effects of race and gender (Branch, 2002; Collins, 1993, p. 28).

The integration of women into the Army and their increasing role in the male-dominated field has increased the issue of sexual harassment. Evidenced in a study by Marisa Gonzalez, *Sexual Harassment in the Marine Corps: The Challenge of Organizational Change*, she purported that, “sexual harassment continues to plague the Marine Corps” (Gonzalez, 2010, p. 84). Given the most recent and salacious reports of nonconsensual online nude photo circulation of female Marines to include their name, rank and duty station, such findings are further substantiated. Consequently, Gonzalez’s research also exposed Marine naiveté where, “participants had disparate perspectives on what sexual harassment [is]” and described required sexual harassment training as merely a “check in the box” (Gonzalez, 2010, pp. 172-177). Other studies have equally reported wide spread sexual harassment in the Army. A study ordered by the Department of Defense in 1988 indicated that 56% of active-duty women and 12% of men had experienced sexual harassment. In 1991, a similar report indicated that 62% of females in the Army had experienced sexual harassment in the previous year (Faley, Knapp, Kustis, & Dubois, 1999). Scholars have explored predictors of sexual harassment in the Army. Women working in nontraditional roles increases the risk of such factors. In addition, studies have explored the interaction of ethnic groups, gender pioneering and rank as possible factors. Claims of sexual harassment in the services continued with different sections of the Army being accused of tolerating sexual harassment. In 2003, the U.S. Air Force started an inquiry concerning claims of sexual harassment of females. In 2004, the Air Force report confirmed the fear of sexual harassment among enlisted women (Faley, Knapp, Kustis, & Dubois, 1999). The report highlighted a number of issues including facilitating women to report cases of harassment and training personnel to handle such

cases. Over a decade ago, in 2004, 37% of the permanent workforce in the Army were women (Hampf, 2004).

Hampf (2004) explores the concept of sexuality in the armed forces. It was noted that although there have been changes on the perception of female Soldiers; women continue to be subjects of rumors and hostility. The rumors stereotyping “feminine” nature is viewed as irreconcilable with masculinity, Hampf (2004). Records from military archives indicate that female sexuality was controlled by discourses of desexualization and hypersexualization by policies and programs based on assumptions about the social class and race nature of sexual morality, Hampf (2004). In 2005, surveys were conducted among West Point cadets to seek the opinion of students on how women should be assigned roles. According to the study, 67% of the respondents agree that women should be assigned different roles regardless of their gender, Hampf (2004). Samples of male Army officers were asked whether the presence of women would compromise their functions. According to the results, 51% of men agreed that the presence of women in combat would influence how they reacted. However, they held that they would act to protect the female colleague in combat (Stiehm, 1998).

Similarly, the effect of combat-exclusion was explored by Moore and Webb (2000). According to their survey, discriminatory inclusion and exclusion of women in combat significantly reduces their chances of advancing in their career (Moore & Webb, 2000). He noted that women are secluded from positions that are reserved for male members and as such female service members cannot specialize in areas in which the number or distribution of closed positions impede advancement of career (Moore & Webb, 2000). Discrimination in the force deters prospective women who want to join the

service. The discriminatory military academy policies meant that women could not access the required education necessary to achieve well-paying jobs in the military.

In 2014, a group of women congressional representatives petitioned the Department of Defense to reconsider Regulation 670-1. The regulation governs the grooming of Soldiers for combat, especially female Soldiers. The legislators believed the law to be discriminatory against women of color in uniform (Stiehm, 1998). The regulation bans three hair styles: dreadlocks, twists and large cornrows. The legislatures argued that the styles are predominantly worn by women of color and terming them as “unkempt” and “matted” is offensive and culturally insensitive (Military Times, 2014). Although Army officials insist the regulation is aimed at uniformity of the force, such perceived or real grievances persist.

Discrimination beyond Gender

Institutional discrimination in the U.S. military is not limited to gender. There is evidence of discrimination along racial and ethnic lines. Antecol and Cobb-Clark (2008) found that two-thirds of active-duty military officers report experiencing offensive racial behaviors. These authors point out that the U.S. military has achieved success in terms of creating an ethnically and racially diverse workforce. Today, the military integrates all ethnic groups into its institutions. However, diversity in the military has come with a cost. The authors report that diversity in the workforce has resulted in a swell in the incidents of racial and ethnic harassment episodes. Antecol and Cobb-Clark (2009) collected data using a survey method and found that offensive encounters were the most frequent forms of racial harassment. These offensive encounters mainly affected

members of the Hispanic population. The study found that White Soldiers were least likely to experience any form of harassment.

Minorities in the Military

Over the years, minorities have been recruited into the U.S. military. However, a review of the literature indicates that the struggle to include more minorities in the military is not yet over. Regardless of efforts to increase diversity, it is evident that minority groups, particularly Blacks, continue to be underrepresented in the Marine Corps. The table below indicates the proportion of active-duty personnel on the basis of race.

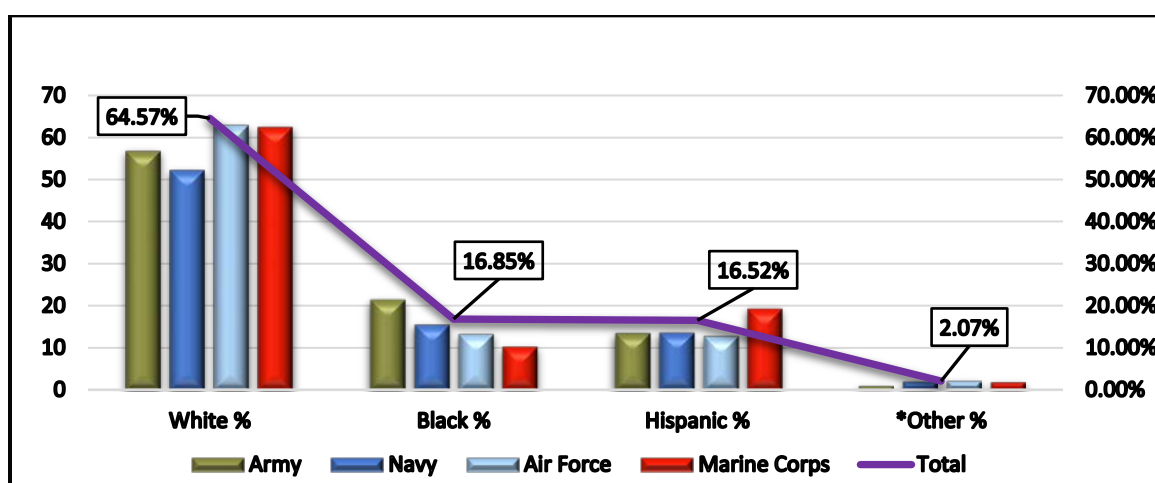


Figure 1. Race Profile of Active-Duty (AD) Forces, FY16

Department of Defense

According to the U.S. Military Demographic report (2014), less than one-third (31.2%) or 412,070 of active-duty members are minorities (Blacks, Asians, American Indians, Pacific Islanders and other races). The report also cited the Marine Corps as having the smallest percentage of minority members (20.7%) and this percentage has decreased in the past four years. The National Defense Research Institute (2014) noted Black recruitment is decreasing; dissimilarly, Hispanic recruitment is increasing. The

institute explored factors that influence the recruitment. They noted that Blacks respond positively to recruitment incentives and bonuses instead of military pay. However, Hispanics are responsive to military salary rather than recruitment bonuses.

In comparison to a regular fixed compensation or earnings for performing a specific job in an assigned military occupational specialty code (MOS code), monetary recruitment tools in the form of upfront bonuses or educational incentives provide an immediate and mutually beneficial system for recruiters and those recruited to serve in the armed forces (Asch, Heaton and Savych, 2009). Hispanics with high school diplomas or its equivalent and those who score high on the military entry test (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) find the Army educational incentives, such as the student-loan repayment program, very appealing. Depending on MOS, the recruitment enticement apparatus qualifies enlistees for \$65,000 to \$73,000 dollars in combined educational benefits, an incentive for which Hispanics further respond positively towards. In contrast, the \$20,000 dollar “Quick-ship” signing bonus program is a very captivating means for engaging and successfully recruiting specifically Blacks as target populations (Asch et al., 2009). The caveat therefore, with both Hispanic/Latino and Black populations, new recruits agree to participate in an accelerated transition from high school to combat in as little as four months with the effective use of the discussed incentive options.

Hispanics, Latinos and Mexicans

According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Directive 15, Hispanics should not be considered a minority race but an ethnicity. The OMB defines race and ethnicity as created for the U.S. Census, and not for "scientific or

anthropological" reasons. However they incorporate "social and cultural characteristics as well as ancestry", utilizing "appropriate scientific methodologies" that are not "primarily biological or genetic in reference." Distinctively, race is associated with biology, whereas ethnicity is associated with culture, Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris (1958) assert, a minority group is distinguished by five characteristics: (1) unequal treatment and less power over their lives, (2) distinguishing physical or cultural traits like skin color or language, (3) involuntary membership in the group, (4) awareness of subordination and (5) high rate of in-group marriage. Wolf (1982) declares, racial grouping was crafted and integrated throughout the period of European mercantile expansion and ethnic categorization during the period of capitalist expansion. A consequentially more historically astute pronouncement in this matter is rendered by the American Anthropological Association (AAA), in a 1997 publication where research,

...has shown that the idea of "race", scholars in many fields argue, as it is understood in the United States of America was a social mechanism invented during the 18th century. From its inception, this modern concept of "race" was modeled on a rigid hierarchy of socially exclusive categories, unequal rank and status differences, established by a mode of classification linked specifically to subsume a growing ideology of inequality devised to rationalize European attitudes and treatment as they were constructing and justifying the retention of [an enslaved society]. As they were constructing U.S. society, leaders among European-Americans fabricated the cultural/behavioral characteristics associated with each "race", linking superior traits with Europeans and negative and inferior ones to Blacks and Indians. Numerous arbitrary and fictitious beliefs about the

different peoples were institutionalized and deeply embedded in American thought. In the latter part of the 19th century it was employed by Europeans to rank one another and to justify social, economic, and political inequalities among their peoples. Further noted by AAA, the U.S. system for categorizing the populace based on race and ethnicity was formulated by a then-dominant “White”, European-descended population, purposely “designated as a means to distinguish and control other ‘non-White’ populations in various ways (AAA, 1997, p. 4).

Accordingly, the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" refer to an ethnicity; however, for the purpose of this study, Hispanics will be considered a minority group as most of the previous governmental relic and literary devices document Hispanics as a minority group (Military Times, 2014; Department of Defense, 2012; Dempsey and Shapiro, 2005).

The Civil War of 1861 divided the allegiance of Mexican Americans living in Texas to support either the Confederacy or the Union. A large number of Mexican Americans initially supported the Confederacy while others supported the Union Army. By the end of the war, Colonel Santos Benavides became the highest ranked Mexican American in the Confederate Army. However, it was the achievement of David G. Farragut (1801-1870) that marked the history of Hispanics in the war. The colonel led the federal naval ships and played a strategic role in the capture of New Orleans and the Battle of Mobile Bay in Alabama.

Hispanics played an instrumental role in the Second World War. The 158th Regimental Combat Team, known as the Bushmasters, an Arizona National Guard unit comprised of countless Hispanic Soldiers, saw heavy combat. "The greatest fighting

combat team ever deployed for battle" is how General MacArthur referred to this group of infantry fighters (Ruiz, 2009, p. 194). During the Vietnam War, approximately 80,000 Hispanic Americans served in the Army. Although they constituted about 4.5% of the total U.S. population at the time, they incurred approximately 19% of casualties during the war. It is estimated that 20,000 Hispanic service men participated in Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Regardless of their contributions and dedications in the Army, Hispanic and Latino Americans experience various forms of discrimination.

One of the earliest studies to explore Hispanic discrimination in the armed forces was reported by Gutierrez in 1978. The study reported discrimination and issues that affected Hispanic service men to include biased testing, culture shock, lack of minority officers and blatant discrimination in promotion. In addition, Gutierrez noted Hispanics felt immense pressure to Anglicize their name to avoid harassment from Anglo officers (Gutierrez, 1978). A 2004 survey of active-duty service members in the U.S. Army focused on the experiences of Hispanics and examined the views surrounding discrimination among all races. Military personnel in all racial groups expressed faith in the fairness of Army leaders and opportunities for all racial groups in the Army. Contrarily, studies reported a persistent racial divide in the Army. Only 3% of White officers had experienced discrimination compared to 27% of Blacks and Hispanics (Gutierrez, 1978). Among the enlisted ranks, 22 % of Whites, 19% of Hispanics and 24% of Blacks reported they had been discriminated against. In the last decade, several lawsuits brought by minority workers against their employer have earned large settlements.

Moore & Webb (2000) explored the perceptions of equal opportunity among women and minority Army personnel. They noted that military service in the U.S. is viewed as an avenue of upward mobility for minority men. According to Butler (1996), the military provides a “bridging environment” for racial minorities offering them skills they need to improve their socio-economic status.

Dempsey and Shapiro (2005) conducted a survey with 1190 active-duty members in the U.S. The study reports that Hispanics in the U.S. Army face a unique set of challenges. Some of the common difficulties included education, familiarity with Army life and fluency in the English language. Dempsey and Shapiro (2005) reported that discrimination on the basis of race was more prevalent than conventional wisdom on military structure. They noted that there exists significant disparities on how minorities view inclusiveness in the Army and the military programs designed to help them. The lack of minority representation in the higher ranks causes dissatisfaction among the Hispanic Soldiers. Dempsey and Shapiro (2009) assert that, unless a more insistent stance in addressing the 80 percent White senior Army leadership is taken, the majority of Hispanics will continue to disagree that the military is significantly better at barring racial inequalities than the civilian sector. Early Hispanic recruitment emphasis, according to Dempsey and Shapiro (2009), focusing on minority officers could also help deter frustration with extensively Caucasian Army leadership among minority Soldiers.

African Americans/Blacks

This phenomenon of racial discrimination in the U.S. military may not be new. In the First and Second World War, Black Americans were prohibited from joining the American Army (White, 2012). Presumably, on scientific grounds, African Americans

were deemed incapable of fighting. During this period, military officials used the *Army General Classification Test* to determine if Soldiers were fit for combat services. This test blocked many African Americans from combat service, therefore restricting their contribution to the military. Comparable to the Civil War where most Northern States forbid the conscription of Blacks except when avoiding defeat necessitated maximizing the Union Army's manpower during the war. The presumption that African Americans were not fit for combat was again quickly overlooked when African Americans were incorporated into the military during the Korean War. Consequently, the overwhelming casualty rates resulting in North Korea's onslaught, according to Scott (2010), forced the circumstantial integration of units. Death tolls instigated such a substantial manpower hardship that commanders desperately abandoned their racially biased stereotyping "which posited...Negroes were poor combat Soldiers, suited only for service or transportation units" (Scott, 2010, p. 2). Notwithstanding, a military without racial division under the most dismal circumstances, who demonstrated wartime triumph of preventing wartime defeat, was still unable to conquer the bigoted beliefs of most White commissioned officers that being assigned to a Black unit was punishment and a detriment to their careers (Scott, 2010).

Wintermute (2012) examined the premise used by the military to exclude African Americans from combat during the Second World War. The study revealed that the U.S. War Department contributed to racial intolerance. The research examined the work of two Army officers, Charles Woodruff and Robert Schufeldy, whose work provided a justification for exclusion of African Americans from the military. Both scientists, based on scientific reasoning, argued that African Americans were excluded from combat

operations because they were less loyal. Employment of African Americans in professions that were deemed beyond their capacity, were considered a betrayal and a waste of precious resources. Woodruff concluded Black Soldiers were more susceptible to sunstroke and rheumatic tuberculosis; hence, were unsuited for military service. Schufeldy argued that mixing White ethnicities with non-Whites would lead to racial degeneration. Another medical practitioner, Chamberlain, argued that African Americans were more likely to join the military with heart diseases, tuberculosis and nephritis; hence, their exclusion would make the military clean of these illnesses. The combination of arguments by these military medical doctors formed the premise for excluding African Americans from the military. However, Wintermute (2012) argued these exclusionary actions were based on unfounded fears and racial prejudices rather than scientific evidence. He continued to argue that the main concern of the military command was that African Americans would associate more with locals rather than their White superiors when deployed to the battlefield. Therefore, the military organization was responding to deeply held fears and prejudice against African Americans by instating exclusion policies (Wintermute, 2012). Additionally, as a tactic to save the White-dominated society, military officials only highlighted incidents that portray African Americans in a shameful light and looked for medical statistics and other inauspicious events that would support such claims and demean Black Americans (Wintermute, 2012).

Kimbrough (2007) found evidence of racial discrimination in the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War. The author argues that despite the lifting of government policies with regards to racial segregation in the military, discriminatory practices still discouraged full integration and assimilation of members of minority races. Her

investigation focused on the triad of three (3) voices; a comparison of oral narratives and biographical accounts of three African American service men: Air Force Colonel Fred V. Cherry (interviews) and the individually published biographies of Private David Parks and Private Terry Whitmore, both were Army draftees (Kimbrough, 2007). She argues that, after enlisting in the military in large numbers, African Americans found themselves relegated to dangerous combat roles resulting in disproportionate casualties and deaths. Consequently, apathy and defensive racial solidarity infiltrated African American ranks as antiwar and domestic racial tension intensified. Kimbrough's (2007) work offers indicative insight on the experiences of African American Soldiers during the Vietnam War. However, a point of notable critique of this work, it relies on the author's subjective interpretation of three primary sources; including the sensitivity attributed to memory given the overtly public contested issues such as the disparate treatment of Blacks during the Vietnam conflict. Nonetheless, Kimbrough's views on the treatment of African American Soldiers during the Vietnam War are supported by Westheider. In his book, Westheider (2008) also examined the experiences of African American Soldiers during the Vietnam War. He argues that inequalities in the military selection system during the war led to disproportionate casualty rates among African Americans. He points out that African Americans experienced both institutional and personal discrimination that made the military an unattractive career path. Westheider's (2008) work relied heavily on Kimbrough's (2007) work. However, unlike Kimbrough (2007), Westheider (2008) had significant references to support his argument through the use of historical documents, service staff statistics and testimonials of military officers.

