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Effective Combat Leadership: How do Individual, Social, and Organizational Factors in the U.S. Army Reserve Cultivate Effective Women's Leadership in Dangerous Contexts?

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EFFECTIVE COMBAT LEADERSHIP: HOW DO INDIVIDUAL, SOCIAL, AND
ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS IN THE U.S. ARMY RESERVE CULTIVATE EFFECTIVE
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN DANGEROUS CONTEXTS?

DIANA DRITA ELLERMAN

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program

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EFFECTIVE COMBAT LEADERSHIP: HOW DO INDIVIDUAL, SOCIAL, AND ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS IN THE U.S. ARMY RESERVE CULTIVATE EFFECTIVE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN DANGEROUS CONTEXTS?

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Dr. Bruce Campbell, a member of Antioch's Leadership and Change inaugural cohort and a graduate of the program as well as a dear friend, has transformed my life during the last 15 years through his mentorship and friendship. In my third year of teaching junior high school social studies Bruce convinced me to get a Master's degree in Education. He also encouraged me to participate in the National Boards Certified Teacher program when I was in my fifth year of teaching. He then told me I needed to continue my studies because of my passion for the military and love for this country. Bruce said that by doing so I would benefit so many women in the service. I balanced my educational and military careers and my family while enrolled in Antioch's doctoral program. Dr. Campbell's mentorship has transformed my personal and professional life and those of the women and men I lead in my military service and the students I teach in my civilian job.

My deployment in 2008–2009 to Afghanistan taught me firsthand about leadership, organization, and dangerous context. The vivid experiences during deployment heightened my awareness of training and policies as they pertain to women leaders in dangerous context. I was inspired to learn more about leadership theories so I applied to Antioch University's Leadership and Change Program. I remember being interviewed by Antioch faculty members Dr. Lize Booyesen and Dr. Philomena Essed. Dr. Booyesen inspired me to embrace leadership learning. Dr. Essed, who specializes in ethics and dignity and respect, made me cognizant of the ethical responsibilities of leaders and how their actions impact people's lives.

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pilgrimage to Jerusalem and inspired many more to do the same. She inspired me to live a life of love, faith, family, dignity and respect, and grace. The world will be a better place if I can help the Reserve community a fraction as much as my mom helped thousands of people. I want to say to both my parents, now both deceased, I will love you for eternity.

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Abstract

This research centered on the experiences of a dozen women who served in U.S. Army Reserve leadership positions. Although they served in dangerous contexts the Army had an exclusionary policy at the time that formally excluded the women from direct combat. The impetus for the research was Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta's announcement in January 2013 that the U.S. military would be eliminating the exclusionary policy. The purpose of this study was to gain insight into what individual, social, and organizational factors support women's effective leadership in dangerous contexts. The research utilized narrative inquiry in order to bring forth the essence of the lived experience of the women leaders. The research had two phases: phase one interviews, phase two panel discussion. In phase one, an unexpected outcome was that 75% of interviewees discussed issues of gender bias and toxic leadership. In the second phase a panel of four military leaders (two men and two women who were not part of the first phase) offered validation for the interpretation and findings obtained from the interviews. The analysis of the interviews and panel discussion provided recommendations for individual, social, organizational, and cultural changes needed to correct dysfunctional gender and cultural biases and support women's leadership. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive, <http://aura.antioch.edu/>, and OhioLINK ETD Center, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu>

Table of Contents	
Acknowledgments	i
Abstract	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	xii
List of Figures	xiii
Chapter I: Introduction	1
Situating the Researcher	2
Background.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	7
Research Question	7
Overview of the Literature	8
Design, Methods, and Analysis	10
Ethical Considerations.....	12
Relevance to Practice.....	13
Summary of Chapters	13
Chapter II: Literature Review.....	15
Defining Dangerous Contexts	15
History of Women in the Military	17
Gender and the Military Occupation Specialty	20
Women and Recent Developments.....	22
Individual Leadership Factors Important in Dangerous Contexts.....	26
Physical.....	26
Mental	27
Spiritual	28
Selfless Service.....	30
Self-Efficacy.....	32

Identity.....	32
The Importance of Individual Styles of Leadership.....	34
Authentic Leadership.....	35
Transactional Leadership.....	35
Transformational Leadership.....	36
Adaptive Leadership.....	37
Shared Leadership	38
Complex Adaptive Systems Leadership and Systems Thinking	39
Social Relationship Factors Important in Dangerous Contexts.....	44
Support Networks.....	44
Strong Relationships.....	47
Organizational Factors Important for Leadership in Dangerous Contexts.....	49
Holistic Organizational Development for Dangerous Contexts.....	50
Policies.....	51
Procedures	52
Practice	53
System	54
Resource Allocation	56
Culture	57
Leadership	59
Towards a Fuller Integration of Women Into the Military.....	61
Conclusion.....	63
Chapter III: Methodology.....	66
Phenomenology as Method	67
Positivism	68
Constructivism.....	68
Narrative Inquiry	70
Participants	73

Interviewing.....	75
Analysis	76
Limitations.....	77
Ethical Considerations.....	78
Chapter IV: Findings	79
Factors That Enable Women’s Leadership in Dangerous Contexts	80
Individual Characteristics.....	81
Self-Assessment	82
Physical	82
Mental.....	84
Spiritual	85
Self-Efficacy	86
Selfless Service	87
Personal Identity	88
Support Networks.....	90
Social Networks.....	90
Strong Relationships.....	93
Organizational Factors	97
Intervention and Coping Skills	98
Mentorship	101
Army Meritocracy	106
Opportunities for Development and Achievement	107
Removing Barriers to Achievement	109
Comprehensive Training	110
Communication Training	114
Standards	116
Integrated Training	117
Main Issues Making Women Leaders Ineffective	122

Dealing with Labeling and Stereotyping	122
Cultural Biases.....	126
Evaluations, Recognition, and Awards	128
Segregation	129
Toxic Leadership	129
Resistance to Change	133
Organizational Culture	133
Lack of Teamwork	134
Entrenched Attitudes	135
Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP)	
Issues and Training.....	136
Equal Opportunity and Inspector General Support and Effectiveness	137
Ways Male Leaders Undermine Women Leaders’ Effectiveness	138
Male-Dominated Culture	139
Breaking Down of Army Values and Warrior Ethos	139
Different Rules in Garrison and Deployment	140
Feminine Appearance.....	141
Lack of Trust, Control, and Communication	142
Panel Discussion Themes	144
Culture	145
Training	149
Leadership	152
Summary	156
Chapter V: Discussion	160
Individual Factors That Impact Women Leaders in Dangerous Contexts	162
Self-Assessment	163
Physical	164
Mental	167
Spiritual	168

Self-Efficacy	169
Selfless Service	171
Personal Identity	172
Social Factors That Impact Women Leaders in Dangerous Contexts	174
Social Networks	175
Trust	175
Social Support	176
Home Unit	176
Mentorship	177
Home	178
Peers/Teammates	178
Organizational Systems, Culture, and Leadership Factors That Impact Women Leaders Dangerous Contexts	179
Organizational Support Systems	180
Comprehensive Training	181
Training	181
Communication Training	182
Culture	183
Labeling and Stereotyping	184
Cultural Biases	186
Evaluations, Recognition, and Awards	187
Segregation	187
Toxic Leadership	187
Panel Discussion of Themes	191
Summary	192
Individual Factors That Enable Women Leaders to Be Effective	192
Social Factors That Enable Women Leaders to Be Effective	193
Organization Factors That Enable Women Leaders to Be Effective	194
Culture, Training and Leadership	196

Implications for Leadership and Change in the U.S. Army	196
Leader Behavior and Accountability	197
Leadership Awareness	197
Leadership Education	198
Zero Tolerance of Toxic Leadership	199
Accountability	200
Leadership Selection.....	201
Advocates Essential for Redress.....	201
Mentorship.....	201
Overcoming Impediments to Women’s Effective Leadership	202
Training Changes.....	202
Organizational Change	202
Changing the Male-Dominant Culture	203
Cultural Change.....	203
Conclusion.....	203
Appendix	205
Appendix A: Initial Pre-Screening Survey	206
Appendix B: Consent Form	208
Appendix C: Main Interview Questions	210
Appendix D: Additional Possible Questions	211
Appendix E: Glossary.....	213
References	215

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Individual Leadership Factors 26

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Seven Core Army Values 31

Figure 2.2 Categories of Individual Leadership Factors 34

Figure 2.3 Organizational Factors Model for Individuals Operating in Dangerous Contexts 49

Figure 4.1 Foundational Pillars for Effective Leadership 82

Figure 4.2 Organizational Factors Operating in Dangerous Contexts II..... 89

Figure 4.2 Wrecking Ball of Toxic Leadership..... 158

Figure 5.1 The Mechanism of Organizational Factors Enhancing Women’s Leadership..... 195

Chapter I: Introduction

As the sun rises she gets ready for another encounter with the enemy. Each encounter creates angst, but she manages to embrace and overcome it. With each new situation she must consider the battleground environment, the weather, the condition of her troops, and many additional factors. Although she has the drive, determination, and competence to face the challenge, she is hindered by barriers. This is the reality for women leaders in the U.S. Army Reserve.

A woman is not given permission to lead in dangerous contexts until a senior leader recognizes her abilities and gives permission; this is a contrast to the way her male colleagues are treated. Once a combat commander knows a woman leader's ability, however, she may be sent into dangerous contexts. She then becomes a soldier, a warrior—one of the elite—whose leadership capabilities are invaluable in missions. Gender is a criterion for the selection of candidates for the Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) volunteer force.

Even though women have been involved in past engagements, performed their duties under daunting situations, and been a critical part of mission success, women leaders in the U.S. Army Reserve have faced bureaucratic challenges. The purpose of my research was to study the lived experiences of women soldier leaders who have worked in dangerous situations and figured out how to achieve success in their missions. I have derived recommendations based upon their experiences, as well as my own. These recommendations offer direction on how soldier leaders operating in dangerous contexts can be more effective in their missions and suggests changes in the social and organizational resources provided by the Army.

In this chapter I provide background information on the U.S. Army Reserves and situate myself in the military and in my research. I also provide an overview of my research including a statement of purpose, my research question, and the limitations of the study.

Situating the Researcher

I have chosen to study military leadership based on my personal experiences as a woman leader and with other women leaders in the U.S. Army Reserves. I joined the Army Reserves in February 2002 as a consequence of the tragic events of September 11, 2001. I also was inspired by my husband's military service. He served on active duty for over 20 years as a Cavalry Scout in the Armor branch of the U.S. Army. In October 2008, I was mobilized on Joint Base Lewis McCord (JBLM) and then deployed to Afghanistan as a Regional Expert Intelligence Officer for Central Command (CENTCOM). Upon my return, I reintegrated into my family life, my community, and my civilian career as a middle school teacher. I also have continued my duties in the U.S. Army Reserves. This proud family tradition now continues with our son who in May 2014 received his Army commission and assumed his position as Combat Engineer in the U.S. Army Reserve.

Background

According to the U.S. Department of Defense (2008), the Reserve component of the operational force is comprised of 1.2 million service members. This constituted approximately 47% of the country's entire armed forces. As of August 2013 the nation had activated more than 880,000 reserve personnel for Enduring Freedom—the war in Afghanistan (U.S. Department of Defense, 2013). Since the mid-1990s, the U.S. military has employed the total force concept. First implemented in 1973, the total force concept relies on active duty personnel, Army Reserve components, and the National Guard to handle the nation's changing national security goals and engage in military missions on a global scale (RAND, 1993).

The current role of reservists or citizen warriors, men and women who serve in the National Guard and U.S. Army Reserves, is not an easy one. Their duties have changed significantly during the last 20 years. In 1970, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird introduced the Total Force Policy as a budgetary measure to minimize the cost of maintaining a larger active duty force. This policy was put to use on a large scale in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm (i.e., war in Iraq). At that time Army Reserve troops lent combat support and service units to the operation, along with additional combat units from the National Guard (Griffith, 2011).

The Army's position on its increased reliance on the Total Force policy is that in order to meet the "challenges of the 21st century in the war on terrorism, the Army has had to redefine and restructure itself. It is becoming smaller, lighter, and quicker. The USAR [U.S. Army Reserve] is playing a critical role in this transformation" (U.S. Army, n.d., para. 13).

While the policy may have made sense in the 1970s, its implications for service personnel during the last two decades has been profound, impacting reserve personnel and their families, communities, and civilian employers. At the same time, collaboration between active duty and reservists has been problematic due to a lack of smooth integration mechanisms that allow reservists to coordinate with the active duty component. Further, inadequate funding for the Reserves has resulted in abridged training and in limited resource distribution and allocation. In instances of military engagement, when the integration of reserve troops is necessary to meet a specific level of personnel power, reservists receive shortened, intense 30–90 day training. The training is an abridged version of what their active duty counterparts receive. While it meets military requirements the training limited and the equipment used is, at best, old if not outdated.

Leaders of the reserve must deal with a more complex system than their active duty counterparts in order to prepare their soldiers for deployment. They must quickly enhance

training and experience proficiencies at both the individual, collective, and unit levels; integrate new people into existing units to bring them to full manning strength; secure and train personnel on new equipment; and ensure support systems are in place to sustain family members during the deployment. Leaders also may need additional training to acquire knowledge about leading and operating in a combat environment so they can effectively deal with the unique challenges that occur during combat operations.

Unfortunately, in the past, and even presently, because of the Women Exclusionary policy training for dangerous contexts is provided only to male personnel. When deployed, all soldiers undergo the Soldier Readiness Process. This process verifies screening for individual soldier readiness for deployment (i.e., DA Form 7425 SRP Checklist, consisting of Admins Processing Stations: Personnel and Strength, Accounting, Military Personnel Records, ID Card/ID Tag, Army Community Service, Legal Assistance, Finance, Employer Support National Guard/Reserve/Department of Labor Outreach and Education, Civilian Personnel, Chaplain, Mobilization Preparation, and SRP Clearance Station). FORSCOM (U.S. Army Forces Command) sets the pre-deployment training guidance for all Areas of Operation (AO). Additional requirements are set for the regional Combatant Command (CCMD) that are unique to USCENTCOM (U.S Central Command), USNORTHCOM (U.S Northern Command), USAFRICOM(U.S Africa Command), USEUCOM (U.S European Command), USSOUTHCOM(U.S Southern Command), USPACOM(U.S Pacific Command) and SINAI. The set training, for each AO, is specific to Contingency Operating Base/Forward Operating Base Units (COB/FOB): Army Warrior Tasks, Individual Soldier Task, Individual Leader Tasks, and Collective Task/Army Warrior Battle Drills. For COB/FOB Units with Travel Off base, all the training named above as well as additional training in Individual Soldier, Collective and Leader

Tasks occurs before deployment. As for Maneuver Units, all the above and additional training in Individual Leaders Task and Collective Task occur before deployment. Once a unit completes all training requirements, it is validated and moves on to the theatre of operations to conduct the mission. Although the pre-deployment guidance covers a range of training critical to soldiers deployed, the training does not require that men and women attain the same combat training skill set. Furthermore, in-depth training for the Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) is inaccessible for personnel who are not in combat arms (e.g., infantry, armor, artillery, etc.), regardless of their gender, rendering these soldiers less than effective in dangerous situations. The respective in-depth training requirements for dangerous situations are taught at the unit level before soldiers go to the SRP (Soldier Readiness Processing) and Pre-deployment training/validation. At home stations, all units use the Mission Essential Task List (METL), identified by the commander and tailored to each specialty unit, to train their personnel in their respective MOS. In summary, basic soldier skills are given to all military personnel, but, in-depth training that is essential in order to be effective in dangerous situations is not.

Because women are excluded from combat training their preparation as leaders in dangerous contexts is incomplete. This situation is unwise because current engagements and urban warfare know no gender boundaries. Women, who serve in dangerous contexts, like their male counterparts, are vulnerable to injury, death, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Dangerous contexts are defined as “highly dynamic and unpredictable environments where leaders and group members must routinely engage in actions that place their physical and psychological well-being at risk accomplishing the organization’s objectives” (Sweeney, Matthews, & Lester, 2011, p. 4). Hannah, Uhl-Bien, Avolio, and Cavarretta (2009) defined dangerous contexts as ones that occur in close proximity and have the potential for massive

consequences to the military personnel deployed in the area. Effective leadership, training, collaboration, synchronization, communication, and resources are imperative if a soldier is to operate successfully in such circumstances.

This study focuses on U.S. Army Reserve women leaders, whose service occurred under the former exclusionary policy in which women soldiers were formally excluded from direct combat and who experienced dangerous contexts. The research findings are used to explore how the military can facilitate and cultivate the development of organizational and cultural changes that enhance the effectiveness women leaders in dangerous contexts.

Effective leadership in dangerous contexts is difficult to define because the nature of dangerous contexts is highly variable. As the forms of the threat change so too do the needs of followers and the demands on leadership (Hannah et al., 2009).

In extreme contexts, therefore, leaders likely face multifaceted and dynamic human reactions to varying forms of threat, requiring a mix of what we will later define as adaptive and administrative leadership. In sum, the three forms of threat (i.e., physical, psychological and material) can impose a plethora of contingencies on leadership, either separately or combined, that are simply too numerous to amply cover here. (p. 908)

While my sample is limited to a dozen women, the ideas generated by the interviews of these women leaders as well as a panel of four peers and my personal experience as an officer in the Army Reserves provide a solid foundation for proposed changes to Army policies that are meant to enhance the effectiveness of women leaders in dangerous contexts.

The impetus for this research is tied to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta's announcement in January 2013 that the U.S. military would be eliminating the rule excluding women from ground combat. This decision came amid a larger effort to create more gender equity across the military (Bumiller & Shanker, 2013). Panetta's announcement set the stage for the transformation of military culture. The exclusion of women being allowed to serve in combat

arms branches of the U.S. Army was lifted in 2015 with the admission of women to apply as Ranger School an elite combat skills course considered a prerequisite for all combat arms soldiers. The results of this recent policy change are still far from certain, and need further analysis, as presented in this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into what individual, social, and organizational factors support effective leadership in dangerous contexts, specifically for women in leadership roles in the U.S. Army Reserve. To achieve this end, I begin with a review of the current literature to identify individual, social, and organizational factors that impact leaders in dangerous contexts. This review also offers critical insight into the methodology used to answer my research question. My research investigated the experiences of women leaders who have served in dangerous contexts, what actions they took as leaders, and the lessons they learned. Their lived experiences are discussed and used to derive recommendations for organizational and cultural changes the military should institute in order to best meet the 2016 goals set by Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta particularly the integration of women leaders into all Military Occupation Specialties (MOS) inclusive of dangerous contexts. It is essential for the military to update its organizational policies in order to create conditions conducive for effective leadership in dangerous contexts and better address the current state of enemy engagements and lessons learned from such experiences.

Research Question

My research centered on the experiences of women who have served in leadership positions in the U.S. Army Reserve. My research question was: How do individual, social, and organizational factors within the U.S. Army Reserve impact women's leadership in dangerous

contexts? My intent was to understand how women were able to embrace challenges and lead effectively in dangerous contexts without having had access to the training their male counterparts received. In order to capture women's lived experiences in dangerous contexts my research utilized qualitative methodology. Qualitative methodology, more specifically narrative inquiry, provided an opportunity to bring forth the essence of the lived experience in all its richness. I used narrative inquiry during the first phase of my research. In a second phase I used a panel of military leaders to provide additional detail and validation for the interpretation and findings obtained from the interviews. In both the interviews and panel phases of the research open-ended questions were employed to invite participants to engage in an in-depth discussion about their experiences in dangerous contexts.

Overview of the Literature

My literature (see Chapter II) considers the relevance of various leadership styles, including authentic, transactional, transformative, adaptive, and shared leadership in both dangerous contexts and the military as a whole. Existing literature on dangerous contexts is sparse. Scholars have acknowledged the lack of studies explicitly devoted to dangerous contexts and argued that further study on this subject would greatly improve military leadership. The scholarly writing of retired Col. Patrick Sweeney and retired Col. Sean Hannah—two leading scholars in this area—were relied upon to provide a foundation for understanding dangerous contexts.

The literature on leadership was reviewed from a military perspective with consideration of the importance of knowing how to lead, possessing sufficient levels of competency and skill sets, gaining soldiers' trust, and having a strong commitment to successful completion of even the most daunting missions. The aim was to determine what factors allow a leader to thrive in a

military environment because the identification of these factors is the foundation for recommendations to improve leadership in the U.S. military.

The analysis of essential leadership factors highlighted the importance of training at all levels. Such training enables leaders in dangerous contexts to be proactive in minimizing or eliminating stress among their troops and cultivating a sense of coherence, cohesion, and esprit de corps in their units. Such a support system serves a particularly important role during times of high stress by providing soldiers with the ability to address issues such as fear and loss of fellow soldiers. Proper training and experience assist leaders in responding to difficult questions such as legitimacy, morality and/or rightness of the choices that are encountered in dangerous contexts. Leaders, at all levels, especially those at the highest ranks, need to facilitate mutuality, respect and achievement of common goals and missions within their units, while focusing on the individual soldier with whom they are entrusted to lead. Qualities such as moral strength, spirituality, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, also are critical for effective leadership and essential elements of this discussion.

Finally, the literature review provided a deeper understanding of how organizational factors such as leadership, training, rapid response, effective communication, and resource allocation are at the heart of the military's organizational focus. I reviewed how organizational factors contribute to the maintenance of moral and ethical values, the perpetuation of a common vision and understanding of the military's goals, and effective and efficient action in dangerous contexts. Leaders must have an understanding of how to adjust and be flexible within a dynamic organizational environment. Army resources and communications networks need to be adaptable in order for leaders to be effective in dangerous contexts involving complex situations. Acknowledging the levels of the organization—for example, soldiers' individual rights as well as

consideration of the unit as a whole—strengthens the entire organization. The organization also needs a clearly articulated culture with supportive systems that cultivate cohesion, morale and trust. Military leadership is conducted within a specific organizational context and an understanding and acknowledgment of that context is essential for successful leadership.

Design, Methods, and Analysis

My research question and interests are well suited for a phenomenological approach. “Phenomenological research is the study of essences. Phenomenology asks for the very nature of a phenomenon.” This methodology provided me the opportunity to listen to women leaders as they made meaning of their experiences in dangerous contexts. McMillan and Wergin (2010) noted that phenomenological research is a means for understanding people in the context of a situation and provides participants with a voice in the process. They observed: “When we want to understand what stands out for people in a given situation, phenomenological research, gives voice to their experiences in a singularly powerful way” (p. 102). Levinas (1973) noted that: “Phenomenological reflection is an intuitive look directed at life in all the fullness of life’s concrete forms. It is an attempt to understand life and, on that basis, to understand the world, life’s intentional object” (p. 139). Specifically, I utilized narrative inquiry as my primary method and followed with a panel discussion to ensure a meaningful and in-depth study.

My intention was to bring forth the experiences of women leaders in dangerous contexts in order to gain a fuller understanding of the individual, social, and organizational factors that aided in their success, and those factors hampered their leadership. The experiences reported by the women leaders in this study identify the factors they believe supported their effective leadership in dangerous contexts. Their experiences also indicate areas that need to be addressed to support and sustain effective women’s leadership. It is from the interviews, panel discussion,

and my personal experience that policy recommendations for changing the training of women Reservists is reached.

I used a two-phase research process. The first phase involved interviews with women leaders in the Army Reserves who have had experience in dangerous situations. Potential participants were invited to take an on-line survey. The women who received the invitations were from units in which I have previously served or who had been recommended by my peers and senior leadership. All potential participants completed a pre-screening on-line survey. Criteria for a woman's selection were that she had served in a leadership position in the reserve, deployed between 2008 and 2013; had been in a dangerous context; and, currently, was not undergoing treatment for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). If a woman met all the criteria she was scheduled for a recorded interview of 1–2 hours in duration. There was the possibility of a follow-up interview. The recorded interview was transcribed and coded. Two graduates from Antioch University's doctoral program in Leadership and Change performed the coding and initial analysis of collected data. Two coders were used in order to guard against bias. They also assisted in the identification of emergent themes. This was done by going over the transcript, line by line, and identifying themes and concepts that emerged about individual, and social and/or organizational factors for women leaders. These themes and concepts provide the core of the research and are key to understanding the roles these women leaders' play in dangerous contexts as well as identifying what policies need to be changed to better prepare how women reservists are trained.

In the second phase, I discussed the emergent themes and concepts from the women participants' interviews with a panel composed of four senior military leaders. Panel members were selected in a similar manner to that used in choosing the women interviewees. There were

two men and two women, who had not participated in the first phase, serving on the panel. The purpose of the expert panel was to seek additional insights and possibly fill gaps of understanding that were not addressed during Phase 1. The panel also was viewed as a way to validate interpretations I derived from the interviews in Phase 1 and offered further perspective into what social and organizational changes are valuable to cultivate leaders in dangerous contexts. The panel's discussions also were transcribed and coded. This information was then grouped accordingly with those from Phase 1. The results of the panel discussion were used in the interpretation of findings and in making recommendations.

Ethical Considerations

My own deployment experiences aided the interview process and analysis of data. However, I remained aware of the potential and vigilant for personal biases. The research plan was reviewed and approved by Antioch University's Institutional Review Board. I maintained as much objectivity as possible throughout the research. In this vein I tried to be a keen listener focused on the interview participant's experiences and insights.

Participants were advised beforehand about the nature of study. They also were told how confidentiality would be assured and their data secured and protected.

The risks to participants were expected to be minimal. The welfare of participants was safeguarded by providing them information on how to access mental wellness hotlines at their respective Army bases in the event they felt they needed help. Any risk participants experience is hoped to be adequately counterbalanced by benefits they and future military women leaders will gain by the recommendations of this research.

Relevance to Practice

As stated previously, gaps exist in the literature pertaining to leadership in dangerous contexts. As a soldier and as an officer/leader, I am interested in filling these gaps. This information is key to the development and support of successful military leaders and effective systems and practices in dangerous contexts. There is a profound urgency for studies such as this dissertation given the 2016 deadline to integrate women leaders in all Military Occupational Assignments, especially those in combat arms.

Summary of Chapters

The dissertation consists of seven chapters. This introduction is the first chapter. Chapter II is a literature review. The review begins with a history of women in the military followed by an overview of leadership styles. A section on leadership qualities that best meet the criteria for effective military service is divided into three parts: individual factors of importance in dangerous contexts; social factors of importance in dangerous contexts; and, organizational factors of importance in dangerous contexts.

Chapter III deals with methodology. It provides a detailed description of and rationale for the methods used in this study. The details of how participants were selected, data collected and assessed, and ethical and privacy considerations are covered in this chapter.

Chapter IV lays out the findings of the interviews and additional information gathered from the panel discussion. The emergent themes and participant statements are grouped under three major themes. These are: factors that enable women's leader in dangerous contexts; main issues making women leaders ineffective; and ways male leaders undermine women leaders' effectiveness. Some of the factors that enable women's leadership were found to be mentor support, opportunities, barrier removal, and comprehensive training. While stereotyping,

segregation, toxic leadership, and resistance to change were factors that undermined the effectiveness of women leaders. Some of the ways male leaders disrupted women leaders' effectiveness were by employing different rules in garrison versus during deployment, and by exhibiting a lack of trust, control, and communication.

The results of a panel discussion were included in this chapter. The panel reviewed the findings of the interviews, contributed examples of from their own experience, and offered recommendations. The three themes that emerged from the panelists' contributions were culture, training, and leadership.

Chapter V is a discussion of the findings from Chapter IV. The first part of the chapter is separated into three sections that deal with individual, social, and organizational factors that impact women leaders' effectiveness. The individual factors identified as important were self-assessment, physical, mental, spiritual, self-efficacy, selfless service, and identity. In terms of social factors, research found that networks, trust, social support, home unit, mentorship, home, limited overseas support, peer/workmates, and team building were key elements. In the third section of the chapter organizational factors that were discussed by the interviewees and the panel were: biases, lack of teamwork, cohesion, and unity of purpose. The final part of the chapter consists of a discussion of the implications of the findings for leadership and change in the U.S. Army and a look at possibilities for future research.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on the history of women in the U.S. military with specific emphasis on the findings, approaches, theories, and interpretations of the role of women leaders in the U.S Army Reserves. The focus of this study is on women leaders in dangerous contexts, an area within the U.S. military presently undergoing historic policy change. As I conducted this review it became clear that scholarly writings about women leaders in dangerous contexts are sparse. As a result I broadened my review to literature about dangerous contexts. This, too, proved to be an area of limited discussion.

I decided it would be desirable to group literature into three broad categories pertaining to the factors that affect soldiers in dangerous contexts. These were individual, social, and organizational in nature. The clustering of information in this manner gives deeper meaning to the content in this review. I divided the three categories into subcategories: six subcategories were identified within the individual factors category, two within the social category, and seven within the organizational category. The six subcategories clustered within the individual factors category are physical, mental, spiritual, selfless serving, self-efficacy, and identity. The two subcategories within the social factors category are support network and strong relationships. Seven subcategories are located within the organizational category. They are policies, procedures, practices, systems, resource allocation, culture, and leadership. All play a role—independently and interdependently—in effective leadership in dangerous contexts.

Defining Dangerous Contexts

Sweeney et al. (2011) define dangerous contexts as “highly dynamic and unpredictable environments where leaders and group members must routinely engage in actions that place their physical and psychological well-being at risk to accomplish the organization’s objectives” (p. 4). To be able to effectively and successfully operate under such circumstances, effective leadership,

training, collaboration, synchronization, communication, and resources are imperative. Hannah et al. (2009) defined dangerous contexts as those events with potential for massive consequences that occur in proximity to the organization's stakeholders whose perceptions of these consequences may be unbearable and that the organization may be unable to prevent. Dangerous contexts are distinguished from crisis contexts by the fact that in dangerous contexts the experience of crisis can be excluded. Crisis contexts involve short high intensity situations that are customarily dealt with in a reactive/defensive mode. Dangerous contexts may occur unexpectedly, much like crisis, but their occurrence also may be expected. Dangerous contexts are situational and content-based in nature and can rapidly change in scope, magnitude, and mission. Since dangerous contexts can be identified and categorized, they can be planned for and personnel can be trained for encountering these situations. A spectrum of dangerous contexts exists in military operations. This spectrum is based on the scope or scale of damage/effects, duration or frequency of conflict, and affected by such variables as resources, level of training, and personnel. There is evidence that the level of danger intensifies when psychological, social, and organizational resources are constrained (Hannah et al., 2009).

Dangerous contexts can cause a range of emotive responses in leaders (e.g., stress, terror), while the duration of the conflict influences the ability of an individual or an organization to respond to, learn from, and adapt to the event. The novelty of dangerous events may diminish with an increase in the frequency of encounters and increase the likelihood of preparedness and counteraction; however, the higher frequency also may be perceived as indicating the events are more extreme. Prolonged exposure to extreme events can lead to a degeneration in the status of individuals, organizations, and support materials. With insufficient training for prolonged encounters an organization's capacity to counter stress may be compromised. It is essential to

recognize that the most important factors when soldiers directly engage and encounter the enemy in combat are their specific duties and preparation for operating in dangerous contexts. Stouffer, Suchman, DeVinney, Star, and Williams (1949) explained: “The role of the combat soldier may well be considered the most important single role for the understanding of the Army . . . because of its determining socio-psychological significance for combat and noncombat soldiers alike” (p. 59). An historical look at women’s roles in the U.S. military provides important background and context for understanding what female soldiers experience.

History of Women in the Military

Significant changes have occurred since the 1908 inception of the U.S. Army Nurses Corps. The Nurse Corps formalized women’s presence in the military. Although nursing was their primary duty, women’s roles expanded during World Wars I and II. The truth is that women have participated informally in active combat, artillery units, frontier warfare, and espionage throughout American history (Holm, 1982).

The pace of change began to accelerate in 1967 when the 2% ceiling on women’s enlistment was lifted. The implementation of all-volunteer forces in 1973, at the end of the Vietnam conflict, became a watershed for women’s participation in the military. In 1974, all occupational specialties were opened to women, except for those directly related to combat. Beginning in 1975, pregnant women had the option to remain on active duty during and after pregnancy. The service academies were open to women in 1976, and in 1978 the women’s corps was integrated into the regular organizations followed in 1980 with the integration of officer promotion lists. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s women’s access to health care, training, higher education through the military, and veterans’ benefits improved. Between 1973 and the end of

1980s there was a five-fold increase in the number of active duty women expanding women's participation to 10.8% of the military.

Intensive news coverage of the conflict in the Persian Gulf in 1990 increased the visibility of women being deployed to a war zone. Some of these women, who performed a wide array of military jobs, were shown carrying arms and being exposed to the dangers of combat. Gradually throughout the 1990s, all units and positions in the Army, except direct ground support, and support units physically connected with them, became accessible to women. Women became eligible to serve in over 80% of all military jobs. By January 31, 2000, women comprised 14.4% of the U.S. military (Yoder, 2002).

During the early 1980s, a few women held occupations previously reserved only for men.

According to Major General Jeanne Holm (as cited in Kellett-Forsyth, 2003):

New opportunities for women did not translate into an easy acceptance by an organization with deeply rooted traditions and a male-centered culture which questioned the appropriateness of women under arms. The United States Army is an institution 'shaped by strongly maintained traditions and myths with a masculine-warrior paradigm that remains largely intact. (p. 2)

In order to enhance the equality of women in the military it is important to provide them access to prominent positions otherwise the advancement of the few is tokenism.

Research examining male/female perceptions of gender egalitarianism in professional environments sheds light on female soldiers' understandings of their social and professional status within the military and the function of their gender in career advancement trajectories (Ryan, 2008). As male and female officers train together at the Army Military Academy, West Point, and Reserve Officer Training Centers (ROTCs) within universities attitudes may be shifting. As individual relationships between men and women in militaristic environments become customary and accepted, there is the possibility for significant increase in gender equality.

Research by Wright (1990) on the relation between gender roles and age, suggests that the younger the population, the more acceptance of gender equality in the workplace. A research project by Adams, Rice, and Instone (1984) assessed the stakes for males and females pursuing leadership paths at West Point. Their study found that male cadets, who held relatively traditional views of women's roles in society, criticized group performances led by women while male cadets who held more egalitarian views made more favorable judgments about groups led by women. This study further suggested that a reduction in gender bias encourages the preparation of female leaders.

In general, inequities indicate that organizational change is needed. Kellett-Forsyth (2003) noted that, "Organizational changes are also implied by the actions of the male leaders who make decisions that promote the integration and advancement of women in the organization" (p. 129). The support of higher command is vital to the success of change within the military. Army Chief of Staff General Bernard W. Rogers was instrumental in integrating women in the military. General Rogers' personal commitment proved a critical step in the integration of women into traditional male roles.

Miller (1998) assessed women's attitudes to the potential for change in their status. She found that:

Most Army women would support a policy that allows women to volunteer for the combat arms if they qualify, but would not involuntarily assign them . . . women's performance would likely dispel the myth that all women are naturally unsuited for such jobs. (p. 6)

Army women, according to Miller, believe they are capable of doing the same work as their male counterparts.