Today, the U.S. military has eliminated most of the policies that explicitly discriminate against African Americans. However, a number of authors argue that the structures and systems that currently exist still perpetuate racial discrimination against Black Americans. In their study, Baldus, Grosso, Woodworth, and Newell (2012) presented evidence of racial discrimination in the administration of death sentences in the U.S. military. These authors, using logistic regression analysis and other approaches, examined data relating to 105 death-eligible military prosecution cases tried between 1984 and 2005. The authors used qualitative techniques to assess risk of racial prejudice in these cases. Results showed that there was evidence of systematic racial discrepancies in capital prosecution and sentencing decisions. The authors noted offenders were more likely to get punitive sentences when the victims of their actions are White than when the victims are non-White. It was noted that Black defendants were more likely to receive punitive sentences than White defendants. The authors concluded that the greatest risk of racial prejudice exists where the case involves a minority-race offender and White victim.

The studies by Antecol and Cobb-Clark (2008) and Baldus, Grosso, Woodworth, and Newell (2012) suggest elements of racial discrimination are still prevalent in modern military organizations. These studies point out that, despite elimination of explicit segregation policies, the military as an organization has practices that propagate discrimination against minority races. However, not all authors agree with the claim that racial discrimination is still persistent in the U.S. military. The study conducted by Kinder and McConnaughy (2006) purported to dispel the notion of the existence of racial discrimination within the United States' Armed Forces. In the study, Kinder and McConnaughy (2006) examined the life history and career of Colin Powell. General

Colin Powell, an African American, was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the youngest man and first Black to hold this position. He served as National Security Advisor and as U.S. Secretary of State. Kinder and McConnaughy's (2006) study sought to examine factors that made Colin Powell so popular in the military and among general Americans citizens. The study concluded that some of the factors that contributed to Powell's success include racial progress within the military, decline of identity politics among African Americans and the disappearance of racism among Whites. The study offers Powell as an exemplary case of racial progression within the U.S. military. They argued Powell's rise through the ranks demonstrate how far the nation and the military had come in terms of promoting equality among races. The authors point out how White Americans' evaluation of Powell was not affected by racial prejudice. They point out how his evaluation among African Americans was unaffected by racial group solidarity. A significant strength of Kinder and McConnaughy's (2006) argument is that they conducted an empirical examination of the rating of Powell by racial grouping. Results showed no evidence of racial stereotyping in how White and Black Americans rated the performance of Powell. A significant downside of this argument is that it presents only one case to support racial progress in the military. This single case of Colin Powell may therefore be argued as a situation of tokenism and thus cannot be generalized as a 'racial achievement' marking the end of racial discrimination in the military, particularly given the analysis from this research of the racially based outcomes in hardships still encountered by Black service men.

The notion that the military has made tremendous steps in promoting equality among races is supported in Teachman and Tedrow's (2008) study. These authors sought

to examine the impact of military service on family stability and divorce rates among various racial groups. Results of the study revealed that military service reduced the probability of divorce and enhanced family stability among African Americans. Statistics reveal that while there was a noteworthy race difference in the divorce rate within non-service population, this racial discrepancy was not exhibited among active-duty service members. Teachman and Tedrow (2008) argue that the findings of their study are attributed to the fact that the U.S. military has defined career ladders for African Americans that integrate them into leadership positions. They continue to argue that the systems put in place by the U.S. military offer role models and positive work environments that minimize discrimination and promote marriage stability.

The first half of the 20th century was characterized by agitation for equality from minority groups, especially with African Americans. The society was separated along racial lines, and societal institutions mirrored that separation. Discrimination against the Black minority was evident and the “policy of separate and unequal treatment of Blacks” was common (Smith, et al. 2007, p. 17). Regardless of the discrimination, injustices and prejudice, many African Americans were willing to serve in the Army. After World War I, many military policies and regulations changed. Most of the new policies were formulated based on reports and testimonies from Soldiers. These reports came from commanders of the 92nd and 93rd Divisions, which were largely African Americans. The unfair statements, such as “Negro combat troops failed to come up to Army standards,” and “if you need combat Soldiers, and especially in a hurry, don’t put your time upon Negroes” skewed the achievements by African Americans (White, 2012, p. 4). The preceding years were characterized with plans and programs to try and use Black

manpower “effectively”. Some of the strategies put in place included defining the role of African American Soldiers and restricting the number of Blacks in the service. According to the policy, Black representation in the Army should be equal to the proportion of African Americans in the society (10% at the time). However, between the first and the second world wars, the proportion of African Americans in the Army remained below 2%. In addition, the Army devised a different training program for African Americans, and their roles were restricted to services rather than combat. The 1937 Mobilization Act formed the foundation on how African Americans could be mobilized and utilized.

Regardless of the military policy prohibiting racial discrimination, statistics during and after the wars indicate that discrimination is evident. For example, in 1945, there were 653,563 or 9% Blacks in the Army. According to Brets (2011), the War Department sabotaged the enrollment of Blacks in different ways. He noted that the use of the literacy test targeted African Americans because of their low education level. Secondly, African Americans trained in segregated facilities and lived in segregated housing. Thirdly, there were “secret orders” to draft boards to exclude Blacks in the first draft. These practices perpetuated the mistreatment of Blacks through the Selective Training Service Act and widespread discrimination of African Americans in society increased Black activism.

Finally, the U.S. military was desegregated in 1948 after President Truman signed Executive Order 9381. This Executive Order and the Fahy Committee oversaw the desegregation of the military and the integration of African Americans began. The long-held notion that African American Soldiers were inferior dissipated. However, incidences of discrimination in the service are still evident (Brett, 2011).

Incorporated Theories

In this study, the researcher wanted to closely examine and gain insight into the experiences and possible challenge(s) faced, how they were met, handled and then review any subsequent impacts through first hand narratives of those who served in the Marine Corps. In examining and providing understanding to the experiences of participants, three preliminary theories are discussed, namely Cognitive Dissonance, Social Dominance and Transformational Leadership Theory.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Leon Festinger developed the Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957), which is considered a counterintuitive theory, based on the idea that our actions can influence our beliefs and attitudes. This theory's relevance to the research supports the fact that racial discrimination in the U.S. has been an ongoing issue for centuries (White, 2012). As such, discrimination against people racially categorized as Black has arguably been part of the U.S. societal norm and her respective institutional fabric. Therefore, influence of actions on belief is considered counterintuitive because our actions are based on our normalized feelings and attitudes towards a particular outcome, not necessarily the cause of those actions. As pertaining to inclusion in this research, cognitive dissonance exists as normalized attitudes of discrimination against people racially categorized 'Black', and has been an ongoing, normalized occurrence in the U.S. Cognitive Dissonance Theory is thus based on three fundamental assumptions:

1. *Humans are sensitive to inconsistencies between actions and beliefs.* Cognitive Dissonance Theory is stating that as humans we recognize when our beliefs do not mimic our actions or vice versa. For example, if we believe that treating

someone disrespectfully is wrong, yet we find ourselves participating in such actions we become aware of the inconsistency of that action and/or belief and struggle with such inconsistency (Festinger, 1957).

2. *Recognition of this inconsistency will cause dissonance, and will motivate an individual to resolve the dissonance.* When one becomes aware of such a violation of their beliefs, according to the concept of cognitive dissonance, they will feel a level of mental anguish and begin to resolve the inconsistent behavior to blend more with personal beliefs.
3. *Dissonance will be resolved in one of three basic ways: Change of beliefs, Change of actions and Change perception of actions.*
 - a. Changing one's belief is one of the easier ways to resolving dissonance between actions and personal belief. Regarding the aforementioned example, a person does not believe in mistreating others, they could simply become comfortable with the concept of treating someone disrespectfully. Such comfort leads to normalization of the actions of disrespect and as such, there is a dissonance with respecting the person and treating them respectfully. However, if a person truly believes that treating another poorly goes against their fundamental belief system, then the action of treating someone disrespectfully will be double checked and rectified for the particular situation where disrespect may have occurred (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959).
 - b. Changing actions is one of the easier or more common approaches to resolving dissonance due to the personal pressure one puts on themselves

regarding a negative behavior that does not correlate with their beliefs.

Mental anguish and guilt in regards to how you treated someone so poorly will play a role in the belief, therefore, if you choose to never treat someone with such disrespect again you will no longer have such dissonance again (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959).

- c. Lastly, changing perception regarding an action is the most common approach to solving dissonance. For example, a particular person is treated with disrespect because they hurt you or someone you know, which in your mind would be considered “okay” because they caused damage first versus the idea of you just acting out and treating someone poorly (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959).

Social Dominance Theory

Social Dominance Theory was created to try and understand how a group-based social hierarchy is formed and maintained (Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004). Social Dominance Theory asserts that there must be an understanding of the process that produces and maintains prejudices at all levels, including cultural ideologies and policies, institutional practices, relations of individuals within and out of their groups, the psychological predispositions of individuals, and the interaction between the evolved psychologies of men and women (Pratto, 1999; Sidanius, 1993; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004). The applicability of this theory to this research is that racial discriminatory behaviors are harmful as they may be rooted in biases based on artificially defined color coded indicators when identifying people within a society as good or bad, with the dominating group defining terms. Therefore, in

relevance to this research, people categorized as Black are dominated by those categorized as White, with the preconceived view of the former color code being bad and the latter good. Therefore in sustaining group based behaviors, Social Dominance Theory views societies as systems and thus, theorizes that processes work together on multiple levels to produce systemic effects.

Social Dominance Theory states that there are three systems within society that create a group-based hierarchy: an age, gender and arbitrary set system. 1) An age system where adults have disproportionate social power over children, 2) a gender system where men have disproportionate social, political and militaristic power compared to women and 3) an arbitrary-set system where groups are constructed on an arbitrary bases that are not related to the cycle of life such as nationality, race, ethnicity, class, religion, et cetera.

Group based hierarchy systems can even be found among animals. Specifically termed as trimorphic configurations, hierarchy systems which are based on age, sex and coalitions, are even evident in the group dynamics within chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas and baboons (Kawanaka, 1982, 1989; Nadler, 1988; Rowell, 1974; Strier, 1994). These social configurations help primal societies transfer skills, knowledge and ideas, while also communicating roles and power. Trimorphic systems also exist within the universal human world but there are three systems that vary significantly depending on where one is in the world. For example, the term childhood and who and how old are considered children in regards to marriage, sex, labor and freedom are all different depending on where you are in the world. For instance, in the United States you cannot be married unless you are 18 or you have your parents' consent. But in the Middle East, 14 year olds are set up for marriage.

Social Dominance Theory argues that each system is qualitatively different, and hence one system cannot be regarded as merely a special case of another. Specifically, aside from their function in societal definition, there are three critical differences among these systems (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius & Veniegas, 2000), namely, flexibility, level of violence and focus. The age and gender systems have some flexibility as to who is defined as a “child” versus an “adult” and who is “male” versus “female.” But the arbitrary-set system is distinguished by a very high degree of plasticity, both in terms of which group distinctions become socially significant and in the permeability of the group boundaries. In some instances, coercion and violence may be used to maintain the age and gender hierarchies, however the degree of lethal malice associated with the arbitrary-set system is often that of a magnitude greater than an association with either the age or gender system. This may be comparable to the grounds for perpetuating forms of discrimination to the point of normalizing outcomes. As such, arbitrary-sets are the only type of system in which total annihilation of people could occur (Sidanius & Veniegas, 2000). That is, there are cases in which one clan, race or ethnic group has exterminated another. Finally, while by definition, the age system is focused on the control of children by adults, and the gender system is focused on men’s control of women, Social Dominance Theory argues that arbitrary-set hierarchy primarily focuses on the control of subordinate males by coalitions of dominant males. In fact, this is a primary reason that arbitrary-set hierarchy is associated with extraordinary levels of violence, thus giving insight into some consequences of institutionalized racism (Keegan, 1993). The masculine focus of arbitrary-set conflict can be seen in several ways. Men are the most frequent perpetrators of both lethal interpersonal violence (e.g., Archer, 2000; Daly &

Wilson, 1988) and of intergroup violence (Goldstein, 2001; Wrangham & Peterson, 1996). Indeed, collective violence ranging from military campaigns to gangs to lynching are almost exclusively instigated, organized and controlled by men (Edgerton, 2000; Keegan, 1993). Equally important, men are not only the primary perpetrators of intergroup violence, but also the primary lethal targets. For example, 69% of Black U.S. lynching victims between 1882 and 1927 (White, 1969) and over 80% of U.S. homosexual hate crime victims (e.g., Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2003) were men. Even the widespread practice of raping enemy women during war often appears intended to dishonor and humiliate the rape victim's male relatives (United Nations, 2002). This is not to diminish the suffering of women and children in arbitrary-set conflicts, which is often atrocious. Rather, it is to emphasize that violence in the gender and age systems may stem from arbitrary-set conflicts (United Nations, 2002). The male-on-male focus of arbitrary-set conflict can be seen in everyday forms of group discrimination as well. At the level of social stereotypes, Eagly and Kite (1987) found that negative national stereotypes are really differentiated stereotypes of men in those nations.

At the level of individual discrimination, the assumption that arbitrary-set prejudice primarily concerns men seems implicit in the fact that most studies of race discrimination use only men as targets (Correll, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2002). At the level of institutional discrimination, there is substantial cross-cultural evidence that men rather than women are the primary and most ill-treated targets of arbitrary-set discrimination (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The notion exists that both arbitrary-set violence and arbitrary-set discrimination are primarily male-on-male provocations. This

is known as the “subordinate male target hypothesis” (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius & Veniegas, 2000).

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory is defined as a leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems (Burns, 1978). Ideally, Transformational Leadership Theory creates affirmative and constructive change within the follower’s final goals and develops their skill sets into becoming leadership material. The relevance of this theory to the study is the applicability of leadership and the said potential to redefine and possibly shape outcomes. Leadership, thus, may be defined as the ability of having influence as a result of being in a particularly acknowledged position. Authentically, Transformational Leadership Theory aids in the further development of enthusiasm, confidence and enactment of followers through an array of tools. These tools include: 1) connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to the mission and the collective identity of the group, 2) being a role model for followers that inspires them, 3) challenging followers to take greater ownership for their contributions, and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, so the leader can align followers with activities that optimize their performance (Langston University, UK).

James MacGregor Burns (1978) first introduced the concept of transforming leadership in his research regarding political leaders. However, transformative leadership currently relates to psychology within organized sectors as well. According to Burns (1978), transforming leadership is a process where both leaders and followers work together to create a higher level of morale and enthusiasm. Because there is a challenging difference between management and leadership within their characteristics and behaviors,

Burns (1978) established two leadership concepts: transforming leadership and transactional leadership. Transforming Leadership Theory creates change by creating lifestyle modifications within individual and organizational structures. Transforming leadership aids in re-conceptualizing perspectives and beliefs; changing objectives and ambitions of affiliates. Transactional leadership is based on a leader's personality and abilities to create transformation through examples, creating a vision and challenging the goals that are developed, versus the give and take relationship which transformational leadership approach creates. The key difference between transformative leaders and transactional is that transactional leaders do not strive to change the organizational culture but work within the confines of such structure and culture, whereas transformational leaders attempt to change the organizational culture.

Bernard M. Bass (1985), added to Burns (1978) concept, by explaining the psychological tools that are the fundamental bases to the concepts behind transforming and transactional leadership. Bass (1985) was able to create measurements to understand the impact of the leaders regarding their followers' motivation and performance. The first measurement is influence; when followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for their leader, this shows the true influential power because a transformational leader is a person who works with their followers to create a mission, vision and identity for all involved. It is not simply based on self-gain. This type of leader engages their followers and has them become a part of the process in order for the organization to be more positive and effective.

The full range of leadership introduces four elements of transformational

leadership: Individualized Consideration, Intellectual Stimulation, Inspirational Motivation and Idealized Influence.

1. Individualized Consideration – is based on the level to which a leader focuses on the needs of a follower by acting as a mentor (Bass, 1985). The leader is empathetic and supportive by keeping lines of communication open and providing constructive environments for discussion. They provide followers with the possibility of personal development and motivation for their missions, duties and tasks relative to their position within the organizational structure.
2. Intellectual Stimulation – is the level in which a leader challenges their followers by responding to their assumptions, allowing them to take risks and following their ideas. This particular leadership style encourages creativity and inventiveness. Leaders are capable of nurturing independent thought from their followers, which allows followers to feel involved, recognized, cherished, as well as build themselves into potential leaders (Bass, 1985). All opportunities are considered learning opportunities for both leader and follower, which stimulates growth.
3. Inspirational Motivation – refers to the level in which a leader is capable of inspiring others to work towards a particular vision that can be seen by all. Inspirational leaders motivate by challenging followers to create higher standards for themselves, being optimistic regarding the creation and execution of developed goals and providing meaning to the work that followers are completing. Followers need a strong sense of purpose in order to be motivated to

act. Therefore, providing purpose and meaning to tasks drives followers to work harder to complete their missions.

4. Idealized Influence – provides a model for behaving ethically, instilling pride, gaining respect and trust within leaders and followers. Transformational leadership is currently being used in all areas of western societies, including governmental organizations.

Observations and Research Gaps

In reference to existing studies with the literature review, there is a contentious debate regarding the concepts of institutional discrimination. While some authors may acknowledge the existence of institutional discrimination as irrevocable, others have severely critiqued such a stance. Though authors propose institutional discrimination as discrimination, but vary on how that is supported by institutional systems (Brett, 2011; White, 2012), there is the consensus that though institutional discrimination is less visible and more subtle, it is inevitably destructive to both victims and institutions. There is evidence of discrimination on gender and race basis, as well as on the basis of sexual orientation. The concept of military readiness has been covered in the literature. There are more than a few reports that describe this concept. However, though rare, there are a few studies that attempt to link the subject of institutional discrimination and military readiness. Nonetheless, the few existing publications have only explored the impact of discrimination on a few aspects of military readiness, but not the individual themselves beyond organizational duty preparedness. There is a lack in readily available studies exploring the psychological effects of discrimination on service personnel themselves and

the relation to the holistic concept of military oneness. The researcher's study addressed and filled this gap in knowledge.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

I'm talking about a new way of thinking that rests on the assumption that you cannot fully understand your own life and events which surround you without knowing and thinking beyond your life, your own neighborhood, and even your own nation.

(Smith, 2000) — **Johnnetta Cole**, *Onward!*

The difficult part of an argument is not to defend one's opinion, but rather to know it. (Wilcox, 1947) — **André Maurois**, *A Little Book of Aphorisms*

A qualitative research approach was utilized in the study. As offered by Creswell (1998), qualitative research provokes tacit knowledge while providing understanding and opportunity for multiple interpretations to constructed realities. The researcher wanted to gain an understanding of the essence in realities of service personnel with respect to their specific experiences as armed service personnel classified as Black/African American. The research was conducted phenomenologically by color coding the narratives for analysis, synthesis, decoding and interpretation. Phenomenological research studies focus on describing a "lived experience" of a phenomenon, an individual(s) and their unique experiences, therefore the focus was to understand the essential meaning of the description and provide a more intimate insight into an issue specific to the life of the individual (Creswell, 1998). Furthermore, according to Moustakas (1994), "...phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience" (p. 13). Thus the goal of phenomenological research is to establish what an experience means for the person who has gone through that experience (Moustakas, 1994). When contributing analysis of real life experiences to

the field of humanities; phenomenological research serves as a more qualitative interactive form of study with participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). As opposed to existential phenomenology or experiential phenomenology, the researcher chose to use the transcendental phenomenological approach. In the existential approach, rather than a focus on essence, there is an examination of a probable world view concept that may explain the existence of a phenomenon (Crewell, 1998). Comparatively, the experiential phenomenological approach moves away from a philosophical premise to a more practitioner basis of inquiry. As such, the approach may explain a phenomenon from a practitioner's examination into a specific sector of interest within human science, but may still not capture the quintessence of lived experiences. However, the researcher needed to capture the essence of the specific lived experiences of participants through their own narratives in relation to the research inquiry, rather than coming to generalized conclusions of the phenomenon in question. Therefore, the phenomenon of study had to be examined as it relates to the lives of the participants, hence hearing the participant's voice in their own set of experiences was very important to establishing said essence. Furthermore, in transcendental phenomenology, there is intentionality in examination of the phenomenon and this is significantly achieved through the use of narratives creating imagery from which meaning is deduced (Moustakas, 1994). The use of imagery and deducing meaning from it thereof may be referred to as imaginative variations. Through the method of imaginative variation, (examples of instantiation and comparative examination) the invariant or eidetic aspects of a particular phenomenon are explicated. Therefore, the primary objective of the chosen approach was to use personal narration to

gain insight and assess how a historically dissonance-causing issue in society has impacted the life of service personnel in the armed forces.

Excerpting from the main research question to inform the basis of this study is the inquiry on, 'How the overall aspect of Integrated Racial Diversity has influenced interactions and shaped the experiences of African American/Black officers in the Marine Corps.' Conceptually,

1. Integrated Racial Diversity specifically, for this study, implicates the presence of African American/Black service Marine personnel.
2. African American/Black officers are those service personnel who are classified as being of African descent according to the racial classification codes observed in the U.S.

Epoché and the Process of Bracketing

Epoché refers to a researcher's need to 'clear space' within themselves so as to have a clean slate outlook towards new information obtained from an interview (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, the goal of epoché is to "not impose judgment on what we see, think, imagine, or feel" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 86). Serving as a Marine, and also being classified African American/Black, the researcher saw the need to clear his mind of his own notions regarding racial experiences as the objective of this study was to learn new information from the experiences of others. Therefore, given the researcher's intimately familiar background, there was a need to involve the process of bracketing in upholding epoché. Accordingly, Moustakas (1994) suggests that the process of bracketing must occur before the interview stage. The purpose of bracketing is to literally set aside any personal experience of the researcher which relates to the topic line of

study. When the researcher's experiences are visually noted, full focus can be placed on the study's topic and question, thus avoiding any compromise to research based on the researcher's own biases due to possibly related personal experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The bracketing process had to be adhered to throughout the research data collection phase and analysis. The researcher began his bracketing process by observing the study's topic line from different angles to ensure there was an identification of any biases of the researcher that may interfere with the study. The researcher needed to remain cognizant of any such possible biases which may cause interference with the interpretation of data. The researcher felt a connection to the participants as he is a fellow Marine and also what is racially classified as a Black/African American male, the population that was the focus of the study. Prior to interviewing the participants and reading over data for analysis, the bracketing process entailed the researcher writing his own unique experiences on a piece of paper in relation to the research topic. There were 10 experiences that the researcher identified and these were numbered 1 through 10. The researcher further shared his identified biases with a senior military officer familiar with the research. This sharing was done to ensure the researcher maintained transparency and accountability. Following this, the piece of paper, which represented a collective acknowledgement of the researcher's personal experiences, was then placed in a filing cabinet at the researcher's home office, this act representing an acknowledged separation of any personal experiences the researcher had that may interfere with the data gathering and analysis process. The researcher did pay periodic reference to the written biases during the course of the research to serve as a reminder to remain aware. In taking this action, the researcher was alert that what could possibly interfere with the research process was

being acknowledged, had been noted and shared. Furthermore, this specific act of accountability taken by the researcher was intentionally done so as not to contaminate the interpretation of participant's stories. Therefore, based on epoché being successfully achieved through the bracketing process described in earlier texts, the researcher was thus aware of potential biases. Being conscious of biases, the researcher is able to remain alert not to allow personal thoughts and feelings experienced in relation to the research topic to potentially interfere with collection and analysis of data for the research.

Sample and Population

This section describes the sample and population, including sample and recruitment procedures, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data coding methodology and categories. As with phenomenological research, this study analyzed the respective participants' lived experiences: "how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). All participants live and/or have had their experiences in the United States of America as this study entailed an assessment of the social phenomenon in the U.S. Specifically, the criteria for participation included the following:

1. Participants had to have identified themselves as Black or African American.
2. Participants had to be a male, holding a leadership rank as a commissioned officer within the Marine Corps upon time of interview.
3. Participants must live in the United States.
4. All participants had to agree to be audio-taped for the purpose of transcribing.

Initially, for recruitment of participants, the target population for the research was to consist of approximately 180 Marines from a Marine Detachment (MarDet). However,

the researcher later learned that recruitment through this means would compromise participant right to remain anonymous because the MarDet structure could specifically identify who, at a later date, may have taken part in the research. As a substitute, Marines on official duty who were away from their assigned Marine Corps base were the ones recruited. Prior to recruitment of participants, approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study was sought and granted. Upon IRB endorsement, recruitment for participants began by seeking and obtaining required written approval from an authorized approving official who was located in the researcher's geographical proximity. Required written approval was consequently acquired from the Chair, Joint Operations Logistics, who granted permission limited to matriculates of courses under the purview of the Joint Operations Logistics Committee. The courses included subject matters such as; Intern Logistics Studies Program; Theater Logistics Planners Program; Reserve Component Theater Sustainment Course; Joint Logistics Course; International Officer Logistics Preparatory Course; Pre-Command Courses - (Multifunctional, Transportation, Ordnance); Logistics Transformation & Change Management Course; Supports Operations Course; Combat, Training, Doctrine Developer Integration Course (CTDDIC); Doctrine Developer Course. This recruitment alternative provided an additional precautionary complexity absent within the MarDet system or unit and thus the alternate approach principally increased confidentiality for participants. Knowing the probable sensitivity of the research topic, confidentiality for those who wanted to take part in the research was important, especially with the concern of retaliation expressed by participants for participation in the study. For those in the military, particularly in the Marine Corps, there exists an unspoken code of silence. In this culture, seldom are there

any positive affirmations for violating this unofficial doctrine of silence; the consequence for breaching this discipline or breaking the ranks can pose a psychological fright, to one's career and person, characteristically enduring and as devastating as being labeled: Indignant and Disloyal.

This elite force, cloaked with the valor of loyalty, duty and discipline depicts a nexus of noble, self-sacrificing commitment. For a Marine, anything else would be un-American. Consequently, this veil of silence, which fastens Marines to their rank in order of God, Country, Corps, Family then Self, restricts the voices of individually maltreated Marines neither wanting to bring disgrace to their brothers and sisters in arms nor discredit the organization housing America's Beloved Warriors. Explicitly, for that reason, the decision to select Marines away from their parent units or specified Marine Corps bases would make it practically impossible to identify willing participants. Accordingly, Marines assigned local Marine Detachment: Marines, stationed on a non-USMC base, are compromisingly nonetheless surrounded by fellow Marines within the MarDet and posed a greater risk of their identity being discovered and enacting the consequent institutional retribution.

Within a phenomenology study, it is purported by some authorities that participants could range from 1 up to 325 (Polkinghorne, 1989; Dukes, 1984). Therefore, in this study, two participants who had served in the Marine Corps for at least 1 year were the only ones who were willing to risk participation despite their awareness of potential retaliation. This indication was only of initial concern prior to visiting with the participants individually. In meeting them in person, however, both participants did not show any signs of distress for participating in the research. The confidentiality of

participation was reassured by the researcher and upon agreeance and commitment to the explained research process and the terms of participation (i.e., audio-recording or copious notes as well as publishing data in the dissertation), the researcher selected to conduct the interviews off base at participant's desired location. When locations were determined, in-depth interviews with the selected two participants were then scheduled. The participants were further informed that all identifying information would be removed, a pseudonym will be used and measurable privacy and confidentiality ensuring their identity concealed. Concerning the recommended number of participants with phenomenological research, according to Boyd (2001), it is suggested that 2 to 10 participants or research subjects are sufficient to obtain adequate information to work within a study. Additionally, in some cases, Creswell (1998) recommends "long interviews with up to 10 people" as a "practical basis for a phenomenological inquiry" (p. 65 & 113). In further consideration of sample size, Wolcott (1994) maintains rather than enhancing qualitative research, the use of a large sample size may weaken the depth and richness of a research project. Hence, smaller samples allows for the capturing of participants' views and individual interpretations (Wolcott, 1994). In further support of smaller sample sizes, Daymon (2002) extends that, "Some highly insightful studies have been based on very small samples, especially in phenomenology research, because these have allowed researchers to focus in great depth on a few phenomenon rather than more superficially across a wide range" (Daymon, 2002, p. 20). In this particular research however, as noted, due to fear of retaliation the sensitivity of the research topic, it was a challenge to get the number of potential participants that would meet the recommended minimum number of at least 8 participants as advised with a transcendental approach (Moustakas, 1994). Hence, the

researcher had to resort to using two participants that were willing to fully take part in the study and be interviewed. Information gained from the willing participants offered invaluable insight into their lived experiences in relation to informing the research topic.

The participants interviewed in the face to face session for this study were both field-grade officers. Field grade officers hold the rank of major, lieutenant colonel or colonel. One participant was on active-duty and the other served first as an enlisted Marine before being commissioned as an officer. However, in addition to the two participants selected for the face to face interview and with reference to Creswell (1998) on what may serve sufficient to data collection in a phenomenological study, the experiences of another service personnel, Lt. Gen. Frank E. Petersen, was incorporated in the study, through his autobiography (Petersen, 1998). The justification of including Petersen (1998) into this research is due to the experiences during his service of almost four decades as a Marine.

Upon review, Petersen's story informed the topic line of this study hence Petersen's extensive experiences, particularly cross generationally, as a Black service man added significant insight to the study. According to Petersen (1998), Petersen served in the Marine Corps for almost four decades, beginning in the late 1940s. Such a period of time is inclusive of two generations. His set of experiences from when there were little to no Black service men found or allowed in the Marine Corps, particularly to occupy certain positions, to periods where the presence of Black service men increased gradually, could be very telling in how things, if at all, may have changed for Black men in the Corps. On his first day at the Marine Corps Air Station in El Toro, California, a captain claimed he was masquerading as a lieutenant and had him arrested; ejected from a public

bus while training in Florida for refusing to sit with the other Black passengers in the back and was even arrested at an officers' club on suspicion of impersonating a lieutenant. Petersen's selection offered a unique conduit for multidimensional richness in this research. His piercing tenure and range of racial encounters inclusive of his accomplishments defying the challenges, speaks in the still small voice of then and now. He enlisted in the Navy as an electronics technician in 1950. Inspired by the story of Jesse Brown, first African American naval aviator, Petersen applied for and was accepted into the Naval Aviation Cadet Corps. In 1952, he accepted a commission as a second lieutenant and also became the first Black pilot in the Marine Corps.

Petersen served as a fighter pilot in two combat tours in Korean and Vietnam, flying 350 combat missions. He flew nearly 300 missions during the Vietnam conflict; during his tour in Vietnam, he became the first African American in the Marines and the Navy to command a tactical air squadron. Demonstrated combat actions while flying in North Vietnam earned Lt. Gen. Petersen the Purple Heart.

Of many firsts, in 1979, Frank Petersen became the first Black general in the Marine Corps. In 1986, he was named the first Black commander of Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia. Serving thirty-eight years, two in the Navy, Petersen retired as a lieutenant general. General Petersen had earned twenty medals for bravery in combat, the Distinguished Flying Cross as well as the Distinguished Service Medal and was also the senior ranking aviator in the U.S. Marine Corps, Army, Navy and Air Force with over 4,000 logged hours in various fighter/attack aircraft. General Petersen worked with several education and research organizations during and after his time in the military to

include the Tuskegee Airmen headquarters and the National Aviation Research and Education Foundation. He also served as vice president of Dupont Aviation.

Promotions, job assignments and disproportionate punishments “were the three areas where racism was most likely to rear its ugly head for Blacks then and, to some extent, still does today,” he wrote.

According to Hunter (2008), “in terms of phenomenological study, biographies and autobiographies supply not just facts and dates, but offer a rich textual glimpse of the meaning that is attached to experiences. By definition, these literary offerings illustrate lived experiences” (p. 97). This inclusive approach added yet another informative dimension to the research.

Justifications

Considering the nature of this study, racial discrimination, the researcher chose to include only African American/Black male Marine officers. This decision was based on three particular reasons. Firstly, in relation to being gender specific to males as opposed to females, the literature review suggested that there are additional significant differences in issues which female service personnel deal with, such as sexual harassment (Hampf, 2004; Faley, Knapp, Kustis, & Dubois, 1999; Stiehm, 1998; Jensen, 2005). These differences may interfere in the shared narration of racial discriminatory experiences which is the focus of this research. Secondly, in relation to other racial groups, people from other marginalized populations, such as Hispanics, do not necessarily share the same historical acts of provocation in discriminatory practices in comparison to the experiences of the African American/Black males in the United States (Pieterse, Todd, Neville & Carter, 2012; Ruiz, 2009; Dempsey and Shapiro, 2005). Thirdly, this is a

research study; hence it must be methodological and with focus. As such, a homogenous group had to be established in order to fully understand the phenomenon within this particular subculture or spectrum of analysis.

Data Collection and Breakdown of Interview Protocol

When participants were initially met to conduct the interview, the process began with reviewing the consent form, which is a contract that stated the details of the research, confidentiality and how the study may affect the participant. The researcher was aware that gathering personal information from someone can leave the individual vulnerable in the process (Mauthner, et al. 2002). Once this disclosure was shared and completed, both researcher and participant signed two consent forms of the same content. The researcher kept one of the signed copies and gave participants the other signed copy for their own records – all copies owning the signatures of both participant and researcher. The copies kept by the researcher were safely stowed in his home office lockable filing cabinet.

The data collection and analysis consisted of three stages. The first stage included initial data gathering by preparing the participants to be comfortable and at ease with what was required in their participation. As aforementioned, consent forms were executed prior to the interview, and during the interviews, none of the participants showed any signs of discernible distress during the interview process.

The second stage was ensuring the use of open-ended questions to guide the interview sessions. The posing of questions in this manner was done to extract the experiences of the individual in their own elaborations whilst encouraging focused responses (Berg, 1998). Additionally, Berry (1999) states, “Because of the nature of this

type of research, investigations are often connected with methods such as in-depth interviewing” (p. 197). While Maykut and Morehouse (1994) add that:

“The data of qualitative inquiry is most often people’s words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behavior. The most useful ways of gathering these forms of data are participant observation, in-depth interviews, group interviews, and the collection of relevant documents.” (p. 147).

Open-ended, in-depth interviews enabled the gathering of vital information from the Marines within the unit concerning the topic of racial discrimination experiences. Some of the interview questions were presented as follows; What factors may influence service personnel’s perception of racial discrimination; What are the challenges that have been faced from being considered a member of a historically marginalized population serving in the United States Armed Forces; How do African American/Black service men perceive current equity training programs in the Marines?

Myers (2002) described some strengths of qualitative research in the following:

“Qualitative studies are tools used in understanding and describing the world of human experience. Since we maintain our humanity through the research process, it is largely impossible to escape the subjective experience, even for the most seasoned of researchers... A major strength of the qualitative research is the depth to which explorations are conducted and descriptions are written, usually resulting in sufficient details for the reader to grasp the idiosyncrasies of the situation.” (p. 3).