In 1994 Secretary of Defense Les Aspin announced that the Department of Defense Risk Rule was to be rescinded and a new assignment policy for women would be enacted. The new

policy included specific positions available to women except in cases, as reported by Rabkin (1999):

(1) the units and positions were required to physically collocate and remain with direct ground combat units, (2) the service secretary attests that the cost of providing appropriate living space for women is prohibitive, (3) the units are engaged in special operations missions, or (4) job-related physical requirements would exclude the vast majority of women. (p. 3)

Since its implementation this policy opened up 32,700 U.S. Army positions to female soldiers.

Women in the U.S. Army continue to transform and enhance the military by assuming leadership roles never before envisioned for them. General Ann E. Dunwoody and General Janet Wolfenbarger are examples. In November 2008 General Ann E. Dunwoody became the first woman to be promoted to the rank of four-star general. Nearly four years later, on June 5, 2012, General Janet Wolfenbarger was promoted to the top Air Force Materiel Command position. She became the first woman four-star general in the Air Force (Jenkins, 2012). Wolfenbarger suggested that “Women have proven that we can succeed and that we can lead on every battlefield” (as cited in Jenkins, 2012, para. 15).

Choosing personnel based on their ability levels, in both assignment and leadership positions, ensures excellence and accomplishment in mission success. There is evidence from the field that commanders assign their people, without regard to gender, to where they are most needed (Holm, 1982). The military must remain committed to and engaged in making changes needed to achieve real gender equality not only for the sake of equality but also to ensure top performance and outcome.

Gender and the Military Occupation Specialty

N. Anderson, Lievens, van Dam, and Born (2006) concluded that, in general, men and women are equally effective as leaders although they lead in different ways. In their meta-analysis they found that: “Men emerged more often as task-oriented leaders who displayed

directive and controlling leadership styles” (p. 557). Additionally, they found that males were more likely to demonstrate competitive, assertive, and “stand out from the group behavior” (p. 557). In contrast, women were more likely to facilitate inter-personal relations and oral communication, and were better at problem-solving. N. Anderson et al. added a disclaimer. They believed their results generalized “to male-dominated working populations and for selection into male-dominated job roles” (p. 563). In another study, Saad and Sackett (2002), relying on data from the U.S. Army Selection and Classification Project, also known as Project A, determined that women tended to score higher than men on measures of dependability, while men scored higher than women on measures of dominance and influence. Here too, the researchers noted their findings were limited by a male-dominated environment; such environments limit female soldiers’ experiences and, therefore, impede certain performances. The above findings align with gender stereotypes. N. Anderson et al. recognized that violations of these gender stereotypes may lead to lower performance evaluations of women.

Researchers at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute found that within military organizations there is an “expectation by individuals that opportunities, responsibilities, and rewards will be accorded on the basis of a person’s abilities, efforts, and contributions” (Dansby & Landis, 1991, p. 392). However, there was a difference in perception between men and women wherein men perceived a more favorable culture to meritocracy than did women. This situation was even greater when racial minority status was factored into the equation. There was a particularly large disparity in perspective between minority female officers and majority male officers. According to Dansby and Landis, minority female officers held a much less positive view of equal opportunities in the military.

While it is true that men join the U.S. military for a variety of reasons the military offers a distinct benefit over general society in that it provides the “resources of a hegemonic masculinity” (Hinojosa, 2010, p. 180). Rather than equal opportunity the military gives men a way to demonstrate their masculine identity as “defined by emotional control, overt heterosexual desire, physical fitness, self-discipline, self-reliance, the willingness to use aggression and physical violence, and risk-taking, qualities tightly aligned with the military” (Hinojosa, 2010, p. 180). Hinojosa suggested that the U.S. Army policy that banned women from direct participation in the combat arms (infantry, armor, and artillery) “enabled men to maintain positions of dominance over women” (p. 180).

Crocker and Major (1989) found that the U.S. Army created situations in which women and ethnic minorities were dispersed so as to isolate them in order to marginalize and selectively devalue them. This may cause an individual to have a lowered sense of belonging, commitment to the organization, and subsequently affect their performance. Saad and Sackett (2002) believe that a similar phenomenon is the result of the Military Occupation Specialty, a policy that restrict women’s opportunities and training:

Given the policy restrictions on the role of women in combat situations, we speculate that these ratings contribute to the findings of lower female mean performance on this criterion composite and lower female performance than would be predicted given the female soldiers’ measured standing on the Achievement, Adjustment, and Dependability scales. (p. 673)

Women and Recent Developments

In May 2012, Col. Ellen Haring and Command Sgt. Major Jane Baldwin challenged the Army’s policy excluding women from ground combat. They filed a lawsuit seeking a judgment that the Army had violated the Fifth Amendment. Their suit further demanded that the Army make all assignment and training designations on grounds that are not based on gender (Wiltrout, 2012). In November of the same year, four women, who had been awarded both the Purple Heart

and the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor for their service in Afghanistan, sued Defense Secretary Leon Panetta for his women-in-combat exclusion policy. Their suit contended that the exclusion policy unfairly limited women's military careers (Hlad, 2012).

In January 2013, Defense Secretary Panetta announced the Pentagon would repeal the military's prohibition against women in ground combat; further evidence that women's capacity to contribute to the nation's defense was being recognized (Sisk, 2013a). Panetta's announcement required military officials to provide the Pentagon with a plan for the implementation of a system to eliminate all gender-based bias in military service careers, by May 15, 2013. The full implementation was to be completed by January 2016. Panetta said that Secretary of State Hilary Clinton's leadership was partly responsible for his inspiration to make the watershed decision (Sisk, 2013c). The Associated Press reported that military personnel accepted the new policy "so long as women will have to meet the same standards as their male colleagues" (Watson, 2013a, para. 9). However, they remained cautious about women serving in infantry units. A statement by General James Amos implied that the majority of Marines supported the policy change, although some remained skeptical about women in infantry positions (Watson, 2013b).

Panetta affirmed that qualification standards would not be reduced and reiterated his position that the new policy would "strengthen the ability of the U.S. to win wars" (Watson, 2013b, para. 11). Military experts, as well as decorated women veterans, expressed confidence that women have the capacity to train for and serve in combat along with their male colleagues (Carroll, 2013; Cox, 2013a; Sisk, 2013b). As plans for implementation of the policy approached, additional evidence supporting the new policy surfaced (Elliott, 2013). For example, women's service since 2011 in Special Forces units in Afghanistan was outlined in the *Army Military*

News (Goodall, 2013). Another sign was a shift in planning with the purpose of finding an equitable way to train women to serve (Lessig, 2013).

On May 15, 2013, the Army submitted a plan for the implementation of gender-neutral training and service standards (Baldor, 2013; Cox, 2013a). The plan suggested “reviewing and possibly changing the physical and mental standards that men and women will have to meet in order to qualify for certain infantry, armor, commando and other front-line positions across the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines” (Baldor, 2013, para. 3) with the aim to create a single uniform standard. The plan also included revisions to recruiting guidelines (Henning, 2013).

In the fall of 2013, new milestones in military service for women were achieved. One of these occurred when Amy Swears’ was sworn in as the first female Army Judge Advocate General (Leipold, 2013). Another was the deployment to Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan of five female Army soldiers who had been trained in a new counter-IED (Improvised Explosive Device) course. This course had been, developed specifically for Female Engagement Team members (Drohan, 2013). Further examples were the successful completion by four females of the Marines’ infantry training program, a pilot-training program geared toward determining in which combat jobs to place women in (Stars and Stripes, 2013), and on November 7, 2013, a statue depicting a female combat soldier was dedicated at the U.S. Army Women’s Museum in Fort Lee, Virginia. The statue was a tribute to the contributions of female soldiers who have served since 1990 (Cox, 2013b).

On December 3, 2015, U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced that all combat roles would now be open to women; therefore, the question about women’s service in dangerous contexts has been removed. The time has come to focus on instituting the changes that

are needed to support the full integration of women into the military, especially for female soldiers who serve in dangerous contexts.

To summarize, women have actively contributed to the mission of the Armed Forces throughout the history of U.S. military engagement. The formation of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps was the first time women's service was officially recognized as part of the U.S. Army. Since then, women have served in some capacity in every encounter in which our nation has engaged. The level of women's participation, however, has been limited and many positions have been categorized as male-only Military Occupation Specialties.

A series of policies have been implemented over the years in an effort to open the Military Occupation Specialty to women. Former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta recognized the need for policy changes to achieve a more equitable military. Panetta's 2013 announcement created an urgent need to identify and address outdated policies. I believe that one change in policy, necessitated by modern combat, should be for women soldiers to receive the same training as their male counterparts. Combat zones are no longer marked by the traditional front line. While a soldier's job description may not specify combat women regularly serve in areas of dangerous context. I further believe that another important change in policy, this one necessitated by current operational needs, is for commanders to look for leaders among all candidates not just from a pool limited by gender. Any new policies pertaining to leadership should aim to evaluate individual factors with the aim of identifying the salient characteristics of leaders who serve in dangerous contexts.

Individual Leadership Factors Important in Dangerous Contexts

Effective leadership is vital in dangerous contexts because “soldiers depend on leaders’ technical and tactical expertise, judgment, and intelligence to plan and execute operations that successfully complete the mission with the least possible risk to soldiers’ lives” (Sweeney, 2007, p. 256). A search of the literature identified six factors important for individual leadership in dangerous contexts. These are physical, mental, spiritual, selfless service, self-efficacy, and identity.

Table 2.1

Individual Leadership Factors

Individual Leadership Factors						
Factors	Physical	Mental	Spiritual	Selfless Service	Self-Efficacy	Identity
Key Points	ability to perform duties demanded by job high-intensity, daily exercise aids stress management	cognitive ability psychological factors that affect attitudes, habits, and beliefs, including courage, commitment, fear, and optimism	moral purpose connected to overall well-being, coping mechanisms and commitment	altruism commitment to protect and serve others promotes unity absence erodes cohesive-ness	can do attitude confidence and competence high coping skills	ability to be of high character, values, morals and ethics in words, actions and behavior enhanced by strong self-identity

Physical. Leadership in a dangerous context demands a certain degree of physical ability. In order to function in a highly demanding situation, physical endurance, strength, and stamina are imperative. Soldiers must be able to perform physical activities such as road marches and

carrying loads. The ability to perform high-intensity daily exercise also has been shown to assist in the management of stress. Mitchell (1940) discussed specific strategies for overcoming battle weariness and acknowledged in the process the importance of adequate sleep and nutrition.

Mental. Mental factors include the ability to cognitively process, to develop sound character in oneself and others, and psychological factors that affect attitudes, habits, and beliefs such as resilience, stress management, and optimism. Within this individual leadership subcategory are elements of Sweeney's (2007) ten characteristics including competency, honesty/integrity, self-control, courage, and a strong sense of duty in dangerous contexts.

Sweeney and Fry (2012) discussed the individual psychological factors necessary for courageous leadership. They observed that the moral strength of leaders makes them effective in instilling commitment in their soldiers and other personnel in dangerous contexts. Leaders' actions empowered others to achieve "moral potency." Sweeney and Fry argued that acting in a moral and ethical manner is highly rewarding, as doing so allows a person to express their true self. In contrast, Mitchell (1940) spoke of the specific fears soldiers often encounter. Mitchell observed two traits of leaders that help others overcome fear. These are the cultivation of a sense of coherence and spirit de corps. All of the aforementioned factors are connected to a sense of optimism, which has been shown by Sweeney and Fry to contribute to a leader's strength of vision and purpose, and tied to their performance.

The U.S. Army has published a series of documents citing individual qualities needed in combat environments. These publications reinforce the importance of having the mental capacity to lead. "Leaders who are strong, confident and deliberate will attenuate levels of stress among followers, while also increasing their confidence to perform in dangerous contexts over time" (Hannah et al., 2009, p. 898). A leader's response to extreme environments serves as models for

others. It demonstrates how to make sense of the mission and experiences in dangerous contexts. Klann (2003) observed that “leaders who recognize the importance of effective relationships keep watch over the organization’s emotional barometer and are sensitive to the nonverbal emotional signals of people in the organization” (p. 54). Thus, leaders need to have a level of mental toughness to deal with extreme situations. The mental strength of a leader has been shown to minimize followers’ stress under duress, encourage followers to pursue the most effective action, and build hope and resilience. According to Hannah et al. (2009) this capability is related to a leader’s charisma and ability to engage troops in a way that cultivates soldiers’ self-identities.

Spiritual. Pargament and Sweeney (2011) define spirituality as “the journey people take to discover and realize their essential selves and higher order aspirations” (p. 58). They point out that spirituality is not a characteristic per se, but rather the guiding force in one’s life that is at the heart of “the human spirit [which] organizes people’s lives and propels people forward” (p. 58). Spirituality encompasses our “goals, dreams, and aspirations” (p. 58) as well. A high level of spirituality has been connected to greater psychological and physical health and general well-being, along with advanced coping mechanisms.

Von Schell (1933/1999) emphasized the value of spirituality in the military leader.

The great commanders of all times had a real knowledge of the souls of their soldiers. Let us use a simpler phrase and call this knowledge of the soul, “knowledge of men.” Knowledge of men in all wars has proved an important factor to the leader. (p. 9)

Such knowledge lends psychological support to soldiers in extreme environments. On the most essential level, it is tied to the overall attribute of setting the highest example as a leader (von Schell, 1933/1999). Soldiers engaged in dangerous contexts are likely to experience an internal crisis of faith or question their moral compass. If a soldier has developed an intrinsic sense of faith and purpose, these conflicts may be reconciled by a belief in oneself and the

necessity of the mission. Spirituality is incorporated within Sweeney's (2007) characteristics of competency, loyalty, honesty/integrity, self-control, courage, and strong sense of duty.

Hannah and Sweeney (2007) focused on the importance of a military leader's overall character, and, in connection with this asserted "a person's spirituality provides the building blocks of character from which the attitudes, the worldview, the actions, and indeed, the professional and personal life of the future Army officer will be assembled" (p. 147). They also discussed the ties between character and leadership ability, citing Aristotle's philosophy that "the disposition which makes a man good and causes him to do his own work well." (p. 150).

The U.S. Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) program includes a human spiritual education program based upon Sweeney and Hannah's (2007) concepts. The program was designed to "enhance soldier's self-awareness of their spiritual core" (Pargament & Sweeney, 2011, p. 62). The program provides "Army personnel access to spiritual resources to facilitate the development of the human spirit" (p. 62), and "assist(s) soldiers in building greater social awareness to foster a sense of deep connectedness with other people and the world" (p. 62). The Army has committed resources to the CSF program recognizing the value in cultivating the human spirit. Leaders who demonstrate strong spirituality, as Sweeney and Fry (2012) noted, appear to be more effective as leaders. Hannah and Sweeney (2007) observed that "in assuming a leadership role, a person of faith clearly understands he/she has been given power and means not for the purpose of performing one's will or achieving one's desire" (p. 161). Perhaps most importantly, prayer and spiritual belief demonstrate an approach to life rooted in love and service. "Love can be considered the glue that holds all other leadership values together" (p. 162).

Spiritual practice strengthens leadership by combining reverence for certain virtues—prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance—with attributes that perpetuate a strong

morality and right judgment (Hannah & Sweeney, 2007). Hannah and Sweeney further explained that, “justice is the virtue which disposes a person to respect the rights of every other person and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to person and to the common good” (p. 153). They emphasized, in particular, the importance of fortitude in the military environment; it supports strength of mind and resilience in the face of adversity.

Pargament and Sweeney (2011) observed the linkage between spiritual practice and the need for continued personal and professional development in leaders. “Human spirituality is a significant motivating force, spirituality is a vital resource for human development, and spirituality is a source of struggle that can lead to growth or decline” (p. 58). Pargament and Sweeney cite the fact that “Individuals who report stronger spiritual motivation also manifest less conflict among other goals in their lives, greater purpose in life, greater commitment to their goals, and more satisfaction and happiness in their pursuit of their strivings” (p. 60).

The Army acknowledges that spirituality is an important element of military training and development programs as it is connected to a soldier’s psychological and physical health, and overall well-being. The belief system of a soldier also plays a role in their combat performance (Henderson, 1985). Soldiers who are grounded by spirituality along with the belief that they are serving their nations interests are deeply invested with a sense of purpose.

Selfless service. Selfless service cannot be taught. It is an inherent part of a person’s moral and spiritual foundation. Selfless leaders put the greater good ahead of their own wants and needs. Selfless service is in line with Sweeney’s (2007) categories of loyalty, leading by example, self-control, sharing of information, personal connection with subordinates, and strong sense of duty.

The Army recognizes the importance of selfless service as a leadership trait; a trait that puts people in place who are truly committed to protect and serve. This recognition is reflected in the U.S. Army's official statement of its values (see also Figure 2.1).`

Put the welfare of the nation, the Army and your subordinates before your own. Self-less service is larger than just one person. In serving your country, you are doing your duty loyally without thought of recognition or gain. The basic building block of self-less service is the commitment of each team member to go a little further, endure a little longer, and look a little closer to see how he or she can add to the effort. ("The Army Values," n.d., para. 5)

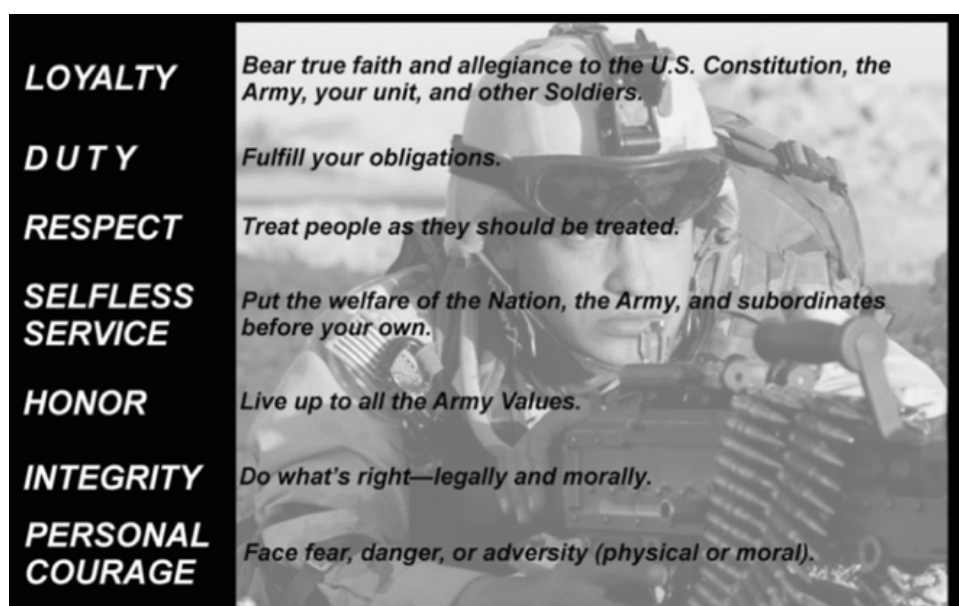


Figure 2.1. Seven core Army values. Reprinted from Army leadership: Competent, confident, and agile. Field Manual No. 6-22, by Department of the Army (2006, p. 2-1).

The potential for cohesion and unity of purpose are far greater when a team or unit is led by a leader who embodies selflessness. Cohesion of a team will erode if the self-interest of a team member supersedes the group or unit. This erosion diminishes the unit's strength and undermines trust. Leaders are ultimately responsible for modeling selflessness in their behavior, speech, and decision-making. The ultimate behavior when confronting situations of extreme danger is deliberate self-sacrifice.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is an important aspect of successful leadership, especially in the military. When faced with a challenging issue or event, a leader who embodies the characteristics of self-efficacy believes in the possibility of a successful outcome. These leaders possess the skills and abilities to stay the course until a positive conclusion is reached. They remain close to their “men and women” and lead by example cultivating trust and morale. As Mitchell (1940) explained,

An officer’s value is in direct ratio to how he is regarded by those serving below him. Whatever superior officers think of an officer, in no way improves or decreases his efficiency. If his men have complete trust and faith in him, then they are a single fighting weapon in his hand. (p. 155)

Military training that builds on skills and promotes confidence and trust in self through the creation of realistic scenarios bolsters an already competent leader’s ability to take charge. Self-efficacy falls within Sweeney’s (2007) categories of competency, leading by example, and self-control.

Mitchell (1940) mentions the need to cultivate self-efficacy in leaders so they have the mental strength to remain persistent in the face of defeat. Tough training increases leaders’ resilience and helps in the long-run with stress management. The more confident leaders are in their abilities and the stronger their coping skills the more likely will they be able to embrace the demands and challenges of combat.

Identity. The goal of the U.S. Army is to create leaders and soldiers who are well-prepared to tackle the physical, intellectual, ethical, and social challenges of military service. The goal of military education and training is to achieve this level of preparedness. One aspect of training is identity development. In the military the two main components of identity development are the Army Values (Figure 2.1) and the Warrior Ethos. The spirit of the Warrior

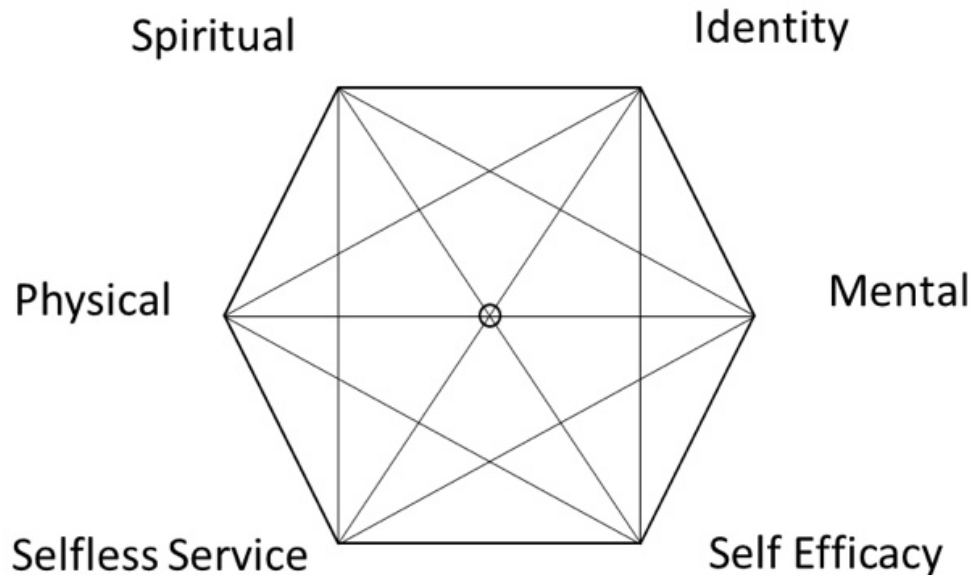
Ethos (Department of the Army, 2008) compels soldiers to rise to all challenges in order to achieve their missions.

Identity, as a factor, is the ability to be of high character, values, morals and ethics in words, actions, and behavior. The characteristics mentioned by Sweeney (2007) that apply are competency, loyalty, honesty/integrity, leading by example, self-control, confidence, courage, sharing of information, personal connection with subordinates, and strong sense of duty.

Leaders' character attributes and value systems are optimized by a strong self-identity (Sweeney & Fry, 2012). This strong sense of self is tied to the leader's performance in action. Sweeney and Fry take this concept one step further and apply it to the critical factor of agency, which encompasses mental strengths such as self-regulation, self-efficacy, self-identity, and values. There are three ways for exercising agency: personal, proxy, and collective. All three influence moral and ethical behavior through various individual, procedural, and social channels. It is vital to understand that a leader's self-identity has the power to guide the perceptions and actions of subordinates, peers, and superiors. Identity is a source of strength, enabling one to take action on each task or challenge through moral and ethical behavior. A strong sense of identity empowers leaders to accomplish missions, take care of soldiers, and serve their nation.

All of these factors (i.e., physical, mental, spiritual, selfless service, self-efficacy, and identity) working together contribute to effective leadership in dangerous contexts (see Figure 2.2). "Leaders who understand the connection between emotion and behavior will be more effective during a crisis because they will understand how to meet the needs of people in the organization and so influence their behavior" (Klann, 2003, p. 42). Klann also emphasized that leaders must acknowledge, constantly be aware of, and take responsibility for their role as an exemplary soldier. Idolized leaders are emblems, or symbols, idealized by soldiers and solid

examples for soldiers to emulate. In this role they have a high impact on the overall effectiveness of Army operations and combat.



Leaders in Dangerous Context are Most Effective When All Factors are Integrated.

Figure 2.2. Categories of individual leadership factors.

The Importance of Individual Styles of Leadership

As leaders have a profound impact and influence on their personnel, peers, and missions, it is essential to understand leadership styles. This section presents a brief review of the literature on leadership styles as a basis for a discussion on the most effective ways to accomplish missions in dangerous contexts. No one leadership style is likely to be appropriate for long durations of time during encounters in dangerous contexts; however, adaptive and transactional leadership are likely to be most pronounced. Often leadership, rather than being confined to one style over another, is more likely to reflect a combination of styles. Leaders must be knowledgeable about a variety of leadership styles. They should be aware of how each leadership style functions and

how to transition from one to another as not one type of leadership is likely to assure the success of a mission in a dangerous context. The most commonly used styles of leadership to be used in dangerous contexts are authentic, transactional, transformational, adaptive, shared, and complex adaptive.

Authentic leadership. Authentic leaders, as defined by Sweeney and Hannah (2007), are “highly self-aware and able to regulate their behavior to stay true to themselves and exercise their core moral beliefs in the domain of leadership” (p. 2). Gardner and Schermerhorn (2004) characterize authentic leadership as the ability to use positive self-regulation to attain high standards, demonstrate positive psychological abilities (i.e., self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, self-understanding), and continue self-growth in a framework of discipline. These qualities create confidence and competence in leaders which in turn inspires hope and loyalty and fosters resilience among their followers.

Authentic leaders create an environment that starts with a sound leader base. Followers know that they can count on an authentic leader to be true, consistent, and fair and to care for them physically, mentally, and spiritually. They strive to be selfless in their service to their followers and are models for living one’s ideals. Authentic leaders are effective in dangerous contexts by the very nature of their being.

Transactional leadership. Transactional leadership involves influencing followers with rewards for specific actions or performance standards (Pearce, 2004). Sweeney and Hannah (2007) note that transactional leadership serves a purpose in task-oriented environments like combat, which by nature are transactional. Hannah et al. (2009) suggest that transactional leadership can be reasonably employed in extreme environments if done in combination with transformational leadership; the former may be necessary to overcome obstacles in mission and

personnel. The application of authentic leadership at the same time enhances the leadership role. Hannah et al. also note that transactional, goal-oriented leadership can calm and contain stressful situations: “In dealing with extended stress, leadership that provides competence, support, structure, priorities, role clarity, effective communication, coordination, maintains cohesion, focus, calm, a sense of human and adequate preparation and response has typically been evaluated as more effective” (p. 912).

Transactional leadership may be more commonly used by leaders in the early stages of their professional development. It is a style taught to the junior levels of non-commissioned and commissioned officers. The goal is to teach developing leaders to follow directives from superiors. It is an important lesson from a global perspective so that subordinate leaders understand that the entire mission in an Area of Operation (AO) is decided, in large part, by higher commands. Transactional leadership may be most effective when specific tasks or a mission is goal-oriented, for example, when simple military tactics are sufficient for engagement or when weapons systems and technology are employed. Northouse (2007) noted that “transactional leaders are influential because it is in the best interest of subordinates to do what the leader wants” (p. 185). Other leadership styles need to be taught to insure that leaders, from and within all ranks can be self-efficacious and not simply follow the higher command.

Transformational leadership. In contrast to transactional leadership, where leaders do not individualize subordinates’ needs or focus on their personal development (Northouse, 2007), transformational leadership is effective in maintaining a level of identity among leaders and their soldiers that contributes to strong cohesion (Hannah et al., 2009). Transformational leadership adopts “a more symbolic emphasis on commitment to a team vision, emotional engagement, and fulfillment of higher-order needs such as meaningful professional impact or desires to engage in

breakthrough achievements” (Pearce, 2004, p. 53). Northouse (2007) characterized transformational leadership as,

a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals and includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treats them as full human beings. Transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them. It is a process that often incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership. (p. 176)

Sweeney, Thompson, and Blanton (2009) asserted that transformational leadership is an effective means of establishing trust. Leaders with vision and influence are trusted by their soldiers and can create mission success in the most desperate situations.

Being, inspirational, intellectual, and considerate are important characteristics of transformational leaders. These leaders have clear visions, are socially adept, maintain a positive self-regard, and can create an atmosphere of trust (Northouse, 2007). Transformational leaders cultivate an environment of growth, change, engagement, and empowerment. They are concerned with the well-being of their followers, prioritizing the mission, and caring for themselves. Followers have faith in a transformational leader’s interest in caring for everyone on the team in a positive and productive manner.

Adaptive leadership. Being an adaptive leader in an environment of change is imperative to ensure a mission’s success and protect lives. Whiffen (2007) defined “adaptive leadership as the ability to modify individual and collective actions based on circumstances” (p. 109). Adaptive leaders must be able to “recognize changes in the environment, identify the critical elements of the new situation, and trigger changes accordingly to meet new requirements” (p. 109).

A variety of social elements, administrative policies, and distribution of resources assist in the cultivation of adaptive leadership. Hannah et al. (2009) noted that adaptive leadership and

administrative processes work together to contribute to an understanding of shared objectives and the mission in dangerous contexts. They wrote that adaptive organizational structures are most effective for dangerous contexts where the range and variety of threats vary. In an unpredictable environment it is vital to the life of personnel and the success of the mission for leadership to adapt to a situation as soon as possible. Thus, it is imperative to have leaders who are situationally aware, think critically, problem solve, and communicate clearly. Followers trust adaptive leaders because they are interactive, knowledgeable, and analytical; skills that are essential to safeguard lives and mission success. Hannah et al. have observed that adaptive leadership is a promising area for future research on effective leadership in dangerous contexts.

Shared leadership. Pearce (2004) stated that in order to have shared leadership leaders must cultivate trust, interdependence, creativity, and complexity. “Shared leadership entails a simultaneous, ongoing, mutual influence process within a team that is characterized by ‘serial emergence’ of official as well as unofficial leaders” (p. 48). Leadership that models and cultivates shared leadership will bring forth strong cohesion. In order to develop shared leadership within an organization certain systems must be in place. These are “(1) training and development systems; (2) reward systems; and (3) cultural systems” (p. 51).

In a combat environment shared leadership, also known as distributive leadership, creates a climate in which everyone is responsible and accountable for doing their best to accomplish the mission and return home alive. Stouffer et al. (1949) referred to this factor as vital interdependence, in terms of its impact on the safety of others. Shared leadership in combat reinforces essential relationships between leaders and soldiers that contribute to a team’s cohesion. Hannah et al. (2009) suggested that:

This collective identity may set the conditions for highly coordinated action, but also reduce followers’ willingness to question leaders’ directions. The ultimate

balancing act for leaders in these situations may be to foster a shared leadership system where the leader both maintains authority yet can be questioned. (p. 907)

In order for shared leadership to operate most effectively, it is essential that members of a team are chosen with the utmost care in terms of their “mission-critical knowledge, skills, or abilities” (Pearce, 2004, p. 50).

Leaders who demonstrate a shared leadership style are likely to be viewed by their subordinates as being competent and deserving of trust. Teams consisting of followers that are viewed as experts in their field and can serve as leaders, are highly competent, efficient, and goal-oriented. Shared leadership demonstrates the highest form of team-leader interaction. It is a leadership style that shares the traits of high team-leader interaction with transformational and adaptive leadership.

Leaders in dangerous contexts must adapt their leadership style because dangerous contexts are highly dynamic situations. Leaders must be adaptive mentally, physically, and interpersonally. It, thus, is imperative that leaders are aware of the different leadership styles and can implement what works best given the situation. Leaders in dangerous contexts are likely to use one or all four leadership styles (i.e., authentic, transactional, transformational, or shared leadership) to accomplish the mission and minimize casualties.

Complex adaptive systems leadership and systems thinking. Leadership as a discipline took root in the mid-twentieth century and has since become a fully-fledged field of study and practice. New models of leadership continually emerge to describe the complexity within organizations, address the demands of change within organizations, and as new types of organizations arise. Complexity Leadership Theory is one of these models. It specifically addresses the complexity within organizations and its impact on leadership. Complexity leadership theory deals with interactive, aggregated, dynamic behaviors (Rumsey, 2013). It is a

dynamic in which persons and groups introduce ideas into a discussion, foster learning initiatives for others, stimulate exploration of challenges, and initiate changes that lead to greater adaptability for the system. This interactive adaptability leadership model may be useful in dynamic environments such as dangerous contexts to address ever present changing threats. complexity theory, however, does not assume that all systems are complex adaptive ones. A key assumption of complexity theory is that some events are unknowable until they actually occur (Schneider & Somers, 2006). This has particular salience to the military because even though it develops plans so much about war, the battlefield, and dangerous contexts remains unknown before engagement occurs. No amount of planning can account for all variables and there will be assumptions that turn out to be unfounded, simply not true.

In complexity theory, leaders serve as agents and influence other persons and processes. All too often soldiers lead in a temporary capacity and without authority. Soldiers may take on a leadership role consciously or accept the role if given to them. It also is possible that leaders may be unaware of their role and emerge as leaders or co-leaders as a result of their actions. In these instances, leadership connotes an indirect, catalytic process within an organization instead of the more traditional usage of the term which suggests there is an individual with positional powers and factors that distinguish them from others (Schneider & Somers, 2006). Certainly, dangerous contexts involve lots of chaos and, in such instances, military leadership may not be overtly visible or readily available. There are times when it is necessary for someone who has not been assigned a leadership role to step up and temporarily assume leadership, to take charge in order to keep the mission moving forward. They maintain this position until someone with military authority can reassume leadership.

Rouse (2000) characterized complex adaptive systems as nonlinear, dynamic and do not inherently reach fixed equilibrium points. Complex adaptive systems, therefore, appear to be random or chaotic. There is no single point of control. The system's behaviors are often unpredictable and uncontrollable. No one seems to be in charge; consequently, the system is more likely to be influenced more than controlled. Such characteristics imply an organizational system that is more loosely-structured than envisioned in the past.

In complex adaptive organizations people engage in communicative interactions and power relations. The dynamic of continual influence, an evoking and provoking of responses, results in problem solving (Griffin & Stacey, 2005). Leaders in these interactive groups are co-created by processes of recognition. The leader, therefore, is as much formed by the recognition of the group as s/he forms the group in recognition of the others. The leader is acting upon the outcome just as much as everyone else. However, leadership is distinguished by participating skillfully in interactions with others, by being reflective and imaginative and aware of potentially destructive processes. In complex adaptive organizations leaders demonstrates a greater capacity to deal with the anxiety of the situation and the courage to carry on despite the uncertainties. This is a different view of leadership than the more traditional perspective, in which, as Griffin and Stacey describe, "the leader stands outside the system, designing, manipulating variables and pulling levers in order to stay in control" (p. 13).

Complex adaptive system leadership often does not rely upon formal authority structures but may well influence the process of emergence or self-organization. (Schneider & Somers, 2006). Soldiers who demonstrate leadership qualities will unofficially and personally take on leadership issues that may emerge within the organization. This is not the same as shared

leadership, but is an individual's exercise of personal initiative to carry out the intent of the organizational leaders.