In addition, participants were sent a copy of their transcripts for review and if they had any further additions they wanted to make, they were encouraged to share. It must be noted that all were satisfied with what was presented in the initial submission.

In the third stage of data collection for this study, the researcher sought to access any publications or written documents pertaining to the lifeworld of the research participant. Publications included books and articles that were written by the participant, about the participant or recommended via the participant. Written documents included letters from friends, family members, well-wishers, and/or journal logs kept by the participant with all set to be analyzed along with interview transcripts. Ensuing the data collection, the analysis phase of the research entailed the sifting of material from interviews, researcher's notes, publications and all other aforementioned sources of data. A content analysis approach was employed to aid in a systematic identification of specified characteristics contained in written or oral communication (Druckman, 2005; Moustakas, 1994).

Organization of Data

Data organization was centered particularly on Amedeo Giorgi's psychological phenomenological approach encompassing three interlocking steps: (1) phenomenological reduction, (2) description and (3) search for essence (Finlay, 2009). Data was sorted by developing themes through the use of an appropriate color coding scheme method. The analysis of qualitative data is essentially defined by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) as: "Working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 35). Patton (1990) further articulated

that researchers use an inductive approach to analyze data by condensing the data into a brief summary, establishing clear links between the summary findings and developing a framework of the processes that come from the raw data. Once data was collected and verified by participants, through detailed description and direct interpretation, categories and themes were developed and applied to the research questions in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

As the data was analyzed and interpreted, descriptive themes were used to describe the basic features of the data. The researcher used both graphical and color coded methods to summarize the data in a clear and understandable way. The researcher also utilized memo writing to organize thoughts during the data analysis phase of the research (Creswell, 1998). All data was stored manually and electronically in a secure space which only the researcher accessed.

The Coding Process

Coding is a vital process in the analysis of qualitative data. A code, in qualitative research, is a short phrase or a word that researchers symbolically assign for a portion of visual or language-based data (Saldana, 2009). Coding, on the other hand, is the process of assigning indicators of reference to qualitative data so as to arrange observations and make them part of a system. It is a process that allows the segregation of data, and that serves to summarize and condense data. The researcher recorded the participant's descriptions of their experiences using a digital voice recorder. Through the use of open-ended questions in the interviews, a greater understanding of the participant's experiences was gained by the researcher. The recordings from the interviews were uploaded on the researcher's computer and readied for transcription. Headphones were used during

transcription where the conversation was typed out verbatim by playing and pausing, then typing out short portions of the recording one bit at a time. Upon finishing the transcriptions and transposing the recordings into written narrative form, the researcher cross checked what had been written with replaying the recordings and making a comparison for accuracy. The transcribed recordings were then merged into one document. After transcription of the interviews, the autobiography of Lt. Gen. Petersen was read in its entirety while referencing the research questions. During the reading of Lt. Gen. Petersen's autobiography, notes were taken and placed in relevance to the interview questions. Inclusive of Lt. Gen. Petersen's autobiography, the process of transcription and replaying of the recorded interviews enabled the researcher to identify meaning within the narratives. This identification process is referred to as horizontalization, where a pattern of meaning in narratives are observed and noted (Moustakas, 1994). Patterns of similarities that were consistent between the experiences of the participants eventually emerged. There were three main similarities that emerged to form the categories. These were Individual/Marine, Marine Culture/Environment and Relational Concepts. The said categories were then represented pictorially with a chart as subthemes pertaining to the participant's experiences were found and placed under the appropriate category. There were a total of 32 subthemes initially created. Given the volume of subthemes, the researcher identified further similarities in some of the existing themes, therefore themes that were similar in meaning were merged and also, by incorporating delimited horizons (Moustakas, 1994), subtopics within subthemes were established. Identification of subthemes, development of subtopics within the process and leaving only themes that

were giving significant differences in expression, was necessary in allowing for an efficient chart to be developed.

By reflecting on personal textual description and engaging in imaginative variation, the researcher was able to construct a description of the structures per participant's experience (Moustakas, 1994). Through observation of the categories, subthemes and subtopics that had emerged, the research sought to identify the structural essence from the descriptions informing participant experiences. The researcher was able to conclude that the essence of the summed participant experiences was adaptation. In all that the participants had expressed they had been through, inclusive of the odds against them as African American/Black men in the Marines, all participants found ways to adapt to the reality of racial discrimination they were facing in the Marine Corps environment, particularly since the aim of these men was to make a career out of being a Marine. Therefore, for the participants, adaptation was a survival necessity in the Marines Corps.

Once the similar subthemes had been combined and subtopics finalized, the total subthemes and subtopics under each category were represented along with the essence of adaptation in an Adaptation Structural Chart (*fig. 2, chapter IV*) as follows,

Individual/Marine – 4 subthemes with a total of 11 subtopics, Marine

Culture/Environment – 2 subthemes with a total of 6 subtopics and finally, Relational

Concepts – 3 subthemes with a total of 8 subtopics.

Justification of Color Coding

There are several methods to coding. The researcher preferred to use the descriptive color coding method (Saldana, 2009). This coding method focused on providing detailed inventory of the data content based on assigned colors. Color coding

began after the researcher transcribed the interview content, which was the raw data. Color coding enables researchers to decode meaning in colors behind a narrative. This method also provides researchers with visual signs that enable researchers to see intersections and interrelations between coded signs and, therefore, aids the researcher to give meaning to and extract the participant's feelings, thoughts and perceptions by reading in between the lines (Broome, 2011; Saldana, 2009; Josselson, 2004). As such, color coding allows researchers to better assess maps of meaning rather than the meaning of individual quotes. Phenomenology research method emphasizes the collection of data in narrative form (Josselson, 2004). It focuses on studying the experiences of the participants by analyzing the participant's accounts. How the researcher interprets data affects the outcomes of the research process. The color coding strategy enables researchers to interpret the structured meaning of the message as a whole giving it a contextual analysis rather than focusing only on the specific text. Interpretative stances are critical in qualitative studies as this approach may humanize expressed experiences. The coding strategy has a significant influence in how the researcher interprets a given set of qualitative data (Josselson, 2004). Therefore, color coding can lead to further explanations beyond the text and obtain disguised and implicit meanings. This method anchors on the philosophy that there are implicit meanings in the narratives that participants provide during research, creating visual effects that deepen the meaning of events in the narrative (Josselson, 2004).

The categories were listed, then each category's subtheme was highlighted with a color and the subtopic in relation to the subthemes were given initials and highlighted in the same color. For instance, under Individual/Marine, the subtheme of *awareness* was

highlighted yellow and the subtopic of individual discrimination was indicated as ID, fellow discrimination as FD and environment discrimination as ED and were all highlighted yellow. The subtheme *trust* under the Individual/Marine category was highlighted brown and the subtopics of oneself indicated as OnS, military as M and environment as EnV. This pattern of coding was carried through with Marine Culture/Environment and Relational Concepts. Categorizations, subthemes and subtopics resulted in the development of patterns and, as aforementioned, subtopics under each subtheme and category were used to demarcate meaning and were represented by initials. The concept of demarcating meaning suggests that the stream of human experiences has landmarks. The researcher identified the landmarks in order to demarcate each meaning unit and assign labels. The meaning units expressed pieces and moments in the participant's story. Pieces are part of the participant's experiences that can exist separately while moments are parts that are dependent upon the entire experience of the participant (Broome, 2011).

An example of the highlighting and color palate for each category's subtheme is given below:

Umm, when I say this was the first time I had to admit to myself that this wasn't normal treatment – different things had been happening, but I was – well I ignored them... [OnS]. This incident allowed no space for my lies or deliberately accepting this as part of the training. I couldn't lie to myself [MLi]. Umm for instance umm I was continually awakened from from my sleep umm getting very little sleep. I'm talking about this had been some years ago but I aah distinctly remembered umm being awakened at night to get up and this was happening two

and three nights a week [HrD]. And umm I remembered when they were spraying us off...

Individual / Marine

- Trust – *brown*

Oneself [OnS]

Military [M]

Environment [EnV]

- Awareness – *yellow*

Individual Discrimination [ID]

Fellow Discrimination [FD]

Environment Discrimination [ED]

- Morals – *blue*

Personal Belief [PB]

Marine Belief [MB]

- Betrayal – *red*

Individual [InD]

Marine Corps [MCp]

Fellow Marines [FM]

Marine Culture / Environment

- Discrimination – *purple*

Mental [Mn]

Verbal [Vb]

Physical [Phy]

- Culture – *light green*

Marine Life [MLi]

Authority [AuTH]

Dangers [D]

Relational Concepts

- Marine Support – *light grey*

Services [SV]

Hierarchal [H]

Peers [P]

- Familial Relations – *orange*

Hardship [HrD]

Support [S]

- Authority Support – *burnt orange*

Positive [PsV]

Negative [NegV]

Neutral [NtL]

Findings on Emotions with Colors

Distinct cognitive, along with affective arousal, or emotional responses were identified with Individual/Marine and correlated with other identified categories.

1. INDIVIDUAL / MARINE

Trust 

Awareness 

Betrayal 

Morals

Please note that the black box being used here is primarily to enhance the colors incorporated in the color coding for clarity in this section.

2. MARINE CULTURE / ENVIRONMENT

Culture

Discrimination

3. RELATIONAL CONCEPTS

Marine Support

Familial Relations

Authority Support

Affective emotions (Trust, Awareness, Betrayal) expressed the greatest dissonance as Morals (Standards/Principles/Messages) were conflicting and consequently perplexed the cognition of the **Individual** in relation to themselves and their required obligations to the **Marine[s]**, therefore presenting a state of burdened awareness in which they still had to remain functional. For instance, the **Individual / Marine[’s]** Familial Relations was illustrated as attempting to cope with mental, verbal and physical Discrimination. Authority Support only offered unpredictable responses consequently leaving Marine Support far from black and white *standards* but most often creating a dissonance of “gray areas”. These Marines found it necessary to maintain higher levels of Awareness for Trust in this environment led to the maddening reality of having to fear the danger of Betrayal since Marines, like themselves, had to balance and find ways to exist in both their country and their Corps – pledging allegiance to conflicting Morals and dueling realities. These Marines loved

and served a country and Corps that didn't love them...explicitly enduring hardships of a society and an environment described equally as a **Culture** of **Discrimination** and **Betrayal**: an institution of conflicting **Morals**.

Summary of Data Analysis Steps Employed in Research

Steps were as follows:

- A. The researcher obtained a full description of the participant's experiences of the phenomenon.
- B. Interviews were transcribed verbatim.
- C. Post transcriptions of interviews;
 - i. Each response in statement from participants were assessed for significance with regards to description of the experience.
 - ii. All relevant statements to the interview question were noted and categories developed.
 - iii. Each developed category was given color and then narratives color coded, thus creating the invariant horizons of the experience under the categories (Moustakas, 1994).
 - iv. Invariant meaning units were developed into themes per category.
 - v. Textual descriptions were developed by synchronization of invariant meaning units in the narration of experiences while incorporating verbatim examples.
 - vi. The researcher reflected on own textual description and, through imaginative variation, grouped the varying colors giving description to the structures of each participant's experience under developed categories.

- D. Textual description of the meanings and essences of each participant's experience was then placed in the appropriate category (Moustakas, 1994). The Petersen (1998) text was obtained in a PDF version. Analysis of the text for the purposes of extrapolating information for the research followed similarly in the format aforementioned in C. ii through vi.
- E. Using the individual textual-structural descriptions developed from participants' experiences, inclusive of Petersen (1998), the researcher constructed a composite textual-structural description of the essences and meanings to the participants' lived experiences, cumulating all individual textual-structural descriptions into an umbrella description of the experiences representing participants as a collective delineation.

Interview Validity: Building Rapport

There is the responsibility for a researcher to present findings in an accurate and reliable way (Moustakas, 1994). During the interview process, this is achieved by building rapport hence validating the gathering of data and representation of information as authentic to the participant's story. Credible dialogue between researcher and participant created an understanding of the reality in experiences expressed by participants. The researcher attentively listened to the participant as their narrations were being extended. This was done through both verbal and non-verbal communication. Examples of such communication non-verbally was in instances where the researcher would periodically nod his head. Verbally, the researcher stated, "I understand." Such engagement from the researcher encouraged the participant to enthusiastically proceed as they realized they were being listened to and hence eagerly did so. Accordingly, periodic

“checking in” with participant(s) was also enacted ensuring sustained conformability and safety to prescribed standards.

Reflexivity and Ethics

Factors involving reflexivity were observed by the researcher in conducting this study. Firstly, the researcher is himself classified as a minority in the U.S. population codification system (White, 2012). Secondly, the researcher has served in a leadership position as a commissioned officer in the United States Marines Corps. In this leadership role, decisions have had to be made which influenced the lives of others. Thirdly, the researcher has been closely acquainted with what internal conflicts may arise between actual experiences as an individual and pledged loyalty to the U.S. Armed Forces. Data reported represents the voice of the participant, and though the researcher may have an emotional and natural inclination to empathize with participant experiences, objectivity was sustained through the processes of data collection, analysis and reporting (Willis, 2007). Considering the above factors, the researcher maintained reflexivity and objectivity by being conscious of personal biases during the phases of research in order to not convolute the participant’s voice, hence the outcome of the study.

Considering adherence to ethics, the researcher sought objectivity in providing answers to inquiry while safeguarding the well-being of participants. In qualitative research, the probable involvement of human participants in studies demands greater levels of responsibility requiring the researcher(s) to adhere to all ethical codes. According to the Collaboration Institutional Training Initiative (CITI, 2013), researchers need to assess potential risks that may affect involved parties, being the researcher and the participant(s), prior to research. Ethical considerations for this study were in

compliance with the stipulations set forth by the Institutional Review Board of Nova Southeastern University. Given the potential sensitivity of the research topic, the researcher had to be aware of the potential of psychological harm which is discussed by Mauthner, et al. (2002). A participant's recollection of past experiences of encountered discrimination may provoke unpleasant memories. The researcher remained cognizant of that possibility and limited probing questions in order to maintain a comfortable environment for the participant. Furthermore, the researcher communicated with Nova Southeastern University's School of Psychology to lend assistance in any possible therapy that may be needed. Confidentiality of participant information was of high priority to the researcher due to ethical obligations and the sensitive nature of the study (Mauthner, et al., 2002).

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

What disturbs or assures us about race has very little to do with blood or biology. ... Race is about how you use language, understand your heritage, interpret your history, identify with your kin, and figure out your meaning and worth to a society that places values on you beyond your control. And it's also about what people see you as—or take you to be. (Dyson, 2009) — **Michael Eric Dyson**, *April 4, 1968: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Death and How it Changed America*

We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated. An absence of compassion can corrupt the decency of a community, a state, a nation. Fear and anger can make us vindictive and abusive, unjust and unfair, until we all suffer from the absence of mercy and we condemn ourselves as much as we victimize others. (Stevenson, 2014) — **Bryan Stevenson**, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*

This chapter will cover the researcher's analysis where the themes, categories and essence of the narratives from the transcriptions of participants were discovered. There were three main categories created that gave structure to the analysis. These categories were Individual/Marine, Marine Culture/Environment, and Relational Concepts. The essence of the narratives explored was encompassed in the concept of Adaptability. Additionally, various subtopics were developed under each main category which provides further clarity and expounds on the themes generated in relation to the categories.

In this section, excerpts utilized in the analysis of transcribed data will be presented in color. The researcher trusts that in offering a colored presentation in this regard, the reader may gain a sense of connection to the color provoked expressive

overlook relative to the adaptation chart and through the narrated experiences of participants. Additionally, the names Johnson and Cleofis represent pseudonyms used to protect the actual identity of interviewed participants. Finally, in some areas, for the purposes of readability of text, some sections of colors have been purposely placed on a black background.

The participants in the research expressed how their lives are impacted, both directly and indirectly, in dealing with racial discrimination as service personnel. Furthermore, like Black/African Americans in the general U.S. society, service personnel in the armed forces, had experiences on the job that affected the lives of the participants beyond the job. Whether on base or off base, all aspects and consequences of racial discrimination continued to have an inseparable impact on the participant's life. Johnson, for instance, referenced an incident that negatively impacted him from the time of occurrence through his years as a Marine. As Johnson pointed out,

“Yeah, **it just wasn't right umm and that's after weeks and weeks of these different events that – that umm it just didn't feel right –** that's the best way I could describe it. **Confusion as to the treatment and and it was a eerie – it was...an eerie feeling that came along with it and it created some umm [voice cracking] anger in me but when that incident actually happened at that time I – I had to I had to deal with some things with myself but as far as me being in denial about what was going on umm [extended paused]; I didn't understand. I couldn't define what I felt. Nothing good warranted such an act [paused]. Nothing at all. This incident tore something inside of me and at the same time ripped something out of me.”**

Johnson was expressing here how the differential negative treatment he experienced, based on his race, had impacted his very personhood. An incident which Johnson indicated affected him years later when he further adds,

“Yeah, a little over seventeen years, not quite eighteen years and I still remember – I still remember the feeling.”

Similarly, Cleofis had caught on to the fact that service personnel classified ‘Black’ were mistreated and called names. Cleofis indicated that he brought his concerns to a sergeant major, but eventually realized that his queries were falling on deaf ears and such experiences were to be his reality. He states,

“Sergeant major umm didn’t care for me because I challenged him on why his staff-NCO’s called [*stopped statement/sentence*] – which we rarely had to go to their formations but occasionally we did – [*returned back to original statement/completion of sentence*] why were Blacks referred to as niggers?”

Cleofis adds that the sergeant major he posed the question to, simply mocked him by reiterating the derogatory term to Cleofis himself. In experiencing this, Cleofis adopted a totally different perspective of the organization he had joined. He expresses this by stating,

“The sergeant major did it. Yep [*extended pause/intense stare/smirking*] I won’t say what I thought about doing [*pause/snickers*], but umm it wasn’t good. So umm so here again [*look of perplexed displeasure*] **this is an organization that you know – you know that supposed to be the best and I’m expecting it to be the best and seems like you know when things turn or when something comes up it always**

seems to be [*pause and points to himself*] I thought I was being treated differently because of the color of my skin.”

Petersen (1998) also expressed how he had to recognize the realities that he was treated negatively through constant harassments, which were represented as ‘hazing,’ but targeted at those being racially classified as Black.

“Sometimes, the hazing because of the color of my skin would get my goat. No doubt about it. It was difficult to contain, practically and emotionally.” (p. 81).

Considering all participants, there was an eventual acknowledgement that racial discrimination against them was the norm – endemic to their being a Marine.

Presented on the next page is *Figure 2*, an adaptation structural chart that provides a visual representation of how the essence, main categories and sub themes inter-related in analysis of the narrations.

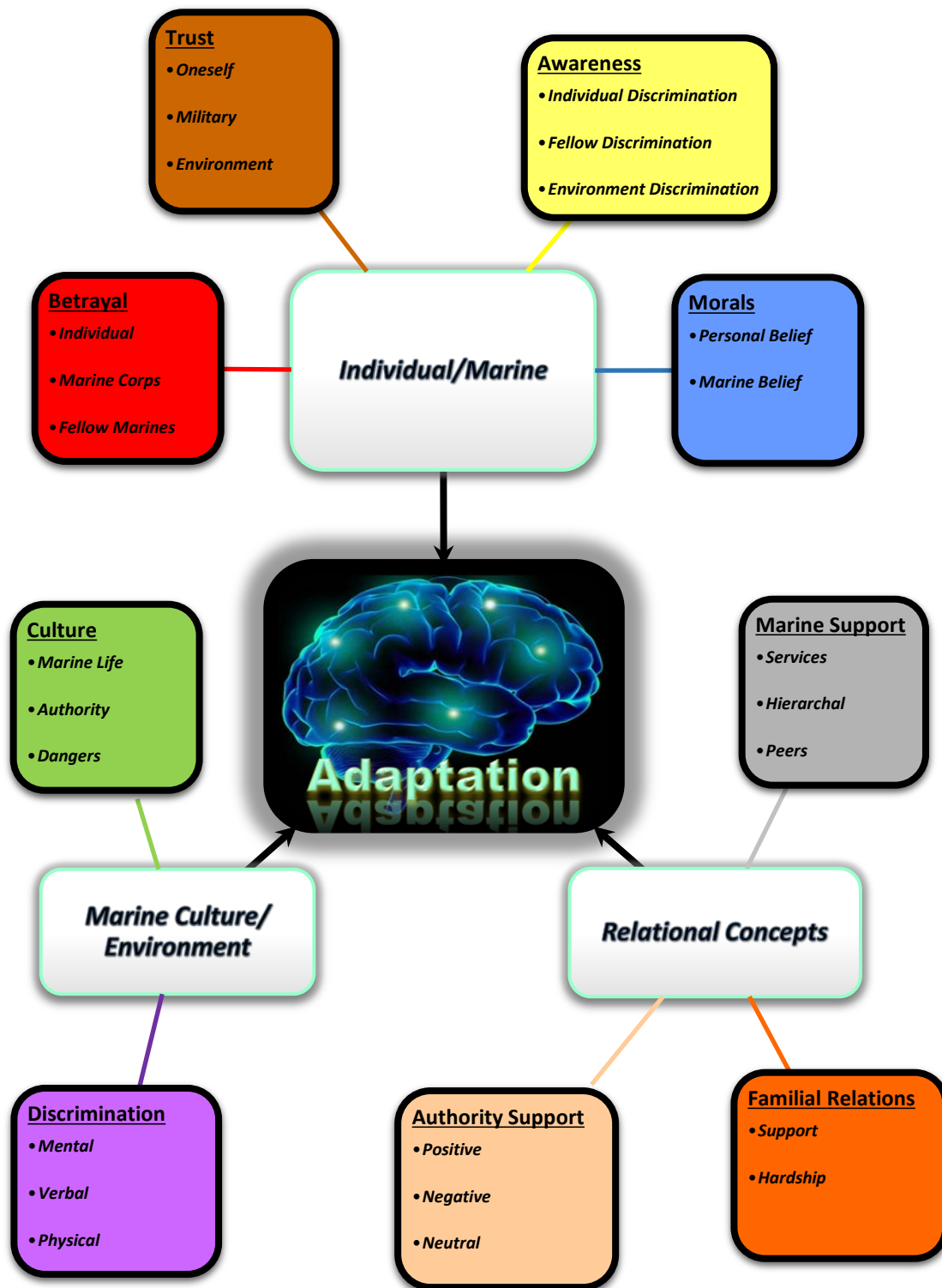


Figure 2. Adaptation Structural Chart

What follows is a discussion of how each of the developed themes and subthemes are relevant to the analysis of narratives and respective meanings identified. For the purposes of fluidity in reading, in some places, where expressions such as ‘umm’ are present in the transcriptions of the narrator’s exchange, in direct quotations within this section, such expressions have been removed and narrative presented otherwise verbatim. Furthermore, where there are duplications in a word or set of words such as ‘and and,’ only one of the words will be presented. However, the researcher will maintain illustrating some of the transcribed data from the interviews ‘as is’ with the original expressions and inserted researcher’s observations. This is done in order that readers will get a balanced perspective for the interview outcomes from both versions, thus limiting the possibilities of agitation from trying to navigate comprehension of what is being read in transcription. Finally, Petersen’s expressed experiences are also depicted in this segment.

Adaptability

According to Boyd-Franklin and Franklin (2000), adaptive behavior, which is engaged by African Americans in reference to preserving the psychological integrity, can be impacted by personal experiences of both perceived and direct acts of prejudice or discrimination. Such adaptation was evident in the lives of the participants during several portions of their narratives where it was assessed by the researcher that there was first confusion, then excuses made for self and then an overall acceptance of a mindset needed to fit their lives as service personnel within the Marine Corps who were facing unprecedented challenges because of their race as Black. The need for such adaptation can be seen as participant Johnson indicated:

“...it’s really hard to say and what I mean by that (*sic*), I think it had been happening for a while but just didn’t understand it being discrimination. I think it happened when I first came into the Marine Corps. I just noticed people were treated different I guess; I noticed that... I really didn’t take mind to it because my main objective was just to try to get through. This started at a place called Quantico. It’s a base where I was going through OCS which is Officer Candidate School. And when I was there, I had some situations that took place and I just really didn’t pay attention towards it until I just noticed the frequency and the intensity, but I also just kinda blew it off. I chalked it off to that of, it’s just the Marine Corps. What do you expect, this is all in how they treat you and try to toughen you up and I just kind of ignored these things ... but I ... I just had a weird feeling about it – I just had a weird feeling about it. That feeling...just made me – it kinda made me – kinda didn’t feel right on the inside.”

There was a similar need for adaptation identified with Cleofis:

“Yeah, the police force, so yeah wow – it’s in the Marine Corps...it’s in the police force – I mean goodness! So – but I decide to go back to the Marine Corps, but now I said I know how to, I think I know how to deal with it better than the first time ‘cause remember I really wanted to be a career Marine.”

Additionally, the recognized need for adaptation was found with Petersen (1998):

“Home was to be El Toro Marine Corps Air Station in Santa Ana, California. Just lucky, I guess. It could have been Cherry Point, North Carolina. Even though it was California, I was to find out exactly what it meant to be a Black officer, the

only Black aviator, in the United States Marine Corps during the 1950s. And it wasn't to be all fun and games.” (p. 64).

As was evident from the excerpts above, all participants, even during different generational periods of being a Marine Corp officer, experienced a familiar marginalization and treatment because of being classified a Black person and in the Marines. Their respective desires to be fully committed to their careers as Marines, forced them to accept a racist reality and propelled them to eventually acclimate themselves to the reality of the racial discrimination they faced.

An example of acknowledgement of a discriminatory reality and the need to adapt was offered by Cleofis when he stated,

“I mean initially all I wanted to be was a staff sergeant because I didn't see me being able to get any further than that [*speaking softly emphasizing any further than that*]/[*extended pause/perplexed look on face*] ... **My glass ceiling was staff sergeant.** I know I'm not going to make Gunny. Look here [*emphasizing look here*] – I had never seen one – I had never seen a Black Gunny [*gesturing with hands and shrugging shoulders*]!”

Petersen (1998), of the earlier generation of Black service men, also indicated that he eventually had to acclimate to being discriminated against as Black and among the only few to be in the service during his time,

“The significance of becoming the first Black aviator in the Marine Corps was fully understood when I was designated a naval aviator and accepted the commission as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps Reserve. All this was prior to the civil rights movement, and we were **still operating in a segregated environment.** It made for a strange

bit of mental confusion if I allowed myself to evaluate my new social position by the color of my skin.” (p. 47).

Participant Johnson also adds,

“So actually saying something to anyone, I had to first realize that maybe I was even trying to rationalize why these things happened. So maybe I wasn’t looking at it the way it actually was ... I tried to distort what was actually going on, but I had to deal with that burden. So that being said, again, days turned into weeks and weeks turned into more weeks – weeks turned to months, months turned into more years to a point where I started realizing ... that I developed a umm a complicated and dangerous distrusting state of mind. It was kind of maddening in a sense and still very confusing. It is very depressing umm especially when that same feeling of betrayal or when incidents of racism identifies – finds themselves in ... embedded and organic throughout the Marine Corps. Seeing it, feeling it and umm so much mental energy fighting it [*sits back in chair and places his hands over his head/looks very disappointed*]. You don’t know what is what or who is who... Marines know how to locate, close with and destroy the enemy. In other words, by the time you realize your life is in danger – it’s already too late – you’re dead...”

Regardless of the participant’s common attempt to initially ‘overlook’ being racially discriminated against, they all ultimately accepted their experiences of being treated differently as Black service men. Such acceptance in turn led to their coping with experiences in order to have and maintain their careers as Marines. Hence, “adaptation”

was the thematic essence as this was the most transcending commonality among all narratives reviewed.

Textually bringing the experiences of the participants into perspective were three categories that informed the essence of adaptation: Individual/Marine, Marine Culture/Environment, and Relational Concepts. The examination of these categories is presented below along with the subthemes developed from each category.

Individual/Marine

Participants in this research, all explained their ambitions for becoming career Marines. Although each participant found a way to endure his experiences and did what they had to in order to ensure continuity with their careers as service members, there were variances in narrations specific to each individual. The researcher therefore acknowledged this with the heading Individual/Marine. As an example of this Individual/Marine category, Cleofis perceived the Marines as an ‘elite force,’ for which he wanted to be a part. However, being accepted as one of the ‘elites’ was mitigated by the fact that he was a Black man. Cleofis explains:

“So, now you know I’m thinking – I’m joining the elite force, the elite fighting force of the world [*paused looking at me intensely*] and so they got to be inclusive you know what I mean – ‘cause you know, you need [*voice quivers*] everyone and [*perplexed stare/slight pause*] here it is I’m seeing discriminating factors as far as I’m concerned – right up front.”

Similarly, participant Johnson had an encounter of equal note and observation in his set of experiences. As a Marine, he wanted to serve with honor and dignity. However, as an

individual, he was humiliated by the actions of a White Marine of the same rank who spat in his face as a joke. Resultantly, that incident was unpunished by senior personnel.

Johnson shares:

“... and again, different things like that happened ... but when I actually had him spit in my face – there was nothing I read about the Marine Corps, in the sense of Honor, Courage, Commitment – where we learned different acronyms that dealt with Marine Corps principles and traits and things of that nature – nothing ever justified a behavior as that... I was – that felt demoralizing and I became very angry umm but at that point when – this incident actually happening [*shaking head left to right/perplexed and piercing stare*] ... him spitting in my face ... ”

As is evident with Cleofis and Johnson, both men admired the Marines and had ambitions of becoming career service men. Though they themselves were looked down upon and despite their goals as individuals, they faced discriminatory acts from the very entity they held in high regard. Being looked down upon was a situation Petersen also encountered (Petersen, 1998). After taking the required initial examination for the Marines and scoring high on the written assessment, the reaction to Petersen’s otherwise impressive performance from the reviewing officer was one of disdain. Petersen (1998) recalls the words of the reviewing officer, who was White. The officer stated, “...there’s no way in hell or in this world that a Black guy could possibly do this well on this examination. Just no way” (p. 29). Petersen was not only surprised at this reaction, but as he continued to share, his outrage within grew. He felt crushed, but his resolve was nonetheless restored after speaking with his father about the situation.

What remained interesting about these encounters was how these men found ways to somehow endure, despite the patterns of condescension they were shown within the Marines because of the color of their skin. Some of this endurance in an attempt to find some form of solace, entailed acknowledging that others, who looked like them racially, were experiencing similar treatments. As Johnson presented, “... these things that were happening to me ... also were happening to others at that time umm – that were officer candidates – but what I did notice after that incident of him spitting in my face ... these other individuals looked just like me.”

Concerning the participants as individuals in the Marines, racism was very real to them all, even if they were in denial at the beginning of their respective experiences. There was an identifiable general trend of mistreatment for ‘being Black.’ In pursuit of becoming the career Marine they all desired, despite their respective, but similar drive to be the best Marine they could possibly be, the reality of racially charged discrimination, as individuals, was one they all faced within the Corps’ structure and somehow had to deal with it if they wanted to remain a Marine. Therefore, the essence of adaptability in relation to the individual Marine through this analysis revealed a cognitive dilemma or paradoxical ambush. The individual being a reflection of the need for the other, which was, becoming a career Marine. Thus, with this intent, even in facing animosity, the participants *had* to endure the racially driven challenges they encountered. In the subsequent discussions, there will be further illustrations and explorations exemplifying the varying elements of Adaptation in managing their experiences as an Individual and needing to cognitively negotiate life as a Marine.

Awareness

The health and welfare of an individual are the best criteria needed for effective functionality as a person. As such, in remaining cognizant of a needed state of safety, feeling a sense of belonging and/or appreciation, an individual may take notice of certain occurrences in his interactions and environment which may or may not inform positively the aforementioned needs. Upon reviewing the narratives, all participants explained how they came to realize, with time, that what they had anticipated, regarding being a Marine, was in fact not the case because of their race. Therefore, awareness denotes the occurrence of coming to specific realizations of discrimination witnessed individually, of fellow Marines and also in the general environment. Hence awareness is a key factor exacerbated by the environment. Some examples of states of awareness expressed by the participants are shared. For instance, Johnson mentioned the pride he initially took in feeling that he was a part of an elite force such as the Marines. However, with the passing of time, he realized that his set of negative experiences, in the Marines as a Black man, proved to be the opposite of what he expected.

“This pride of belonging, the energy and all the lives – it was all a lie. This is crazy – so then as more time went on and I had to decide what to do – do with my, this fake reality of *the few the proud*, that I really didn’t belong... There really wasn’t a clear path or understanding of options for certain acts not being tolerated. It almost felt and uh to a strong degree still feels like you should be happy that you are here – so don’t cause any problems.”

Johnson was of the notion that the members of the Marines were a group held together by a special bond of service. As an individual, however, that bond did not include him as he

was a racial outcast. This talk of belonging, as Johnson states, was just talk and hence a ‘fake reality,’ but the true reality was that of being excluded based on his race.

Comparatively, Cleofis’s encounter of a tough reality in being a Marine as a Black man came sooner than later. As he expressed in his narratives, he wanted an exit his first year within the force. According to Cleofis, his immediate experiences of the environment within the Corps reminded him of his childhood days where he experienced racism growing up under segregation.

“You know, yeah, so my Marine Corps career started out not so well... Now, with my [*chuckles*] ... in my fourth month – I was probably in my first year I imagine [*looking around smiling shaking head*] – yeah, let me see – yeah probably in my first year now I’m saying hey, how do I get out of this place. Because this uh this is reminiscent of my childhood, you know growing up in the South, under racist...racism. I grew up – I grew up under segregation.”

Petersen (1998) became equally aware of the racially biased challenges in mistreatments, ridicule and humiliation faced in the Marines by fellow members who were classified as Black, including himself.

“Unless a Black Marine’s hair is either naturally straight or has been chemically processed, if it’s three inches long it’s going to stand straight up—exactly what the new “Afro” hairstyle required. Trouble for the Black troopers had only just begun. Usually, they’d been serving under a White commanding officer and had little or no contact with Black officers. If they committed an act that made them subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, their legal advice would be provided by Whites, because few Black lawyers served in the Corps in that time.

This lack of Black leadership and guidance led to a sense of detachment and isolation from the Mainstream Marine Corps (pp. 99-100).

Among the experiences of all three service personnel, though they wanted to 'belong' and see themselves as part of what was commonly referenced as 'all Marines are green,' for these men, they became aware of a different reality of discrimination in a prejudiced environment. They were treated with contempt, disrespect and disregard all because they were Black men.

Trust

As the participants expressed and illustrated in their narratives, being a Marine was a common goal which they all were determined to accomplish. Where success was acknowledged to be based on being able to trust others, the environment was not conducive to trusting people, accomplishments became unnaturally challenging for these Black men. Issues of trust were similar in their respective stories and a race based issue overall within the Corps. As members of an already marginalized and mistreated population, being a Black male growing up in America was expressed by Cleofis as difficult in itself. He shared this experience in relation to that of being in the Marines, as he recollected his childhood experiences in the South, stating, "...this is reminiscent of my childhood, you know growing up in the South, under racist...racism." Now as men and members of an acclaimed elite force such as the Marines, for the participants, their presence as Black men was still met with hostility and contempt which then caused them, in their own ways, to find who to trust and/or not trust. For instance, Petersen acknowledged his need to form bonds with other service personnel who were Black and the reason why he like others, did so, "...needed the reinforcement of associating with

their own in order to restore self-confidence and a feeling of security.” (p. 100). As such, Petersen saw himself as a Black person first. Therefore, as a Black person within an environment which could not be trusted, Black people had to find their own associations with people who looked like them. This took precedence over what he and the other participants had come to realize was a charade. The Marine brotherhood was a falsehood.