Complex adaptive systems interact with the environment in order to adapt to changes (Rammel, Stagl, & Wilfing, 2007). Within the complex adaptive system are multiple, cross-level interactions and single and double-loop feedback systems which result in a high degree of complexity and non-linear behaviors that disrupt predictive equilibrium. The whole creates novelty, adaptation and selection, and inevitable uncertainty. (Rammel et al., 2007). The challenge of a complex adaptive system is to excel in all the competing elements. There is an interconnectiveness between branches (e.g., MOS, logistics and sustainment, information exchange, etc.). This allows for the organization to change as the situation changes, as new missions become necessary and others are completed. This is adaptive because when the organization is in a dangerous context it can remain flexible. In dangerous contexts change occurs almost on a consistent bases. Leadership, therefore, must explore and engage in the challenges and adapt to the situations given.

Brown and Eisenhardt (1998) offered pointers for successful leadership in complex adaptive organizations. They suggested that any advantage is temporary and leaders should expect and accept continuous change. The most effective strategy is diverse, emergent, and complicated. It is important to strive for new ways to create value and readjust in order to align with emergent opportunities. The past, however, should not be overlooked. K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple Soldier) a tried and true acronym used by the military was employed at the tactical level to ensure foot soldiers understood the operation and therefore could accomplish the mission. Today's modern conflicts require greater integration between the strategic, operational, and tactical levels for military campaigns that require more of the "boots on the ground" soldier than

in past conflicts. There is much to be gained by evaluating past experiences, but it is a mistake to rely on outdated models. Organizations must function in the present, keeping an eye to the future, yet remembering that extensive future planning may be unwarranted because the future is so unpredictable. Change will be least disorienting when the pace can be managed to be smooth and evolutionary. Change strategies are more likely to be successful when driven from the business end rather than from the top down.

This approach to leadership is evident in modern systems thinking. The approach “bears directly on the problem of ‘doing more with less’ [and] involves getting back to the purpose or *raison d’être* of a function, and leads to the development of radically different ideas about resources and their organizations” (Checkland & Scholes, 1990, p. 77). Systems thinking and its formative and rational teleology, refer to a pattern of activity that allows the embedded conclusion to occur. While that end may or may not be knowable, depending on the branch of systems theory one holds, it offers no theoretical place for the participants in the process to influence the result through their participation (Griffin & Stacey, 2005, p. 133).

There are two complementary schools of thought within systems thinking. These are customarily identified as “hard” and “soft” (Checkland & Scholes, 1990). Hard systems thinking contributes to the efficiency of action while soft systems studies bring forth learning (Checkland, 1981). Checkland argues that hard systems thinking is a “response to certain difficulties with the broad sweep of the scientific way of trying to understand the world” (p. 242). He suggests that the hard system approach problems are evaluated either as solved or as improved.

Soft systems thinking takes a whole entity approach. Constructed abstract wholes, often called systems models, are used to evaluate the perceived real world in order to learn about it.

The purpose of doing this may range from engineering—in the broadest sense—some part of the world, to seeking insight or illumination.

Social Relationship Factors Important in Dangerous Contexts

Social factors are essential to the well-being of soldiers and units operating in dangerous contexts. Two social factors instrumental in achieving this are support networks and strong relationships. A network cultivates and facilitates professional conduct, ethics, morals, rituals, and mentor relationship. Strong relationships are the foundations of esprit de corps. Strength in relations is a priority if there is to be mission success particularly in extreme situations.

Support networks. A support network consists of a safe, formal or informal forum that enables soldiers to communicate with their leaders and vice versa on any matter that aids in the accomplishment of their mission and also with peers, mentors, family and friends. Support networks like social relationships foster interactions between humans, but have more to do with framework and structure. The existence of a network provides a bridge between work and human relations and, thus, supports social relationship. Networks provide a pathway for open communication between personnel. They are an important part of problem-solving. They are essential in promoting the interdependence that is fundamental to survival in dangerous situations.

Among the key issues in the promotion of strong support networks are trust, the development of cohesion and a collective identity, group standards, and group influence. Trust is a critical element in the successful functioning of a support network. Hannah et al. (2009) cite lack of trust as having the power to destroy unit cohesion, which can erode commitment to a mission. It is not enough, they conclude, for a leader to establish trust from the onset; they must maintain trust continuously, particularly in combat.

Cohesion among leaders and their soldiers reinforces collective identity. Cohesion assists with mission success by supporting coordinated action and prompt response to a leader's directives (Hannah et al., 2009). Collective identity helps to foster collective resilience and contributes significantly to performance in extreme environments. According to Manyena, as cited in Hannah et al., mental strength, particularly in terms of collective resilience, preserves a group's ability to manage stress.

Group influence is a social reality in the military. Soldiers constantly assess the respective conduct of other members of their team. They may challenge those who do not adhere to group standards (Hannah & Sweeney, 2007). At times when military practices conflict with mainstream social standards, "the fundamental values of society, respect for the individual as a person, the rule of law, and the authority of the Constitution, provide boundaries on permissible action" (p. 132). Group standards also are reinforced by a sense of loyalty to the group and commitment to the group's mission. The group constantly assesses its competence and proficiency. Janowitz (1964) view is that the greater the level of combat service together, the greater such group mechanisms develop. He warned that when smaller units are merged or are dispersed, these assets—competence, cohesion, and the unity—can be lost.

The social network extends beyond soldiers and their leader: family and friends are an essential component. A variety of forms of communication, such as phone, text, emails, video conference/meetings, and social media networks, are available to cultivate and maintain this type of support. Society, in general, also can contribute. When citizens support a mission they strengthen military operations and may improve mission success rates (Hannah & Sweeney, 2007).

Peterson, Park, and Sweeney (2008) made the point that good relations with others fulfill people. In a military community, positive social relations lift morale and foster a sense of optimism; both are important elements in achieving success, particularly in dangerous contexts. Although the Army attempted to implement initiatives to foster cohesion and collective identity within a unit, it failed to demarcate the physical spaces of the small unit, an entity that has been shown to support cohesion (Henderson, 1985). However, “the small unit has not replaced other primary influences such as family, friends, and other groups as the primary determinant of his [a soldier’s] day-to-day behavior” (p. 31). Another issue that Henderson observed was that small unit leaders struggled to develop cohesion within their units because of a level of organizational distance between unit leaders and their soldiers. Additionally, a reduction in squad leaders caused a shift away from what had been a traditional concept of a linear career pattern for leadership. The Army responded to this decline in squad leaders by offering financial and career incentives. These, however, did not address the underlying reasons for the decline. Henderson states: “As a result, the U.S no longer [had] a tough, professional army that match[ed] other leading armies in an essential element of combat power-cohesion” (p. 129). What was an issue in 1985 is still one today in incentivizing quality recruits to join. To build and maintain a cohesive, effective Army, more structural leadership development policies are still necessary.

Wong, Kolditz, Millen, and Potter (2003) focused on the Iraq conflicts and Desert Storm, which took place during the first decade of the 21st century. They provided examples of the function of social support networks with respect to effective leadership.

When soldiers were asked what kept them going during the war, the most common response was getting the war over so that they could go home. The second most common response and the primary combat motivation, however, referred to the strong group ties that developed during combat. (p. 2)

This commitment to group may be stronger now than in the 1980s because today's Army is a volunteer force comprised of professional soldiers, a fact that reinforces psychological/emotional bonds among soldiers and between leaders and their unit (Wong et al., 2003).

Strong relationships. Strong relationships are important to the free flow of communication, building trust, maintaining group cohesion, promoting individual and group resilience, and addressing prejudice. Henderson (1985) cited social interaction as one of the primary factors contributing to unit cohesion: "The cohesive unit becomes, in effect, a social and support organization capable of satisfying the soldier's major needs" (p. 13). The Army has dedicated resources to and protocols for fostering healthy social relations. Army Bands, for example, reinforce morale and provide positive psychological support, and unit ministries offer outlets for the reduction of combat stress and battle fatigue (Department of the Army, 2005). Strong relationships of trust and unit cohesiveness among soldiers and leaders are particularly valuable on frontlines where soldiers' psychological and emotional needs are challenged (Stouffer et al., 1949). In dangerous contexts strong relationships between leaders and soldiers is necessary for individuals and their units to function effectively.

Stouffer et al. (1949) pointed out that combat action can create strong relationships through exposure to a common threat. Combat situations foster "a closer solidarity between officers and enlisted men than was usual in the rest of the Army" (p. 119). The shared goal of survival in dangerous contexts naturally creates a sense of group interdependence that fuels motivation to succeed in a combat mission. Janowitz (1964) noted that a "network of interpersonal relationships formed by buddies contributed to operational effectiveness by establishing and enforcing upper and lower limits to role performance" (p. 195). The relationship between buddies is founded upon

mutual loyalty and reciprocity, creating a supportive relationship of understanding which also helps to minimize psychological stress.

Von Schell (1933/1999) indicated that a similar sense of interdependence can be achieved through training and discipline. Training, he suggested, is important because human behavior is unpredictable in dangerous contexts. Training and discipline may prove invaluable in conditions that depend on cohesive response. This is true for dangerous contexts where individual safety is dependant on group solidarity. Group solidarity can be reinforced when there is a common understanding of the risk a group faces together and guiding principles they must adhere to when facing risks (Janowitz, 1964). Such social awareness equates to an understanding of the importance of social relationships and promotes “both individual and collective well-being” (Sweeney & Fry, 2012, p. 90).

The U.S. Army has taken measures to increase cohesion and morale. One of these measures is the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) program which acknowledges the importance of the human element in “successful military operations in the 21st century” (Cornum, Matthews, & Seligman, 2011, p. 8).

Sweeney and Fry (2012) suggest that leadership skills are essential to “harness the power of the developmental resources of relationships” (p. 97). In their view, leaders can promote strong relationships by modeling positive social relationships with other leaders and soldiers and demonstrating the positive consequences of such relationships on well-being, the development of self-identity, and moral standards.

People make up an organization and their social relationships and social networks are the functional elements of the organization. The caliber of people and the quality of their relationships

determine the quality of organizational functioning. When this complex system functions effectively leadership is empowered and missions are accomplished successfully.

Organizational Factors Important for Leadership in Dangerous Contexts

Organizational factors form the foundation and framework upon which leaders work to accomplish their missions. Examples of organizational factors are policies, procedures, practice, resource allocation, culture, and leadership. These factors are interlinked and work as a complex system (See Figure 2.3).

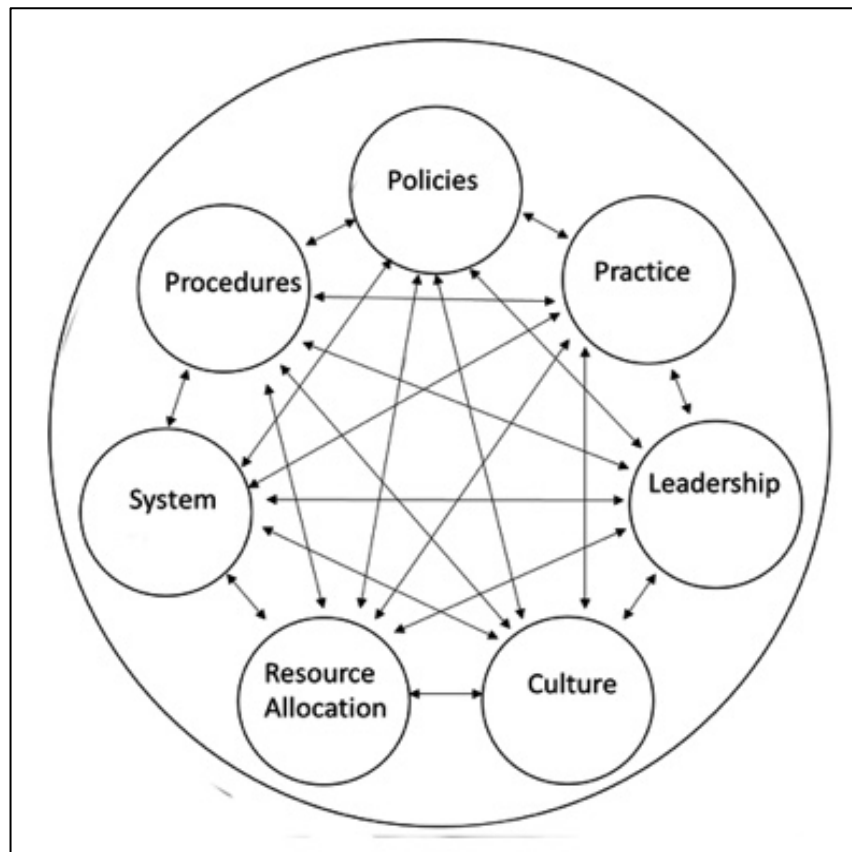


Figure 2.3. Organizational factors model for individuals operating in dangerous contexts.

They can be empowering when they support leadership, but they can be debilitating in cases where they impede leadership effectiveness. Therefore, it is important for senior leadership to analyze lessons learned in the field in order to implement organizational changes that enable

and empower leaders to have strong relationships with and between their personnel and thus be successful in accomplishing their missions. For smooth and effective functioning as organization in the 21st century must be continuously reevaluated and updated to meet the rapidly changing needs that modern technology imposes on national security and on the battlefield.

Although an organization may appear segmented each part contributes to the functioning of the whole. Stouffer et al. (1949) described the structure of the Army as a “rigid, complexly hierarchical” (p. 97) organization in which soldiers are not individuals but rather an “integral part of a vast system of discipline and coordination” (p. 97). Flexible leadership, regular training, synchronization, and communication are necessary for the organization to function at its maximum effectiveness. Military organizations are continually subjected to dangerous contexts. They need to be ready to encounter such situations. It, then, is essential that an organizational culture be created that adheres to and facilitates moral and ethical values; displays unity, strength, and expertise in combat; and enables the acquisition of the necessary combat skills. To that end, organizations must plan with short- and long-term goals in mind; goals that are attainable at various unit levels (e.g., division, brigade, battalion, company, platoon, and squad).

Holistic organizational development for dangerous contexts. A holistic approach to military planning recognizes the value of organizational unity which is especially important to those encountering combat. This approach acknowledges how self-awareness, sense of agency, self-regulation, self-motivation, social awareness and connection to others, core values and beliefs, and identity facilitate the development of capacity within leaders and followers to operate in dangerous contexts (Sweeney, 2010). The holistic model provides a uniform framework for the interdependent social, organizational, and independent environments at play when operating in dangerous contexts. The model, by starting from a worldview and moving

toward the most applicable factors related to social and organizational influences, captures the complexities at stake in military leadership particularly in dangerous contexts. Critical factors are policies, procedures, practice, system, resource allocation, culture, and leadership. Each one of these factors helps to cultivate an environment that is dynamic and adaptive and ensures leaders are well equipped to handle the vagaries of their missions.

Without the support from these factors leaders' effectiveness and mission success can be compromised.

Policies. Policies impact all levels of an organization's effectiveness. They can facilitate or hinder leaders in the accomplishment of their mission. Henderson (1985) cited factors that undermined leadership. One was policies and in particular policies that undermine unit cohesion. "The combined effects of recruitment policies, internal Army policies, and societal effects deny small-unit leaders the opportunity to build cohesive units" (p. 156), which limits the organization's ability to cultivate cohesion. Henderson suggested recruitment policies would be more supportive of cohesion if they focused less on econometric reasons for enlistment and more on the notion of serving a greater good. Wong et al. (2003) noted that soldiers have a stronger motivation to fight when there are strong bonds of trust, both at the level of the unit and also at the organizational level. They urged policymakers to promote trust; it is essential to the cultivation of loyalty and commitment in leaders and personnel. In the military trusting leaders is vital. Hannah et al. (2009) gave support for this position, writing, "strong informal structures and procedures coupled with the formation of similar values and identification in a unit may buffer or attenuate individuals against the negative effects of external threats" (p. 912).

Procedures. Procedures are put into place to implement policies. Hannah et al. (2009) stressed the importance of flexibility and adaptability so that organizations can be more effective in

dangerous contexts. They suggested that policies must be developed and procedures implemented with an awareness of the complexity of the organization and adaptable to the unforeseen problems that arise from the interactions between people and technology, rapid changes that can occur in dangerous contexts, and the confluence of extreme events. All of these require a leader to have the ability to reprioritize in order to respond with the highest level of efficiency. To achieve this leaders must work within the organization to see that the procedures mandated are suitable for dangerous contexts. The stresses and unpredictable nature of dangerous contexts present their own risks and can cause organizational systems to break down; therefore, leaders must be prepared to adjust the organization. Hannah et al. identified several procedures to avoid this. One requires the adjustment of the physical proximity of leaders and soldiers to the extreme event. Another involves the adjustment of the leaders and soldiers social or psychological proximity to the extreme event and a third involves the adjustment of the physical location of leaders and followers to each other during the event.

Henderson (1985) explained how the structure of an organization contributes to the need for leadership and how procedures support this at every level. At the small unit level, for example, the establishment of structural parameters contributes to the creation and maintenance of cohesion within the unit. Henderson suggested that the very structure of the unit itself promotes a soldier's sense of responsibility toward all stakeholders and the political bodies s/he serves. Janowitz (1965) recognized that "Traditions and procedures which reinforced the officer's solidarity with other officers ensured his fidelity to the norms of the larger organization" (p. 211).

An article, entitled "Leading Our Soldiers After They Lose One Of Their Own," (Company Command, 2008) discussed the effectiveness of Army leadership during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

It offered a leader's personal view on the importance of procedures to operations in dangerous contexts.

While I didn't always agree with everything we were doing politically or some of the strategic decisions that had resulted in our situation on the ground in 2004–05, it really didn't matter. While you and your Soldiers need to understand these things and the strategic effects of your small unit operations, it is most important that as the leader of your company, platoon or squad, you figure out what does make sense and what you are committed to (like killing and capturing terrorists who want to kill you, making life better for the good people in your area that are just trying to feed their families and raise their babies, and taking care of each other). As a leader, you should question what you're doing constantly and should always be in search of a better way, especially when bad things happen. You have to do it, however, in a way that prevents purposeless doubt from becoming part of your unit mentality. (p. 51)

Ultimately, as Hannah and Sweeney (2007) concluded, it is the behavior and characteristics of individual leaders within the organization that shape practice.

Practice. Practice is a systematic way of how and what we do results in proficiency. Practice is essential for leaders if they are to be prepared to deal with problems and take measures to prevent the severity of any potential crisis, even those within an organization. Practice is not only required in regular military procedures but also in maintaining values in dangerous, high stress contexts. Leaders, therefore, must be prepared to deal not only with problems related to the organization but also focus on the human element. Sweeney and Fry (2012), for example, asserted that maintaining high levels of morality at both the individual leader and organizational level contributed to the creation and implementation of exemplary practice. Values such as honesty, integrity, humility, courage, and compassion help to cultivate altruism which serves as a foundation for creating optimal practices and inspiring motivation to serve the common good (Sweeney & Fry, 2012). Finally, Hannah et al. (2009) stress the role of sound judgment in contributing to the establishment of effective practices in crisis situations.

From a holistic perspective the military organization is a system of regularly interacting or interdependent groups that form a unified whole. Policies, procedures, and practice contribute to the successful functioning of the whole. There are other factors such as recruitment, leader development, assessment, and promotion that more specifically address the individual human element.

System. The system as a whole consists of many parts. The smallest part—small units and their respective personnel—is the key element in the actions and inactions of the system. This is the functional unit engaged in a dangerous context. As a system, every unit, branch and operational area of the U.S. Army must be sustainable and functional. Having every part work together makes the entire system powerful and effective. Empowering every part of the system conveys trust and unity. When such empowerment does not exist the system may become dysfunctional. Small units within the system may become isolated. These units may either fail in their mission due to lack of support or they may innovate and modify their practice/process without the support from higher authority. Patton (2008), in his research on systems thinking, emphasized that in a system the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This is an apt characterization of the military which has specialty field branches (i.e., infantry, armor, intelligence, etc.). Each has their specialty expertise and competency. When the branches work together they create a powerful system with multi-dimension perspectives and capabilities.

An important factor within the military organizational system is respect for the principle of individual rights. This principle should be applied to soldiers just as it is for civilians because the military's moral and ethical standards are based upon the principles of our nation's constitution and Military Code of Conduct (Hannah & Sweeney, 2007). Although the nature of dangerous contexts and military engagement may change over time, our nation's principals do

not. It is imperative to have leaders in place who exhibit the values, beliefs and character traits that support these ideals. These principles also should be employed beginning at the recruitment phase, which is the entry point for all soldiers into the military. Current, recruitment efforts are supposed to be targeted toward people who have specific skills and who represent the character, interests, and ideologies that meet military criteria. To this end a battery of tests are given during the recruitment process that categorize and identify prospective soldiers and slot them to the they are best jobs and which need to be filled; these include jobs for dangerous contexts.

Basic training ensures that recruits develop the characteristics for which they were selected. Basic training is a brief but intense “period of indoctrination whose purpose is not really to teach the recruits basic military skills, but rather to their values and their loyalties” (Dyer, 2003, p. 461). Dyer noted that young soldiers are the most malleable when their values and attitudes are still taking shape so it is with recruitment and initial training that the foundations of military practices and values are laid and competent soldiers are developed. Character development, through teaching, mentoring, modeling, cultivating, and living in accordance to the U.S. Army values and the Army ethos assists soldiers in successful integration. By working with all kinds of personalities and learning how to function in all kinds of challenges soldiers develop resilience and self-efficacy to overcome the adversary; leaders who acknowledge a soldier’s individual contributions empower them.

If leaders are to serve as teachers and models then their development also is a crucial element. Leader development involves the individual, social, and organizational factors of leading in both formal and informal settings. The creation of professional and personal goals enables them. Furthermore, it is vital that leader development include social factors which provide safe and supportive networks. The development and support of every soldier and leader,

should be from a holistic approach so that every individual becomes well-rounded in all aspects of their life.

One way leaders, as with all soldiers, are assisted in the development of their own capacities is through an annual job evaluation. Evaluations are based upon job description, targeted achievements and a spectrum of career paths. A write-up of accomplishments is given in the evaluation as well as assessments by two superiors (i.e., the immediate leader as first line leader or a rater, and the first line leader's own rater or senior rater). The assessments and evaluations are subjective in nature. An individual's success depends on the integration of their self-assessment, peer assessments, and leader evaluations and work done afterwards to improve and enhance areas mentioned in the evaluations. Soldiers who do so gain advantage in promotion and are more likely to have a successful career.

Even with highly skilled, well-trained leadership the interdependence of the system must not be overlooked. People cannot do their job effectively if appropriate resources are not allocated to effectuate the demands of a mission. Pargament and Sweeney (2011) highlighted the importance of the Army's organizational responsibility for providing adequate resources of every kind, at all levels, including spiritual, psychological, and material.

Resource allocation. Resource allocation refers to resources that are apportioned for a specific purpose, particular persons, or things. Resources consist of psychological, social, and material resources. "Organizational adaptability in extreme and novel contexts requires adequate resources and effective organizational communications systems that give organizational members the ability to share information and coordinate" (Hannah et al., 2009, p. 910). How resources are expended across an organization plays a significant role in the ability of leaders to be effective in dangerous contexts.

Pearce (2004) stressed that an important function of unit leaders is “facilitating positive relations with the outside constituents and securing resources” (p. 50). Hannah et al. (2009) reinforced this by citing Turner (1976) who observed that organizations are “cultural mechanisms developed to set collective goals and make arrangements to deploy available resources to attain those goals” (p. 378). If soldiers feel they lack sufficient resources, their trust in their leaders is eroded and a unit’s sense of cohesion is undermined, according to Hannah et al. Unit effectiveness also suffers as a consequence of insufficient resources. Soldiers may experience diminished morale and respond poorly or become non-responsive to a leader’s decision-making. Soldiers under resource poor conditions may make faulty reports, misunderstand or neglect orders, misuse weapons, and overlook proper maintenance and adequate preparation.

Culture. Culture is another essential element in the successful operation of an organization, particularly under dangerous contexts. Cultural factors include the shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize an institution/organization (Argyris, 1999; Burke, 2011; Griffith, 2011; Schein, 2010; Sweeney et al., 2011). An organizational culture or macro culture evolves from the synchronization and integration of all micro-cultures, functional or dysfunctional, within the organization. Leaders, at all levels, and most importantly leaders at the highest level need to cultivate and facilitate mutuality, respect, and achievement toward common goals and mission. “A special role for leaders will be to create cultural islands in which it will be possible for members to explore these differences to reach both mutual understanding and new rules for how to manage their own authority relationships” (Schein, 2010, p. 104).

Klann (2003) wrote,

Dangerous contexts require organizations to have a strong and clearly articulated culture . . . culture defines the identity organization members need for the context

and also serves to unite and synchronize members' efforts around a core purpose and vision. (p. 9)

Understanding an organization's culture functions as a unifying concept that reinforces the stability and integration of an organization. The U.S. Army values and the Warrior Ethos are the bedrock of military culture. The Army values are loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. The Warrior Ethos instills in soldiers values of particular utility in dangerous contexts: the mission comes first, and soldiers should never give up or abandon a fallen comrade (Department of the Army, 2012). Adherence to these guiding principles reinforces a collective identity that is the essence of esprit de corps, uniformity, and cohesion. Shared beliefs and values function as external and internal motivators, and "cultures arise through shared experiences of success" (Schein, 2010, p. 56). Therefore, leaders must take care to maintain an atmosphere of support and respect for group culture.

Intense experiences, such as those that occur in dangerous contexts, strengthen group culture (Schein, 2010). Everyone in such instances is dependent on each other's expertise and survival. Overcoming these dangerous encounters and walking away alive results in trust that they can do the very same thing again. It results in a bond unmatched in any other situation. Schein concluded that overcoming a crisis can create and promote its own culture. High levels of emotion, particularly anxiety, propel collective learning.

Sweeney and Hannah (2007) observed that the military environment contributes to a cohesive culture, in some cases creating stronger bonds than those with family members or other social groups. A strong sense of culture contributes greatly to the organization's functional abilities in dangerous contexts as it helps to reinforce purpose and vision. Schein (2010) characterized culture in this context as:

a "here and now" dynamic phenomenon and a coercive background structure that influences us in multiple ways. Culture is constantly reenacted and created by our

interactions with others and shaped by our own behavior. When we are influential in shaping the behavior and values of others, we think of that as “leadership” and are creating the conditions of new culture formation. (p. 3)

Culture is dynamic and all leaders are contributors to the creation of culture within and for their organization. Schein (2010) explained that culture and leadership are closely related as the culture determines who will lead and how. Leadership also guides the process of developing an organization’s culture, and, thus, has the ability to institute cultural change particularly in dangerous contexts.

The military’s culture does not diminish one’s own culture. Awareness of one’s culture and the underlining layers of assumption is particularly important as the military is composed of personnel from many cultures. Understanding other cultures contributes to respect, patience, acceptance, and collaboration. The end result is that soldiers from different civilian cultures are enabled to work toward common goals, missions are enabled, the organization is more successful, and leadership is more authentic.

Leadership. Leadership, as a factor impacting organizations, consists of individuals who have commanding authority or influence in specific positions or offices. Historically, military leadership functioned with a clearly defined set of policies, regulations, procedures and structures that empower the military leader to command his or her unit, maintain good order and discipline, plan, organize and train to accomplish assigned missions. However depending on the individual or organizational interpretation of these defined parameters different results can occur, creating variations of, and deviations from the defined standard. Leadership within the organization has to be adaptive in scope and sequence so leaders can function within a wide range of roles with minor adjustments while adhering to defined standards. This is especially the case in dangerous contexts, where the urgency to respond to emerging threats and fluid situations requires balancing between generalization and specialization (Hannah et al., 2009). Leaders must foresee

and be prepared to shift modes with respect to their leadership style, and “effectively manage the transitions from stable to extreme and back to relatively stable, along the way continually rebalancing the unit or organization with respect to emotional, cognitive and physical perspectives” (Hannah et al., 2009, p. 902). As levels of complexity increase the need for shared leadership becomes more critical.

Resilient leaders contribute to the development of more adaptive and resilient organizations (Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004). Hannah et al. (2009) concurred citing Manyena’s (2006) concept of collective resilience as a gauge of an organization’s capacity to handle high levels of stress. This is especially important because, “During the stress of extreme events, organizational systems and processes will also likely be stretched toward or beyond their limits, and organizational roles may be challenged and break down” (Hannah et al., 2009, p. 904). Therefore, leaders who display and cultivate resilience in their soldiers are extremely valuable in dangerous contexts. Leader’s competence and their soldiers’ trust are essential parts of survival of troops and mission success. The cultivation and maintenance of unit cohesion, likewise, are important. The sense of belonging to the unit cultivates loyalty, devotion, and motivation.

Hannah and Sweeney (2007) emphasized the importance of building leaders qualities throughout their career. Creativity, ability to create cohesion and maintain optimism, fostering a healthy concept of the team, and successful performance, are examples of leadership qualities that contribute to an organization’s effectiveness (Campbell, Hannah, & Matthews, 2010). Leaders who work together create a viable and functional team and are more effective in handling a variety of situations. Continued competence is sustained by continuous learning about situations that leaders encounter and where effective solutions have been implemented.

One new challenge for leadership occurred in 2013 when Secretary of Defense Panetta announced that women would be included in the Military Occupations Specialty (MOS). Since the announcement it has become a priority for military leadership to find effective ways to accomplish this and overcome issues that previously impeded the full integration of women. Integrating women in all scopes of MOS requires effective planning, implementation, and follow-up stages in order to achieve both the required organizational change as well as foster healthy teams.

Towards a Fuller Integration of Women Into the Military

The integration of women into an all-inclusive Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) has been attempted in the past, but it was not until Secretary of Defense Panetta's announcement that complete implementation would be needed by May 2015 that the military, as an organization, had an urgent need to develop a strategic plan.

D. Anderson (2010) cited Worley et al.'s four-step Integrational Strategic Change process as an example of a plan that incorporates both strategy and the practical steps needed to implement change. The four steps are: analysis, formulation, change plan design, and implementation. In the formulation step, the organization's readiness for strategic change is assessed. In the first phase an assessment is made of the organization's values and priorities as well as its current strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Additionally, a diagnosis of the organization's strategic orientation, including mission, goals, and core process is done. In the formulation phase the vision and strategic choices about the amount of change to be proposed, is explored. In the change plan design phase, an outline of the major activities to be implemented and the impact these will have on the stakeholders inside and outside the organization is created. Finally, in the implementation phase, the vision and strategy is communicated. This includes the rationale for changes and how

the leadership team arrived at major strategic decision. A leadership team that acknowledges the internal and external factors that dictate the need for change is essential for the success of the process. According to D. Anderson, the leadership team members must be receptive to feedback from participants who will be affected by the change and who represent a significant percentage of the organization.

Any strategic change plan that addresses how women are to be structurally integrated will require focusing on key organizational factors, especially those involving reservists. Reservists are key stakeholders in military policies; for example, at the height of deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan, nearly 40% of service members were reservists (Moskos, 2005). According to Punaro (2014), reservists in those campaigns effectively supported “efforts to build partner capacity, filling enduring operational mission requirements, and providing homeland defense and support to civil authorities here at home” (p. 21). Training and resource allocations for reservists are organizational issues that require attention because the reserve has “demonstrated their availability and reliability in providing forces for operational use through a decade of sustained combat operations” (p. 23). Whereas active duty departments are allocated up-to-date resources and classroom training, the Army Reserves typically receive outdated resources and training is largely through distance learning and in brief classroom courses. This is an inequitable distribution of resources. It is an unsound practice because reserve soldiers, are expected to be on par in training with active duty personnel. This inequity creates division between the Reserve and active duty soldiers and fosters the perception that Reserve soldiers are second-rate personnel. The development and implementation of a single standard would be an effective way to integrate the whole and establish a core purpose and common vision. Furthermore, it would

validate all soldiers' identities; there would no longer be the suggestion that some are valued more than others.

Before the Army can fully integrate women it must address organizational policies that affect current societal attitudes, inflexible and outdated leadership strategies, and the reality of engagement in dangerous contexts. To this end, this literature review has outlined the individual, social, and organizational factors that impact soldiers, leadership, and the Army organization in dangerous contexts. Additionally, the literature explored how these parts operate in dangerous contexts, how various factors support soldiers' needs, build trust and commitment, and contribute to a positive military culture.

Conclusion

Identifying factors that lead to thriving leadership provides areas for the U.S. Army to target as it works to support its leaders, particularly women, under dangerous and extreme contexts. A review of the literature reflects a lack of research into organizational factors that facilitate and cultivate effective leadership in dangerous contexts. It, therefore, is essential to study leadership in these contexts with the goal of adjusting policies that define, cultivate, and enable effective leadership to better address 21st century military engagements.

My analysis of essential leadership factors highlighted the importance of training at all levels. Proper training and experience reinforces soldiers' commitment to the cause they serve and contributes to the establishment of a framework for the moral choices they need to make in dangerous contexts. Among the individual factors that contribute to moral strength are spirituality, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. With the individual as well as the group in mind, leaders should work to cultivate a sense of cohesiveness, an esprit de corps, among their soldiers which, among other things, is a proactive means to minimize stress. Leaders cultivate cohesion by

appealing to soldiers' diverse cultural and ideological values. Additionally, leaders at all levels should cultivate and facilitate mutuality and respect for the preservation of human dignity, a fundamental element that they have been entrusted to maintain especially under demanding circumstances.

The Army cultivates and facilitates professional conduct, ethics, morals, rituals, and mentor relationships. Social factors such as unit cohesiveness, training, communication, and sharing create trust, an element that is essential to functioning in challenging operational conditions. Adequate training that develops resilience and coping skills is critical, but it also is necessary to recognize that dangerous contexts naturally create a shared goal for survival which fuels soldiers' desire to succeed in their mission. Leaders should strive to create an environment in which the well-being of soldiers is a priority. The influence of loved ones and the wider society should not be overlooked. When soldiers perceive that the mainstream citizenry supports their mission, it has been found to lead to higher success rates.

Factors, such as procedures, practices, and resource allocation, are the heart of the military's organizational focus. These factors contribute to the perpetuation of a common vision and understanding of the military's specific short- and long-term goals. Healthy and efficient interdependency, created through training and communication, reinforces organizational effectiveness. It is important to acknowledge that leadership is being conducted within a specific organizational context and that an understanding and acknowledgment of that context is essential to successful leadership.

Military leadership will be more effective if there is a more complete understanding of the challenges presented by the rapid changes underway in the 21st century and the implications of leadership styles available to meet these changes. Entrenched habits, organizational barriers,

outdated policies and procedures do not serve the mission of a 21st century military. Army resources and communications networks need to be adaptable particularly in highly complex and volatile dangerous contexts.

It is imperative that leaders in dangerous contexts are supported fully by the organization through the implementation of policies, protocols, procedures, training, and resource allocation. These enable leaders to function at their maximum efficiency before, during, and following combat. Leaders must be attentive to their own well-being as well as that of their soldiers. Leaders must feel empowered to challenge any policies that hinder the success of their mission, including the elimination of barriers and biases, so as to have the most effective force going into battle. Finally, leaders must be confident that they are prepared and ready to lead soldiers in the most daunting situation, knowing their soldiers will complete the mission and return home alive.