Trying to figure out who to trust was a very exhaustive process. The need to question trust took a toll on Johnson, for instance. His process to figuring out whom to trust was draining. He expressed this impact when he stated that, “This is a lot of mental and situational paranoia, the very brothers and sisters-in-arms you’re supposed to protect are the ones violating your state of being.” As Marines with their lives literally in another person’s hands, the feeling that they could not trust those other people was something extremely troubling for the participants. What’s more, knowing the very fact that they were in this position was primarily because they were merely seen as Black men in uniform, was mentally traumatic to deal with as Johnson shared.

Betrayal

Where there is an expectation by someone with regards to upholding something and that expectation is violated, it may be a cause for betrayal. According to the participants, betrayal was experienced in various ways. Betrayal was experienced from the Marine Corps as an entity, on an individual level, and by fellow Marines. For example, betrayal by the Marine Corps was experienced by Cleofis. Betrayal for him was realized when he was shut off from an opportunity of recognition, even though his performance qualified him to be considered.

“Like, you know ... to see what the pilots experience and what have you. So there ... obviously they knew who they – who those people were – you know what I mean? So that’s what makes you feel inferior, you know that someone is not giving an opportunity. Now I was number one out of school and where do I go, I go to a non-job – you follow me?”

In relation to his expectations, as an Aircraft Hydraulics Systems Maintenance Specialist finishing top of his class, Cleofis, was still denied a job that would have otherwise been given to someone who finished number one in their class. This blunt denial of an opportunity that he qualified for placed him in a space that reinforced a sense of inferiority, a similar experience of racism from his childhood days in the South as he had shared. Cleofis had worked hard enough, but yet again because of his racial classification as Black, a legitimate pursuit of an opportunity he earned within the Corps had been denied. Betrayal was manifested unexpectedly as well. Johnson had an experience of betrayal from a fellow Marine of his own race. He spoke of a specific situation where he was betrayed by a person who was attempting to appease a White officer. This person had seniority over Johnson and being of the same race, Johnson had hoped he would find support as the individual had witnessed the incident between Johnson and the White officer. However, this Marine sided with the White officer who had, according to Johnson, clearly done wrong.

“This senior officer, this senior White officer from my perspective insults not only me, another officer, but this should have also offended this other Marine. Though he was speaking directly to me, indirectly this other Marine should have been also very disrespected. Ah, this Marine was older than this senior officer, as

well he was the command sergeant major. In other words, he was the most senior enlisted Marine, somewhat of an advisor to all Marines. Instead of him correcting the situation, he started protecting this senior Marine that was without question, wrong! Absolutely wrong!! But what's so damn interesting, this was an older Black Marine.”

This was yet another example of how one could be betrayed as there seemed an effort by other Black service personnel, who didn't want to get into trouble, to appease those who were White. Along with the experience of betrayal by individuals and fellow Marines, another example of betrayal was expressed by Johnson. This was a betrayal by the Corps. This was compounded by the disappointment of what Johnson had expected as more support from a member of his own race. As a result, he had not only lost faith in a preconceived notion of the Marine Corps as an entity of togetherness, but also felt he was losing himself as an individual in being affiliated with an entity of active hypocrisy, “ ... I had bought into this and I don't know if he was afraid and this was – he had been in the Marine Corps way longer than myself – the slow killing of self for God, Country, Corps ... always faithful – honor, courage, commitment...all a lie – all a lie! These are words, not deeds. In reality the Corps treats me no differently than society, no different than this country. It's all an act of character, not a true reflection.”

As is evident, the sense of betrayal was a disconcerting state to be in the Marines as a Black person. Johnson shared, “It is very depressing ... especially when that same feeling of betrayal or when incidents of racism identifies – finds themselves in ... embedded and organic throughout the Marine Corps. Seeing it, feeling it and ... so much mental energy fighting it. You don't know what is what or who is who...”

As offered and demonstrated through preceding illustrative excerpts, the participants found a level of disconnect as individuals and a Marine from an entity they served. This disconnect is indicated in the Adaptation Structural Chart (*see Fig. 2*). As they had to deal with being Black and Marines, all participants maintained a disposition of negotiating one's self in conflict with what was the theory of oneness and their reality of blatant racial discriminatory mistreatment, primarily from those who were White.

Morals

Each participant shared a premise in morals where they projected personal and Marine-based beliefs while trying to make sense of their experiences in the Corps. Encountering discriminatory acts led to tainting the moral perspectives of the participants. For instance, the standards for good physical appearance was not good enough when one is Black, but was measured against what was White. Cleofis was particularly and frequently mocked about his hair by a senior White officer. "In his office – what he would do is take a ruler and he would take my hair and extended it out to see if it would be exceeding the 3 inches on top." Though this kind of behavior may be equally seen as harassment, these sort of occurrences made Cleofis feel as though he was not good enough, in appearance, to be a part of the Marine Corps. What was the moral rationale for such behavior coming from the senior officer? It seemed having features that qualified one as Black was not respected. Another example for Cleofis, where Marine morality was called into question, was of an event where actions of an officer went against the perpetuated goodness of being a Marine. Upon finishing an exam, Cleofis's response on his paper was apparently not good enough, and though overall having scored high on the exam, his performance was not accepted. According to Cleofis, though he

also graduated at the top of his Marine class and number 2 overall in the Corps, his answer to a particular question, though similar in response to a White counterpart, was not acceptable. In seeking an explanation, the instructors indicated that they just liked his counterparts' response better. Likewise, Petersen shared his disheartening moment when, though he, similar to Cleofis, also finished high in his class, a White officer, when asked by another White officer whether he would want Petersen under his command in wartime answered in the negative. This response indicated again that being a top performer was obviated by one's Blackness.

Marine Culture/Environment

Culture

As part of an elite fighting power such as the Marines, members may pride themselves in their affiliation with an established organization known to the nation as "... the world's most feared and trusted force" (Mattis, 2003). Therefore, Marine culture may be conceptualized as the practices within the Corps which inform the experiences of its members. Danger and answering to authority all encompass the Marine life. One useful aspect of the Marine culture which those in command ensured was done well was combat related. Johnson identified this as a positive, though, according to him, it equally carried a negative consequence. Johnson credited the Marines with preparing its members to identify danger, on one hand, but on the other hand, such training led to creating a Marine environment where members always felt they were in some kind of danger, even among themselves. "...it's like always being on high alert even when you're on friendly soil." Therefore, how can a person who is meant to protect, do so effectively when they feel unsafe in their own environment? Additionally, coupled with a Marine environment of

superimposed insecurity, as a member of the Corps now having come to some revelations about the Marine setting, Johnson further stated that the pride he had initially carried with him in hopes of becoming a career Marine eventually dissipated. Hence, the Marine culture was a false reality of belonging. “This pride of belonging, the energy and all the lives – it was all a lie. This is crazy – so then as more time went on and I had to decide what to do – do with my, this fake reality of *the few the proud*, that I really didn’t belong...” The participants’ set of experiences within the Marines of being marginalized due to their race as Blacks had them alienated. As Johnson shared, he did not feel that he belonged and thus rendered the Marine ideology of togetherness he had initially believed in as a fictitious projection of something that would be ideal, but in reality was a myth.

Discrimination

Participants experienced racial discrimination because they were Black. The need by all of the participants to make a career out of being a Marine was initially so strong, that, for the most part, the discrimination they were going through was deliberately ignored. Whether verbal, non-verbal or physical discrimination, each participant at one point or another tried to reframe the situation, second guess themselves about their decision to join the Marines or they ignored the occurrences of discriminatory acts altogether. “[D]ifferent things had been happening, but I was – well I ignored them...just getting pulled out of the bed and you know it was just confusing ‘cause I didn’t understand – why was it always me?” Johnson is an example of one who attempted to normalize his experiences by telling himself lies. He eventually admitted to himself that the things that had been happening to him were not normal. For instance, an example of physical discrimination and abuse was when he was painfully hosed down by a senior

White officer who entertained himself with the episode. Although people were in the audience and witnessed this act against Johnson, even though he committed no wrong doing, no one came to his aid. In addition to physical abuse, he was verbally discriminated against. This incident was overlooked by those who were in the audience. “I was trying to get this senior officer – trying to get him to acknowledge what he had said, what he called me and he continued on as if he hadn’t said anything racially offensive. Interestingly enough, there was another Marine present also older than me and he immediately tried to take up for this senior officer.” All too common in occurrence were instances where other officers literally looked the other way as if they saw or heard nothing.

Cleofis’ response to experiencing racial discrimination was in comparison to Johnson, which was denial at first, then an eventual acknowledgement. A non-verbal example of discrimination that Cleofis realized was evident when, because he was Black, he could not proceed beyond a certain rank. “Yeah! My glass ceiling was staff sergeant. I know I’m not going to make Gunny. Look here – I had never seen one – I had never seen a Black Gunny... To this point in – you know what I mean – at this point in my young career. Even as a lieutenant I didn’t see any Black gunnies.” Cleofis felt hopeless at this time given that there were no people who looked like him in the position he was aspiring towards. Like Johnson, Petersen experienced verbal discrimination. An example of this occurred when he was denied consideration for a higher position in the Marines. Petersen recalled that, though he had qualified for this position through an exam he took, because he was Black, there were reconsiderations. In an attempt by the supervising officer to validate his discriminatory act, he suspected Petersen of cheating. Petersen recalls,

although he meant to hide his intent, his questions pointed to the fact that he thought I'd cheated on the examination... "Would you mind," he grated, "retaking the examination? Just to make sure?" My eyes lasered. I was right. It was clear he'd thought I'd cheated ... there's no way in hell or in this world that a Black guy could possibly do this well on this examination. Just no way." (pp. 28-29).

The suspicion and accusation was based on Petersen's initial high score on an exam. He was made to retake the test. However, Petersen (1998) did much better than the first time around. Regardless of being impressed with Petersen's second time performance, the supervisor wanted to maintain his inference that Petersen was not suitable for a higher position because of Petersen's racial classification, which is being Black.

"The Old Salt was impressed. He took me aside, and as we walked, his voice assumed a kind of sotto-voce quality. "Wow!" he enthused. "Petersen, my boy, the Navy has opportunities for guys like you. I like what I've seen here. My God, man, what a great steward you'd make." (p. 29)

As illustrated above, still adamant about keeping him in his place, the supervisor gave Petersen a compliment of a condescending nature by telling Petersen he would make a great steward aboard a navy ship.

Relational Concepts

Familial Relations

Relational concepts denote how the participants dealt with the different aspects of their interactions while in the Marines. Encompassing these aspects were familial relations, which dealt with the participants' own sense of hardships and support whether from personal family and or other members within the Marine Corps with whom they

found solace in affiliation and became an adopted family. For instance, in reference to the formation of a sense of family due to the common experience of privations in the Marines, Johnson began to realize that there were other Black officers who were going through hardships – ill-treated just as he experienced. The underlying reason for these hardships was due to their racial classification as Black. “So it got to a point ... we – and I’m speaking of other Black officers – we developed this, if you would, these groups ... I mentioned groups earlier. We started forming these groups where we would talk about this – talk about these scenarios and what I discovered was there were a lot of people who were dealing with this – there were a lot of Marines dealing with this...and it wasn’t something that was isolated and it wasn’t something that just started – it was something that some of these fellow Marines had dealt with even back when I described – way back in OCS.” There was a bond formed with these other Marines where they would share experiences with each other, where conversations served as support for themselves. One may then ascertain that a family unit within themselves was formed out of the necessity to share encounters of sufferings because of their common ancestry, being classified Black. Relative to Johnson’s experiences in familial relation by adopting a group of people as family within the Corps, Petersen found refuge in confiding in his father, after enduring a very insultingly discouraging exchange with a senior officer who proctored an exam he took twice. He had to take it twice because the officer did not believe that Petersen, a Black person, could score that high on the test. Taking it the second time and scoring even higher, the officer told Petersen he would make a great steward, rather than a fighter pilot, Petersen’s aspiration. After learning what had happened, Petersen’s father intervened and as Petersen shared, though he was not sure what his father did, his father’s

intervention sobered interactions with that particular officer who now proposed Petersen pursue a field in electronics. This change of tune did not however translate to any reform in treatment directed at Petersen nor of better support from the officer or any other senior officers. Petersen still had to find his own way and prove himself above and beyond what was required of Whites.

Authority Support

The other aspect of relations concepts that proved consistent in the stories of the participants was authority support. Along the course of the participants experiencing discriminatory acts against them, there was the search for support from those who were in authority. What became too common though, as explained in their respective stories, was that support from those in authority was nonexistent. There was even lack of support from those officers in higher positions who were themselves Black. Drawing from Johnson's experience as an example, he had been repeatedly harassed by a higher ranked White officer. A Black officer he had trusted knew about these encounters. When Johnson decided to reach out to this Black officer, the officer suggested that Johnson overlook what was going on if he wanted to continue on with a career in the Corps. Johnson found this disposition by the officer to be very negative and discouraging. "This was a huge blow. I then realized, if this Marine – this General Officer admitting these things... He knew exactly what I was having a tremendously hard time facing – at the time someone that I had trusted but here it was he had succumb to this behavior almost wanting me to say it was okay and I knew it wasn't okay." This, to Johnson, was unacceptable. Similarly, in an attempt to ridicule a Black Marine, Cleofis was put in a position to prove himself competent in something his senior member knew he had not

been trained. “And you know ... that whole thing – how do you take a young kid – of color ... it – you know, and and – it could have been a kid of a non-color, but that’s not who it happened to – it happened to me – you know, and because I’m not aware of the systems of aircrafts that I’m not trained on – then having to accept a situation where [paused/frustrated stare] I can’t win.” These Black officers being placed in difficult situations and having other senior ranked officers behave in a manner that suggested an endorsement of the prejudicial treatments are just few examples of the negative ways authority handled some unfair situations towards Black men in the Marines.

Among peers, there was high levels of fear concerning facing similar racial intimidations if they interfered with an incident. The fact was that others feared going through the same mistreatments and to avoid retaliations, people stayed out of occurrences that were not directed at them. For instance, Johnson’s peers would not come to his aid when he was being harassed by a senior official with a fire hose. His peers, who saw this and the pain Johnson was in, acted as though they hadn’t witnessed anything. “I grabbed my eyes when I kind of fell to the ground ‘cause I was in so much pain – I thought I had lost my vision – forever... Everybody else saw it and they just kind of walked away from the situation and he continued spraying me – I could hear him saying, “Get up now!” – I just couldn’t – ‘cause I was just in so much pain.” Particularly Black officers, in ignoring these sorts of incidents towards another Black officer, may have been avoiding becoming the next target, hence the best thing was to remain silent on discriminatory matters they witnessed. In which case, where were these service personnel to turn for support? As shared through their stories, the Marine culture and environment for the participants as Black men proved very hostile.

There was an instance, though indirectly, where positive inspiration was extended which propelled Petersen, who had been enduring challenges as a Black service member, to truly go after his dream of being an aviation pilot. This inspiration was given by Jesse Brown, the first Black Navy pilot who had been shot down and received a posthumous Flying Cross, an honor bestowed upon a few. Such an achievement by a Black man gave Petersen the courage he needed to persevere. Additionally, there was one particular occasion where a senior officer demonstrated some positive relations in regards to Petersen. In his narratives, Petersen indicated that at one point when he was looking for housing off base, his commanding officer who was White, offered his assistance in making a recommendation if Petersen needed such help. Petersen pointed out however, that offers of support by a White officer, were rare.

Marine Support

The participants expressed that the Marines, as an entity within itself, did not have services to facilitate grievances of officers experiencing racially motivated abuse. Lack of such services could be a major factor in sustaining a climate of ongoing discrimination that these Black officers had to endure – particularly when racially targeted abuses were coming through the hierarchy of command. As Cleofis shared, “Well, earlier on there were no services because it was coming from the top – sergeant major down. So, what could you do – those were really the worst years.” As evident in his testament, and similar to the stories in the other narratives, Black officers were being shown hostility from the top down, from senior officials to equally ranked officers. Therefore, whether extended from those of lower ranking or not, the reality of being subjected to an

environment of racial hostility in the Marine Corps was an experience all too real for these Black service men.

The Need to Adapt

In an overview of all the categories presented, it can be assessed that within the experiences of the service men in the Marine Corps, there was a sustained presence of fear that led to the need to adapt. This fear appeared to have been centered on failing to be successful career Marines, and this would occur had they not been able to manage the realities of their experiences of being racially discriminated against. Initiation into their respective experiences appeared similar where there was self-denial in relation to the acts of racial discrimination against themselves. However, consistent with all participants was an eventual acknowledgement of what was going on and a determination to endure in order to ensure a successful Marine Corps career. Therefore, in an attempt to safeguard their ambitions, participants found ways to face and manage the realities of their experiences of racial discrimination. Whether it was motivation from within, from peers facing similar challenges, or some form of acknowledgement and support from empathizing senior authorities, each participant was able to adapt, achieve and survive.

Chapter 5: Reflections and Conclusion

A great battle lost or won is easily described, understood and appreciated, but the moral growth of a great nation requires reflection, as well as observation, to appreciate it. (Hamilton, 2013) — **Frederick Douglass**, *The Mission of the War, 1864*

Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave he is learning to do what he sees others do. (Jefferson, 2002) — **Thomas Jefferson**, *Notes on the State of Virginia, 1781*

The research questions that informed this study will be addressed in this section. In an overview of information obtained with this study, the researcher will reflect on findings per each question posed regarding the lived experiences of Black/African American males serving in the Marines as members of a historically marginalized population in the U.S. The first question was “What factors may influence service personnel’s perception of racial discrimination?” The participants in the research defined racial discrimination as being negatively treated due to the color of one’s skin or classification as a Black person. In joining the Corps, all testimonials from narratives assessed indicated that the participants were in initial denial as to the reality of their respective mistreatments and in persistent denial, as well, since all did not want to premise this reality on race. Occurrences such as being violently hosed down, punched by senior White officers without having offended are just a few examples of such maltreatments. In contrast, in observing the treatment of other officers racially different from themselves, Black officers realized that fellow non-Black officers were not enduring similar mistreatments. What was consistent though, was that abuses endured were readily

common among service personnel that were racially classified Black/African American officers such as themselves. Therefore, one factor was in violent treatments they personally endured along with other officers that shared the same racial categorization. These treatments proved negatively different in comparison to others that were non-Black/African American. Another factor that proved evident to influencing personnel's perception of racial discrimination was in instances where Black personnel found themselves denied access to opportunities and promotions for which they were qualified. There was a consistent practice by White officers, often supervisors, to not acknowledge the legitimacy of achievements by Black personnel, even in clear evidence of competency based on performance. Black officers performing significantly above expectations were made to retake tests and reconsider personal goals, that is, not to aim too high as was indicated to some participants. Petersen and Cleofis were subjected to this sort of mistreatment, as both of them finished at the top of their respective classes but were initially denied acknowledgement and promotion by their White supervisors.

The second research question posed was "What are the challenges that have been faced from being considered a member of a historically marginalized population serving in the United States Armed Forces?" Through analytical reflections of the research, it can be ascertained that the participants had a noticeable quality of personal pride and integrity with commitment to serve. This observation was made through the consistent demonstration of their verve to be career Marines, even though the treatments they faced because of their race, was not conducive for one to thrive. The initiation of difficulties faced by all were evident upon their early days as enlisted Marines and subsequent commissioned officers. As new officers, though they were given assessment tests like

everyone else, when their performance was significantly impressive, doubts of their results being authentic were shown, unlike everyone else. Being a Black person and being able to perform highly in an assessment was something that needed to be questioned, and so it was the case for these Black service men. In some situations, a high performer was made to retake skills assessment tests and others were blatantly denied the qualified promotion and offered lesser roles and positions.

Another challenge faced by the participants was in the lack of systemic support within the Marine Corps in addressing the conditions Black service personnel were enduring. As was determined, none of the participants could find solace in support from the Marine structure itself, but rather the only source of relief from the negative racially charged experiences was from other service members of the same marginalized Black population. Participants also expressed that mistreatments they faced from more senior officers were readily overlooked by other officers as those other officers themselves may have feared retaliation. The standoff behavior from other officers is an example of silent endorsement (Sue et. al. 2009), where it may have been assessed by observing officers that the degree of threat for retaliation was too high for them should they intervene in any form. People do this to protect themselves and to not encourage otherwise unacceptable behavior, but in not doing anything to intervene, the very act or disagreeable situation is encouraged.

As the study revealed, the Marine Corps environment for Black service men was an atmosphere that subjected them to significant discrimination, stress and duress. Facing abuse from White officers, lack of support from other officers in observation of abuses, not being promoted despite legitimately proven reasons to be considered along with

having to redo, reconsider and revisit demonstration of competencies, despite their difficulties, these men refused to be rendered average officers. In identifying responsibilities beyond themselves and their set of experiences, participants knew that all they did in facing the challenges of racial discrimination, may serve as encouragement to others who looked like them. Along with their respective set of experiences, this attitude of commitment to the encouragement of others led the men to better understand and look to make sense of their pre, initial and post perceptions of the Corps.

The third research question presented was “How do African American/Black service men perceive current equity training programs in the Marines?” Through their experiences of mistreatment, all participants developed means of dealing with what became their reality because of their race. The need for this development was due to the expressed lack of structural support within the Marine Corps in addressing grievances pertaining to race based harms faced by the service men. As all participants noted, at the beginning, in finding ways to best deal with their respective situations, all were in initial denial of the race based challenges they endured. Cleofis, even at a point where he had had enough, left the Corps, only to return about a year later and endure similar mistreatments. In Petersen’s set of incidents, in moving from one base to another, he was still met with the same challenges of rejection by colleagues and continuously being made to revalidate and prove himself competent for tasks beyond what was required in criteria from other service men who were racially different. Johnson summarized his racially motivated mistreatments as a Marine in the context of hypocrisy. He indicated that, though it was a known mantra in the Marines that all Marines were green and hence, being part of an elite few and proud men; however, Johnson was just a Black man

required to accept what came to him. Among all three men, they attested to equity training in the Marines being ineffective or nonexistent at their time of service. In Petersen's service period of almost four decades stemming from the early 1950s, he never witnessed the initiation of equity training programs in the Marines. However, upon retirement, Petersen made it a point to briefly highlight that racism and discrimination were serious issues in the Marine Corps, a reality he had lived, endured and was in a position to attest to their damaging consequences. Subsequently, Johnson and Cleofis both revealed that though there were no officially endorsed training programs in the beginning stages of their service in the Marines, attempts were made by the Corps, to provide some form of accommodations for cultural training. Nonetheless, such undertakings only prove decorative rather than to effectively address the realities and guide resolution processes for those service personnel encountering racial discrimination in the Marine Corps. Concluding that there were no effective equity training programs in the Corps addressing their grievances, concerns and need for resolution, all participants expressed that they had to devise ways in which to handle the challenges in discrimination they had to confront.

Therefore, the fourth research question discussed "How are adjustments made by the service personnel to address discrimination challenges faced in their work environment?" As was evident from the collective information gathered, adaptation was a necessity all participants employed. Adaptation proved the essence of the analysis from the narratives. Participants incorporated their being an individual and a Marine into their experiences. As such, the individual was the Marine and similarly, the Marine was the individual. However, what was a factor of concern for all participants was that, measured

against what they had subscribed to as being part of an elite unit of military service men, the reality for the Black men was that they were not accepted by supervisors or fellow officers of other racial categorization, in particular those who were White. The participants' forefront challenges faced as service men were persistent abuses from White personnel. Participants, with the intent of making themselves career Marines, did their best to ignore, suppress or make excuses for the harsh reality they were dealt. They eventually realized that the belief of the individual as a Marine and the Marine as the individual was a principle they could not subscribe to any longer. They came to understand that, though they were present, they did not belong. Their presence was welcomed and their service was welcomed as long as it was submissive to White treatment and dictates. This condition, as expressed by participants in this study, was not acceptable. There was no one person or department within the Corps that cared to address their specific grievances of racial discrimination. They adapted to the reality of the Marine environment and culture they could not control, and counseled themselves and other Black service men on their respective bases encountering similar experiences. They banded together, as the only support mechanism available to them. Though the key adjustment was banding together to support one another, another one was in the determination by participants to aspire to higher rankings within the Corps, despite the challenges thrown their way. Petersen and Cleofis, for instance, refused to be forced into what they saw as proposals of mediocrity from their supervisors despite the evidence of their high performances from assessments given. Therefore, an adjustment had to be made for enduring all the discriminatory acts against them, participants shifted from feeling like victims to seeing that they obtained inspiration from other Black officers they

looked up to, and thus, they may be of similar inspiration to others. Though there may not have been any environmental mechanism readily available or effective in addressing occurrences of discrimination faced by historically marginalized personnel, the officers knew they had control over their responses to their circumstances.

The fifth research question addressed was “What recommendations can be made to effectively address the occurrence of racial discrimination of historically marginalized personnel in the United States Armed Forces?” The participants of the research realized that discriminatory abuses towards themselves as individuals and their race, as a whole, was a part of the Marine environment. Each one had to come to terms with dealing with such occurrences. Though all of them sought to justify their initial denial of the treatment towards them, they acknowledged that the mere fact that others who looked like them experienced similar ill treatments was not a new occurrence. Being ridiculed by senior officers, fellow officers and even some officers of their own race, fearing retaliation, thus siding with White officers, these participants felt helpless in their respective situations. Historical marginalization and subsequent mistreatment of a particular people within the confines of that marginalization may require an intentional action of leadership to achieve any measures of rectification. It was evident from the research that the racially based mistreatments were of a trickledown effect, where senior officers and supervisors would regularly harass Black officers, thus setting such tones during the initial enlistment and commissioning period. Among the participants, one even quit the Marines due to the mistreatments he initially faced, only to conclude that such abuse was going to be his reality and he thus needed to cope if he wanted to make a career of being in the Marine Corps. According to Mays et. al. (2007), repeated racially charged discrimination could

lead to harmful effects, setting a chronic series of psychological responses to the experiences impacting the individual being discriminated against. This explains the participants' felt need to adapt in order to cope. Another participant, in seeking support from a fellow Black man, to address racially motivated mistreatments against him, was turned away. If those in leadership positions, senior officers or supervisors, do not look to even acknowledge racial abuses against Black officers, then measures towards addressing them will not even be considered. All participants had lost hope in the Corps' structure to effectively handle matters of racial discrimination that they constantly faced. Therefore, solutions to effectively address racial bigotry towards Black service personnel in the Corps stem back to leadership being able to understand the need for acknowledging this as a serious problem. Leadership will have to actively demonstrate their availability to hear incidents of discrimination in order to allow those with grievances to have a platform without fear of ridicule or retaliation. The presence of leadership, in such a way, allows for those experiencing discriminatory acts to see that progress, towards reconciliation that will be genuinely made in the Corps, begins with leadership in the forefront of implementations.

Applied Theoretical Implications to Research Findings

The issue of racial discrimination that the participants faced is the result of several interacting social factors. The incorporation of some theoretical frameworks assisted in contextualizing the experiences of participants in this study and offered understanding of the impact on their respective lives. The following theories further explicate the findings.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognitive Dissonance Theory is based on the notion that actions can influence our

attitudes and beliefs (Festinger, 1957). This dissonance theory is premised on three main assumptions (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). The first assumption is that people are sensitive to inconsistencies between actions and beliefs (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959).

This occurrence is exemplified in the narrative of Johnson when he offered that;

“The very people who are training me – these were the people that were – that I felt were violating me – clearly, and even me describing it right now, there is still some umm some confusion as to what was going on – so it’s kind of like ... do I go to – or who would I go to...?”

Johnson was clearly sensitive to the situation of racism he was encountering, where the officers, who were supposed to be his ‘guide,’ were the ones from whom he was facing racial abuse. That is an inconsistency. An experience of such inconsistencies similar to one Cloefis had where he reports that though he had done well on an exam, the supervising officer had given him an average grade by marking wrong things Cloefis got right. On bringing this up to his senior, there was still no action taken to rectify the situation;

“So I say, well you know, it’s it’s [*voice quivering/gesturing with hands*] your exam, you’ll graded it and look, and look what happened. You said, you acknowledged that I – my answers were correct ... and you failed me on it [*despairing voice*]/[*pauses for 3 seconds*]. So [*slight pause/staring away*] they didn’t fix it [*very faint/frail voice*]/[*discouraged stare/emphasizing they didn’t fix it*]...”

The second assumption is that inconsistencies are eventually recognized by the people impacted; they are then motivated to find some form of resolve between inconsistencies

experienced and personal beliefs (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). The last assumption is that resolve is obtained either through change of belief, change of actions or changing the perception of actions (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). An example of recognition of the inconsistency and a sought after resolution is demonstrated by Petersen (1998) when he states;

“As far as Black troops were concerned, the bottom line was that White JAG lawyers were simply not to be trusted. They were neither free to be independent of military influence nor free from racist attitudes. Again and again, Black officers told our teams that White JAG officers had no credibility as far as they were concerned.” (p. 167).

Here Petersen expressed that the eventual recognition and acceptance of the JAG lawyers as racially biased and bigoted was something with which Black officers had to come to terms. The Black officers then acted by informing other Black officers of the racist disposition of White personnel.

In this study, all participants attested to inconsistencies between what they were experiencing in being racially discriminated against and some of the branding mission statements of the Marines. For instance, all Marines are green, connotes that regardless of racial differences however defined, once a person is a Marine, their color is green and hence all are equal. Johnson shares in this realization of contradiction when he states;

“And when they come into the Marine Corps it’s like all of sudden ... we are supposed to be under this ... oath of office or we’re sworn uh, supposed to be all brothers, all sisters, all hands in arms uh, but that – that doesn’t necessarily really say that because now you are now in a different group – that you are now

different. That is a problem [*pause*] one can talk about it ... something that they don't understand, but believe that they do understand...and I think even though there's a lot of literature and even some attempts to combat racism or should I say even discrimination – ah...the Marine Corps [*smile*] is made up with people that are racist.”

This oneness did not hold true for the service men who were Black/African American. They belonged to a ‘different group,’ that being the Black race. Johnson experienced several violent encounters with his supervisor, even though he remained non-provoking or reactionary. Marines of other races were not being treated this way and hence Johnson had to find resolve between what he was experiencing and the oneness purported in being a dark green Marine. Another participant, Cleofis, after much mental anguish from his encounters with racial discrimination, decided to leave the Marines. However, his desire to make a career out of being in the Corps, propelled him to reenlist. In seeking resolve to take this action of rejoining the Corps, he had to change his perception from his initial belief in the statement that all Marines are green. He resolved to accept that in the Marines, he was still a Black man, not green, hence not ‘one of them.’ He was seeing and experiencing racism ‘upfront’ despite the ‘oneness’ of the Marine mantra. Cleofis shares;

“So, now you know I’m thinking – I’m joining the elite force, the elite fighting force of the world [*paused looking at me intensely*] and so they got to be inclusive you know what I mean – ‘cause you know, you need [*voice quivers*] everyone and [*perplexed stare/slight pause*] here it is I’m seeing discriminating factors as far as I’m concerned – right up front.”

Petersen is another example of one who realized inconsistencies of being a Marine. Being treated with honor and dignity because one is a part of the few and proud was not his reality because he was a Black man, though he worked really hard. As such, he decided, through his actions, to be an inspiration to other Black men in the Corps, and strive for his goals despite his challenges with racial discrimination.

“I was also aware that my career was being watched by many Blacks in the Corps due to the possibility of my promotion to star rank. At that time, I had to agree that the environment was ripe for the promotion of a Black into that high arena.” (Petersen, 1998, p. 197).

Social Dominance Theory

Social Dominance Theory focuses on understanding how group-based hierarchy is formed and sustained (Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004). The theory argues that dominance of one over another within a social context exists in systems as created. As such, within the constructed system is where activities maintaining the defined hierarchical process is enacted (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The three systems informing the formation of group-based hierarchy, in accordance with the Social Dominance Theory are age, gender and/or an artificial construct, also known as arbitrary constructs. The theory postulates that society as a whole exists as a system and people within that society adopt ideologies, policies and practices which then renders the adherer predisposed to prejudice.

In this research, the artificial construct offered in the Social Dominance Theory is most applicable to explaining some of the findings. Unlike age or gender, in artificialism, group-based constructs of hierarchy established when defining power and role are not

related to the natural findings of life, but rather man-made classifications, specifically a subjective social construct which consequently can be manipulated and switched up – creating adversely disparate impacts – affecting people’s nationality, race, ethnicity, class, religion (Correll, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2002). Therefore, in accordance with the Social Dominance Theory, it was evident that all the men faced challenges of predispositions against them because of their racial classification as Black. For instance, Cleofis, within a short period of time, noticed that the Marine environment he was in was similar to his experiences as a child in a systemically racist South.

“So I came in with the idea that I was gonna – I was gonna be a career Marine. Now, with my [*chuckles*] ... in my fourth month – I was probably in my first year I imagine [*looking around smiling shaking head*] – yeah, let me see – yeah probably in my first year now I’m saying hey, how do I get out of this place. Because this uh this is reminiscent of my childhood, you know growing up in the South, under racist...racism. I grew up – I grew up under segregation.”

A similar systemic challenge was faced by Petersen, who was made to retake an assessment he initially scored high on, only to score higher the second time around. However, his White supervisor was still in disbelief that such a quality performance of understanding and competency could be demonstrated by a Black person and insinuated that Petersen had cheated. Petersen states,

“Although he meant to hide his intent, his questions pointed to the fact that he thought I had cheated on the examination.” (p. 29).

Even in retaking the exam and outperforming his initial result, Petersen’s supervising officer insistently recommended Petersen consider a post as a steward rather than a pilot.

The response by the senior officers towards these Marines who were Black men may have been induced from the racially bigoted assumption that Black people are inferior, and incapable of demonstrating a higher level of intelligence hence cannot be put in a high role of position and power (Sidanius & Veniegas, 2000). The aforementioned predisposition towards Black officers and challenges they were met with consequent of their race was revealed by all participants that they had to endure repeated occurrences of discriminatory acts targeted towards them in the Marine Corps environment hence equating the existence of prejudices and acts of such against Black personnel in the Corps as systemic.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory maintains that causes of change rests with individuals and social systems (Burns, 1978). As such, transformation, as evidence of change, is a process where both leaders and followers must collaborate to create an environment of high morale and enthusiasm where members can achieve goals, grow within themselves and positively contribute towards the collective, ushering in a new reality of characteristics and behaviors within a set social system (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). The ability to influence is a critical measurement criterion of Transformational Leadership. Compounded in the variable of influence are four main elements. The first being the leader's need for individual considerations of people, that is, followers. The second element is allowing for intellectual stimulation. Thirdly, being an inspiration to others in exemplifying, motivating and allowing followers to grow in the capacities they so desire while optimistically challenging them to achieve such goals. Finally, the fourth element is being a role model for others to want to emulate as a testimony of respect and

trust between all (Burns, 1978). Among the experiences of Petersen (1998), he took personal delight when he was finally positioned to work as a commander. In this role, he loved attending to those he was in charge of at the ground level. Petersen explains that he enjoyed being that hands-on person, an inspiration to those service personnel who relied on his leadership. He states;

“If I had to get my hands dirty with my troops or my hands soiled in doing it, I was never too proud to tote that barge right along with them. It was about being the leader and a manager.” (pp. 213-214).