Chapter III: Methodology

Even though women have been a critical part of mission engagements for a long time and performed the most daunting duties in dangerous situations, the acceptance and official integration of women leaders in the U.S. Army Reserve has been a challenge. Women have not had the opportunity to acquire the same skill sets as their male counterparts as a result of the Military Specialty Occupation (MSO). This has meant that women have not been provided with combat training and allocated with adequate resources to operate in dangerous contexts. This deficit in training and resources adds to the challenges women leaders in dangerous contexts face. Despite these challenges it is my experience that women leaders have managed to figure out how what to do in order to be successful in dangerous contexts.

In this chapter, I describe the rationale for choosing narrative inquiry as the methodology used in the study and discuss the research design and data analysis. The narratives of the women soldier leader participants—women who have embraced the challenges of working in dangerous situations and figured out how to achieve their mission—provided valuable insight into how they managed to be successful in dangerous situations and what impediments they encountered.

In addition, a panel of four senior leaders—one female and one male retired leader, and one female and one male active leader—provided further insight on the challenges with mid through senior levels of leadership and the stalemate these bring in a dynamic organization: innovation to make changes that facilitate women leaders to be empowered; dominant male organization and culture, toxic leadership and the lack or rather no consequences these leaders have; and, finally, that women leaders must be seeing as soldiers and not male and female soldiers. Unite the force and recognize soldeirhood!

The goal of this research was to make recommendations based on the experiences of women leaders who have had involvement in dangerous contexts. The recommendations in this study are instructive and particularly pertinent given the Department of Defense policies on the integration of female soldiers in all contexts but particularly dangerous contexts.

Phenomenology as Method

This research was designed to bring forth the experiences of women leaders who served in dangerous contexts in Iraq and/or Afghanistan. The aim was to gain a better understanding of how individual, social, and organizational factors enhance or hinder women leaders in these situations. This knowledge formed the basis of recommendations for the U.S. Army Reserves with the intent of assisting the Reserves in the implementation of the 2016 goals set by Secretary of Defense. Furthermore, the recommendations are meant to assist women leaders to be more effective especially while operating in dangerous contexts.

Phenomenology, as a way of capturing the essence of lived experience, forms the foundation for qualitative research. McMillan and Wergin (2010) suggested that phenomenological research methods provide a means for understanding people in the context of any situation and, thus, gives the participant a voice in the process. “When we want to understand what stands out for people in a given situation, phenomenological research gives voice to their experiences in a singularly powerful way” (p. 102). Furthermore, Bentz and Shapiro (1998) asserted that the knowledge and information obtained with a phenomenological approach can be used judiciously with an understanding of how it might contribute to social change.

In the early stages of my research design I explored positivism and constructivism, two different methodological research approaches to determine the appropriate methodological perspective for my research design.

Positivism. Positivism is typically associated with quantitative methodologies as an empirical, systematic approach oriented toward confirming a traditional scientific hypothesis with supporting numerical data (Kumar, 2005). Quantitative methodology aims to measure, quantify, or find the extent of a phenomenon. Kumar described the quantitative methodological approach as being a structured approach in which all aspects of the research process are decided upon before data collection begins.

In contrast, constructivism is typically associated with qualitative methods that focus on the meaning of the research topic through a less-structured and more exploratory, open-ended manner that is usually more concerned with describing experiences, emphasizing meaning, and exploring the nature of an issue (Coolican, 2004; Kumar, 2005).

Constructivism. According to Coolican (2004), constructivism contributes to qualitative research by virtue of its focus on describing experience, bringing forth meaning, and getting at the nature of one's topic. By integrating ideas, themes, and concepts, constructivism permits the researcher to give the reader an understanding of the research results in their entirety, thus constituting a complete picture to present all aspects of the issue being explored in the research. Gubrium and Holstein (2002) explained: "Constructivists study how participants construct meanings and actions, and they do so from as close to the inside of the experience as they can get" (p. 677). This means engaging with the cultural context in which meaning is articulated (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Each person's perceived experience is determined according to their individual values and what is significant to them based on their culture, upbringing, language, and situation (Benner, 1994). Benner suggests that: "Persons, in the phenomenological view, have not only a world in which things have significance and value but qualitatively different concerns based on their culture, language, and individual situations" (p. 50).

Phenomenological methods require an open-ended approach to data collection so that individual experience may be "described in its totality, in a fresh and open way. A description is given of its essential constituents, variations of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, sounds, colors, and shapes" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). The emphasis is on the respondents' essential experiences of the subject being explored. This research perspective is particularly advantageous for this study of dangerous contexts as it invites each interviewee to narrate her own lived experience. Eilifsen (2011) explained the importance of the context in which a story is depicted and acknowledged the significance of communication methods such as the anecdote for phenomenological researchers, which are defined as "secret or private stories" (p. 3).

As this research was designed to evoke from participants a self-interpretation of what is important to them, I chose to use the narrative inquiry method. As a methodology, narrative inquiry invites participants to construct in their own voice their lived experiences. During the data gathering phase of this study I gathered deep and rich details of the women leaders' lived experience in dangerous contexts. Josselson and Lieblich (2003) noted that some of the most interesting findings of a study are "buried among the narrative quotations" (p. 86). A researcher's interpretation of these narratives provides a bridge to understanding "the nonobvious meanings of narratives studied as well as the larger significance" (Wells, 2011, p. 134).

Narrative Inquiry

In the literature reviewed in preparation for this study, the concern was how the individual, social, and organizational factors of a military environment influences women leaders in dangerous contexts. In particular, I was interested to know how such factors affected women leaders. This interest guided the search for a methodology that could dig deep into a women leader's experiences. I knew from my own experiences in dangerous contexts that there are powerful stories that can emerge. I needed to listen carefully to the lived experiences of other women.

Van Manen (1990) offered a detailed framework for approaching phenomenological studies, particularly through interviews. In the interview process, he urged the researcher to “stay close to experience as lived” (p. 67). The value of narrative comes: “When we listen carefully to the stories people tell, we learn how people as individuals and as group makes sense of their experiences and construct meaning and selves” (Chase, 2003, p. 80). Josselson and Lieblich (2003) recommended that “the interviewer keep her research aims and personal interest in mind, while leaving enough space for the conversation to develop into a meaningful narrative. It has to picture ‘stories’, namely concrete examples or memories from the teller’s life” (p. 270). Van Manen (1990) explained that in preparing for research scholars should come to the table with adequate real life experiences, in addition to a solid foundation in published scholarly materials relating to their topic. He emphasized that language is the vehicle through which human experience is recounted. He wrote that: “The phenomenological method consists of the ability, or rather the art, to be sensitive—sensitive to the subtle undertones of language” (p. 24). In the presentation of the phenomenological research, it, therefore, is critical to allow the participants’ responses to stand on their own.

Throughout this study I utilized my own reflections, intuition, and experience to interpret the deeper meaning of the verbal and non-verbal cues of the participants in order to more fully understand their narratives. Husserl, often considered the father of phenomenology, offered a framework for crafting a phenomenological approach that allowed for precision in interpreting findings. Giorgi (1997) elaborated on Husserl's suggestions:

to enter into the attitude of the phenomenological reduction means to (a) bracket past knowledge about phenomenon, in order to encounter it freshly and describe it precisely as it is intuited (or experienced), and (b) to withhold the existential index, which means to consider what is given precisely as it is given, as presence, or phenomenon. (p. 238)

Data collection techniques must take such factors into account by adhering to a very straightforward process of obtaining information through interviews, written descriptions, or both. Moustakas' (1994) perception of phenomenology is a process of "bringing phenomenon to light," (p. 26) through participants' perceptions of their own realities.

My research protocol was based, in part, on the recommendations of Kvale (1996):

While case stories may contain reports of spontaneous stories, the interview can also be systematically structured with regard to narratives. Narratives can serve as a mode of structuring an interview during analysis. In a narrative approach the interviewer may conceive of his or her investigation as storytelling from beginning to end. The narrative interviewer will encourage subjects to tell stories, assist them in developing and clarifying their stories, and during the analysis work out the narrative structure of the interview stories and possibly compose the stories to be told in the final report. (p. 274)

As Benner (1994) noted, "Narrative accounts are essential to gain access to the participants' way of understanding and structuring the situation" (p. 118). Storytelling, as a form of narrative, encourages respondents to participate openly and honestly, provide the researcher with "immediate access to the participant's world with minimal overlay of the researcher's language, pre-understandings and directive actions, while promoting immersion in the other person's world" (Conroy, 2003, p. 16). Storytelling also helps create a more natural setting that

enhances the flow of information, as well as inspiring self-reflection. As Van Manen (1990) pointed out, “good conversation draws the participants together and creates a shared space” (p. 93). Narratives, therefore, “provide powerful access to the temporal dimension of human existence” (Kvale, 1996, p. 244).

This research relied upon Polkinghorne’s (1988) recommendations for the use of narrative as a tool for identifying meaning in action and in context with respect to participants’ responses and for organizing the narratives into common themes that emerge. I functioned as both “narrative finder” and “narrative creator,” (Kvale, 1996), discovering stories as they emerge and crafting them according to themes. It was important that interpretive elements of the narrative analysis take into account the study participants’ individual “meanings, practices, habits, skills, and concerns” (Benner, 1994, p. xviii). Bentz and Shapiro (1998) described narrative analysis as the basis for “a range of techniques for interpreting the meaning of text with the structure of stories” (p. 115). Narrative analysis has been acknowledged as a valid, scientific source for understanding social phenomena (McMillan & Wergin, 2010). As Josselson and Lieblich (2003) stated “There is no prescribed infallible means for unearthing and creating meaning. The qualitative/narrative researcher eschews methodolatry in favor of doing what is necessary to capture the lived experience of people in terms of their own meaning-making” (p. 260). They stated further that “narrative research is a voyage of discovery” (p. 260), not knowing what all will be found out.

In order to capture the participants’ lived experience it was critical to create an interview environment that encouraged the women to share their lived experience in all its richness. As open-ended questions encourage such narrative responses (Yin, 2009), I designed two main

questions to invite participants to engage in an in-depth narrative about their experiences in dangerous contexts. The interview questions were:

- Describe for me an experience serving in a leadership position with the U.S. Army where you felt effective?
- Describe for me an experience serving in a leadership position with the U.S. Army where you felt ineffective?

A set of additional questions was designed as a guide for this interview phase. As Chase (2003) noted, questions prepared in this way may not need to be used as they will be answered without being asked. The interviewer's main goal is to invite the story and listen well. Given the nature of these questions all participants in this study had to have served in dangerous contexts.

This research was designed to be undertaken in two phases. Phase 1 involved the selection and interview of qualified participants and an analysis of the content of their narrative interviews. Phase 2 involved a panel discussion of military leaders. This discussion centered on the findings from the interviews in Phase 1. Phase 2 provided additional insights which were used in the overall analysis of the data and enriched the study's findings and ultimately recommendations on changes needed to support women leaders in dangerous situations.

Participants. Due to the nature of the question a nonrandom, purposeful sample was used. Participants needed to be representative of Reserve women leaders who had experienced dangerous contexts. A pool of potential participants came from three sources: reserve women leaders I have worked and deployed with; current brigade personnel; and recommendations from personnel, peers, and superiors. Recruitment was done by word of mouth either by me or leaders with whom I have worked.

I selected 12 from 29 possible candidates. All were over the age of 18 and served in the Army Reserve. Selection criteria was based on leadership experience as measured by having held five or more leadership positions and having served in a leadership position while deployed in a dangerous context. Additionally, no participant was to be undergoing PTSD treatment during the interview. The purpose of this criterion was to avoid any potential for negative consequences that might arise from a participant's recounting her military experiences during the interview. Anyone who qualified could volunteer to participate in Phase 1 or 2 but no individuals could participate in both phases.

Seventeen potential participants were deemed unqualified. These women did not meet the pre-screening qualifications on one or more of the above named criteria or were not soldiers in the Army Reserve. The women who were selected for the interviews ranged in Military Intelligence, Military Police, Field Artillery, Logisticians, and Medical Corps. The 12 women represented a total of 192 years of experience in the service.

In Phase 2, four participants—two men and two women—were selected. The four, like the interview participants, were pre-screened and required to meet the same requirements for selection as the interviewees in Phase 1. Only senior leaders were chosen for the panel. Total of experience of the four members was 201 years. Panel members brought a wealth of experience from their branch: panelist #1 from Engineering; panelist #2 from Military Intelligence and Military Police; panelist #3 from Military Intelligence and Engineering; and panelist #4 from Military Intelligence. All participants in Phase 2 had tactical and strategic insights about operating in dangerous contexts and, as such, were able to knowledgeably contribute to a discussion of the social and organizational support needed to be effective leaders in dangerous contexts.

The rationale for having male leaders on the panel was to gain insight into how decisions are made to send women leaders into dangerous contexts. Male participants provided a different lens with which to interpret the priorities and values of skill sets needed by leaders operating in dangerous contexts. The panel format provided the opportunity for discussion of these beliefs, decisions, and related issues.

The panelists were presented with and discussed emergent themes discovered in Phase 1. In doing so they provided an additional layer of understanding to the lived experiences of women leaders serving in dangerous contexts. The panel was a critical part of this study as these senior leaders contributed valuable insight into military policies, processes, and training and deployment. The panel also provided a credible way to validate the interviewees' statements as well as an opportunity to fill in any gaps that arose during Phase 1. The value of the panel extended to their capacity to offer recommendations to address the challenges of leadership in dangerous contexts and strategies for more effective integration of women leaders.

Interviewing. All potential participants were asked to complete a pre-screening survey (see Appendix A). Once the survey was completed, participants were contacted and asked to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix B). Confidentiality was assured on the consent form.

In Phase 1 the interview consisted of a 1–2 hour session. The amount of time depended on the participants' availability and how their stories unfolded. The average length for the interviews was 1.5 hours. The shortest lasted an 1 hour; the longest went nearly two hours.

Although a face-to-face format for interviews was preferred geographic distance made that infeasible, so the interviews and panel discussion was conducted over the telephone.

During the first interview the participant discussed toxic leadership, consequences of the military's male-dominated culture, and obstacles that reduced the effectiveness of women leaders

in dangerous context. These themes emerged from the data and were surprising to me. As a result I asked a military peer to sit in on all further interviews. The purpose of this was to insure my neutrality. I did not want to guide or sway participants to discuss any specific topics.

Phase 2, the panel discussion, was conducted mainly by conference call. Panelists #1 (female), #2 (male), and #3 (male) participated in this manner, and Panelist #4 (female), who was recently deployed, provided feedback via written response. A time limit for the discussion had been set at about an hour; however, the panelists who interacted by phone were sufficiently engaged that the discussion proceeded for nearly three hours. Panelists had been given an executive summary of the interviews conducted during Phase 1 and during the discussion and in the written response panelists chose the topics they felt were most important to discuss. The panel discussion provided an informal way of validating the results as well as provide recommendations on how to empower women leaders.

Analysis. After the interviews in Phase 1 had been conducted they were transcribed by a professional court transcriptionist. Unfortunately, she moved and a second transcriptionist needed to be engaged. The second transcription was a junior high school secretary who was reliable and professional. However, because the transcriptionist lacked a military background, it was necessary for me to define acronyms and military lingo.

I edited the transcripts, noted any interruptions, and omitted any filler elements for greater fluency. Page numbers and line numbers were inserted to make the transcript easier to use during the interpretation phase.

Participants were given the opportunity to review their edited transcript and ask for changes, additions, and/or deletions. Only two opted to review their transcripts and one of them made minor changes to the script. Once the editing process was completed the thematic analysis

began. This phase involved coding the transcripts line-by-line. Coding was done with the assistance of *NVivo*, a commercially-available qualitative data analysis software package.

A peer of mine, a field grade male officer, assisted with the coding. This second lens with which to assess the data, along with a second evaluation of each transcript, ensured that all major themes and important concepts were not overlooked. After we separately coded a transcript we collaborated to see if we were in agreement on emergent themes. Our communication was by phone, email and in-person. When all the themes were assembled they were shared with my dissertation chair and we agreed on three umbrella themes that could be used for the whole analysis. These were: empowerment, non-empowering, and male non-empowering. At this point, a “Findings and Executive Summary Discussion Points” document was created for use with the panel members.

When the panel responses were transcribed and coded, three main themes emerged. Panelist #1 and #3 articulated that the richness of the topics brought forth by the dozen women leader interviewees required additional time for serious discussion. Their discussion highlighted the need for change and offered recommendations for achieving positive change. These results will be reviewed in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Limitations

This study is limited by the purposefulness with which participants were selected and by the size of the sample. The findings in this study are specific to the backgrounds and experiences of the participants and leadership experiences in dangerous contexts. I have sincerely attempted to bracket myself from the research. The intent of having an observer present during the interviews and a second coder to assist with data analysis was to promote objectivity. However,

even with all these precautions there always remains a possibility that personal biases may have influenced the data gathering and analysis.

Ethical Considerations

I have tried to adhere to the ethical guidelines and principles for scholarly research involving human subjects. I have made a significant attempt to make participants feel safe, maintain their anonymity, and protect their personal data. As Gubrium and Holstein (2002) noted, “The most important ethical imperative is to tell the truth” (p. 116). In addition to upholding an atmosphere of honesty and openness I have earnestly tried to respect each participant’s voice.

Chapter IV: Findings

This study provides a deeper definition for effective leadership and highlights what factors—individual, social, and organization—cultivate effective women’s leadership in dangerous contexts. This came through the lens of women leaders who have served in dangerous contexts. Their stories became the basis for understanding how various factors affect women’s effectiveness as leaders.

A dozen women, representing an average number of 16 years of service and 192 years of combined service, were interviewed by phone. Non-commissioned and commissioned officers volunteered for the study. All had served in leadership roles while deployed between 2008 and the time of their interviews in 2014. These women have deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo. They were invited to answer questions designed to capture the essence of their lived experiences while leading in dangerous contexts. As McMillan and Wergin (2010) suggest, phenomenological research methods provide a means for understanding people’s lived experiences and give voice to the participants in the process. The women in this study were asked to describe a leadership experience they had while serving in a dangerous context specifically where they felt effective and one where they felt ineffective. In their narratives the women reflected on personal characteristics and leadership styles that supported their leadership while in dangerous contexts.

Narrative inquiry, the phenomenological methodology used in this study, gives participants a voice and it is from their lived experiences that themes emerge. The themes emerged via line-by-line coding interviews and panel discussion. When grouped, three themes emerged: factors that enable women’s leadership in dangerous contexts; main issues making women leaders ineffective; and, ways male leaders undermine women leaders’ effectiveness.

Each of these major themes included a set of subthemes which will be discussed under each of these three themes.

Factors That Enable Women's Leadership in Dangerous Contexts

Three major subthemes emerged during the coding. The three fit under the theme of factors that enable women's leadership in dangerous contexts. As depicted in Figure 4.1, they form distinct pillars that are the foundation for effective leadership and mission success. One additional self-enabling factor that emerged from the interviews was self-assessment.

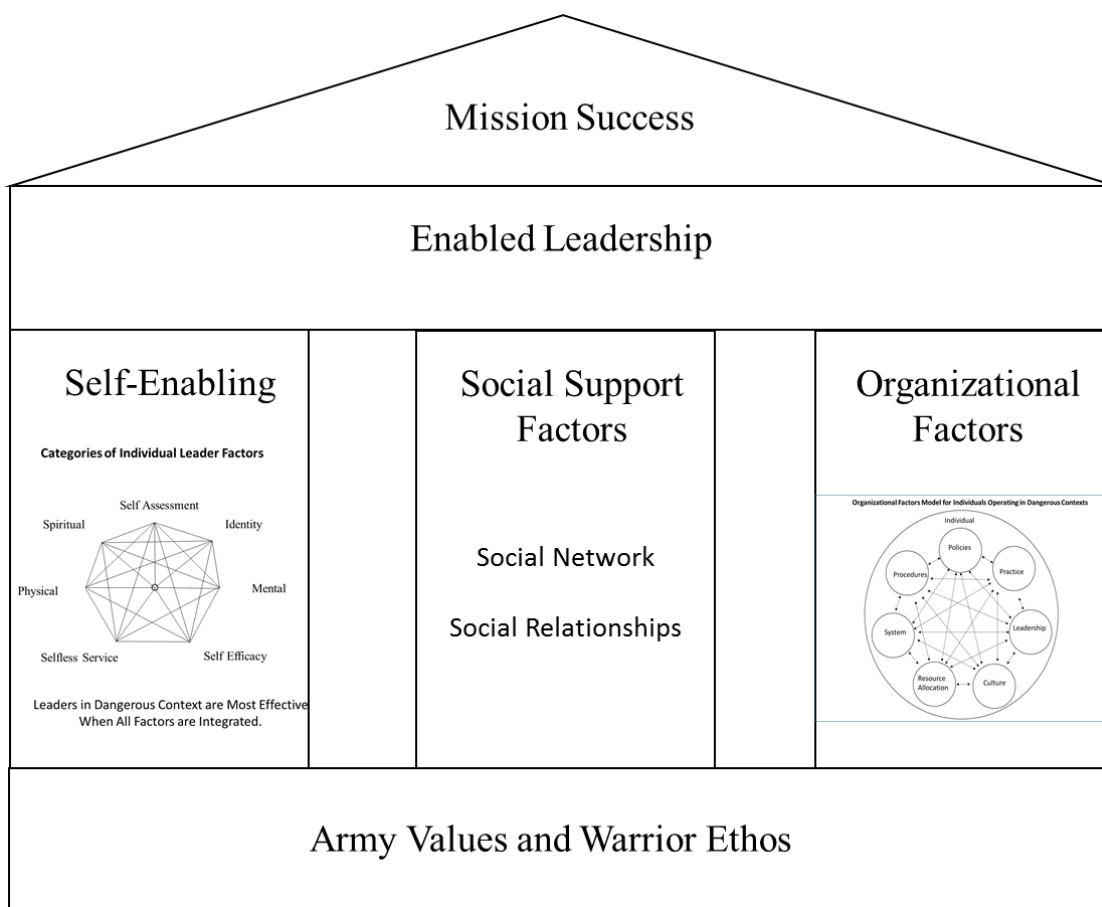


Figure 4.1. Foundational pillars for effective leadership.

In their narratives the women shared observations about how certain individual factors supported their leadership while in dangerous contexts. These factors came from within (i.e., self-enabling), as well as from external sources (i.e., social and organizational factors). The

factors that supported self-enabling or feelings of confidence were self-assessment, physical, mental, and spiritual strength; self-efficacy, selfless service, and a sense of personal identity. These factors gave the women confidence to recognize that their achievements demonstrated competence, made them more willing to accept opportunities and to continue to develop themselves, and to work to eliminate barriers.

A second set of subthemes emerged from the coding of the women leaders narratives, namely support networks. The narratives reflected how social networks, Organizational factors, intervention and coping skills and mentorship all contributed to enabling leadership in dangerous contexts.

The third set of subthemes that emerged dealt with those factors that led to effective achievements of the leaders. These included army meritocracy, opportunities for development and achievement, removing barriers to achievement, comprehensive training, communication training, standards and integrated training.

Individual characteristics. The original six individual factors were validated by each of the participants; however, the participants added a seventh factor and labeled it as self-assessment. The need for frequent self-assessment of how one would react in dangerous contexts was strong and felt essential for survival by all the participants who were faced with dangerous contexts on a daily basis.

Self-assessment. It is important for an individual's success to integrate self-assessment, peer assessments, and leader evaluations and work toward the improvement of any improvements. Soldiers who embrace personal development and are successful in challenging leadership positions have an advantage in terms of promotion, their career and their own personal well-being. Soldier #2 recognized this when she said a soldier must be "willing to look

for and strive to find those kinks in your armor and fix them when you can.” Soldier #2 observed that self-assessment is not without an external component. “You have to be able to embrace criticism. A lot of people don’t, but that’s the only way you grow.”

Soldier #2 also understood that the self-awareness of a soldier leader had global impact.

She said that a leader has to,

be able to think. You have to be able to go beyond yourself and look deep. You need to be able to look at the tactical picture and then create an operational bridge to get you from right now to the big picture. You have to be an example. You not only have to live and breathe being the example, but you have to understand that you will still fail at times . . . It’s learning about yourself and changing, and by doing that you have to say you have some flaws and that it’s ok.

Soldier #6 highlighted a different aspect of self-awareness. Because the military has historically been a male-dominant culture and, in many aspects, continues to be so women leaders are left to question their place. They are left to wonder if their authentic selves can operate within the culture or whether they must remain outside. Soldier #6 implied this when she said: “It’s not just you. You are part of a bigger culture and organization.”

Physical. Leadership in a dangerous context requires a degree of physical ability. In order to function in a highly demanding situation, physical endurance, strength, and stamina are imperative. Soldier #2 recognized both the social comparative value of physical fitness as well as its survival importance. “It helps provide you relevancy, especially in a culture dominated by men. Every soldier needs to be physically fit. It helps the team and individually in any situation that you can react to it.”

Soldier #1 observed that deployed soldiers often carry heavy loads.

When you are outside the Forward Operating Base (FOB) you have to carry additional weight. Just with your vest, you have 30-40 lbs. of gear, weapon. You have to be physically fit in training but more so when deployed. Personally, I had to adjust in having to carry more gear. You have to be able to run towards the

shooting and help your unit members or away from an enemy if the need arises. I thought I was invincible.

Soldier #2 recognized that “Being physically fit is important and allows everybody to know that you come on an even playing field.” Soldier #1 added that as a soldier: “You don’t want to be a target or dead weight to your team.” However, Soldier #2 spoke about the challenges that come with a physically demanding job. Some of the high demand jobs and positions offer little down time to exercise during the deployment. Soldier #2 and Soldier #10 both complained that they did not get much of a chance to exercise. That was because, during their deployment they sometimes worked up to 16 hours a day.

Soldier #1 made the point of “You don’t want to be a target or dead weight to your team. Working out as a team helps, if you have the luxury of time and place to go to.” Soldier #8 offered:

There were days I was exhausted, but a nap helped. Physically I was fine. Some days you just want to go home and some you just want to go. Everybody goes through things. It was draining, but I never wanted to give up. I had times, when I just said, “I’m a woman so put up with it.”

All the interviewees experienced challenges to keep up their fitness level while working an arduous work schedule. Soldier #3 noted that physical fitness capabilities degrade with injuries and with age. These facts become vivid when being deployed. Soldier #5 stated:

I have some medical challenges. Therefore, I am not as agile as any of my male soldiers. I’m 55 years old. I’m not a 22-year-old male infantry lieutenant. As I tell my soldiers, I may not be the poster child for the Army, but I’m valued more for my brain and my experiences than my physical prowess.

Long hours are not an uncommon problem during deployment; it comes with the price of sleep deprivation. Soldier #1 admitted: “I didn’t get much sleep. Definitely, sleep was at a premium” Long hours were an issue for Soldier #2 who said: “I didn’t really sleep or have me time. I didn’t have a reset.”

Mental. In a series of documents published by the U.S. Army, mental capacity to lead is cited as an important individual characteristic in combat environments. A leader's response to an extreme environment serves as example to her soldiers on how to make sense of the mission and the experiences of dangerous contexts.

Soldier #2 endorsed this notion. "Mentally, it's one of your greatest skills. You have to be able to think, you have to be able to go beyond yourself and look deep." Soldier #2 elaborated:

One of the things I appreciate is the Army training, teaches you that even if you're fit enough and your body breaks down, you mentally can still keep going when your body says you can't go any further. There were times with extreme lack of sleep can cloud your mind and body, but your mind is a mind over matter. I brought coping skills with me when deployed. I did come from a strong spiritual background and I can mentally formulate things. I can work through my own fears and trust. I trust that when it's your time, it's time. You have to adapt in your thinking, decision making, and follow up with actions. The challenge is that, physically, it tells you to stay where you are at, but mentally you tell yourself to work through it. Your mind tells you "ok: you are not in a safe position" and it makes you get up and run and dive into the bunker that is safer. It's those types of things.

Soldier #1 gave an example of the power of mental capacity:

I felt resilient and able to deal with the continuous danger and the stress level. However, one gets mentally draining when you're team members may get hurt or other team members get hurt or killed. I had faith in my team and could not make my worry a priority. I had to focus on the mission and leading my personnel.

Soldier #11 offered a different kind of example:

There's so much going on when you're deployed. You are supposed to begin a brief early morning and then you had to be ready. I didn't know where I was going until I hit ground. We were learning data, systems and how they were going to work. I briefed a lot. I didn't realize how powerful speech was. I made sure what came out of my mouth had to be worthy and a well thought of thing. What we presented and explained had to make tactical sense.

Soldier #4 noted that even when a soldier feels mentally prepared there is still the potential for unexpected reactions. "In the element of danger, I didn't react like I thought I was going to.

Soldier #11 concurred: "In the face of uncertainty, you act differently than you think would act."

Spiritual. Soldiers engaged in dangerous contexts are likely to experience an internal crisis of faith or question their moral compass. If a soldier has developed an intrinsic sense of faith and purpose, these conflicts may be reconciled. Spirituality is connected to a soldier's overall well-being. Soldiers who are grounded by spirituality along with the belief that they are serving their nations interests are deeply invested with a sense of purpose.

Soldier #1's spirituality allowed her to have faith she'd succeed:

Spiritually, I don't think I'd ever prayed so much in my life. It reaffirmed my faith. Every quiet moment, I prayed and thanked God for giving us the strength and wisdom to overcome the challenge and protect us. I knew I was going to leave this place alive. I believed and had faith. For me being spiritually-grounded keeps my strength, which allows me to grow physically and mentally.

Soldier #11 recognized how linking spirituality to the mission gave her strength. "I am spiritual and deployments are like a calling. I held very tightly to that and it was good and bad. I knew what the right course of action was. It hit hard at the end of the deployment. There was no spiritual wavering until after the deployment."

Soldier #2 recognized the ultimate importance of spirituality but also to the contributions of other factors. "Mental, spiritual, physical, selfless, self-efficacy and identity, all those things balanced to create a leader to have true capacity. If you choose only one or some, then they'll be unbalanced. For me, the spiritual side is what pushed me."

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy falls within Sweeney's (2007) categories of competency, leading by example, and self-control. Military training that builds on skills and promotes confidence and trust in self, through the creation of realistic scenarios, bolsters an already competent leader's ability to take charge. Mitchell (1940) mentions the need to cultivate self-efficacy in leaders so they have the mental strength to remain persistent in the face of defeat.

For Soldier #11, self-efficacy is a balance between confidence and self-control. She explained how it requires experience to develop the balance. "Your first deployment is the

superman effect. I thought I could fix it all. Dangerous situations, your reactions are different. I was little wiser in the second one. On the first deployment, in artillery, I learned to be alone a lot. In the second, I had to be a team member.”

Soldier #3’s self-efficacy was negatively affected by a perceived gender bias. Even when a female soldier felt good enough she might not be recognized because of her gender. She suggested that it wasn’t sufficient to be good, you had to be: “Twice as good to be good enough.”

Soldier #4 explained the double standard:

Some of the early commissioned officers, the females, were treated so badly that they just became bitches on wheels and they were trying to be men and they were trying to be fire-breathing men, and it’s a double standard but it exists. If you are a guy and you are hard as nails, you are a guy who’s hard as nails. If you are a woman who is hard as nails, you are just a cold-hearted bitch. You know, that’s it you are a bitch. Now, it’s a compliment to some of them, but I don’t think so. There is that perception that, “oh, she’s going to be a real ball buster,” and there are a couple out there I’ve run into. They still are. They overcompensate like crazy by stomping on the men underneath them, but it’s like that doesn’t even help. But these are outliers. We are really focusing on the people itself, the skill that they have to accomplish the mission or whatever they are thrown into. It’s leadership.

Soldier #3 also recognized a gendered difference in self-efficacy and leadership.

Women do have a different approach to leadership. One of my first sergeants told me that. He said, I love watching the differences between my male commanders and my female commanders. And he said, you just—you’re both—you’re as good as the other, but you both do things differently. Men, you make a decision and you go with it. He said, you women, you kind of sit back and you think about it and then you make the decision, but then there’s no changing your mind, you know. Unless you change it yourself, which has to be okay.

However, Soldier #3 has found with experience she has moved beyond thoughts of different.

As a female and being in the Army for 28 years, it’s how you present yourself to the people who are around you. You need to present yourself as a confident leader. Most of the time, they can look beyond your gender, and in that regard, that has been my successful story for many years. I don’t portray myself as a female leader. I am a leader, who happens to be a female.

In the case of Soldier #8 self-efficacy is an ongoing process. She understood that leaders find it necessary to re-define themselves.

I'm very open and I like to have some kind of control over everything. I have a high standard of quality that I refuse to relinquish. Everything is fine as long as things are getting done correctly, but if not, then I get very passionate about correcting it. I'm approachable. Being able to delegate and not being in control of it all. Those were big lessons he helped me. Redefining yourself as leader is an ongoing thing with the environment. Who you are going to be as a leader is always changing. Your demeanor and approach has a lot to do with the environment and the scope of the mission.

Soldier #2 would like the military culture to move beyond the gendered comparative culture. For her self-efficacy is not about what she is but how good she is:

I don't want things because I'm a female, I want to earn it. I want to earn anything in the Army based on caliber and service. I want to black out the word her and go after what I did and say, "Yup, that's the best one."

Soldier #2 wants the focus to be on standards and professionalism. It is okay to recognize she is female, but it should not mean that she cannot also be an officer and a leader.

Selfless service. Selfless service cannot be taught. It is an inherent part of a person's moral and spiritual foundation. Selfless leaders put the greater good ahead of their own wants and needs. The Army recognizes the importance of this as a leadership trait and attempts to put people in place who are truly committed to protect and serve.

Soldier #2 described selfless service: "You try to think less of yourself and more of others. Grabbing a person and caring about moving them is more important than caring for yourself." Soldier #11 recognized that self-service makes a leader more human, a trait that is personally fulfilling:

I felt I could help others a little more. I knew changes with family and when you come back. The trials and the cycles that would occur. I wanted to not come back with regrets and how to come back to their families. I tried to frame it in a positive way, especially since some tragedies happened in my first deployments with families.

It is Soldier #11's view that selfless service is characteristic of the majority who join the Reserve:

I am a reservist. I was called up and to me this is what I agreed to do when I put on the uniform. I think there are a lot of people who serve selflessly, but none of us would do it for free. I don't think everybody in the Army is a hero. People do it for they have their own reasons. Most people in the Army or military do feel uncomfortable when someone thanks you. You feel uncomfortable, because you are doing something you signed up you do. There's a danger possibility, but that danger may not be that great. The likelihood for me was not big.

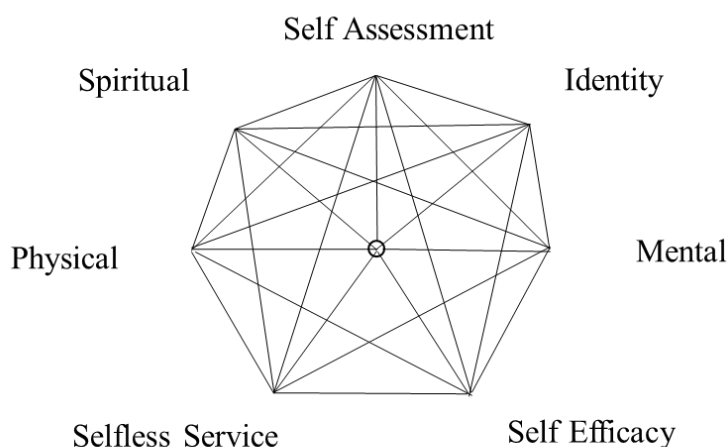
Personal identity. In the military identity development is guided by the Army values and the Warrior Ethos. A soldier's personal identity is expected to be of high character, values, morals and ethics in words, actions, and behavior. Unfortunately, women soldiers' identities are questioned because of their sex and not because of their character. As a result, as Soldier #8 discussed, women soldiers find it difficult to attain credibility: "You have to show your worth and intelligence, since it's questioned more. It makes it difficult. Your level of seriousness is questioned."

Soldier #11 was confident in her identity. "That's why they brought me over, because I knew the language. I picked it up quick." Even though she knew why she was deployed others sometimes questioned her value: "The guys respected me differently because it was artillery. It was a male-oriented job and you had that MOS." Some situations, however, were different. "An Intel officer is easier going. I had that experience so they accepted me easier."

There is a cost for female soldiers who adjust their personal identity to meet male evaluative standards. Soldier #2 was personally aware of the cost. "It is linked to your identity. Being an effective leader is sometimes linked to giving too much of yourself that I've turned into an introvert. I appreciate quiet time now and not before. I was very extroverted and didn't appreciate the time to think."

The categories of individual leader factors in this study include seven factors. A three dimensional interaction within and among the factors is shown in Figure 4.2. Intersecting at the core of these is the optimal level of individual leader performance. Thus, the change lies from the two dimensional to the 3D model of optimal performance.

Categories of Individual Leader Factors



**Leaders in Dangerous Context are Most Effective
When All Factors are Integrated.**

Figure 4.2. Organizational factors operating in Dangerous Contexts II.

Support networks. All participants specifically stated the need to have good social networks and strong personal relationships. The discussion by the participants validates the importance of social networks and strong relations in the literature review discussed in this study. Social networks and strong relationships are important and interconnected, yielding a formal and informal support to soldiers and leaders. This was especially important to soldiers and leaders in dangerous contexts.

People make up organizations. Their social relationships and social networks are the functional elements of the organization. The caliber of people and the quality of their relationships determine the quality of organizational functioning. When this complex system of individuals, their social relationships, and the organizational culture interact it creates a unique and complex environment that leaders must navigate. The interviewees discussed a number of networks they felt were important for the well-being and successful achievement of soldiers. These were: social; organizational; intervention, support, and coping; and mentorship.

Social networks. Social networks are essential for the well-being of soldiers operating in dangerous contexts. They cultivate and facilitate professional conduct, ethics, morals, rituals, and mentor relationships. The work of Wong et al. (2003) provided examples of the function of social support networks and in dangerous contexts the primary motivation among soldiers was strong group ties that developed during combat.

Soldier #4 observed the importance of such networks in creating trust—trust among soldiers, in the system. ”Trust in the system is very, very important, you know. Well, trust in the system, trust in the leader, trust in your unit members.” Soldier #1 believed that social support should function up and down the command chain. “It is essential that when you send someone, you check on them. You communicate with them. Ask how are they doing. ‘Can we talk to her?’ just have that communication through the chain of command.”

Support also can be extended from sources outside of the military as Soldier #1 discussed. “Support is really important from home and from the unit.”

Soldier #1 recognized the critical role of relationships and networks: they help reduce stress, are vital for self-validation, and strengthen relationship whether the networks are mixed gender or single gender. Soldier #1 valued her opportunity to participate in an all-female support

group. It freed her to talk about issues she didn't feel comfortable doing otherwise, but she also appreciated having others to talk to when she had issues:

There were a few ladies that helped one another . . . What I wanted to discuss had to do with my family. I didn't want to worry them, but I needed to get it out. You don't want to go on an Intelligence forum or with that group you were working with. They would say that you were complaining. There are things you don't discuss or if it was a male environment, as a female, you couldn't complain. If you did, you got excluded in everything right away. It would have been nice to have the commander check on you through the chain and have that communication. A support network built in or mentorship for women would help. A mentor, male or female, can be a sounding board and can help through your career or advice in situations, even though it is a long-term thing.

Soldier #1 continued to press on the limited time one has during deployment to utilize any support network, particularly family.

Building a women support group was not very supported by the male commander. Instead we were to focus more on work. There was no continuing or incentive for anyone to facilitate any social activity. I was always invited by the international forces but just so exhausted because I was a singleton covering 24 hour shop. If something happened, I was awakened and had to work. It was sometimes so hard to focus. Sleep deprivation was not pretty and nothing you want to undergo for a longer duration of time.

Soldier #1 illustrated the beneficial effects of social support networks on soldiers when she described how she reacted when people from her civilian job and family reached out to her.

I loved the news and the care packages I got from the teachers, neighborhoods, and from my husband . . . I got letters from my students. I used one letter at a time whenever I went to work. It was one driving force for me to come home. . . . I did not want to say anything to my family, especially by my husband. He specifically asked me to not leave the FOB and that was the opposite of what I wanted to do. I am a soldier after all. When I did, I didn't always tell him. I don't talk about my job. I didn't want my family to worry or be scared. I was invincible. I was coming back, it was my mindset and I knew I was going to come back. I didn't want to worry them. I was tired when we talk. These were my future and I wanted to come back and teach them. But most of all was my son, daughter and husband. The closest to my heart. I remember telling my son not to worry and that I will be back just for him. He looked at me with tears in his eyes and so much love in his heart. Love that boy so much. I had no choice, I had to come back to my boy.

Soldier #2 had a well-developed support network particularly her husband and her Executive Officer (XO). Her support network were crucial to her success. Soldier #2 said:

I'm married to the best man ever. He is one of the most critical to my success. When I deployed, the unit I was in didn't have a family support group. David and I walked around one evening before I took command and he asked what concerned me. I said, "Here I am about to deploy a unit across 36 different states and they have no family support group." David had never done a family support group and he asked. Next thing I knew, he took it over. He organized it by time zones and really helped people. He was my biggest cheerleader and advocate. He was there to bounce ideas off of and have him turn his head sideways and say, "What?" That's good to have. My XO was female and my battle buddy. You don't go anywhere alone. At 4 am to do PT or meals, she was there. It was interesting to because she was the complete opposite. It was neat because we were going for the same end state. It was the unifying effort. It's what you take away from deployments, the bringing together of opposite people, working towards the same end goal. Grouping people in a place that they would never otherwise be, but have the same end state. Now there are a lot more females. When I first got in I was the youngest and very few females in the unit. It was very challenging. My battalion had 67 females assigned to it

Soldier #1 added to Soldier #2's observation. "Strong relationships with the people you work it, male or female are a good thing, but being female requires some know how or insider that some males may not know or how to react to."

For Soldier #5 her challenge was not having a support network:

I isolated myself. You were either left to stay or to the right who went out. They were alone or lesbians. There were several girls that did stuff that I couldn't believe. I have been married for 29 years and he's the man I'm staying with. Honor and respect is important. No matter where I go. Women need to be respected for their humanistic needs. Our needs are not met or set up. The hope is to set up the environment so that things that are needed are met. You are isolated from your group. Overseas, you don't have that. You were by yourself. I found my Latino friends. If you spoke Spanish, you were supposed to stay with the enlisted. I was told not to speak Spanish and that they couldn't understand me. My first evaluation, they put I didn't speak English. There were a lot of put downs. In the beginning, you don't know what happen. I remember being told that I was a ball and I needed to be a square away and I wanted to fit it. He told me I didn't fit in. I went to find a way to belong to prove that I belong in the Army. I wanted to demonstrate that I belong. I wanted to fight for the women in the future. They should be appreciated. No social networks, except for the Latinos. I have been ordered not to speak Spanish in the 80's. People were not adapted to multilingual, you had to assimilate or you didn't fit in.

Soldier #10 also found herself isolated without a network and as a result she felt more isolated. Soldier #11 said that isolation can happen because “There are few women who have had combat experience. You don’t always get along with every other female in the military either. We need to start a women’s support group. It’s nice to have a support group with the same experience.”

Soldier #12 discussed one area of support the military does well; support for spouses that have deployed.

The Army has resilience and transitioning programs. My husband just got back to Afghanistan and he goes to classes, but there are support classes for spouses. They are keeping an eye on him on how he is reacting. They are concerned and the Army is paying attention. I’m sure there’s more they can do, but in the end it’s up to the soldiers. The Army does a good job as of now.

Strong relationships. Strong relations, foster interactions between humans; however, Organizational factors have more to do with framework and structure. The existence of an organization network provides a bridge between work and human relations and, thus, supports social relationships. Organizational networks provide a safe formal and informal pathway for open communication between personnel, both up and down the chain of command. They are an important part of problem-solving and essential in promoting the interdependence that is fundamental to survival in dangerous situations.

Soldier #1 was concerned that the organization network was nonfunctional in her unit because it was geared to pleasing the commander and brushing issues under the rug, instead of subjecting them to fair and objective due process. She suggested that “The EO [Equal Opportunity] and IG [Inspector General] process have been, by and large, ineffective in addressing this issue as both are still under the commander’s influence.” Soldier #8 had a far more positive experience. In her case the organizational network worked because “The first commander’s environment was trusting and positive.”

In the cases of Soldier #5 and Soldier #10 the military had not taken into account the need, on occasion, for a gendered network. Soldier #5 thought it was important for soldiers to have access to someone with whom they can relate and talk. “There should be a female chaplain. Maybe someone they can talk too.” Soldier #10 suggested that it might be possible to have non-gendered networks if there was “A male etiquette class. How to deal with women, but I don’t want it to be a woman complaining class about women being in the military.”

For Soldier #5 adjustments in the Organizational factors needed to take into account not only gender but also cultural. She wanted “Latino networks as support for Latino.”

Soldier #6 offered her observations on why the military culture is slow to change. “If it’s our culture, it’s also our Army culture. It [civilian culture] is changing quickly. There are senior leaders who are not changing as fast as the culture. That’s the tough part.”

Soldier #7 observed that civilian culture compounds the need for women soldiers to have a gendered support network. Women understand the psychological burdens that military service places on wives and mothers.

I think a lot of it is the pressure we put on ourselves because of society. A lot of it is what you put on yourself. As a woman, you need to ask your husband to watch the kids. It still falls on you to set up babysitting. For me, I feel like I should be there but I’m not. That maybe because my mom stayed home, so it’s my own expectation for myself. There are typical roles in a marriage that falls on the female. Most of the scheduling of the house falls on the woman, even if we work, I would think. It’s what you do and it falls more on us.

Soldier #8 gave an example of why organizational support would be well served if it came in the form of gendered and culturally-aware mentorship.

For females in general in leadership positions, [they] should go through some sort of female mentorship or fellowship. This is like a spiritual thing. Having a safe environment where you can just be a female and remind them that it’s hard to be a female, but the way you carry yourself, present, speak and mannerism about your opinion are huge factors to deem you of value or a leader in their eyes. Here are some of the things that will automatically degrade your credibility and effectiveness as a leader. There was the policy 6-1, and months later they had to

come out with a revision, because nobody asked anybody and it was unfair to some Black or Samoan females have large amounts of hair. There was no way they could have a two-inch bun, because their hair is thicker than that. No one asked so they had to amend it.

Soldier #12, however, didn't feel that gender was imperative for a support network to work; instead, she felt what was important was personality and chemistry.

I'm not a feminist. It's nice to find a girlfriend. You develop friendships whenever you can. I got to see my husband in Iraq when he deployed at the same time. I was fortunate. The group I deployed with, there were two other females. I had no respect for one and the other was far. I didn't feel the need to seek out females.

Soldier #7 discussed the need for an organizational network that supports and empowers subordinates when they are not in the same location as command. She felt this type of support is needed to render units more functional and operative.

We constantly struggle and I talk to my officers a lot about 'How do we support them when we are not co-located?' There's a lot of independence involved in their organization. I need to be independent to support myself, but I do need things from my battalion. I have to be able to support them; no one is going to do their awards and OER [officer evaluation report]. Every place I have gone to, I have told my team who were their support system and how they could help them. I tell them to make sure to come teach classes in their office. I talk to them about their families and other responsibilities, especially since their jobs are so stressful. I know what every office is doing, but when they need advice about cases, they would talk to my warrant officers. I don't think they would think that was a negative thing though. They just know that the CO is not going to give you good advice on cases; it's not what she knows or have expertise on it. I think they know that I'm supportive and I'm sure they get frustrated when we ask for information and they're already busy. We focus a lot on what we can do here to help them, but not do too much. I knew a battalion that wrote all the words on their OER for them. My problem with that was that if I write an award for you and then you won't know how to write your own NCOERs next time. To me, there are just some things you have to do, even when you're busy. There's trying to find a balance on them.

One of the most fundamental networks in the military is the unit. Soldier #1 observed that "The bonding among battle bodies, teams and groups becomes very strong [in dangerous

contexts]. We become one. We are here for each other and are always together.” Soldier #2 explained the importance of this level of organizational support and its transformative power.

It was the unifying effort. It’s what you take away from deployments, the bringing together of opposite people, working towards the same end goal. Grouping people in a place that they would never otherwise be, but have the same end state. I had knockdown, drag out fights with this other major that never would have happened in a regular garrison environment. Because we were trapped together. We worked two feet from each other for almost an entire year, you know.”

Well-developed support networks can overcome situations that might otherwise undermine an organization. An example of this was given by Soldier #3 for whom the tension and pressure of overcrowding resulted in the resolution of issues rather than escalation.

We spent every freaking waking moment together and we are still friends, you know. He’s probably one of my closest friends I’ve ever had. It was like, you know, if I had that kind of argument with him in a garrison we wouldn’t be speaking to each other, but you got to get along, you know.

Support is necessary at all levels. Soldier #7 expressed her need to share, to bounce ideas and thoughts off others.

When you’re having a [bad] day today, I have my husband and kids and I can vent. The saying “It’s lonely at the top,” it really is. When you have a major, you can talk to him, but if you don’t you can’t complain to anyone, especially when it’s about him. You have to find your support system. Thank god for me, I had my roommate and a friend of mine came here. We were able to meet for dinner. I had a friend from Kuwait that I could meet with. It was weird walking into a unit as a company commander. In 2005, I walked into that unit, I already knew people and some were people I had deployed prior with. I had five other majors there and it was so much more fun. I had my peers and I felt part of this big group versus coming in as a commander and you don’t have peers in your unit. I had to go out and find people I can bounce stuff on. Look among your peers, who can you run with, eat with and someone you can complain too. Maybe not the opposite sex, it can lead to problems.

Soldier #10 illustrated what can happen when a soldier loses a battle buddy.

When Walter was there, I went to church with him. He was my battle buddy until they moved him. Otherwise, I stayed in my room and watched Golden Girls and Frozen Planets. I would zone out and forget where I was there. Just the comfort of the Golden Girls made it great. I had my bed, TV, and I was away at college, so I was used to being alone. I can zone out the outside and can sleep through rounds.

For a while, there were radio checks with an incoming, but they never got a check from me. I just wanted to do my job.

Organizational factors. Organizational factors were discussed by all participants as topics that enabled women leaders, without specific reference to those policies procedures, practices. As we see later in the findings, these behaviors in other situations deprived all the participants of the ability to effectively employ the leadership models and forced them to operate in less than an optimal way within the unit and organizations while deployed and operating in dangerous content. The organizational factors discussed included achievements, intervention and coping skills, mentorship, opportunities for development, removal of barriers, communication skills, and comprehensive and integrated training.

The women leaders in this study were empowered when they were allowed to do their job—to engage with their soldiers and do the work necessary to accomplish the mission. During their interviews they emphasized Army meritocracy, opportunities for development and achievement, and the removal of barriers to achievement, training, and enforcement of standards.

Intervention and coping skills. The commitment to group may be stronger now than in the past because today's Army is a volunteer force comprised of professional soldiers, a fact that reinforces psychological/emotional bonds among soldiers and between leaders and their unit (Wong et al., 2003). The shared goal of survival naturally creates a sense of group cohesion. The relationship between buddies is rooted in mutual loyalty and reciprocity. This creates a supportive relationship of understanding which helps to minimize psychological stress.

Training is a type of intervention. A sense of interdependence can be achieved through training and the discipline it instills in soldiers (von Schell, 1933/1999). Leaders can promote strong relationships by modeling positive social relationships with other leaders and soldiers as well as demonstrating the positive consequences of such relationships.

Soldier #9 brought attention to what happens when leaders fell short in their responsibilities to lead.

I had to stay in my tent, because the leaders didn't develop collaboration for soldiers." In Soldier #4's experience intervention came with risks. It might be received as a solution or it might be received as a punitive act. "I think I identified more with the ones [leaders] that would say, "Okay, I'm bringing everybody into the same room. We are going to shut the door. We are going to hash it out. I make the decision." One of the approaches I love; my last battalion commander was, "You can bring me a problem that you want me to solve, but I'm solving it my way and then you are going to have to live with it. So think twice before bringing me something."

Because intervention, especially in terms of harassment, was uneven Soldier #9 found it more satisfactory to handle things on her own. "During the deployment, I learned to not complain, take matters in my hand. The next person that touched [me], I hit them and it worked." Soldier #4 had a different way to cope; her's was psychological. She explained,

The best revenge is living well. And, as I've gone through the years and I've seen some of these upper men who were just so awful to me and told me I wouldn't be anything, and I was like, "You know what? I've got two bronze stars. What do you have?"

Soldier #5 lacked trust in the Army's ability to intervene or to do so in a meaningful way. She suggested that intervention come from outside the Army.

I would have equal opportunity, sexual harassment outside of the Army. So the EO or commander won't have complete power. When they are outside, they will investigate and see the issues rather than swept aside. It would be effectively dealt with.

Soldier #2, however, had a positive experience with intervention from her leadership but pointed to other branches of the military that needed outside intervention.

In the National Guard, there's a lot of nepotism and vary to who you know and not necessarily the right thing. That was hard for me to digest. Knowing my authorities and knowing that leadership had my back. I had a leader who said, "If there's something wrong. I want to know. I want to hear about it."

Soldier #7 discussed the importance of building and interacting with a network of peers:

They need to have their peers, especially one's from other deployments. You need to build a support network. Someone once told me that you should look at who you associate with at the 90-day mark and think about is that the person I should be talking to all the time or is there someone else? Look among your peers. Who can you run with, eat with and someone you can complain too? Maybe not the opposite sex, it can lead to problems. There's nothing wrong to reaching out to other people too.

The topic of networks and coping took on a troubling character when support was lacking and interrelations became toxic. A somewhat benign example was given by Soldier #6. She suggested that,

If it's a boys club, then it's more focused on women to not include them. It is, but your peers are your peers. When I was struggling back in the day, I would talk with some of my male peers. They saw it and would say they were uncomfortable with. Sometimes they won't actively help, but they won't pile on the ugliness either. They would be neutral, and when the bully realizes they are not getting what they want, they stop. If you cry or physically react, then they get what they want. They want the attention.

Soldier #6 advised that the way a soldier should respond to unsupportive networks was for the individual to "make a decision on how much you are going to tolerate and how much you will fight for what is right."

Soldier #8 chose to smooth over the issues of toxic leadership as she thought to do otherwise would have negative consequences for the organization.

I tried my best to not show my frustration. You try to stay cool in front of your soldiers. There were times when they asked about my choices but I couldn't say, "I don't know. He's stupid." You just say "I don't necessarily understand, but we are going to support it." You had to give him support and not talk bad about him. Justifying his actions and disagreeing with him was hard. I tried to spin it as best as I could, so they didn't see him as the bad guy. If no one trusts the leadership, then the whole thing is ruined. It was me just trying to smooth things over. I am very opinionated and adjusting what I said was hard.

Soldier #10, however, decided to stand up for herself. She was responsible for coordinating teams that went out in the field. Her job was to collect their intelligence and use the their information to create a daily report. The problem for Soldier #10 was that she did not receive the intelligence.

I was constantly being disciplined or yelled at for not providing or doing my job or writing reports. Until I talked to one of my leaders and I told him all the methods I tried to get the info. And, he would also say, "why wasn't I getting this?" I told him that you couldn't write a report off of one report. I sent him a long email. To have credible report, I needed more than one sentence and I can't collect if I don't get them. I put them on my distro. List and used the reminders, so I could send reports to the companies, which annoyed him. It showed him that I was trying to get reports. I stood up to him and I told him that if he wanted me to remove him from the distro. List I can. He wanted me to remove him because it annoyed him. I told him that he requested to be removed. I had him read the email while I was there. I had to stand up to prove that I was doing my job. It showed poor leadership and that I had no credibility in the unit to be able to do the work.

Soldier #9 talked about female soldiers who have received retaliation for seeking support.

In one instance she tried not to get involved.

I did give them advice on what they could do. They could make a formal complaint. One wrote a congressional because she kept getting looks for a lot of things. She got picked up to be E5 and then she was taken off the list. She did nothing wrong and many people thought this. Just because the command labeled her as a trouble maker, she didn't make rank or anything. Her career was shut down and things went downhill. She was put in admin. Instead of being able to do her job.

Soldier #10 personally experienced retaliation. As a result, she,

left Iraq very angry. I could not believe that they could treat me out of spite. I left by outsmarting them, which pissed them off. I was supposed to extend within country and the S1 didn't care, so I said nothing. When they moved me the third time and I said I never signed my packages and my term is up in a month. They had to send me home. My major was an S2; he sent me an email laughing. The commander was furious. He thought he was big and bad and he could move me. I out smarted him, because I got to leave without him. My colonel asked if I wanted to extend my package. I was angry and I said I should have stayed home and I could have had 100% Post 9/11. I was so angry, how people can treat other people that way. I have anger issues that, every time I have to deal with a man in the military especially infantry.

Mentorship. The Army has dedicated resources to and protocols for fostering healthy social relations. Strong relationships build trust and unit cohesiveness; these traits are particularly valuable on frontlines where soldiers' psychological and emotional needs are challenged (Stouffer et al., 1949).

Soldier #4 discussed the importance of mentorship and development of leaders and soldiers.

You mentor and develop those leaders to a capacity that you can completely trust them to get the mission done. Whether being in dangerous content or at state side you have to continue building mentor relationships. You established that close bond. My husband was back in the states; he had his own job. I'm not going to bother him. Excluding him allowed me to completely integrate or be part of the team in dangerous content, being mindful and becoming the most effective leader.

Soldier #8 explained the value of having a mentor.

He was able to convince you that changes made the most sense. He made changes that positively affected our mission and individuals. When it wasn't easy, he explained why. It was mostly because someone above him wanted him to. He made us feel good about the change and let people know why it was occurring. It was easier to follow, since he told us why. There was a sense of purpose when he told us to do something. It made it easy to recognize your purpose, extent of task and our mission. We were able to figure out where we fit into the picture.

Soldier #6 also believed in mentoring. She encouraged younger leaders to engage senior leaders to teach them the path to success. Soldier #6 said she encourages "soldiers of all ranks, gender, ethnic backgrounds to find themselves and to ask advice from those senior. They need to ask how to get where they want to. It's been successful for me to teach this." Soldier #1 thought that younger soldiers were more open to mentorship. She felt that junior officers were willing to ask for help but older officers had learned it is safer not to do so. "It's a cultural thing. I think with junior officers, they are a lot more able to do that. Not the generation of female leaders that I grew up with. We were taught to tough it out."

Soldier #5 thought it is up to senior officers to make the effort to mentor.

When I started out, there was a big push for soldiers finding themselves a mentor. Having that constant reinforcement, it drove me to find mentors. You have to have the understanding that they will change and they don't have to be your boss as you go through your career. We need to get back to that. Find yourself a mentor along the way. They don't need to be just like you. They need to be able to have insight to what made them successful. One of my mentors was a Vietnam infantry vet in civil affairs. He had provided me insight into career development. You need to be confident and still be able to take things you may not want to hear. I ask junior officers to ask me a question, any question. I have the right to not answer. Balancing is hard. You are balancing your memory, full-time job, part-time job and you have to have time for you. We need to expand it beyond women. Soldiers have a lot to share with soldiers. They're mentoring process may look a little different, but there's a lot to be said for variety.

Soldier #7 told a story about a leader-mentor whose actions demonstrated caring and were instructive for her leadership.

There's a lot of learning-by-learning-by-watching, whether or not they do it successfully. You think "I want to do that, but not that or I can do it better this way." I Facebook-messaged my old battalion company. I told him that his certificates of "my baby lives on" is something I started doing in my battalions and I learned that from him. We were in Germany and he would drive five hours when someone had a baby to give them a Wee certificate and to see them in the hospital. I did that too. I told him that people watched and learned what he did. I saw that and I wanted to do it to when I had the opportunity.

Soldier #6 shared her experience as a mentor.

During the deployment I had frequent contact with one mentor. And, yes, it helped lots. Some subordinates, men and women, have mentors but many do not. It depends on the soldier. We have all found ourselves in organizations working for people, who are not necessarily that we would want to follow if we had a choice. As long as they have someone to talk to. I have about 30-50 personnel I mentor. It can be time consuming. Some people are needier than others. It's not a set schedule. It comes up at different points of their careers. They may need help when they get to a pinnacle point or just got promoted. In dangerous contexts strong relationships between leaders and soldiers is necessary for individuals and their units to function effectively.

The promise of mentorship for Soldier #8's was uneven. Mentor's strategies differ and some are not be well-matched for their mentee's personality which results in a negative experience.

With proper mentoring and effective mentoring, it doesn't have to be negative and it can be still progressive with mentorship. You don't need to knock someone down, even when they're a different gender. It seems like the first one pushed you hard as a team, while the second one devalued you and your skills. I definitely think the second one could have been better with this mentorship, but I don't think it was his goal. I took it as harsh mentorship. At the moment, I just thought he was a jerk. It was easier to say lesson learned. I took it as a mentorship, even though that wasn't his goal.

Soldier #6's mentorship experience was not affected by her mentor's gender. "My mentors are two males and one female. I get just as much from my male mentors than my female mentor." She said her mentorship attempts to be gender neutral.

I don't present myself as a female senior leader. I encourage soldiers of all ranks, gender, ethnic backgrounds to find themselves and to ask advice from those senior. They need to ask how to get where they want to. It's been successful for me to teach this.

Soldier #12 agreed. She had difficulties with a female mentor and thrived under the mentorship of men, so it was personality rather than gender that mattered.

At one point, I drank the kool aid when they told me to find a female mentor. She was not great. I had someone better who had the same interest, so a female is not necessary. I have had three mentors that I would still call to this day. All male. It's the nature in the Army. It's a woman in a field of a man. You look for connections in the end. I would follow my mentors to the end of the Earth. They value me and I respect them. I worked ROTC after my deployment for five years. They established mentors and defined who they were going to have as mentors. I thought that's not how it happens. It doesn't work that way, it's natural.

Soldier #7, however, found having a mentor of the opposite sex provided uneven support.

A lot of their advice is very career-oriented and it can be completely frustrating. They tell you to go from one hard charging job to another, which is hard. In between all of that, you're trying to have a family. There's nothing wrong to going easy and hard to catch up in life. If you follow a male's advice of being constant charger, what do you have in the end? Some people are willing to do that, but for those who want to have families that can be really hard.

Soldier #5 identified gendered mentoring as a way to train female soldiers and assist in problem solving.

There should be some kind of opportunities to be mentored by other women. What they go through or what they expect. Simple things like, Kotex or bras. All the resources they need would help. There should be a female chaplain. Maybe someone they can talk to.

Soldier #6 provided an example of how gendered mentoring would help when she discussed the importance of professional demeanor.

As a female and being in the Army for 28 years, it's how you present yourself to the people who are around you. You need to present yourself as a confident leader. Most of the time, they can look beyond your gender, and in that regard, that has been my successful story for many years. I don't portray myself as a female leader. I am a leader, who happens to be a female. As a female, you want to be seen as a confident soldier and get guidance just like our male counterpart. However, we don't want to ask, because you want to be seen as a strong female and nothing less.

Soldier #8 discussed the pros and cons of women mentors.

It would be nice to talk to other women in the military about success. Those that want to take advice and listen, then great. We have stronger women leaders and those that choose not, who want to sleep when half their chain of command, well then, they are that sort of girl in the military. For females in general in leadership positions, [they] should go through some sort of female mentorship or fellowship. This is like a spiritual thing. Having a safe environment where you can just be a female and remind them that it's hard to be a female, but the way you carry yourself, present, speak and mannerism about your opinion are huge factors to deem you of value or a leader in their eyes. Here are some of the things that will automatically degrade your credibility and effectiveness as a leader. Really just putting it out there 'that it is not fair, but it is the way it is. We judge other people as much as they judge us. If we look at a healthy, good looking middle-aged male and a young, fat, pimple-faced guy in the same leadership position, which would you want to follow? The healthy, middle-aged guy without knowing either one of them would be the one you are drawn to. You are drawn to the good looking one. Being fat is not a level of success. Same things with a female, you need to be in shape, speak eloquently, your hair needs to be perfect, dress nice, but not slutty or look unattractive. There are all kinds of weird factors of whether or not a female is presenting herself correctly in order to allow her true strength shine and not have there be factors to judge them preemptively. Having a fellowship to be able to talk about these things; especially when people ask, "Hey, I've dealt with this. How could we deal with this better?" There would be a ton of female leaders that could say "Hey, I've been there. This is how I handled it or it went terribly so thread lightly."

Soldier #10 also spoke about the pros and cons of a mentor's gender.

There are few women who have had combat experience. You don't always get along with every other female in the military either. We need to start a women's support group. It's nice to have a support group with the same experience. Women's mentorship group, yes! No one could tell me what to do beyond for me to grow, since no one had gone through it. You don't always need to mentor a woman. It's not always the right answer. Just because she's a woman doesn't mean we had anything in common. Either one can be a mentor. However, sometimes it would be good to have a candid discussion with a woman. In my mind, women don't always get along in that environment. It might be the male ratio. It may help to have one of each, but I don't know if it would always work. You have to be savvy and learn the political end. I think they use the Army as a social experiment. The percentage of female in any environment will change the culture and dynamic. Like for artillery, it's a good old boys culture, but having more than one would be a support.

Soldier #7 felt that male mentors can be effective but there were times when women needed a women's perspective.

When I was in West Point, I thought, "Why don't I know any of those women in 1980?" We were the first female graduate class, but I didn't know any of them. They would be the ones who could tell me how they balanced their husband, lives and career. Why did they get out? When did they get out? [I would have liked] someone who was a little bit ahead of me to tell me that it's fine or what I could do next. If it's a male, it's fine, but it's better as a female because they would have the perspective of balance of the family. I've had great male mentors, but they didn't have that perspective. They just thought their wives would just take care of things and follow them wherever they went.

Soldier #11 served as a mentor after her first deployment. She knew her experience would be invaluable to other women.

I felt I could help others a little more. I knew changes with family and when you come back. The trials and the cycles that would occur. I wanted to not come back with regrets and how to come back to their families. I tried to frame it in a positive way, especially since some tragedies happened in my first deployments with families.

Soldier #5 also served as a mentor. She provided cultural support for other Hispanics. She said:

The Hispanic people, who knew, were supportive. I stayed in contact. I had a PFC, who I mentored and he became a major. I saw that when you spent time and help a soldier, they move forward. You felt like an immediate family. You will be forever part of their life.

Soldier #10 explained that in certain situations, such as the lack of women leaders in certain branches, it is necessary to seek a mentor from outside.

In artillery, other women didn't pay attention to you. You were more isolated. Externally, there were other contractors that you could talk to outside of the chain. People outside the chain or someone who could mentor even from the contractors would have been great. Someone on the outside would be a great mentor, because you don't often know yourself. People can be stubborn and you need someone to keep them in check. Someone external would be good. I talked to someone who was an IO, he wasn't in my chain.

Army meritocracy. Dangerous contexts leave no room for questions of competency; the focus is getting the work done. Soldier #1 summarized how doing the work without being subject to a gendered lens was liberating:

If someone viewed a woman as a soldier and they have the competence to say "Okay you can do the job," you would be. When we actually went out of the wire and I was given to be on my own group, we were able to do the job without the excess of reporting to someone. It was just focused. We were able to spend time together as soldiers. We were able to bond, learn to trust each other, and work cohesively. In the absence of a shadow/control male leader, I was effective. For me to do my job, I cannot have a boss who is over-protective or someone who doesn't like women or controlling and micromanaging them. It was exhausting but very enriching. It changes the way your subordinates look at you. They think "You know what you're doing." It was very liberating and trust was building. You have to prove yourself to get the validation. Your decision-making matters and so does your competency in your job. You have experienced soldiers, and they knew whether you knew it or not.

In her own leadership Soldier #1 promotes fairness and support for soldiers. Her interest is that everyone might be successful. "I would always give people a fair shake equal opportunity all the time. If you're competent you go, if you're not, let's train you to get you there."

Opportunities for development and achievement. In order to develop as a leader certain systems must be in place. Women have experienced two impediments to their development as leaders in the military: the first was access to the military, and the second has been acceptance. Gender barriers continue to hamper women leaders' opportunities to professional development which is essential for the cultivation and maintenance of leadership

particularly in the military. As Hannah and Sweeney (2007) recognized, “The profession of arms exemplifies the general pattern of specialized education and training that leads to a profession-peculiar body of expert knowledge and associated expertise” (p. 128).

Soldiers #9 and #3 held life-long dreams of service in the U.S. Army. Soldier #9 acknowledged that: “Ever since I was a little kid wanted to be in the military. I don’t know why. I don’t have any idea why. It was just I knew that’s what I wanted to be and I told my dad, ‘I’m going to be in the Army.’” Soldier #3 also desired to serve from an early age. Her father challenged her to step up and be a leader.

Since I was little I always wanted to be in the military and I talked about enlisting, and my dad said, “Look, you know, academically you have done well. You can do very well as an officer. You know, you need to be an officer.” So I applied for Navy ROTC and Army ROTC and got those, but John Murtha was my congressman and picked me for West Point.

Soldier #3 explained the personal growth that came from her opportunity to attend West Point. It served her well when during deployment.

Airborne school was kind of standard if you went to West Point. It just kind of brought home to me the concept of that courage is not the absence of fear. It is going through something even though you are afraid. That makes great heroes. So that’s just kind of just where it was. I don’t come back to airborne school a lot, you know when I think about other things, but I think it was just one of those experiences that just kind of re-enforced the whole if you got to do it, you got to do it.

Soldiers #9 faced a different sort of challenge. Her brother tempted her by calling attention to the missed civilian opportunities; however, she knew that there was more than one way to look at opportunity.

My brother laughs at me that I was institutionalized—West Point. I missed all these great parties and all that I missed socializing but I don’t feel like it. I made friendships that I still have 18 years later. It was a good experience. It was competitive and challenging, but I was surrounded by achievers and people who wanted to do something in life.

Soldier #1 and #7 noted that opportunities sometimes result in unexpected and beneficial outcomes. Soldier #1 said that she was employed in a role more like that of a diplomat:

Talking to the Afghan leaders and International forces. It was more of diplomacy, although, the other regional managers got to go anywhere [within their Area of Operation]. My job description was the same, but it was added that I would be the connection with International forces since I had linguistic skills. It was a huge bonus as it enhanced relations with the international forces. However, I did not get to do my job to full capacity as I would have liked to.

Soldier #7 had the opportunity to do a job she was unprepared to do with a surprising outcome.