In considering the Transformational Leadership Theory to explain some of the other experiences of the participants in this research, the firm reality of participants was that acts of racial discrimination towards them of violence, degradation, humiliation, unprovoked reprimanding were all regular encounters with White personnel who were predominately senior officers. Additional to the racial discriminatory behaviors exhibited by senior officers, other officers of lower rankings simulated similar treatments towards Black officers. The occurrences of the aforementioned ill treatments towards the Black service men contradict the stated core values of the Marines in speech, motto and chanted slogans announcing an adherence to honor, courage and commitment to another in uniform (Kinder & McConnaughy, 2006).

Considering the theory where racially charged behaviors of leadership perpetuate discriminatory conditions suffered by Black service personnel in the Marine Corps, it leads to a collaboration of fueling a negative realization hence there is no transformation for those being impacted. This was the case with Johnson, where he expresses an incident

where a sergeant spat in his face and nothing was done by fellow leadership to address the situation;

“...that there isn’t such a thing as Black Marines, they say ‘all Marines are green.’ There are light green and dark green Marines, but [*sits forwards in seat*] I noticed if you were the dark green Marines we were being treated a certain way and umm and like I said, it just didn’t seem right and I really didn’t pay attention to that until I had an incident where ... one of the platoon sergeants spit in my face.”

Furthermore, as reported by another participant, Cleofis, there was a lack of support to hear grievances from Black officers in relation to the racially prejudicial challenges they suffered within the Corps itself. Rather than consideration of the racially abused individual’s need to be heard, the Black officers were chastised. Rather than being intellectually stimulated by leadership and encouraged to aspire towards goals they set for themselves, participants were being demoralized and denied access to opportunities for which they were qualified. On how leadership interacted with Black officers, Cleofis shares;

“It was the way you were treated – sometimes the assignment you may have been giving or maybe it was some of the other folks – some of the enlisted Marines of other Marines – what they had been giving as an assignment. Umm giving assignments that were almost impossible to pass or to win. And so then the consequence of it – now you get duty or something – you get something extra [*emphasizing something extra*] – you know? So that’s kind of how it’s handled.”

Lacking the necessary support within the institutional system, participants decided, after acknowledging their reality, to adapt to the situation. In coming to realize that other

officers of the same race endured similar hostilities in the Corps, participants determined to place themselves as their own agents of change. They thus set goals and achieved results, which motivated others of their race to pursue their own aspirations within the Corps, with verve and dignity to task, despite the racial prejudices they endured. As such, though transformation was lacking at the institutional level, the participants may have served as the right transformational role models to other Black service men on an individual level.

Researcher's Developed Theory from Study: Socio-Psycho-Bio Dissonance Theory

The experiences of racial discrimination related to the participants of this study are obvious in similarity yet specific regarding their impact on the lives of each participant. Harsh treatments of discrimination centered around dehumanization of the individual carries with it effects that may take a threefold toll on the psychological, physiological and emotional wellbeing of a person, which in turn could create conditions for trauma (Mays et. al., 2007). In an environment where work expectations are defined but an individual is impacted by a structurally iniquitous social-cognitive intentionality of racial discrimination, fighting dissonance, associated with being dehumanized, alienated and not being given an opportunity to voice and have grievances addressed accordingly, becomes an overshadowing reality. A situation of dueling dual consciousness could arise where this reality may morph into creating a state of Socio-Psycho-Bio dissonance where a person, in an environment of immense hostility created artificially, is expected to still perform proficiently. The researcher purports that in this state of dueling dual consciousness, the individual acknowledges first the acts of hostility targeted towards them, then secondly through adaptation must bond with a definitive loyalty to what they

recognize as more of an importance in achieving despite the arbitrary constructed challenges faced. Even where elements of racial discrimination may be classified in the context of microaggression (Sue et. al., 2009), which is often a subtle form of suggestive bigotry, the individual being impacted still has an amplified reality in awareness of threats to their wellbeing. As one of the participants shared of a situation in which microaggression from a White senior officer was expressed, the officer envisioned the participant in a role as a 'great steward' rather than a fighter pilot despite the participant's exceptional performance on an assessment. Socio-Psycho-Bio Dissonance Theory thus argues that what eventually results in a biological health expression, begins with a stimulation from one's environment, this stimulus is then psychologically processed, following which its impact on the individual's biological state is revealed.

Consequently, in relation to conflict analysis and resolution, efforts to resolve situations of conflict must be implicitly positive for there to be any chance towards a realization of healthier outcomes. Beginning in the socio context, or environment, stimulants must be purposeful in implementation. Stimulants such as educational training and personnel behaviors must explicitly address the concerns of those negatively being impacted. Secondly, stimulants must lead to encouraging better psychosomatic assessments and recalibration of perspectives among those being negatively impacted. If the aforementioned is not being achieved, then the stimulant is not effective and must be readjusted. Finally, in a better psychological state, hence a healthier mental stance, a person is now arguably more holistically ready to execute tasks. Reflective of this argument, the researcher maintains that positive outcomes in conflict are realized when positivity reforms a situation, and in turn, negative outcomes or perpetuations of

negativity are the reality of negatively charged/dishonest stimulants. In conclusion, the Socio-Psycho-Bio Dissonance Theory offers the view that dissonance will exist as a result of dueling dual consciousness that a person faces while negotiating the realities of environmental activities (socio), processed internally (psycho) and expressed physically (bio).

Comparison and Contrast to Literature Review

The findings in the study sustained that racial discrimination experienced by African Americans/Blacks, is an ongoing issue in the society of the United States of America. Consistent with some of the findings in literature, the presence of discrimination has a permeating effect that can be perpetuated, supported and sustained in societal systems, including government agencies, which may be considered agencies of control (Fischer, Hanke & Sibley, 2012). As demonstrated in the study, the U.S. Marine Corps is not immune to internalizing the ideologies of racial discrimination which negatively impact the lives of those the discriminatory acts are being extended towards. As explained by Bradby (2009), institutional racism and individual racism experienced are almost one and the same thing. Though institutional racism may be viewed as the specific environment from which racial acts of discrimination are experienced, these acts are committed by one person to another, or a collective group of people to another specific group of people. Mays, Cochran and Barnes (2007) point out that race-based discrimination, whether experienced, anticipated or perceived, has a negative outcome on the health of the individual who is being targeted. As all participants in the study attested, there were disparities between the portrayed ideology of being one and all a part of an elite unit such as the Marine Corps and their actual experience of being racially

mistreated in the Corps by officers they were mandated to look up to as guides and supervisors. One would think this designated role of supervisor would translate to those senior officers charged as such to mean well for the ones they are overseeing, but for the Black/African American service men, their experiences were contrary. One participant exclaimed even for a period of time he felt he was literally ‘losing his mind,’ as what he was experiencing in racially motivated abuse was not consistent with the ‘*Semper Fidelis*’ (Latin for “*always faithful*” or “*always loyal*”) philosophy he had been led to believe was at the center of the Marine Corps’ spirit. The participant proclaimed the contrast of his reality measured against the regularly referenced philosophy of Marine oneness as pure hypocrisy. Mays et. al. (2007) further suggest that an unhealthy racial discriminatory environment, particularly institutionally, which creates an unhealthy social space, is catalyzed by situations of violence, miseducation and destructive disconnectedness. All these factors were existent in the Marine Corps environment as studied in this research, and the presence of the variables, which Mays et. al. (2007) adds, could lead those impacted by unhealthy psychophysiological responses in an attempt to adapt or cope. This need for coping while in the Corps was revealed as true in the testimonial experiences of the participants. This need to adapt through negotiating reality may then explain why two of the participants had an unsettling constant feeling of being unsafe and targeted for being harmed by fellow Marines. Along with their imminent sense of danger, these two participants suffered feelings of helplessness and the need to balance fear and anger from their experiences. All while knowing that there were no structural implementations of support to address their grievances. Further complicating the required balancing act the participants were undergoing was knowing that the racially

charged mistreatments they were enduring were all sustained through a deliberate and conscious trickle down practice of signals orchestrating consequential activities, where the imitation of such behavior is replicated by subordinates. Hence, environmental responses mirror environmental stimuli whereby simple observation trained and communicated the endorsement of paradoxically disloyal behaviors towards *this category* Marine was nurtured as normal. Still, all participants in this study were determined, from their initial entry, to establish themselves as legitimate Marines. Even in performing highly on assessments, exceeding expectations, being dismissed as cheats and having to retake exams because of doubts of ability from senior officers, participants indicated that they did not want to accept any offered position as token members (McGinnis, McQuillan & Chapple, 2005) of artificial promotions, but wanted to be granted equal access to the desired aspirations they worked hard and honestly to earn. Being ostracized through racial discrimination, this study showed that participants lived with a sense of disconnect from the core philosophy of the Marines – *the few...the proud...* However, being that unit cohesion is necessary in the Marines for effectiveness and functionality, and as one of the participants served for almost four decades, through means of adaptation, the men in this study were able to serve honorably. All remained true to their units, despite disconnects to the philosophy of the Marine Corps they felt consequent to the racially based challenges they faced.

According to literature, there are some arguments placed that pertaining to the armed forces, with regards to unit effectiveness, efficiency and functionality, it is important for there to be a genuine bond among the members of a group (Schatz et. al., 2012; Shaw, 1981). As was evident in the findings, this purporting does not hold

consistent with what was demonstrated by participants in this study concerning their experiences. Through the racial mistreatments faced, they were not permitted to be part of a genuine bond. In coming to terms with the reality of needing to deal with this complicated tapestry of racial discriminations that caused a disconnect, with it in mind that if they intended to make a career of being a Marine, as part of their adaptation mechanism, participants made it a point to exemplify themselves as high achievers despite the challenges they faced. Doing this, they trusted, served as inspiration for other Black men who were facing and/or would come to face similar racially generated hostilities in the Marine Corps environment. Thus, this adopted state of mind may be argued to have served as motivation for the participants. Comparatively, cognitive readiness, as it pertains to the armed forces personnel, is defined as the mental preparedness of an individual to perform in situations of high levels of stress and unpredictability (Schatz et. al., 2012; McGinnis, McQuillan & Chapple, 2005). In this research, it was apparent that all the participants needed to be functional in a very antagonistic environment. Accordingly, it can thus be inferred that the participants were themselves a testament to cognitive readiness as they used their experiences of being racially discriminated against to harness a fortitude of mental, emotional and interpersonal balance as well as maturity.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

In this study, three particular limitations were identified. The first limitation was that study participants had to have at least one year of service in the Marine Corps. This limitation has both a positive and negative aspect. On the positive side, the 'at least one year of service' placed as a criterion for participation by the researcher is because it was

the researcher's inference that compared to someone with just a few months of affiliation in the Corps, someone with a full year or more in service would have had more exposure to the Marine Corps environment. As such, a person with more than one year experience in the Corps could offer a more reflective comparison of experiences from initial entry period to later years of service which would enable better analysis for the purpose of the research. It is important to also note that in the armed services, the first few months to a year may be regarded as periods of 'initiation' for new recruits, hence there may be a higher likelihood of a double standard argument that could be made in that the experiences of participants, if service in the Corps was below a year, could be part of a general orientation where newer recruits, regardless of race, may be equal targets of the unfavorable treatments. On the negative side of the aforementioned limitation, Black men with less than one year of Marine Corps service have a voice, too. In not including these men, their voices, and hence experiences were not heard. However, as one recommendation for further research, such a population may be studied where a comparison of treatments towards several racial categories of personnel with not more than one year of Marine Corps affiliation are examined.

The second limitation was that this study was gender specific, requiring the participation of males only. Though there may be various components to sociological phenomena that cause conflict or situations of conflict, it is the researcher's position that research has to be focused in order to effectively explore a specific situation towards gaining a more probable understanding. Even if revealing only a small amount of information, such information could lead to providing answers that may unveil other opportunities for additional research. Thus, focus in research is relevant. Though this

study explored the experiences of men identified as African American/Blacks with racial discrimination in the Marine Corps, further research can be recommended where the same topic line of examination could be applied to women only. Additionally, a recommendation for study could be a case study where the experiences of racial discrimination in the Corps towards Black men and women are compared.

The third limitation to the study was that in the use of an autobiography for one of the participants, body language could not be observed. Though the argument can be made that the same limitation would hold true if interviews were not conducted in person, but rather over the phone, the researcher would still be limited in observing body language of a participant. As presented by Moustakas (1994) and Druckman, (2005) observed body language in the interview process in research may offer valuable insight in recollection and analysis of data. Similarly, the researcher, in this limited capacity could not also pose interview questions or form a bond with the participant, with bond being a needed component to building trust between researcher and participant (Moustakas, 1994). Nonetheless, the incorporation of the autobiography was significant as the biographical narratives successfully informed the research questions that guided this study.

Research Contributions and Conclusion

This research work availed an opportunity to look into a phenomenon that has arguably plagued American society since its founding days. Racism, as presented through the study's discourse, permeates all sectors and agencies of the U.S. society, with the Marine Corps as no exception. There was valuable insight gained from this research proving that even within an organizational entity such as the Marine Corps, which is credited to be an establishment of elite, well trained service personnel, it was clear that

regardless of rank or position, acts of racial discrimination, as it pertains to Black/African Americans being targeted, is without partiality. The participants of this research mentioned that experiencing racial discrimination in the Corps placed them in a dichotomy between having to negotiate a reality of highly offensive racially charged discriminatory acts towards them versus their desire to make a successful career as Marines. Therefore, to survive the harsh realities of a racially discriminatory Marine Corps environment, participants had to adapt. Adaptation enabled the participants to cope with what was routine in bigoted mistreatments and allowed them to maintain some sanity to remain functional professionals. According to the Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025, an exceptional Marine must maintain moral, physical and mental verve. Through this research, it was evident that experiences of racial discrimination endured by the participants arguably prepared them very well, possibly indirectly, to be truly elite professionals who are combat ready. Furthermore, these men proved to be of moral, physical and mental valor, even though their leadership did not exemplify the same. In their morality, though immoral acts were being carried out against them, the participants did not insinuate any racially charged retaliatory or reciprocating prejudicial behaviors. The participants were physically tough as they kept up with that aspect of their training, despite physical abuse by senior officers which seemed a norm in training. Mental fortitude by the participants was demonstrated in that they found ways to adapt in pursuit of a career as Marines despite the hard realities of discrimination they faced.

The relationship of individuals to their environment may determine the level and quality of their functionality as a person, professional or member of that society/organization. Revealed in the narratives of participants, in the Marine Corps, the

individual has not been the focus, though this may be a desire. Grievances of racial abuses faced, when brought to the attention of the organizational heads, were readily dismissed and ignored. This research has demonstrated that regardless of what aspirations of equity may be articulated by leadership in mission statements or philosophical mantras, in relation to legitimately addressing centuries-long social phenomena such as racism in the U.S., probable resolution cannot be pursued when leadership is at the core in perpetuating discriminatory acts. The contribution of this study has revealed that leadership should not only be held accountable, but also responsible for exemplifying what should entail a process of resolution in conflict. As leadership is the main source of influence in any establishment, particularly in entities poised by a hierarchical recognition such as the Marine Corps, what is done by the top is followed by others of the unit, therefore, what is tolerated by the head will exist in the body. The research offered clarity in that in situations where conflict persists, those being impacted negatively by the conflict may find ways to adjust in order to survive in that specific environment. This adaptive ability for those being impacted should not be misconstrued as a sign that all is well or that matters are not as seriously detrimental to those being impacted as people may probably assume it to be. If such a perspective as aforementioned is maintained, there may be no amount of training or sensitivity education that will genuinely impact any progressive stance towards the issue of racial discrimination in the Corps. Hence, situational understanding must be considered in dealing with matters of long existing social conflict. Situational understanding is specific to environment occupied. Such an understanding must be reflective of true leadership, where there is a critical look into the grievances of those being impacted in the environment and encouragement from

leadership to those being impacted to assist in guiding them in an active partnership towards resolution. In this case, a deliberate signaling and cognitive transfer can indeed lead to the spread of constructive social-cognitive interpretation.

Accordingly, the researcher concludes, if leaders deeply reflect on own cognition and associated self-consciousness, conceivable phobic realities of subliminally normalized racial attitudes will possibly be discovered. Therefore, leadership's attendance to the situation becomes transformative, and success thereof in a conflict resolution process becomes evident in not only how those people being impacted by the negative occurrences relate to now trusting leadership, but more so in how those in leadership offer themselves as not the exception, but the catalysts to the process of resolution: *Ductus Exemplo* – To Lead by Example!

To progress again, man must remake himself. And he cannot remake himself without suffering. For he is both the marble and the sculptor. In order to uncover his true visage, he must shatter his own substance with heavy blows of his hammer. (Carrel, 1939) — **Alexis Carrel**, *Man, The Unknown*

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Appendix A: Research Interview Questions

Exhibit A: Research Interview Questions

Question 1

What factors may influence service personnel's perception of racial discrimination?

Question 2

What are the challenges that have been faced from being considered a member of a historically marginalized population serving in the United States Armed Forces?

Question 3

How do African American/Black service men perceive current equity training programs in the Marines?

Question 4

How are adjustments made by the service personnel to address discrimination challenges faced in their work environment?

Question 5

What recommendations can be made to effectively address the occurrence of racial discrimination of historically marginalized personnel in the United States Armed Forces?