I didn't like the law enforcement part, until I was the CO of a company command. The great thing about being an MP, was I got to be an S1, S4, platoon leader and you get to do so much. That's the best part about the Army. You get to try out different jobs and learn. I don't feel like I was robbed out of opportunities. Maybe I had bosses that didn't mind or make it an issue.

Soldier #12's experience suggested that trust may well be what leads to opportunity for development:

I was a Major. My title was Secretary of the General staff to a two-star Command. We were in charge overall of communications there in the entire region. As the SGS, I was like the executive assistant to the general. He was good to me and he used me as a planner and coordinator and more than a facilitator. He had a lot of trust.

Soldier #6 felt fulfilled by the opportunity given to her to develop leadership training.

The opportunity also paid off for the military.

I had responsibility for \$7.4 million dollars and was responsible for 15 personnel . . . within eight months, we rewrote the criminal doctrine and ended up saving the government almost 25% of the cost of that. In part of that, I wrote a document and recommended that the Army as an entity focus on training folks and not on full blown officer training to more than just contract officer training. If you are working around contracts, my concern was if you do something wrong in the contract area you're talking about money or someone may end up in jail. So let's develop some training tools for that and eventually it turned it into a new ASI [Additional Skill Identifier] and I was one of the driving forces.

Soldier #9 also expressed satisfaction when a leadership opportunity was presented to her.

I thought I was going to do that until I was picked for command. One of the officers there told me not to do it. No one is going to allow a former battalion commander to teach at West Point. That was my other thing, to go back to teach. It's a rewarding profession.

Removing barriers to achievement. If women are to be empowered as soldiers and leaders and successful in their mission then barriers must be recognized and removed. Some of the participants spoke about barriers to their achievement. Soldier #2 spoke in great detail about how she removed barriers. She did it by rising to the challenges, recognizing the skills of her staff, and, thus, demonstrating her skill as a leader. She said:

I refer to myself as the barrier remover. I like to take away road blocks that keep my people from being successful . . . I put a lot of energy into the company commanders and different team leaders, I built them up. We delineated authority, competency and responsibility to the point that we were able to shape how we are going to employ. Instead of deploying our battalion like a normal unit, we tasked organized, and each of my company serviced a different U.S. division in the North center of Iraq. That paid huge dividends, coupled with company commanders that were cross-trained and excellent communicators. It enabled them to be a single point for their soldiers and those they were servicing. We went to the basic capabilities of our unit and brought things down to the basic building units . . . We looked at their overall skillset as a soldier and what they were trained for or other capacities they might be good at. We tried to align them. Talent management was huge, knowing every single person on the team to the face to their background and the goals. We then talked to the leaders and figured out how to effectively use those people on the team . . . I had many people who had huge skill sets and unique civilian skill set that enhanced the mission.

Sometimes the barriers to achievement are self-imposed. As in Soldier #2's example, these impediments can be removed if there with external support.

I had a specialist, B. My XO said, "Specialist B was crying in my office, because you said she had to go to Signal school and she doesn't think she should. She just wants to work in the shop." I had known her and she was bright and capable. I knew she could do more. She needs to be in another position. It turns out that she turned into a rock star and blossomed. She came back to me and said she was wrong and thanked me for sending her to school. She said it was the best thing for her. It was rewarding to me. I saw her a year later and she was promoted and two

weeks ago, I received an email from Lieutenant B, and she talked about how my forcing her to grow showed her that she had more to offer inside. I didn't think I had much effect. That's what leaders should be doing. They should be critically thinking and setting examples and inspiring people to reach beyond to reach their potentials.

Sometimes the barriers to achievement are the demands on soldiers' time. Soldier #9 pointed out that there needs to be enough space for soldiers to focus on self-improvement: "During our down time, people were able to put their packages together. They were able to improve their PT scores. They were able to do courses that would help them move up."

Comprehensive training. Effective training is a necessity for successful operation in dangerous contexts. Training, along with experience and a soldier's allegiance to the mission and to the general cause they serve, creates a framework for decision-making in dangerous contexts (Hannah & Sweeney, 2007). Participants talked about areas of training that supported achievement of the mission. In addition to highlighting the value of training, the women called for a focus on communication, standards, and integration.

Von Schell (1933/1999) indicated that a similar sense of interdependence can be achieved through training and discipline. Training is important because human behavior is unpredictable in dangerous contexts. Training and discipline may prove invaluable in conditions that depend on cohesive response (von Schell, 1933/1999).

Soldier #4 was a strong proponent of training. She explained how training is an essential tool. When soldiers are trained to the point that their skills have become routine, they are prepared and confident.

You have got to keep reacting and reacting until it becomes just a second nature. I think spontaneity, there is not a whole lot of room for that in combat situations. My brigade in Iraq, on my last tour, required the training over and over and over and over. And, it didn't matter how many times they had done it, they had to do it again at least two or three times before they even left the gate. Even if they had just done it that morning. But it really helped them keep it together when things would go badly. Didn't have to think about. It just became a routine.

Soldier #4 also stated that training is imperative if soldiers are to be competent during engagements. Training prepares soldiers to be adaptable which is necessary in dangerous contexts where things can change in a second.

In a really dangerous situation physical pretty much takes care of itself, because you are going to do what you got to do, the adrenaline takes over. That's why people get shot and they don't realize it until an hour and a half later because they just didn't feel it. I think mental, among anything, is keeping a cool head, which is really, really hard, even if you have training. I think the training, that's the only thing that really keeps it together.

Soldier #3's felt that training for dangerous contexts needed to address soldiers' physical and mental strengths. She would instruct women:

I'm going to teach you how to fight dirty because you are going to have to. You don't have the strength a man has. I'm going to teach you how to fight dirty. I'm going to teach you how to take 'em down and take an eye out, you know, that kind of thing, because don't get captured. You need to be able to defend you your soldiers. So you have to be twice as good to be good enough.

Unfortunately in the case of Soldier #1, her experience was a lack of training. She attributed this situation to her position rather than her gender.

As Intelligence Officers, we are handled with kid gloves . . . We didn't need to do all the other trainings. Just the basics and were pushed ahead of the line to get to our destination as soon as possible. You're trained as a soldier, but when you deploy . . . You would have liked to get more of combat training.

Soldier #1 felt there was a need for more integrated and aggressive training time, time that highlighted offensive and defensive skill sets to be used in a combat environment.

As a generality for every soldier to get more training would help and not only combat branches. It may turn drill days from two to four days. This will give a base for each soldier, regardless of branch, to engage in offensive/defensive measures effectively. Combat arms training plus your branch training. Being an officer and a lady is the mentoring part. Being a professional is the training part. I would continue recommend to be aggressive with our training program, our cultural awareness, our professional development and the mentorship program would be helpful for women.

Soldier #4 noted that the demands of combat in the Middle East required that women be involved and that this necessitated that everyone—men and women—receive adequate training for dangerous contexts. Furthermore, she noted that women want to be integrated into all aspects of the military.

I don't think that any woman could just be told, "Well, you are just going to be infantry," and just be okay with it the way guys accept things. We are in a volunteer service. What we discovered with Iraq and Afghanistan is you can look like a dozen wet donuts in a zip locked bag, if you can haul somebody out you are okay. They relaxed a lot of that and now I kind of see them tightening back on that. We train for full-spectrum conflict, but that isn't always how it goes. We train for full-spectrum conflict and then realized that we needed females in these teams. That no amount of brute force was going to help with this woman problem, natives in Iraq or in Afghanistan because it is culturally drive. You have to insert women in dangerous context which they travel with the packs to get the mission done.

Soldier #4 believes that equitability in training and in service is the best way for the military to staff positions with the most capable and motivated soldiers.

Without the women, the mission is more than likely not to succeed. We tend to look at stuff with the worst possible scenario, which is almost like the ranger school scenario: no food, no water, 23 hours of the day, that kind of thing. Got to ford the river, got to cross this, got to build a bridge, and all that. And, I think that's where a lot of, "Hey, there's physical limitations to this." I always thought the guys that always got ahead in the Army were these little scrawny little runners. A lot of them cannot lift an artillery shell, but it would be hard for them. A strong woman could train at the same task and do that. I guess anecdotally, you can always come up with an example they could do or woman, like Navy destroyer. I never understood why they wouldn't let a woman command a destroyer. There's absolutely no reason . . . I think there are probably a handful of MOSs where, worst case scenario, I just don't think it would be a good fit or if it's a good fit for a few years and then something happens [like] she wants to get out of it. Back to your choice thing. If the policy is women get the choice, then the men should get the choice too. You are getting the training to get to your maximum level on each of the competencies that you are training for regardless of the gender.

Because combat training, has been limited to men, trainers are men. Soldier #4 observed that once women are integrated into dangerous combat not only will there be females available to

train others, women will be more readily accepted in dangerous context. Soldier #4 said she thought:

It is like 16% of women right now or something. Once we start this, the only instructors are going to be male, which is fine. I think as a whole, we need to be fine with that, rather than trying to shoehorn someone in there just for appearance sake, because, you know. , I think we need to not do that. Let's just start with: these are the guys who have been teaching it, these are the experts, they will bring these women along. The first ones [women] to go through this will probably be, "Hey, I was the first one, so, you know, don't tell me you can't do it." But, I do think that there is going to be a huge "everybody is going to be watching to see." I don't think the younger guys are going to care. I really don't. I don't think they care now. Sure, put them in, whatever. Because of how much we have kind of equaled things out in the civilian world, and after all, that's where we get our soldiers. So the training will be instrumental once you find out what you have and what you don't have? And that's why it needs to be very challenging. It's challenging for guys too. He had a heck of a time. It was hard, a lot of that, and I think it needs to stay that way for men and women. You have to have a lot of that in all fields not just combat ops, because, let's face it: there's danger everywhere. You are more than likely to face it when you are out there looking for it like the infantry guys do. But, I do think that's why training needs to stay very challenging because you are going to have this to begin with. You have to. The real value in a lot of my training was showing that you discovered, holy hell, I do have shortfalls.

Soldier #4 is somewhat pragmatic about change. She recognized that overcoming barriers will take a while to overcome and that somethings will take a little bit longer. But she feels that the results will be well worth it.

I would definitely go more for the integration because familiarity will work wonders when you are sitting there bored and you don't have anything else to do but talk to somebody. I do think that interpersonal connection goes a long way. So the social aspect is a key element of having accessibility and actually getting to know female leaders versus combat arms may not have any access to women so they don't know how to respond to them because there is no opportunities to see a woman leader being actually a leader.

Soldier #10 saw value in the integration of branches for training. There is great value in working as a team within and among different branches/expertise "The mix of branches like in ILE [Intermediate Level Education] classes. You learn about the different branches from each other."

Communication training. Effective communication is essential for organizational success in extreme and novel contexts. Interviewees discussed the merits of mentoring and professional development that addressed these skills.

Soldier #2 noted that enhancing communication skills was an important part of integrating the organization. “I would continue recommend to be aggressive with our training program, our cultural awareness, our professional development and the mentorship program would be helpful for women.” While Soldier #4 encouraged assessment be used to communicate clearly and directly what training is required to enhance skills and leadership, she also emphasized the need to provide the training so the soldier can reach the new level of achievement.

The only way to continue to enhance it is to realize and get a good assessment where you are at and then have viable, rugged training that would mirror maybe the real life situation and then train for it. Rigorous and challenging for men or women. Setting that platform for those individual factors is probably one very important thing.

Soldier #4 recognized not only the value in terms of attaining a new level of skill but in its positive effect on a soldiers’ presence of mind. She said of such training impacts: “Your identity or knowing who you are all about in your physical and mental strength [and it] will be exponentially raised by having that additive training.”

Soldier #10 was concerned by the serious lack of training in how to handle toxic work environments. She said there was a need for,

Training on how to deal with difficult people. You have to be willing to step back in yourself and evaluate yourself. I look at myself, and see how I’m portraying and doing the steps. It’s like a marriage, if you can’t step back during an argument, it’s not going to work. You have to know how to move forward. If there’s a leadership class that would help on toxic leadership.

Soldier #10 noted that differences in communication between genders was another issue that would be enhanced by training.

In general, men and women communicate and react differently in uncertainty. Management style must be tweaked. I was in an all-male and in a mixed environment and I took the same approach and it didn't work. Women react differently to competition. There needs to be a change in management style not the job. The approach to communication and solutions needs to be different. The job doesn't change the management style needs to.

Soldier #12 explained that communication improves as soldiers become a team, but as the members of a team are reassigned, there is a readjustment phase that hampers effective communication. This problem is first seen when soldiers deploy. Communication between stateside and deployed units must be addressed to assure greater efficiency.

It was different when we got there, because I was with different people than I trained with. We trained together and then we were farmed out all over. I felt my training was adequate, but things change when you get there . . . Communications is essential. I want the people I lead to feel responsible to one another and to me. I don't care to be liked or be a friend. I want to earn the respect. I want them to feel like they should do well for me. I try to instill that we are a team and when you fail or succeed, it reflects on everybody on the team. I will take input, but I will make the decision and I expect you to get on board even if you don't like it. If they did something above and beyond, I do recognize them.

Soldier #10 felt that it was really important for different branches (e.g., infantry with field artillery and with military intelligence) to work together. This would enhance communication. This exchange should begin with a soldier's career rather than postponing it until the ILE level. Soldier #10 believed there was much to be gained by continuous exchange.

Standards. One social reality in the military is that soldiers constantly assess their respective conduct against other members of their team and they may challenge individuals who do not adhere to group standards. The group is also constantly assessing its competence and proficiency. Leaders can promote strong relationships and, thereby, support achievement.

Soldier #8 believed that the standards were in place for a practical reason:

The standards must remain standards. If it takes a guy to carry a battle buddy 100 meters, then a female must be able to carry that same battle buddy to be seen as an equal . . . changing the standards is not going to over well, because you are not going to have that trust.

She felt sure that a problem would arise if the standards were changed simply to accommodate women because,

half of the combat MOSs are a bunch of guys who have been together since basic training and like the harshness and have that trust in another to be able to accomplish the mission. Having a female next to them given an accommodation or pass to the standard or treated differently will not be seen in the same level of trust worthiness. I would suggest not accommodating standards at all, but upholding the regular standards. There are women out there, who are that strong, that capable, given that opportunity, but if you don't meet the standards, and then you're not accepted. You can't be trusted by those peers.

For Soldier #12 a basic problem with the military's organizational standards is that they have been in a constant state of flux. She noted there had been a time when a soldier could

get kicked out for anything. Then after that, we went to the extreme. We let anything go to keep people in. Now it seems like we are going back to zero tolerance. Leaders make bad calls, but it is not a reflection on their leadership all the time.

Soldier #8 recognized that some soldiers held a double standard whereby the standards for females were raised extremely high compared to male standards. "You have to out think and out work your male brethren. You don't come with the same standards; you have to work harder to gain the same respect. Set the bar even higher."

Some of the problem may arise from the challenge of Force Management and the need of personnel in different ranks. Soldier #8 understood that all too often the standards are compromised because of need which inadvertently resulted in less than competent personnel rising to ranks they would not otherwise have. This can create a situation that compromises personnel and missions. Soldier #8 suggested that the standards were lacking and were old and needed to be reevaluated to:

Allow both sexes to accomplish that mission. There are going to be hundreds and thousands of people, who have gone through the harder, more stricter standards that your senior leaders now. They will see the next generation of soldiers to be sub-par. Even warrant officers now say "I remember when warrant officers could hit you." There was a time when the Army just needed the warrant officers and

they lowered their standards versus number need and not quality. Now we have CW3s running around, who shouldn't have made E5. It's a double-edged sword, when you look at too much into changing standards or lower them to allow more people come in. For the majority, who were able to meet those standards and uphold them, now it's unfair to them. Now they will have to deal with people, who would have never made it into the MOS, had they not lowered the standards.

Integrated training. The integration of women into traditional male roles is not only mandated but necessary for the Army to be an effective 21st century organization. The participants in this study spoke about the need for training to help dispel biases such as that women are unsuited for particular jobs and encourage a culture that is supportive of integration.

At the most basic level Soldier #10 observed that:

We need to be more a learning environment. As a leader, you have to make mistakes and risks. You need to make them to learn from them and you grow that way. [As a you] the leader have to know that it's ok to make mistake and that you have that opportunity to learn. The zero tolerance in making any mistakes puts a tension. If this is the standard and it's not realistic, then it doesn't validate it for the organization.

Soldier #9 asked why female leaders aren't used more to assist in their integration—to be part of the solution.

There should have been more opportunities for female leaders to help train in different areas of the hospital. We could have provided grand rounds. We used to do that for all the camps. A lot of the foreign doctors came from right outside the gates. Females were part of that. Having that opportunity gave confidence to the commander. We were seen that females can do this job.

Soldier #12 added that if the Army supports integration of women leaders then it must provide the training that prepares them for dangerous contexts.

The stress level is different, the environment is different. Being in dangerous content itself, where all the mortars happen, it's stressful enough and sometimes people become desensitized. The leadership can empower you. Your decision making becomes quick or you learned something hands-on. You can still be in dangerous content, where you have other things to consider. . . . But with having the training you have to have other things in place to channel each person. So if we are going to take the gender away and only the choice of who's going to be doing what job and they do that and they succeed in that, they have to be given

the tools and the ability to do so. Like they have to have a policy in place that says, 'You are allowed to do it' and then the actual training that accommodates.

Soldier #3 doesn't believe that gender integration means being gender blind. It means selecting the best individual for the job and seeing that that person is trained to do the job.

My belief is that, you know, the men in the Army, they don't want the women to be men too, but they recognize that you can be a good female troop, you know. We are really focusing on the people itself, the skill that they have to accomplish the mission or whatever they are thrown into. It is about leadership.

Soldier #3 felt positively that the Army is moving in this direction. "I think the [organization] Army is very accepting. Integration in all the jobs. I believe so. I really do."

Soldier #4 concurred:

It didn't take long to integrate in, although it had nothing to do with work, that got me integrated in there. It was a temporarily lag, but honestly, the Army is pretty darn good with its policies, its procedures, its SOPs.

Soldier #4 has experienced some of the trials of integrative training. She believes that those who are brought along with the change will integrate more seamlessly than those who are being asked to change.

I think that, like most organizations, nobody wants to feel as if something is being shoved down their throat . . . I just don't think [the younger soldiers] they're as wrapped around the axle about this as those of us who grew up. As we are changing, once the senior leadership has experienced a turn around with newer leadership influx, the attitude and the powers, this might change even more to cultivate a more egalitarian environment.

Soldier #10 agreed that one of the challenges of change was situated in generational differences.

There are so many older generations leading—people from the 60's to 80's. They have older philosophy and they are at a different stage of their life. They aren't going through with what we are going through and they can't connect . . . The way they look at people now, they respect the rank but not the person . . . The equality is not there. There's never going to be a true equal from either gender.

Soldier #4 said that leadership makes a big difference in the success of integration. It is important not to set women and male soldiers apart but to unite them as soldiers, soldiers with a common purpose. The military leadership should cultivate and facilitate unity in the profession and purpose. She believed that “the less you can make it about the gender, the better off you’re going to be.” Soldier #4 suggested that gender-neutral policies begin at recruitment.

I haven’t done recruiting ever and that’s what will gain a little more acceptance among the older set. I work around a lot of men, and I got the double whammy of being a female and a civilian. You get that hairy eye ball a lot, you know; until people realize, I am here to help you. Effective recruiting policies will have a policy in effect. For recruiting to from the beginning insert whoever wants it per volunteer.

Soldier #8 agreed. She believed that what really mattered was merit.

It should always be about personal merit. I don’t care what’s between your legs. The best person for the job is the best person for it. I don’t think women get some jobs because they’re traditionally filled by a male. It happens quite often. A male and female with the same competence for the job is given to the male. If the woman is the best, then they should get it. Women do have a more difficult time checking their emotions and some jobs require that. It may require them to be more rational and think with logic to successfully complete the mission. Sometimes they aren’t suited for it.

However, Soldier #8 admitted that in reality achieving a system based solely on meritocracy, unaffected by gender bias, isn’t going to be easy.

Females will have to be basically perfect when given those opportunities, otherwise it will not happen again or a long time again . . . The next time they look for someone, it’ll be a guy. It will be a trying time to break in, but it has been done throughout history where women do an amazing job and carve that path. We have to be selective on that first woman . . . The type of trailblazer female will need to be seasoned, who has messed up, but who is resilient, adaptive, quick thinker and all these qualities that most females have but don’t know how to harness it. There will be females that don’t want to do that.

In instances where integration has taken on negative implications, Soldier #5 pointed out the importance of having EO, EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) investigations, and

oversight outside the chain of command. Having objectivity is essential to identify and eliminate negative practice within the organization rather than covering it up.

I would have equal opportunity, sexual harassment [investigations] outside of the Army. So the EO or commander won't have complete power. When they are outside, they will investigate and see the issues rather than swept aside. It would be effectively dealt with.

Soldier #7 was concerned that women have barriers imposed on them simply because of their gender. She urged more integrative practices.

In the Army, I wish they would open positions more on physical ability and not on the fact of their sex. But that has not really been an issue with the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Everybody knows that females are in combat. No one is really protesting that. There are women that can be in infantry, but you have to be able to do a requirement. It should be the physical requirement and not gender. In the European armies, they have women. Maybe "The Don't Ask, Don't Tell" will also change that.

Soldier #7 offered an example of how a lack of integration impacted her own career.

It's funny, when I first was a platoon leader, I was given so much more leeway than my friends were. I took my own platoon to the field and did my own training vs. they had to follow the battalion sets. Then went to shoot gunnery at certain times and less leeway. Ten years later, in ILE, those guys are masters of combining artillery, armor, infantry and using it for a mission versus me, who has not had all these attachments to me and making those assets work for me. Those guys were given all these assets and they can use it and know how to figure it out. A female, would have to have the same background.

Soldier #9 recognized that integration can result in cultural change. In instances where there is a deeply-rooted all-male culture the need for integrative training is likely to be high. As an example, Soldier #9 mentioned the artillery.

It's a good old boys culture, but having more than one [female] would be a support. That depends on how they determine that. If you are going to open all those potentials, you are as equal to get medical and infantry, and you get a nurse in infantry, then it will end up poorly. You may end up with less women, because the potential of where they end up. Physically, they can't all do the jobs the men can. [Although many men cannot do it either but are still in that branch] The culture will be a massive shock to the culture that is all male. It's not a bad thing, but the upfront cost will be high.

Soldier #8 also addressed the challenge of change. She recognized that change will be just as difficult for females as it will be for the males. She suggested that part of the problem is that decision-makers dictate policies before they've had time to think broadly about the consequences. In order to rectify this she suggested that policy makers listen to the men and women who will be affected by the policies because soldiers have been in the field and know what is needed to effectively execute policy.

Soldier #8 recognized that change typically comes with a period of adjustment. In regards to MOS integration she expects more turbulence due to resistance.

There will be guys who are cool with it. They will have to watch what they say. Combat guys are usually all disgusting pigs, talking about naked women and farts. Guys are different when females are around. Their dynamic on how open they can be or how much of themselves they can show will change. They have to actually be more professional . . . Women leaders will need thick skin and if they can't have that, then they'll have a hard time the female will have to adapt equally to that culture, and not expect only one side to change. They can't be offended with naked pictures and farting.

Main Issues Making Women Leaders Ineffective

The factors that directly degrade the effectiveness of women leaders, which emerged from the interview findings, were consistent with the individual, social and organizational models posited above (depicted in the pillars of Figure 4.1). Participants included examples of labeling, stereotyping, segregation, toxic leadership, sexual harassment, and resistance to implementing EO policy and adherence to meritocracy. The participants all reported that such factors forced them to operate in less than an optimal way within the unit and organizations while deployed and operating in dangerous content.

The Army's Equal Opportunity Policy (Department of the Army, 2014d)—known internally as AR 600-20 Chapter 6-1b—was created to sustain effective units by eliminating discriminatory behaviors or practices that undermine teamwork, mutual respect, loyalty, and

shared sacrifice of the men and women of America's Army. Yet, the women in this study experienced a host of factors that undermined their effectiveness as leaders. These included labeling and stereotyping; cultural biases including gender ethnicity and race; biased evaluations, recognition and dispensing of awards; segregation; toxic leadership; resistance to change; sexual harassment, and ineffective EO policies and staff.

Dealing with labeling and stereotyping. The interviewees stated that male leaders and male subordinates expressed negative regard for female leaders in the form of labels and stereotypes. This behavior was directed toward a woman's appearance or her personality. It involved the description of a woman's level of physical attractiveness or her personality in terms of passivity versus aggressiveness. Such behavior caused a divisiveness that eroded unit cohesion and reduced effectiveness. When these were not addressed or dealt with properly, the environment became toxic and ultimately had a negative impact on the female leader's ability to lead effectively.

It isn't only individual male soldiers who maintain stereotypic notions of appearance. Soldier #8 noted that the Army's physical standards have been created for a male body type; the female body, however, comes in many other shapes—apple, pear, hour-glass, triangle, column, rectangle. When this difference is not accounted for the result is a barrier that women cannot overcome. She explained, "I have an hour glass figure and they take my small neck, small waist, and wide hips [measurements] that make me look like I'm obese, but they don't take that into consideration. I'm not built funny; I'm proportional and do well on the APFT [Army Physical Fitness Test]."

Soldier #11 also gave examples of negative labeling and stereotyping. Some disparaging descriptions reflected stereotypic notions that related to a woman's menstrual cycle. These labels

were used to suggest the woman was emotional and not in control. For example, the interviewees reported that other soldiers sometimes said that a woman was on “girly time,” “being on her period,” “that time of the month,” or “PMS-ing.” They felt that these kinds of remarks undermined the effectiveness of the leader. Soldier #11 acknowledged the difficulties and offered ways to overcome them:

Once you start getting angry, it shows with our soldiers. Conflicts came along and I became ineffective. You got to mentor and find time to do it. It’s hard to replicate in training. You need replicate the constant of changes, because you don’t understand your reaction until you face it. It needs to be talked about even if it’s hard to train. De-centralizing authority down to the bottom is important to teach managing, personal conflict with others and how to manage their time. You de-centralize the power and authority.

Soldier #8 recognized that women leaders need training to gain a skill set to de-escalate situations that cause their emotions to flare. Women leaders need to learn, she explained:

How to get back out of emotional state. It’s hard for women once they dive into the realm of emotion and get back to rationality. They need to learn how to de-escalate their emotions. It would be a benefit to women.

Soldier #10 agreed. She said she gained “strength [by] knowing more about myself and being able to handle a hostile location and situation. I thought of it as an experience . . . We have our own bad days. Keeping that philosophy during that deployment, helped.” Soldier #11 also learned from her deployment:

In the first deployment, I just had to survive. I was the only female in my Field Artillery unit, and I had to make it. I was more independent. I learned a lot more about team work on my second deployment while in a Military Intelligence unit. I came in more realistic in the second one.

Soldier #1 appreciated that not every individual shares the same values when it comes to interpersonal relationships. She was aware that it is more difficult for some to be away from home and family. Because women are judged by harsher standards than their male counterparts, similar social behavior results in the women being negatively stereotyped and labeled.

In the absence of wife, girlfriend, fiancé, [male soldiers] get excited when [they] see someone who looks like a lady from the male perspective. I was more watched. I got the comments of “Hey, you look different in uniform or you’re beautiful.” It was like, in my head all I could think about was, “creep: go away.” There was nothing going to happen. You get a name, even if you don’t do anything. One of the young soldiers got serious attention and she started interacting with males. She became my roommate three days after she arrived. I have a traditional perspective and professionalism. She had a boyfriend at home and met another guy at base and another one somewhere else. She had a bad name before you know it.

Soldier #3 thought that the stigma applied to early women leaders was automatically transferred to today’s women soldiers.

Some of the early commissioned officers, the females were treated so badly that they . . . just became bitches on wheels and they were trying to be men and they were trying to be fire-breathing men, and . . . it’s a double standard but it exists. If you are a guy and you are hard as nails, you are a guy who’s hard as nails. If you are a woman who is hard as nails, you are just a cold-hearted bitch. You know, that’s it, you are a bitch.

It also didn’t help that during the initial phases of the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) that pregnancy rates increased. The rise in pregnancy among reservists was perceived as being a way for women soldiers to get out of combat assignments; however, that is unlikely to be true for all women. Nevertheless, Soldier #3 said the situation created, “A little bit of a stigma out there, especially when you read about a lot of women getting pregnant to get out of combat and stuff like that—or get out of deployments and stuff.”

Stigma is a serious problem as Soldier #5 explained.

[Once] they label you, you can’t change their mind. That is the most damaging thing in an organization. They don’t understand feeling, especially the females. I have the military telling me that I don’t belong. If they fix this, they can create a better future. Soldier #3 suggested that labels place burdens on those who have been stigmatized and while some become reactionary this is the exception rather than the rule. So there is that perception that, “Oh, she’s going to be a real ball buster.” And, there are a couple out there I’ve run into.[who] overcompensate like crazy by stomping on the men underneath them, but it’s like that doesn’t even

help. But, those are the outliers . . . It is really hard for a competent woman leader to come in and do the job. She may very well be deprived of doing her duties.

Soldier #5 gave two examples of soldiers who were hampered by the stigma attached to women showing their emotions. One story was about a lieutenant with a PhD in chemistry.

They didn't like her. I came in and was told bad things about her to sway me. It turned out that she was a great officer, just emotional. She let the guys have it, because she was angry. They were passive aggressive, because she was confrontational. She created her own issue to allow her emotions to come in. This is a problem for women when they allow their emotions get in the way.

The other story was about her own personal experience. "I've been told I was too direct and aggressive. I am assertive and direct because I am open. I am not passive aggressive and I will not back-stab you. I will not blue falcon [i.e. betray] you." This behavior is reversed, the interviewees reported, when men do it but the perception and reaction is very different when women behave in that manner. It is seen as yet another bias and a way to subdue women into submission, not treating them as peers, as fellow soldiers in arms.

Sometimes the stereotyping had sexual preference connotations. Soldier #8 discussed how this type of labeling behavior was used. "When you cut your hair and walk with males, you're sleeping with them. If you walk with a female, you're a lesbian." Soldier #5 thought that some of this was due to a lack of females, because those that were present are isolated. They had to do the best they could given the situation.

Sometimes there are not many females and you do what you got to do, especially with female issues. They tell you don't get pregnant since we're going home. You can't have birth control pills, because you'd get pregnant out here. Some females have to sleep in a tent full of men or lack certain female things. I isolated myself. You were either left to stay or to the right, who went out. They were alone or lesbians. There were several girls that did stuff that I couldn't believe.

Soldier #9 mentioned how women who speak out about stereotyping and discriminating risk being labeled as troublemakers. This leads to repercussions.

I tried to stay out of it. I did give them advice on what they could do. They could make a formal complaint. One wrote a congressional, because she kept getting looks for a lot of things. She got picked up to be E5 and then she was taken off the list. She did nothing wrong and many people thought this. Just because the command labeled her as a troublemaker, she didn't make rank or anything. Her career was shut out and things went downhill. She was put in admin instead of being able to do her job.

Cultural biases. Participants described encountering various cultural impediments that undermined their effectiveness. These cultural biases, in addition, to those related to a male-dominated Army culture involved differences based on ethnicity, race, sexual preferences, and age. Soldier #6 believed that addressing cultural issues would have a significant impact for leader effectiveness. Her opinion was that

The culture is the key element that needs to change for females to be in dangerous content. How can we change that? If it's our culture, it's also our Army culture. It is changing quickly. There are senior leaders who are not changing as fast as the culture. That's the tough part.

Culture is not always a straightforward issue to confront. In Soldier #10's example the issue cut across several cultural dimensions. While she explained the limitations of working in a situation where there was a lack of females (i.e., gender), Soldier #10 also brought up the issue of ethnic identity.

I can say why people react to people. It was a cultural difference. He was Hispanic and he had the 'chismo factor and I reacted more. He was in the "You are in my team or not." I don't do well with that mentally. He kept me up 2 to 3 a.m. in the morning to talk about life. He may have been trying a different tactic. It was probably the difference with how women and men react to the situation. He had his male "go to" guys. They created a major mafia. That's not uncommon. He tried and I was just stubborn.

Soldier #5 described cultural differences across age, gender, and military branches.

I'm 55 years old. I'm not a 22 year-old male infantry lieutenant. As I tell my soldiers, I may not be the poster child for the Army, but I'm valued more for my brain and my experiences than my physical prowess. That's the one area that I face some challenges. I had more challenge in the Army than I did in the Marine Corps.

Soldier #1 explained the limitations because of gender and lack of women leaders to with whom to work.

The commander was an infantry guy, and had said that women are not gonna be able to travel throughout the country, because of what could happen to females. In the beginning, I was completely excluded, but since we lack regional experts, by default I was given the go to go to the less intense area.

Soldier #5 recognized the necessity for training leaders to deal with these types of complex issues, but understood that learning how to navigate the differences was equally important. “There should be enrichment programs beyond just within their grades. You can only go so far with training. You have to learn and absorb it and learn the lesson from it and not get wrapped in it.” In Soldier #8’s experience being cautious and observant helped her to navigate biases.

Before I was the deputy OIC [Officer-in-charge], I was there a month and half and I had already taken control of different parts. I had already proven some of my worth and I think he saw that. He was cautious to judge me, which I would rather than be prejudged.

The alternative, it was reported, is when a soldier isn’t mindful of his personal biases. When they get in the way the result is detrimental, potentially toxic. For example Soldier #8 was aware of a commander who was

hostile and negative for you as a woman leader. There were only a couple of women and he didn’t really engage with them much, since they were young and enlisted. The lesbian female staff sergeant was given a hard time, since he was ultra conservative. He viewed her as not a proper female. She wasn’t in a leadership position either, so he didn’t need engage her too often.

Evaluations, recognition, and awards. The Army’s tradition of evaluations and the recognition of achievement with promotion and awards, has been designed to support the development and promotion of effective leaders. The goal of Army evaluation reports, as stated in the Evaluation Reporting System, (Department of the Army, 2014c) is an independent assessment of how well a rated soldier has met duty requirements and adhered to the professional

standards of the Army's Officer Corps. Likewise, the Army awards program was developed to recognize excellence and motivates further performance and service. However, according to the participants' responses, these ideals do not always match the application of the practices to women or minority leaders in dangerous contexts.

Soldier #10 felt she was unfairly denied a combat badge when the colonel changed the rules. "The rule was, if an IED went off within 500 ft. of you, you earned a badge. I had an RPG [rocket-propelled grenade] go 200 ft. by me, which was a dud, and that didn't qualify."

Soldier #5 experienced evaluative and recognition biases on both the gender and ethnic levels.

My boss told me that I was a female Latina and will get promoted. My male officers would not [saying] "I would not give you the top block even though you deserve it." They won't get promoted as easily as you. I have seen a Latino male get hazed. I was told not to tell, because it wasn't my business. I told and he was helped.

Soldier #8 also recommended the Army review its evaluation process.

The rules are known but the process is not taken seriously and no one enforces it. There needs to be time to counsel and really mentor, not just when an annual OER is due or when doing the MSAT 360. It's a good tool, but getting their honest effective opinion, do they trust them and stuff like that are vital to finding effective leaders.

Segregation. The participants reported that some leaders disregard regulations and Army values. This is doubly problematic for women who belong to minority groups. If women and minorities are isolated in their assignments (i.e., left as the only representative of their gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) they lack the support to adequately address the situation. Soldier #5 had personal experience with this issue. Overseas, she was isolated from others with whom she could share the problems unique to the Latino community.

I was told not to speak Spanish and that they couldn't understand me. My first evaluation, they put I didn't speak English. There were a lot of put downs . . . I went to find a way to belong to prove that I belong in the Army. I wanted to

demonstrate that I belong. I wanted to fight for the women in the future. They should be appreciated.

Soldier #8 acknowledged that the Army offers equity training to help address the kind of biases that Soldier #5 experienced; however, training alone is not sufficient to correct the problem.

People know that you have to treat them equally, but there are people that don't because they don't care. There are still people who refuse to work with Black people or women. It's really hard to change people's mind. I don't think training is . . . going to weed that out. When we are promoting, we need to be more careful. If you have a biased history then you'll be ineffective. There's not a mechanism to say this guy is a jerk and is not an effective leader, but he's still an E-5. Don't promote, make them an officer if they weren't good as an enlisted soldier. We need to be more effective of who we are promoting.

Toxic leadership. The terms toxic leader, toxic manager, toxic culture, and toxic organization have appeared with increasing frequency in business, leadership, and management literature. Reed (2004) quotes human resources analyst Gillian Flynn who described a toxic manager as one

who bullies, threatens, yells. The manager whose mood swings determines the climate of the office on any given workday. Who forces employees to whisper in sympathy in cubicles and hallways? The backbiting, belittling boss from hell. Call it what you want poor interpersonal skills, unfortunate office practices but some people, by sheer shameful force of their personalities make working for them rotten.

Reed (2004) listed three key elements of toxic leader syndrome: an apparent lack of concern for the well-being of their subordinates; a personality or behavior that negatively affects the organizational climate; and subordinates who believe that the manager is motivated primarily by self-interest. The behavior of toxic leaders sets the climate for the workplace and, according to the Army's publication, "Army Leadership, Army Doctrine" (Department of the Army, 2012), the result is negative for the organization and its people.

Soldier #1 had personal experience with toxic leadership and defined it in the following way:

Toxic leadership is someone who deliberately prevents you from doing your job or from the opportunity based on liking you (your gender, ethnicity, origin, the way you look, speak, accent). Somebody, who has every intention for you to not succeed, hurting you in your evaluation, career path or you as a person. That's a toxic leadership for me.

For Soldier #1 what impacted more than the toxicity was that she had "very limited access, boots on ground, to do my job . . . Debilitating, to say the least."

Soldier #8 gave two examples of toxic leadership. In the first she described the behavior of a new Commanding Officer.

He had quite the ego on him, an old school Mad Men of the era. He was full of himself and had deployed with the Navy Seal, so he thought he was the coolest thing ever. He thought that the position was beneath him and he was bitter about it. He didn't want to understand the scope of the mission but wanted to control everything. I had been there as the OIC for 5 months. He didn't listen to me or take the direction that we were trying to go with all the work we had been working towards the new goal. He decided to go the opposite direction and how he wanted to do it. It confused us all. We were mixed with Navy and Air Force. He changed things within the first week. He wanted a special brief just for him on early nautical twilight. We thought we were Intel folks completing prosecution packages, what does that have to do with twilight? He went on patrol, but not at the battalions. They hated when he did come. His leadership was toxic and it radiated down to company. Having few females made it very difficult for a lady. Yes and me being the Military Intelligence soldier. He didn't want to know where he should not go. He wanted to know where they were so he could go there. He thought he could win the war under his deployment, which was not our mission. They had just started elections, so we were there for stability operations. He wanted to be the hero. They didn't care for my lack of enthusiasm to be there. This was my first experience dealing with infantry. The problem may have been that I wasn't from the state. It could have been I was an outsider. I did not shine through, because I didn't want to bust out my guns. I am not that type of person. I was there and my focus was to do the job not prove something. I would tell them that this guy died, but working five extra hours on the computer is not going to make the situation better.

Her other experience involved a leader she characterized as tyrannical, but he was more. He obstructed her leadership and, in the end, demonstrated that he had no commitment to the mission—hallmarks of a toxic leader.

He frustrated a lot of people and the senior leadership he reported too. He was very charismatic and was able to sell his ideas, even though he made everybody else mad. It made me look bad since I had to be with him. I was effective with the other CO, because he let me do my job and shine. This guy came along and didn't want to hear me or value me. He didn't value my opinion even though I had been there. When I left, I found out he had gotten out of the position. He had abandoned the mission and they had no OIC. He let the mission fail. I spoke my mind to him and he didn't take that well and told me to shut up or "know your role chief." He made comments about females being in position. He said no battle was won with a woman in charge. He made it difficult for me to be successful. He refused to listen to me. I was still trying to mentor and advise my folks, but it turned more into how to deal with the new CO. It became a sneak-around to get things done without him. It was a huge hamper to be as successful as a team. It was difficult for me to succeed with this tyrannical leadership. It didn't work for anyone. The last half, I just felt unsuccessful, because of the restraints by him. The second commander judged me from day one."

Soldier #1 said that it is "difficult to argue with your boss when toxic leadership is how he does business." It was her experience that it was difficult to get help to deal with a toxic superior.

The EO and IG process have been, by large ineffective in addressing this issue as in both of them personnel are still under the commander's influence. If EO and IG is separated and there is no command influence it will be much more successful. Soldiers accept the "gray" meaning the amount of damage they will allow a toxic leader to impact their career. They will do what is necessary to self-preserve and accept toxicity by the leader so they can get an "adequate evaluation." However, it is always to the toxic leader to write whatever he wants to write as there is no stopping or preventing of a toxic leader to give a bad evaluation, even if it is unjust, fabricated, and negative to destroy the female soldier's career. So it is to the acceptable thrashing that one subjects themselves. Arguing with the toxic leader may render a career-ending evaluation. The evaluation system is a top down system without the leader being held accountable to the soldier for poor or bad leadership. There is no negotiation, at any point of writing the evaluation. Although, there should be quarterly counselings at a minimum, most toxic leaders do not do them or they do but do them in a negative way to hurt the soldier so to hurt or harm the soldier's career. Regulation that the rater cannot be ordered by the senior rater what to write or change the evaluation. Therefore, the rater can

write whatever and the soldier has to take it. By far, protecting the rater and not the soldier is achieved thus, further cultivating the abuse utilized by toxic leaders.

Soldier #10 also discussed the fact that toxic leaders are afforded a great deal of authority when it comes to evaluations. In the hands of a toxic leader the consequences can be devastating. Soldier #10 provided an example of how a toxic leader wields their power.

I was going to get the OER for my infantry commander for my S7 duty. I saw the draft. I just needed the commander to write the comments, then he changed it. He said I needed more time to do my job, but he didn't refer it since he had no justification. I was pissed, he changed the words. He backstabbed me intending to hinder me succeeding in my career.

Soldier #8 felt that evaluation forms need to be designed to allow thoughtful, directed comments about leadership, to call attention to specific areas that need to be addressed.

No one wants to be the one to ruin someone's career. Writing someone is ineffective [and] is harsh on an evaluation. We need people to say "you need to work in these areas." It needs to be done in mentorship and counseling. They need to take the time to do it, especially when people are getting ready to move into leadership. There needs to be an in depth and honest evaluations. We need opinions from other people are vital factors. There needs to be time to counsel and really mentor, not just an annual OER or doing the MSAT 360. It's a good tool, but getting their honest effective opinion, do they trust them, and stuff like that, are vital to finding effective leaders. The up and down and lateral evaluation from the 360 is very valuable, but it's not taken seriously. It can be a power tool to progress, especially for people to lead. People fill in bubbles because they can, but there's no room to adjust your reasons. It's monotonous. They don't say, "He has made comments about sex" or anything like that. It shows more of their character when you can give a reason, even in an anonymous survey like the MSAT 360. You need to have a conversation; it's a good way to gauge a person. They don't need to say he's completely sexist, but to be able to add comments about their character, without having to say, "He makes me completely uncomfortable." I don't really know the best tool or effective alternate on the lateral.

Soldier #1 retained faith in the Army. While she believed that barriers slow change down, eventually the system will embrace the challenges. She hoped that the changes would be undertaken now but she felt, not until senior leaders retire. Soldier #1 characterized being a soldier as a profession that requires sacrifice of each soldier on the battlefield, but that the

battlefield should not be within the system. She felt that barriers constructed within the system as a result of poor attitudes and ineptness of male soldiers require change.

Resistance to change. According to Major General Jeanne Holm (as cited in Kellett-Forsyth, 2003), because the U.S Army has a long history, it has developed traditions and myths unique to the organization. These were shaped by the male-centered culture that for so long was a single-gender organization. It is, therefore, not surprising that opportunities for women have not come easily. The appropriateness of women in arms has been continuously questioned.

Organizational culture. Culture, according to Klann (2003), provides an identity for an organization's members. It "also serves to unite and synchronize members' efforts around a core purpose and vision" (p. 9). Understanding an organization's culture functions as a unifying concept that reinforces the stability and integration of the organization. Soldier #1 recognized the link between cultural change and leadership. This link was another reason that she believed the Army "must be cautious about whom we place into leadership roles." She felt that American society, as a whole, is more egalitarian when it comes to women filing leadership positions. Thus, she thought it was,

important to integrate women in the military and reflect our societal values. If a woman chooses to be in combat arms, then by all means. We have a volunteer force, there should be no restrictions. You want a range of talent.

Soldier #2 agreed. She also believed that American society is egalitarian and that soldiers drawn from this culture bring those attitudes with them. Soldier #8 expected that with full integration the Army culture will change: "This would have to be addressed with leaders, and female leaders would have to learn how to be more of a professional in their MOS than their male counterparts."

Lack of teamwork. Soldier #2 pointed out that “having cohesion is not based on gender. It is based on trust. Knowing that a female and/or male soldier is part of the team and that I can count on their expertise and experience to save one another in the moments where it counts.”

But, Soldier #11’s experience was that a lot of teamwork occurred in gendered-arenas:

A lot of the decision-making was made when the guys were out or smoking. You are left out. You end up being reactive. I was adamant that I was in the barracks with the guys because of this. Decision making was made off line. Probably the time when people are able to talk. A lot of decisions are made during those times. I don’t know if you can rid of those . . . I was the only female out of 100 guys. Increasing the number of women is different. One female out of 100 guys, you are felt left out. You change the dynamics. It’s a sister in a brotherhood. Your reputation was always on the line. It was obvious if you made a mistake. In artillery, other women didn’t pay attention to you. You were more isolated. Externally, there were other contractors that you could talk to outside of the chain. In this case, we were isolated, so you couldn’t find someone outside of chain.

Leadership is done in isolation. Soldier #10 tried to be effective but received no support from her superiors. Soldier #8 recognized the value of teamwork, but her commander short-circuited her efforts when he took charge: “He was the commander and he wanted them to know his face and be the liaison.” Increasingly, she stopped going to meetings and he went instead. That was “until he decided that they weren’t valuable and it became we weren’t represented anymore with people that dealt with our product.” As a result they lost “connection with key partners, which was frustrating. Leaders, who were delivering these products, I thought it was vital to talk to them. We need to know what helps the prosecution.”

The interviews pointed to the frequency with which women soldiers confront issues related to teamwork. For Soldier #9 the question was: “Is change stipulated by human variable as the majority deem, or the excellence of an organization?”

Entrenched attitudes. Several participants expressed concern that there are entrenched attitudes within the military culture that resist changes; the subtext is that it is believed that the changes threaten the military’s core traditions and beliefs. Soldier #1 acknowledged that there

will be resistance to change and that the work that needs to be done to overcome it must “be done in a professional way, such as conduct, competency, integration and really finding the right people for the job. I’m very hopeful.”

Soldier #1 believed that “the biggest resistance will be senior leaders. Having gone through a system that was so male-oriented, they will try to maintain it to the cost of women soldiers and leaders.” She was confident the barrier will eventually come down, but thought it was important to push for

changes now and not wait it out until senior leaders retire. Being a soldier is a profession and renders sacrifice of each soldier in the battle field and not a battlefield within the system with barriers that are constructed by attitude and inaptness of male soldiers to adjust by creating barriers and having toxic leaders.

The problem in waiting, as Soldier #1 expressed it is that:

There are so many older generations leading, people from the 60s to the 80s. They have older philosophy and they are at a different stage of their life. They aren’t going through what we are going through and they can’t connect. It was hard to get them to understand what is missing. They see suicide prevention and sexual harassment. They are good for defining toxic leadership, but not doing anything about it. Those who make it through are tired of it and get out. Those who are participating in it are in the political system and they stay in. When you have someone authentic, even though it’s not in their favor, how do you keep them in the military? Those are the people you want to stay in to move up. Discouraged, I was going to retire my commission.

Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) issues and training.

Army leadership, at all levels, is tasked to create and maintain an environment conducive to maximum productivity and respect for human dignity. The Army’s policy on sexual harassment is that it is “unacceptable conduct and will not be tolerated” (Department of the Army, 2014a, p. 68). Sexual harassment destroys teamwork and negatively affects combat readiness.

Successful mission accomplishment can be achieved only in an environment free of sexual harassment. A number of participants questioned the effectiveness of the Army’s training to prevent sexual harassment.

Soldier#10 explained her fear of being assaulted.

I was afraid. I lost weight. Our dining facility . . . was four to five blocks and you had to walk into the open where the softball court. I worked night shift and I was not going to walk alone in the dark. I had no battle buddy. I would not put myself in those situations. People brought me back food or when I went to breakfast or lunch, I would grab an extra plate for later.

Soldier #1 demanded that such gender inequalities be dealt with effectively. “We shouldn’t shut the door on this stuff. We need to bring it to light and find a solution to the problem. We need to problem solve.” Soldiers #3 and #9 offered one solution to the problem: teaching women self-defense.

Sexual assault is a physical form of sexual harassment, but there are psychological and social forms of harassment as well. For Soldier #10 the lack of trust showed her served as a form of harassment.

They made fun of me, because I would stay in my room. I didn’t show emotion, or do drama like a girl would. I didn’t show any interest in any of them sexually. My roommate was a lieutenant, and she told her commander that she was sleeping with a gun. Someone walked in our room at night and we weren’t allowed to put a lock on it. It was like a bunker, the walls were cement and a window. My husband was more fearful of me being assaulted from a soldier than an IED.

Soldier #7 was placed in a tent with men. It was hard for her. She had no leadership support. She was emotionally drained. Soldier #7 decided to take matters into her own hands.

The next person that touched, I hit them and it worked. You got to protect yourself. What are you going to do? Don’t touch me again. I learned karate and it helped. All women can’t do it, because there were tough guys out there. I maced them. I respect them as a soldier, but I am not going to damage my relationship. It’s hard to be a female. I get hurt and disappointed. I cry and I believe that in the core of a human being, you are to be kind. My body is spiritually for my husband and I serve my country.

Soldier #9’s commander was the center of conflict. It was said that the commander was misrepresenting some soldiers as being unprofessional.

They investigated it and nothing was found, but people still thought he should have been relieved. It’s still an issue . . . Complaints made by females—one was a

captain and the other a specialist. The specialist lost rank and the captain was told to not work with the specialist anymore, which made things harder.

Equal Opportunity and Inspector General support and effectiveness. Army

Regulation 20-1 (Department of the Army, 2010) provides a system for resolving problems for soldiers, DA civilian employees, contract employees, and retirees. Equal Opportunity complaints are processed directly through the chain of command. When the chain of command is unable to address such complaints, a soldier has the right to make a complaint to the Inspector General (IG). The Inspector General system can process EO complaints which include sexual harassment cases. Although the IG process is supposed to allow redress for soldiers, responsiveness and confidence in this system was questioned by a number of respondents. They felt that legitimate complaints were not taken or dealt with seriously. For example Soldier #1 said:

The EO and IG process have been, by and large ineffective in addressing this issue as, in both of them, personnel are still under the commander's influence. If EO and IG is separated and there is no command influence it will be much more successful. Soldiers accept the "gray," meaning the amount of damage they will allow a toxic leader to impact their career. They will do what is necessary to self-preserve and accept toxicity by the leader so they can get an "adequate" evaluation.

Soldier #1 was adamant that the problem needs resolution.

We shouldn't shut the door on this stuff. We need to bring it to light and find a solution to the problem. We need to problem solve. We need to work hand in hand with whoever is in power. I don't want any of my soldiers to be fearful to go into the service because of sexual harassment or assault. But we shouldn't implement some training that you just check off the block. There needs to be a scrutiny on that where it is inspected. All claims should be taken seriously, because it is really important that we change it. The whole attitude. I expect a safe, professional work environment for all soldiers.

Sexual harassment made the issue personal for her. She wondered what decision-makers would do if they had a daughter considering military service.

Would you tell her the problems that have been exposed; where we have had women in combat operations, where they were subjected to sexual assault? The public perception is that I don't want my daughter subjected to that. What would

be your view of women in leadership roles where the public would see it as an option for their daughters?

Soldier #9 felt that EO and the IG are uneven in their effectiveness.

These [EO and IG] are sometimes helpful and work. Sometimes, they work. Sometimes, people don't realize how they come across or they lose touch from their changing environment. Sometimes they don't work. You need to make a decision on how much you are going to tolerate and how much you will fight for what is right.

Ways Male Leaders Undermine Women Leaders' Effectiveness

Furthermore, the participants identified male leaders' behavior that further degrade and undermine women leaders' effectiveness. These included examples of male-dominated culture, breaking down Army values and Warrior Ethos, different rules for garrison versus deployment, feminine appearance, and lack of trust and control.

All participants in the interview phase of this study had a male as their First Line Leader. A recurring issue raised during the interviews was that male counterparts use the Army's male-dominant culture to avoid providing opportunities and career advancement to women. Five main subthemes emerged as the women discussed the ways men undermined their effectiveness. These were: the continuing existence of a male-dominated culture; the breaking down of Army values and Warrior Ethos; a difference in the rules used in garrison as compared to deployment; cultural expectations based on female appearance; and, a general lack of trust, control, and communication.

Male-dominated culture. Soldier #6 suggested that the Army's male-dominated culture has built in mechanisms for slowing down change so that those who follow tradition are rewarded, while those viewed as change agents are not.

It's because of our culture [that] it is harder for female than male. If you have children, yes it's harder. I have none so it's less strenuous. If it's our culture, it's also our Army culture. It is changing quickly. There are senior leaders who are not changing as fast as the culture. That's the tough part. To facilitate change we

start by valuing those who are changing with the culture, by giving them the important job, critical jobs. Reinforcing the fact that you are not always learning and as long as no one is hurt, then it's ok. We are very intolerant of the senior rebels . . . We are not learning as much as we could. There is a risk aversion. We reward success but not learning. When my friend deployed she let go of her kids and I had a hard time doing that. I asked her "How did you do that?"

Breaking down of Army values and Warrior Ethos. Army values and Warrior Ethos are the foundation for soldiers' behavior and action. The professional conduct for the men and women in the U.S. Army is built upon this foundation. When the standards of the Army values and Warrior Ethos are not adhered to there is an erosion of morale and cohesion. Women in the U.S. Army experience a breakdown in the fundamental standards when they are subjected to unfair treatment, subjective favoritism, and unequal access to opportunities. Women in this study spoke about the negative consequences of being in a male-dominated culture. Their experiences of inequity undermined the esprit de corps that is at the heart of military cohesion as well as the women's' sense of effectiveness. Soldier#10 characterized this breakdown of Army values as involving a dehumanizing of soldiers.

The way they look at people now, they respect the rank but not the person. That's not the Army values that I joined. I joined with traditional values and family ties. When you're in the job with somebody, it's not what I expected. The equality is not there. I don't know how that would ever be. There's not a policy you can implement. How do you demand respect from someone? You can't force it. You can't make someone respect another person. There's no rule out there. What would a policy do? It's mannerism. Throughout the entire career and all MOS and rank. Policy and integration would be great, but the implementation would be a problem. You're sending them to a battalion without a guarantee that they will get respect. Making it effective is the hardest part. What the organizations do for women to be successful in dangerous depends on the units you're with. The culture and values are still there amongst most, but it depends on the situation. Culture to integrate women leaders go out the window when you are deployed.

Soldier #12 that today's Army is a volunteer force.

As an enlisted, you choose. Officers, it's not a true statement. You don't get a choice. Officers must be a closer look to be a volunteer force. You will set up females for failure if this is not initiated properly. There will be lots of challenges.

It will be interesting to see how unit cohesion is affected and how men and women react to environment and competition is very different. There a change in culture between in dangerous content and garrison because it was a new environment. There's more swagger when you're in a dangerous environment. Not showing off, but "I'm here and I can handle it." People will always find something to grip or complain about.

Different rules in garrison and deployment. Soldier#12 acknowledged that "There are different rules in for each situation—one rule during deployment, another back home. It's a challenge to transition back and forth. That's the training part of going from high stress to low." But, as Soldier #3 referenced, sometimes the difference has nothing to do with the situation and everything to do with bias.

I actually had a professor tell me one time because I was talking about ranger school being open up to women or, you know, I would like to try that, or whatever, and he said, "You know what? Sometimes you just need to let the boys be the boys." And okay, I got it, you know. And, I think there's a lot of, there's a lot of people in the Army that have gone through dangerous situations without ranger training, without, you know, mountain warfare, heavy urban warfare or anything like that.

Soldier #7 provided another example of gender bias; this one involved her company commander.

I didn't know until I got there that the company commander didn't like females. They mentioned it to me. After the third time I was moved. I was moved from battle captain because I slouched in the chair. Then as an S2, the commander was not interested to hear what I had to say. The major above me supported me, who was also a 2. All of a sudden I got orders to go to battalion. I found out two days before I got it. The one friend I had—he was moved to train the Iraqis after a month of us being deployed. I had made it clear that we were friends and that he was my support and they moved him.

Soldier #9 had a different take on why there is uneven application of rules. "It comes down to character compatibility rather than gender. Why didn't you respect that one lady?"

Feminine appearance. Soldier #1 noted that the military standard for women is to dress in uniform and to wear minimal make up, jewelry, and hair styling. The women in this study identified the application of stereotypic bias when it came to the assessment of women's physical

appearance. For some, it was assumed by male leaders that the more physically attractive a soldier, the more disruptive she would be to the work environment. As a result some female soldiers were marginalized. Others believed that those soldiers perceived as attractive gained favor.

Soldier #1 believed that pretty soldiers had an advantage. "If you're ugly, you got yucky jobs. If you're pretty you got treated more decently. Lucky for me, I got treated well because of appearance." Soldier #1 stated that appearance

played a significant factor in how people treated you. It goes back to the original question on your appearance, how did that help or detract you? It was positive for me, but not for everyone. In the absence of wife, girlfriend, fiancé, you get excited when you see someone who looks like a lady from the male perspective.

Soldier #8 pointed to the stereotypic challenges that come with being attractive.

The identity stuff, as a female, attractive and young, you have a very hard time. We're viewed very differently. Being young, female, and attractive has its own issues. Some people treat you differently. You have to own your identity wherever you go and prove yourself. People think you do questionable things to get where you want too. You have to show your worth and intelligence, since it's questioned more. It makes it difficult. Your level of seriousness is questioned.

Soldier #5 pointed to the problems that come with not being perceived as attractive. "I was always in trouble because I was a female and not nice looking."

As Soldier #8 pointed out it is a challenge for a woman to present herself in a way that will allow her to be judged on her merits on not simply her looks.

You need to be in shape, speak eloquently, your hair needs to be perfect, dress nice, but not slutty or look unattractive. There are all kinds of weird factors of whether or not a female is presenting herself correctly in order to allow her true strength shine and not have there be factors to judge them preemptively.

Soldier #9 recognized that initially she has fallen into the trap of evaluating another by looks, but was able to shift to evaluating knowledge before formulating a final opinion. Upon meeting a female soldier for the first time, Soldier #9 found the other,

sloppy and fat. Her uniform was tight and not impressive. I thought maybe someone is better inside, but when I talked to her, there was nothing there. She didn't understand tactics, signals and basic Army. She was not to standard.

Lack of trust, control, and communication. Soldier #1 identified issues of gender that led to issues of trust. She provided several examples. She felt that the largest resistance to acceptance of female soldiers came from senior leaders. She felt that they will try to maintain the status quo which comes at a cost to women soldiers and leaders. "This is encompassing of exclusion, not giving the chance to do the job from the beginning or given the position without enabling to do the job but marginalizing or allowing for mundane jobs to be done." Soldier #1 gave a specific example of this.

The commander was cautious about the women and it was openly noted that "We don't want any of our women to get captured or hurt." It was more of a protective mechanism. We didn't have anyone captured or hurt and yet they were afraid of it, so they put the restrictions because of this fear. It would have been hard for them to explain why a woman was captured. The male counterpart got more freedom to move around and had more encounters. Many received honors and were decorated. We had a rotation, so everyone got to do their job when they had something going on, but with me it was "close but not far enough." The quality of work could only increase when you have boots on ground. I had pictures and reports. [I] had to rely on that. I was never there to see and be in the engagement and take the pictures to fully take it all in. Although I appreciated them being protective, I am a soldier and wanted to do my job. I didn't think I was allowed to do my job to the full capacity.

Soldier #1 questioned the wisdom of these limitations particularly when it came to her effectiveness. "The skill set is the same for male and female when you go through training, certs and qualifications. Yet, when it comes down to having equal background, you can't do it because you're a female."

Soldier #1 recognized the important link between trust and communication.

If you have that trust and communication, the whole team dimension changes. They trust you to make decisions that is right for the mission and them. It was ok to make mistakes and to learn from it; it was equally ok for them to speak up when any of the team members wanted to give their insight to me or the team.

Soldier #5 spoke about how communication can be used to stifle situations—to limit transparency and shut others out of the discourse.

If you watch communication patterns, who is making the decision and if people are being transparent: does everyone get awarded and promoted equally at different times? Are people happy at work? They have plans or bring pictures from work. If people at their desk [are] just waiting to move, then there's no bite into the system, then that's toxic. You will learn to recognize it. You will have intuition and I can feel in the organization nobody could breathe; because they are afraid to make a decision or make a mistake. People are out a lot, complaints, or don't want to talk about it; that's toxic. There's a lot of secrecy or issues. It is really hard for a competent woman leader to come in and do the job and she's deprived of doing her duties. Maybe someone already has the perception of whether they're part or not.

It was Soldier #11's experience was that it was in dangerous contexts, leadership needed to be adaptable. She found that gender dictated a need for stylistic differences in communication.

In general, men and women communicate and react differently in uncertainty. Management style must be tweaked. I was in an all-male and in a mixed environment, and I took the same approach and it didn't work. Women react differently to completion. There needs to be a change in management style, not the job. The approach to communication and solutions need to be different. The job doesn't change; the management style needs to.

Soldiers #12 and #10 also recognized differences in style between men and women.

Soldier #12 offered as an example the difference between herself and her partner.

Our communication styles were different. He would throw stuff and punch walls; I'm more systematic. What is the procedure process or did an individual drop the ball? He was reactive. Because there was no process and personnel in the beginning and no established communication on how to do things, it broke down the climate. When you are faced with uncertainty, you have to take it and do something. The stress level was high and people react to it differently. You have to figure out how you would react. I don't really care if you like me, I just want the system to work well. It became an issue because of communication. He wouldn't even look at our plans, because he wanted to know why I didn't like him . . . We had arguments because he was emotional and I was systematic.

Soldier #10 compared the communication styles of two of her commanders.

I ended up assigned to a commander that didn't want to listen to me, even though he heard me. He would shoot first and ask questions later kind of mentality. I associated infantry with men who only wanted action. It wasn't until a new

commander, who was a Jag guy, and he turned the table. He reinstated what the military was about. He supported me and allowed me to do my job. He listened to me. “I like to respect people, cut the drama and get the job done.”

Panel Discussion Themes

The three main themes that emerged from the panel that was convened for this study, were culture, training and leadership. The panel considered how the Army’s male-dominant culture affected female soldiers and agreed there was a need for change. They addressed the fact that male leaders continue to exclude women leaders and, thus, impede them from succeeding within or advancing to senior leadership. Inclusive practices appear to be more common at lower levels and need to be extended to all ranks and positions. The panel recognized that women need to be better armed with the skills and support to operate more effectively (e.g., self-defense against sexual assault and preparedness for combat, etc.) and be considered capable in all realms in their profession. These changes, they felt, are necessary to achieve equality for all soldiers and to build an authentic soldierhood. Soldierhood is based on women and men soldiers who have a sound foundation of light infantry skills and Military Occupation Specialty, as part of a team, to be the most effective profession of arms. Additionally, the panel expressed that there is a need within the military organization to be more aware of toxic leadership and proactive in intervention, punishment, and whistle-blowing without retribution.

The panel acknowledged that the changes they discussed would take time. The successful change of the Army culture demands an aggressive pursuit of the problems and the implementation of policies that will put leaders in positions of authority who are committed to and capable of catalyzing and enforcing the change.

Culture. Any organization is a culture with rules—written and unwritten. These exist to identify acceptable behavior and the way things should be done. Such rules represent an organization’s cultural value system. During the panel discussion, issues related to the U.S.

Army's culture were explored. Panelist #1, for example, spoke about her surprise that a negative culture of inequity existed in the Army Reserve:

I found it interesting that there are several instances of biasness and prejudice and issues relative to equality. I have observed this solely in active duty culture. With my experience, with the reserved culture, I haven't seen as many extremes.

The panel talked about ways to mitigate this issue. The impact of cultural inclusion and acceptance became vividly clear when the combat arena was discussed. Panelist #2 said:

In terms of being trained I think there are some cultures, especially in the combat arena, where there are long standing norms and morals and beliefs and policies where it will take a long time for women, even if they are as good as any man. In the primary combat arms arena, that's where we need to work on acceptance. It's not going to be an instance any time soon

Panelist #2 felt that mitigation should begin early on in training. It was her experience that gendered inequity,

started in the cadences and what women were referred too. They began to objectify them. They don't realize that they would someday be your life support. They could be on the halo gun ship. Rather than objectifying them as something sexual, I think that's where it begins. If you drill it in their heads, that they are not there for sexual things, for you to ogle, that they are there to support you and could save your life. They are a professional just like you just in a different role. You got to get them started early.

Panelist #1 maintained a slightly more positive position on the matter. She believed that skills were the currency by which individuals are valued.

If you have the skills and the competencies they will respect you. In general I agree with panel member #2, that the cultural process in the pure combat arms. That should not suggest that they cannot respect an individual for the role they are trained to play to support a mission.

However, Panelist #1 agreed with Panelist #2 that training to rectify or prevent inequities should be initiated early in the training. "I agree. The message is what you said about starting them early. We have to try to make it cultural and gender pure. The comment is spot on and start early."

Panelist #3, however, recognized the complexity involved in trying to change an organization. Early training, therefore, was only one aspect of the solution. Panelist #3 offered this assessment of the situation:

It's more complicated than that. We have to redefine the role of combat arms and infantry. We have to define what they are there to do. We are learning that women can't do some of the things that men can. Mass integration is not necessarily what it is, it is about rethinking what it is they are doing there. Integration would occur naturally, when their roles and responsibility when they are OES or OEF.

While Panelist #3 spoke about the cultural need for new definition, Panelist #2 raised a basic issue about gender. Women and men look different in uniform. Is there a way to identify soldiers simply as soldiers? Panelist #2 offered this example from experience:

I have served on selection boards and you can't get away from looking at those DA [Department of the Army] photos. You're always going to look at how a soldier looks in a uniform. You don't want a leader who looks good on paper, and then comes to your unit 250 lbs. overweight. The writer may not be as honest and not all units maintain standards.

Panelist #3 didn't know how to deal with this problem and asked: "How do you deal with perception, that I didn't get the job because I'm a female or something in my character? How do you respond?" The panel member was pragmatic in the observation that,

some people are born with physical and mental abilities to be good soldiers. There are people that [have] their hearts and minds in the right place, but they may not have what it takes. You need a special skill set.

However, Panelist #3 recognized that women can't gain the necessary skill sets if they are overlooked based solely on their gender.

If you're placed to a unit for a specific line of para and then you arrive and as soon as they see you they move you, it's a good indicator. It happened to two. Another was moved multiple times because the group didn't know how to work with women. They had no practice to work with them. There were situations in dangerous context with limited or no women so they have limited skill set. That creates a void of acceptance. The training should be taught in the beginning. They should be integrated as you mentioned from the beginning on, but, in the meantime, you have those scenarios that are legitimate. It will come out if that person has multiple issues in commands. If it's the same occurrence, then it's not

the person. The thing is, it's not just one or two participants saying that; it was all across the board and it's alarming to see.

Panelist #2 agreed that the problem was greater than a few people and characterized it as a systematic problem. "You had twelve different interviews and it was all the same." This panelist added a personal observation to show that the interviewee's experience, indeed, was representative.

When I started in basic training—artillery—they put a watermelon down range and they shot that with an M16. "Imagine boys, you are in a fox hole and that is a female with her head exploding." Can you imagine seeing a female battle buddy in the fox hole with you, after you saw that? That's early on. Maybe our leaders are scared to the shift in focus to protecting that female soldier, which they shouldn't be. In units I've served in, but in other units, the males are going to be distracted, because they are busy trying to protect the females. We're seen as protectors and that's how we are raised.

Panelist #1 concurred and recognized that change for an organization as large as the Army was going to take time.

I agree with all. There's a reality in organization. Think about groups of people, who congregate. There's a reason they come into those groups. You find opportunities. Like me, you just make the best of it. The larger they are the slower they take to change. We are an ocean liner.

Again, Panelist #1 was positive about the Army's ability to adapt. "Parts of the Army just has to catch up. I have worked [with] different women and groups and some people had to be taught, but we're there." Panelist #3 also was convinced it would happen. "We need to just roll it into the training and how we recruit. There's not an end point, through cultural and world events, it will always move."

Panelist #1 suggested that the Army is likely to have continuing issues, at least initially upon recruiting, because civilian values don't always align with those of the military.

We're talking about military norm and social concerns. In many respects, the Army is like an equalizer. I have lived all over the country and I have had the opportunity to blend in different cultures. The level of acceptance versus Army context, they are culturally hard. There is a lot of prejudice in the East and Mid

Atlantic. It depends where you come from in the country and it is what you bring in. It is a reflection of where it comes from. All the norms we laugh about, if people accept that those are great strengths, it can really come together.

Panelist #3 believed in the Army values and that these values tilted more towards equality than those in the civilian population.

I thought that the Army had a lot acceptance and make the most of people's talents. I don't see that on the outside, like things around the country. The Army has a responsibility to do it right so when you come out, you incorporate it in the society to live in. I don't want the Army to give up. We are getting there, and it needs to be done. I turned out better for it.

Panelist #2 agreed that the Army values, specifically the OER, directed soldiers to "treat people and subordinates equally."

Panelist #4's comments demonstrated that the Army, even in advance of change efforts, has leaders who practice equitable leadership. These individuals (e.g., minorities, women, gays) serve as models for equitable leadership. This panel member described their principles of leadership:

I thought it very important to develop subordinates. It was vital that they knew what their responsibilities were and what was needed to accomplish the mission. It was also necessary to ensure that they had the tools and resources necessary to perform their requirements. I think it is also important to develop a relationship and camaraderie with your subordinates . . . [it] helps to foster a sense of trust and cooperation and allows the subordinates to gain an appreciation for you as a leader and a desire to serve you as a leader, as well.

Training. A second theme that emerged during the panel discussion was training. The panelists' felt that training was key to effective leadership and the development of soldiers. Training, they said, should address stress management (i.e., coping skills). They believed that this is an issue throughout the Army and of particular importance for leaders in dangerous contexts. As Panelist #1 pointed out, Army reservists come from many vocational and professional backgrounds. These civilian jobs do not offer sufficient training to manage the stresses encountered by soldiers. Panelist #2 agreed and noted that emotional responses, not

tolerated in civilian organizations, may be a valuable mechanism for dealing with stress. Panelist #2 further suggested that in the civilian world there are organizations,

where emotional responses are not well tolerated. They're not seen as a strength, but it may be a coping mechanism. It's something we need to address. In an organization, a personal outburst, it is not treated as a strength. It is a coping mechanism outside of the business place.

In Panelist #3's experience, men and women handle stress in different ways. This panelist viewed differentiation as an asset. For example, "If you had an infantry man planning something, he's not going to care anything about the local population. If you had a female transportation officer, it may very well be foremost in her mind." Panelist #2 disagreed:

If you were a planner, if you were planning an operation, and you are not empathetic to the people living in the area, then you are going to take a different approach and send someone who has a lot of empathy. It doesn't mean it has to be negative response to a crisis.

Panelist #1 felt that the way soldiers handle stress represents their experience and level of training rather than gender.

There is a level of maturity relative to the expression of empathy or positive or negative emotion regardless in work place or in a uniform work place. It was more of a place setting. The thing that I observed in all those settings; when I saw opportunity to mentor both men and women on how to express their emotions to the situation at hand, I believe that was my responsibility as well as my subordinate leaders. The real challenge is to find, in junior leaders, that younger men and women that can take people to mentor them in a positive way of their emotion. That's an aspect of what we do as reservists. One week we're guardsmen, one weekend a month, and then we're in a deployed setting. Perhaps we all need a bit more help with that.

Panelist #3 was in agreement that maturity was a key issue. "Identifying and addressing the various maturity levels, mannerism, and etiquette, of individual's male and female, professionalism can be an enabler with the proper training so that the soldier, unit and mission can succeed." Panelist #1 also had issues related to the maturity level of soldiers.

An observation I've had, I found that a number of my younger enlisted are less and less mature as we went on . . . For these enlisted, this is part of the indoc.

Given their home life, economics and backgrounds and I sat down with Foreign Disclosure Officers [FDO] and we talked about parenting skills as part of what they needed to do to bring these young women and men through the ranks. I felt like we were having to reinforce what parents and grandparents should have taught them. More of that is happening from what I have seen. FDOs are trying to take care more of their enlisted.

Panelist #3 referenced a more fundamental issue when evaluating younger soldiers. “You see millennia’s see things a lot different than we did. Gender integration and getting them to become leaders is something to consider with that. It’s not something we can just achieve, it’s always evolving.”

Panelist #1 also recognized the generational issue and how it affects training.

It’s not something that we can nail down that will work for this generation and will work for the next generation. It will be a moving target. Just like our technology, how they process things has changed. How we fix it today, it won’t work for the next generation. They are more involved now.

Panelist #2 wondered why it is gender rather than maturity that is usually discussed as the issue: “Why do we label it as ‘female perspective’? Is that the lack of labeling creativity or is it to reinforce that there is a male and a female thinking?”

Panelist #3 suggested that it has been made an issue because of an attitude that,

we need to protect them and they can’t do their jobs. We do it ourselves. Part of it is cultural upbringing and bias. To be perfectly honest, I think I am forward thinking. In my last deployment, I had a female E5, and she was invited to go out on a mission with special guys to translate. She was supposed to separate the women in the room and try to get them to talk. When they first came to me about the idea, I was very hesitant to let them go but had they asked for the male, I would have patted him on the back and said “Go do great things.” I let her go, and she did a great service. I had to get past it myself. I had to tell one of my O5s [colonels], who was very protective, and he came to me and said that it was not a good idea. I had to take that into consideration but I had to let her go, because it was her job and what she was good at. It is something to look at and address. It’s something we need to get past in the military. It seems in the civilian side we have already.

Panelist #1 offered that it can be beneficial to assign some training to gender. As an example the panelist said:

I had the pleasure of serving with the General officer that had me on staff for female gut check. He said he could not in his own mind or other male subordinates get a female perspective in a Joint Task Force (JTF) environment, so I thought that was interesting . . . It was born about a concern that we are seeing now in the service as SHARP training or sexual harassment and all of that. He had a continued concern and need. I appreciated his thinking and for selecting me.

Panelist #2, however, didn't think that the Army was capable of providing certain kinds of gender-specific training.

I don't know there's a sexual assault training that you can actually feel and know how to react. There's got to be some training to see it first hand and how to feel to be able to respond in that moment of shock.

Panelist #1 observed that simply talking about certain issues was insufficient to be considered training. "Until you have to go through it, talking about it is not enough. [For example], you can't learn how to handle a weapon, unless you've handled one or have fired one." Panelist #3 thought a valuable training program for female soldiers was lane training. "The lane training will be the actual hands on part. You would come out with a strong capable female, who can be able to deal with it in advance or understand herself. There are side benefits."

Panelists felt that training should challenge soldiers emotionally and physically in order to promote growth. Panelist #3 lamented that the Army provides physical training to make soldiers strong, "but we don't give them the competency that they can rely on themselves without having to go through the commander. Nobody comes out fixed, they just move on."

Leadership. The statements of the dozen interviewees suggested that the Army leadership has been uneven in its support of women soldiers and the changes needed to correct problems. Panelist #2 witnessed a breakdown in leadership. As an example of inequity based on gender this panel member gave the following example.

There were some [women who were] held back and not allowed to back out in the wire. It almost strikes me as a commander's cowardess. How do you look at a trained soldier in the face and say, "I'm not going to let you do your job because of genitalia or your reproductive organs?" That is fear and unacceptable. Fifty

percent of my gunners were female and they were great, so for me that's unfathomable. How do you look at a soldier and tell them they can't do their job? How do you look at the male soldier's parents and tell them you sent him out [but] he wasn't the right person. But you sent him because you didn't want to send someone else and he gets killed. How do you look at them and tell them: "I let your son go out in someone else's place?" I just don't understand that.

Panelist #1 noted that similar situations were experienced by the women who participated in this study. "People were keeping women held back in the FOB [Forward operating base], because of fear of what could happen with the individual." Every member of the panel agreed. "I can't say whether that's right, wrong or otherwise, having been in situations like that myself."

Whether it is due to real or false fears about the capabilities of different genders in combat situations or the purposeful intention of a male-dominant culture, the participants felt the system has promoted particular individuals who have actively enforced gender inequality.

Panelist #2, rhetorically asked how any superior could look at a trained soldier and imply "I'm not going to let you do your job because of genitalia or your reproductive organs." Panelist #1 said that there is a promise at the beginning of training that everyone regardless of their abilities will receive the same level of training. Inherent in this promise is that the Army promotes equity and, therefore, there is an obligation to include culture to gender—and ethnic—awareness in the training. Panelist #1 said such training should start with the commander and with acceptable norms and behavior.

First line leaders would enforce those rules, when they are outside of those guidance. In the military, it feels like our First line leaders are more and more afraid to enforce those rules and do the counseling and to take the steps to correct things because they want to be friends.

Sometimes, as Panelist #1 noted, young female soldiers think they can handle a situation by playing games—games that may have worked in civilian life. But, as the panelist observed this can place the soldier in trouble and establish a negative precedent for a unit. It takes a strong leader to take hold of the situation and to ensure that the climate is consistent with Army values:

They can become the victim and I've counseled them. I had to turn to their NCO and say that she is not responsible and it was tough. You have a young woman playing you . . . That was an easier scenario than the one who was being coy and disingenuous. That's where a good female leader, needs to get them by the head and say, "Look straighten your ass out. It doesn't look good". They need to overcome it first to be an effective leader. In this situation to take someone and to have a discussion about their behavior, some people just let it pass. When you let things pass, you send a powerful message to subordinates. That is: "That behavior is tolerated". [In such cases] you are setting a new standard of any negative behavior for the command. The courage of the Army values in each leader has to be exemplified and practiced and refined, even if it's uncomfortable.

Panelist #1 said that all kinds of issues dictate that leadership be consistent and willing to step in to make corrections. The panelist contended that these are critical elements in determining who is qualified to assume a leadership role.

Even going back to the individual's fear, has to have a level of maturity that this is not tolerated. Leadership has to send a message that it is clearly understood what our values are. There's a place where it happens the first time, whether as a soldier or in a leadership role. [So] we need to pick leaders more selectively, to see if they have the competency to be a leader.

Panelist #1 further explained:

A lot of times things in the Army don't get fixed until it's really broken, making sure what we are discussing that it doesn't happen. That's why there's an emphasis on this. We need to make it a priority. As a commander, you were clear that needs to be reinforced repeatedly. I want them to whine and know what you will say.

Panelist #2 questioned whether the Army evaluates leadership skills in a meaningful way.

This panelist suggested that successfully leading a mission and successful leadership is not necessarily equivalent, particularly in non-combat situations.

You have successful people in combat and they get elevated, whether or not they have people skills. Just because you can order people in the battlefield, it doesn't necessarily translate to garrison life. How do you look at people who lead? You did great in combat but you're a toxic leader. We keep lots of those people only because they were successful.

Panelist #1 concurred with the question observing that “The current Army doesn’t relieve commands, unlike in WWII. They were often relieved of command if they were toxic. Now, we have a ‘you can stay no matter what when you attain a certain rank’ [attitude].”

The panel discussed the current state of evaluation of superior officers. Panelist #2 referred to the Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback 360 (MSAF 360) and said, “It’s great for lower staff, who’s going to go hard on the eval of their commander, when there’s only a small amount getting polled. It’s a sham. That’s the only way they can comment on leadership.” The panelist went on to say, “The climate survey gotta be taken seriously from the above to evaluate them not just as a leader, but look at the whole person. If they are driving people out of the unit, then there’s something wrong with them.”

In reference to the participants in this study, Panelist #2 asked how soldiers can work with the uncertainty and unfairness that currently exists in the system. The participants appeared to experience a good deal of resistance from senior leaders and were under toxic leadership.

There’s only so much complaints can do. Juniors will not be able to fix the problem. Reserves, your leadership, is coming across states. In the National Guard, we’re in the same state so we’ve grown up together. It is a known quantity club. You are willing to give them a pass, since you’ve known them . . . It needs to be the leader above them or two up. Their XO’s were afraid of them, but he was afraid to do anything. If you’re not willing to do it, you have created problems to all beneath him.

Panelist #1 agreed and said that in an ideal setting there would be leaders that could make this happen, otherwise a soldier may feel isolated and threatened.

Panelist #2 spoke about a personal experience with toxic leadership. The first toxic leader the panelist encountered was a brigade commander. Despite his negative leadership he has since been promoted to a two-star general; the panelist questioned why a toxic leader would get promoted and if it was due to a pool of candidates that was too small or an ineffective selection process. “The seniors see this and they don’t know that the house is trashed or the Emperor has

no clothes, then they'll think everything is fine in the unit. There's a feedback loop missing to go beyond the leader.”

Panelist #3 responded to the question by saying that those who promote pick “people they like, people like them. They pick people who fit the same scenario types. The high commanders, pick those that are like them and overlook other qualities. They get a free pass—toxic leaders.” The panelist recognized that “It's a good old boy's club and it continues even if they are toxic.” Panelist #3 said that the result was that effective leaders, who can transform things for the better, are being passed over for promotion. How then does the Army increase diversity? The panelist wondered if the process could be made generic. “Not he or she. No first names. Maybe we'll get the best we deserve.”

Summary

The findings can be separated into three main groupings that are relevant to the central question of this study: how do individual, social and organizational factors impact women's leadership in dangerous contexts? The interviewees discussed individual factors that are required to aid women leaders to be successful in dangerous contexts, a climate that changes rapidly and tests leaders constantly. They believed that leaders in dangerous contexts must be prepared to conduct self-assessment and to understand and counter the challenges of their experiences. They also discussed how physical fitness provides the baseline for the challenges soldiers will endure in the dangerous context. Soldiers need to be at an optimum level of fitness to reduce the chances of injuries; furthermore, they need to get adequate nutrition and sleep in order to function optimally. In addition, mental strength carries a soldier through the toughest time while in dangerous contexts. Adequate training is required to reach these levels of physical and mental fitness. Training also is needed to help soldiers confront fears, build resilience, and embrace the

most daunting of situations. Spirituality can give a soldier the inner strength to push through. It is a contributing factor that cultivates and sustains the well-being of soldiers. Self-efficacy was another factor offered. It enables a leader to have confidence to accept that there is not always one way to do things and to be effective in dangerous contexts. Selfless service was the state of mind that interviewees used to describe today's volunteer Army force. It is an individual factor that links soldier's performance and position.

Interviewees suggested that the social factors needed to be effective in dangerous contexts included social networks. Social networks are critical for a soldier's well-being. These networks reduce stress and strengthen relationships. The women leaders said that relationships are paramount for soldiers to be successful. Relationships are the glue between the organization and people.

Social factors affect such things as an individual's stress level, strength, and quality of their relationships. Social support can come from within the service or from outside. The home unit is a critical part of the network that provides direct support to the soldier. If the home unit neglects its responsibilities and duties, a soldier's optimal performance and well-being may be undermined and chances for abuse are increased.

Mentorship is another important social factor which provides support and guidance about career goals and progress throughout the career. Mentors can also help soldiers de-stress in challenging situations and offer assistance in dealing with challenging or toxic leaders. Mentors also protect their mentees from toxic leaders by communicating within the chain of command. A soldier's connection with others provides a greater sense of connection with the world. Limited opportunities for connecting to the home network can be debilitating, sometimes with dire

consequences. Therefore, time to take care of personal needs and build relationships with colleagues is essential for a soldier's well-being and career.

Interviewees described a variety of cultural and social factors that undermined their effectiveness. These took the form of gender, ethnicity, race, sexual preferences, and age biases. The interviewees also shared their views on military organizational systems, culture, and leadership. The consensus was that poor leadership or a lack of leadership impacts the Army by either intentionally or unintentionally creating barriers that render women leaders ineffective. Issues of gender, ethnicity, race, sexual preference, and age were explored. Every interviewee was able to describe at least one experience where a male leader or subordinate used negative stereotypes when referring to female leaders. These stereotypes typically referred to appearance or personality. Most observed a resistance to change and felt that this attitude threatens the military's core traditions and beliefs. Other factors viewed as obstructing women leaders' effectiveness were a lack of teamwork, cohesion, and unity of purpose. The organization is a framework that provides a bridge between work and people and is essential for effective functioning in dangerous situations. If the link between leaders and those they lead is severed the consequences can be devastating for soldiers and organization. The incidences of toxic leadership reported by 75% of the interviewees who experienced short circuits and disconnection, ultimately undermined the women leaders' ability to be effective.

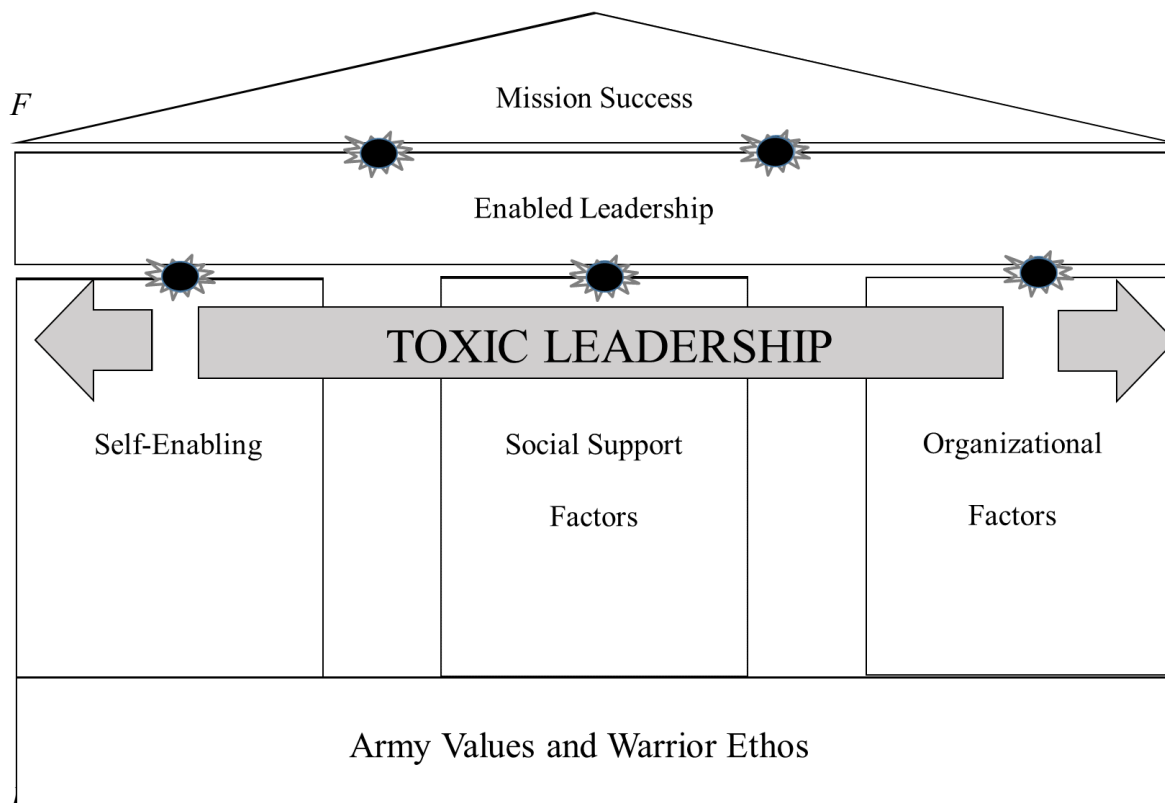


Figure 4.3. Wrecking ball of toxic leadership.

The organization, as a whole, is compromised when it is infused with toxic leadership. As depicted in Figure 4.3, this toxicity acts as a wrecking ball undermining leadership as well as impeding positive connections between soldiers, their social support network, and organizational networks. This also negatively impacts mission success. Thus, the health of an organization and its leaders is a delicate balance. Leaders can promote strong relationships by modeling positive social relationships with other leaders and soldiers. They can demonstrate the positive consequences of such relationships, provide interventions, and arrange mentorships. The women in this study who were empowered by their leaders excelled. They wanted more opportunities for development and achievement and barriers removed. Keys for success were incorporated into better communication, integration, mentoring, and professional development. Factors that rendered the women ineffective were associated with gender, ethnicity, race, sexual preference,

and age biases. These factors, in addition to being barriers to effective leadership, undermined trust, control, teamwork, cohesion, and unity of purpose. Most of the women discussed resistance to change and how it subverted the Army's core traditions and beliefs.

During the panel discussion, which reviewed the findings of the interview phase, three themes emerged: culture, training and leadership. The panel found that inclusive practices needed to be encouraged at all ranks. The panel also saw a need for the Army organization to be more aware of toxic leadership and to be proactive in intervention, accountability and punishment. The panel acknowledged that these changes would take time and that successful implementation would require leader commitment to catalyze and enforce change. The panel further recommended that women leaders be better armed with comprehensive training skills and the support needed to operate more effectively. The panel addressed the fact that male leaders continue to exclude women leaders especially at the senior levels.

Chapter V: Discussion

In 1982 Jeanne M. Holm, the first woman to become a brigadier general in the U.S. Air Force, wrote that the military would be best served by selecting the most qualified personnel with talents and aptitudes that match the job. This practice demands a selection process “without artificial, unrelated constraints” (Holm, 1982, p. 192). Gender, as a basis for selection, is an artificial constraint. Holm’s observation has as much merit today as it did in 1982. Our country’s engagements throughout the world during the twenty-first century serve to illustrate how women soldiers contribute to success. When I deployed in 2008 I saw first-hand, the excellent contributions made by women leaders; but I also saw the need for change. There is still the need for the integration of women into all occupations within the Army. Integration is essential if our military is to remain a competitive and formidable force around the world. The value of diversity has been our strength as a nation and as a military force. Therefore, it is important to have leaders who are able to identify and eliminate artificial barriers in order to build an organization that is inclusive.

Given what I have learned from the interviews about the importance of the individual, social and organizational factors that impact women’s leadership in dangerous contexts, and from my own experience, and the relevant literature, I have separated this discussion into sections based on these factors.

Under the theme of factors that enable women’s leadership in dangerous contexts, three major subthemes emerged during the coding. They form distinct pillars that are the foundation for effective leadership and mission success: self-enabling factors, social support networks, and strong relationships and organizational factors. The self-enabling factors were consistent with the original literature-based model of physical, mental, spiritual, selfless service, self-efficacy and

identity. One additional self-enabling factor that emerged from the interviews was self-assessment.

The need to have good social networks and strong personal relationships—the second pillar—discussed by the participants, validates the importance of social networks and strong relations in the literature review discussed in this study. Social networks and strong relationships are important and interconnected, yielding formal and informal support to soldiers and leaders.

The Organizational Factors Model, based on the literature review, was also discussed by participants where they reflected on practices and approaches consistent with the model and its seven sub topics. The interviews revealed additional factors that rendered women leaders ineffective.. They identified a number of causes that directly degrade effectiveness, as it arises within the individual, social and organizational models. These included behaviors still tolerated in today's military in direct contradiction to Army regulations, policies, doctrines, and values. Behaviors were cited in interviews such as labeling, stereotyping, segregation, toxic leadership, sexual harassment, and resistance to implementing EO policy and adherence to meritocracy.

Furthermore, the participants identified male leaders' behavior that further degrades and undermines women leader's effectiveness. These included examples of male-dominant culture breaking down Army values and Warrior Ethos; different rules for garrison versus deployment; feminine appearance; and lack of trust and control.

These behaviors deprived all the participants of the ability to effectively employ sound leadership models and forced them to operate in less than an optimal way within the unit and organizations while deployed and operating in dangerous content.

The following discussion explores the implications of the study's findings in terms of the three thematic pillars outlined above: individual, social and organizational factors of

effectiveness, and how these are affected by different factors, as seen by interviewees and the panel. These pillars are first discussed in terms of what the interviewees discussed, followed by a separate consideration of the panel's perspectives.

Individual Factors That Impact Women Leaders in Dangerous Contexts

During combat, dangerous situations can evolve rapidly. These dangerous contexts test leaders. Leaders must be able to solve problems and rise to the challenges of their mission to be successful. Therefore, it is imperative that military leaders become practiced in the art of this type of leadership before dangerous situations are encountered. To accomplish this, soldiers and their combat leaders must be trained adequately prior to such engagements. A well prepared force is critical to the survival of soldiers and accomplishment of the mission.

The scholarly, military and doctrine literature provides seven individual factors that soldiers must be properly prepared for in service. These are: physical, mental, spiritual, self-efficacy, selfless service, and strong sense of identity. The Army now recognizes these individual factors as part of their doctrine and provides guidance within its regulation AR 350-53, "Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness Support." (Department of the Army, 2014a), The Army focuses on increasing individual resilience and performance skills of all active duty soldiers. However, not all soldiers receive rigorous, consistent and comprehensive training; this is especially true in the U.S. Army Reserve. Even if fully implemented, this training does not address all the gender bias issues expressed by the participants.

The interviewees and panelists were in agreement that these individual factors were a requirement for the success of women leaders in dangerous contexts with one notable exception: two of the interviewees felt that a spiritual factor was not imperative. Further, the participants in

this study identified one additional factor, self-assessment. All recognized that self-assessment is a critical factor to the success of any Soldier in dangerous contexts.

Self-assessment. Self-assessment is necessary for personal development. It is a prerequisite for understanding and continuously challenging oneself to learn and grow. Self-assessment can be accomplished to varying degrees, from minor to full spectrum. Some are exercises in reflective self-assessment while others may result in rigorous transformation. Because individual self-assessment is not a widespread tenet of Army training, the knowledge on how to conduct assessments and plan and institute useful changes is dependent on each soldier. Individuals who are able to self-assess are more successful in the improvement of their well-being and career. This idea was expressed by Soldier #2: “You have to be able to embrace criticism. A lot of people don’t, but that’s the only way you grow.”

Self-assessment is also important on the battlefield. The Army recognizes this in part by conducting After Action Reviews (AARs) following all operations, in accordance with its Training Circular 25-20, *A Leader’s Guide to After Action Reviews* (Department of the Army, 1993). These assessments identify aspects of the operation that need to be sustained and those that need to be improved. In dangerous contexts, where conditions are ever-changing, leaders must continuously assess and adapt. This is paramount for the survival of leaders and their soldiers and the success of the mission. It is therefore vital that all leaders possess the tools to conduct rigorous individual and collective self-assessment on a regular and continuous basis.

Often overlooked by military leaders is the need to consider individual self-assessment both personally and collectively. Historically, military recruits were drilled in basic training to shed their individualism to put their personal feelings aside. This was so the recruit would be a disciplined soldier, a member of a team to follow orders from leadership, literally without

question. However, while military leaders are concerned with maintaining good order and discipline it is also important that they not diminish or dismiss the importance of individual self-assessment and personal reflection during the initial transformation of civilian into soldier. As recognized by the participants in this study, as well as in scholarly, and military literature, self-assessment is not given the importance it deserves for soldiers who, later on, go into dangerous contexts. Soldiers are the critical part of the system to accomplish the mission, and this system depends on each soldier continuously assessing and adjusting so that they, their teams, and the total organization can withstand the challenges of dangerous contexts.

Physical. In order to function in a demanding environment, physical endurance, strength, and stamina are required. This individual factor affects all soldiers regardless of gender. Soldier #2 recognized the critical value of physical fitness especially in dangerous contexts. She also noted that physical fitness is particularly relevant in environments where survival depends upon team effort. A unit operates effectively when all members are performing their assigned duties to match the tempo of the mission. If a unit or an individual cannot perform at the appropriate speed, the risk of losing the mission increases and creates weaknesses that can be exploited by the enemy. When soldiers cannot shoulder their share of the load, it falls to others to fill in the gap. This forces other soldiers away from their own duties and results in a loss of manpower. This results in a detrimental decrease in combat effectiveness and puts the entire team and mission at risk.

All interviewees experienced challenges in maintaining their fitness level while working an arduous schedule during their deployment. Soldier #3 noted that physical fitness abilities degrade with injuries and with age, regardless of gender. The impact of injuries and age are made more pronounced when a soldier is deployed. Even when in good health, the physical exhaustion

of working in dangerous situations creates a challenge that must be addressed on a daily basis. The challenge is to consume adequate nutrition, get sufficient sleep, conduct exercise when feasible, and seek medical attention when sick or injured. This is not always possible particularly in some high demand jobs and positions that provide little rest during deployment. In some instances, as Soldier #2 stated, the lack of sleep or personal time prevented soldiers from the ability to “reset.” Long hours and lack of sleep not only have negative consequences for a soldier’s physical and mental well-being but also lead to less productivity, while increasing the potential for job ineffectiveness. Army doctrine recognizes this factor. The field manual, *Combat and Operational Stress Control Manual for Leaders and Soldiers* (Department of the Army, 2009), discusses the need for controlled rest periods for optimal performance of soldiers in combat.

As Soldier #1 explained, sleep was limited according to the demand of the mission. This required soldiers to learn to make time to sleep in order to assure optimum functioning. She also said that it is the responsibility of the organization to ensure that there are enough soldiers with the skill sets to make it possible to have a three 8-hour shift and shorter rotation of six month durations, because anything else leads to burn out and the potential development of PTSD. Soldier #1 emphasized that sleep is essential for soldiers with injuries and mental, physical, and emotional trauma.

The problem is that rest and relaxation (R-and-R) time is set by the command, based upon the demands of the mission and not on the well-being of the soldiers. When soldiers are denied three or four day passes or vacation time and are already working 12-plus hours a day, the result is the degradation of soldiers and their capabilities to perform at an optimal level. Recovery time for soldiers in dangerous contexts is necessary to ensure the soldier is able to

continue to perform at optimal levels. Anything short of that is sacrificing the individual soldier and mission unnecessarily. Given the limited number of troops available, this is paramount to maintaining the health of the force. Granting sufficient R-and-R time, whenever possible, to all soldiers, in all spectrums, will ensure a higher pool of soldiers that can and will meet the physical demands of the mission.

Finally, it is critical to assure adequate nutrition and hydration of soldiers so they function at their optimal level in dangerous contexts. Without enough rest and nutrition, leading to fatigue and lack of energy, soldiers will not be in top physical condition to perform their duties, carry their rucks and equipment of 80 lbs. or more; such things are necessary to accomplish a mission.

As a soldier's physical capabilities are critical for survival and the success of a mission in dangerous contexts, it is imperative that a high level of physical fitness be attained before a soldier deploys. Physical training not only toughens the body but also the mind. Mental toughness allows soldiers to survive arduous conditions and accomplish daunting tasks. Attaining a high level of physical fitness for reservists can be especially challenging since they are likely to have full-time civilian jobs and families in addition to their reserve duties. Therefore, it must be recognized that it takes additional effort for a reservist to meet the Army's physical fitness standards. Active Duty members, often, are unable to relate to the reservists' competing demands or fathom their lower level of physical readiness.

All soldiers need to receive full combat training to meet the physical demand of military missions, particularly those in dangerous contexts. A disservice is done to a soldier who is only trained for their Military Occupation Specialty and who does not also receive combat training. This is critical in deployments to dangerous areas because the simple act of getting from point A

to point B can, at any time, could involve tangling with the enemy. Without such training a soldier who has been dependent on Combat Arms or other security type units for protection is left vulnerable when combat units are not available. Female soldiers are particularly vulnerable as they have never received combat training; this is the result of institutionalized gender attitudes. Without combat training female soldiers are at a higher than acceptable risk for capture or death.

Mental. Mental fortitude carries a soldier through the toughest times in dangerous contexts. Such mental toughness is developed through rigorous physical training, realistic and intense combat training, and intense training that confronts a soldier's fears and phobias. With training and testing, preconceived notions of one's own capacity and boundaries are constantly improved. This is why tough, arduous training, targeting personal fears and mental stress, is an important part of Army preparedness. Such training increases a soldier's combat effectiveness and life expectancy on the battlefield.

One factor that undermines mental capacity is sleep deprivation; an issue discussed in the previous section. Mitchell (1940) discussed battle weariness decades ago and acknowledged the importance of getting sufficient sleep and proper nutrition. The U.S. Army has published many documents that reinforce the importance for a leader to have the mental capacity to lead in combat environments. "An Army leader's intelligence draws on the mental tendencies and resources that shape conceptual abilities, which are applied to one's duties and responsibilities. Conceptual abilities enable sound judgment before implementing concepts and plans" (Department of the Army, 2012, p. 55).

A leader's response in an extreme environment serves as an example to his or her soldiers on how to make sense of the mission and their experiences in dangerous contexts.

According to Sweeney and Fry (2012), it is the moral strength of leaders that makes them effective in instilling commitment in their soldiers and other personnel in dangerous contexts. Mitchell (1940) observed that the cultivation of a sense of coherence and esprit de corps helps soldiers overcome fear. Leaders who have these skills can empower soldiers to overcome even the most daunting situations.

Soldier #2 believed that mental ability was one of a leader's greatest skills. "You have to be able to think; you have to be able to go beyond yourself and look deep." She observed that mental strength provided her with the ability to work through problems even when she was tired, stressed, and fearful. Soldier #1 agreed; she said mental capacity gave her the confidence to deal with danger and the related stress level.

Both physical and mental training are important for soldiers; however, mental capacity is the decisive factor that helps soldiers reach beyond their known limits. When leaders are strong, confident, and deliberate they "attenuate levels of stress among followers, while also increasing their confidence to perform in dangerous contexts over time" (Hannah et al., 2009, p. 898).

Spiritual. Pargament and Sweeney (2011) recognized spirituality as a motivating force and a vital resource for human development, and it "is a source of struggle that can lead to growth or decline" (p. 58). It's important to note that spirituality is not necessarily the same as being religious. Spirituality is generally how one sees or defines his or her own role in the larger universe and with the forces at work in the universe. In contrast, religion is how an individual expresses his or her defined spirituality in the form of an organized practice or ritual to acknowledge their belief that a deity is behind unseen forces in the universe.

Soldier #1 said her faith helped her to succeed. She was grateful to God for providing her with the strength to overcome the challenges she faced. Her spirituality grounded her, gave her

strength and allowed her to adapt mentally and physically. Soldier #11 also linked spirituality to her strength. She likened deployments to a personal calling. She experienced “no spiritual wavering until after the deployment.” It is clear from the participants in this study who disclosed a personal connection to faith that their spirituality strengthened their resolve and focus throughout deployment.

While Soldier #2 spoke about the importance of spirituality, she also recognized the contributions of the other factors of mental, physical, and self-efficacy. She felt that many factors contributed to a leader’s success. Soldier #2 pointed out: “If you choose only one or some, then they’ll be unbalanced. For me, the spiritual side is what pushed me.”

For many soldiers, spirituality defines who they are and what actions they should take. Although there are a variety of belief systems, there is a unity between soldiers who maintain a spirituality and an element of mutual respect. This unity provides a feeling of closeness and a sense of belonging between those who share the same belief or who are generally guided by faith.

The Army acknowledges the importance of spirituality as a contributing factor to a soldier’s psychological and physical health and overall well-being and recognizes the importance of this by assigning chaplains at all echelons to aid resilience and support all faith-based soldiers; for, soldiers deployed in dangerous contexts are likely to experience an internal crisis of faith. The positive effect of spirituality is the same for every soldier regardless of gender.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy contributes to a soldier’s competency to take charge. A leader who embodies self-efficacy believes in the possibility of success and will push to stay the course until a positive outcome is reached. Military training that enhances and builds on such skills and, thereby, promotes confidence and trust-in-self, supports a competent leader’s ability to take charge. Mitchell (1940) wrote that the cultivation of self-efficacy in leaders gives them the mental

strength to remain persistent even in the face of defeat. The more confident leaders are in their abilities, the more likely they are able to embrace the demands and challenges of combat.

According to Soldier #11, self-efficacy is a balance between confidence and self-control. She explained how it requires experience to develop the balance. In the first deployment soldiers think they can fix everything. However, she learns from each dangerous situation how her reactions are different than expected. Soldier #11 admitted she was a little wiser after her first deployment and continued to learn new things. This is also an example of how important reflection is one the development of effective leaders.

Self-efficacy can be undermined by gender bias. Even when a female soldier feels good about herself, gender bias may cause others to put doubt in her mind. Soldier #3 explained that it wasn't sufficient for a female to be good; you had to be "twice as good to be good enough." Soldier #4 discussed how the double standard resulted in women changing their behavior, and not for the better. "Some of the early commissioned officers, the females, were treated so badly that they just became 'bitches on wheels.'" These women overcompensated. Fortunately, as soldier #4 believes, this behavior is not the norm. Soldier #3 recognized a gendered difference in self-efficacy and leadership; however, her experience was not negative. One of her first sergeants pointed out key differences. He told her, "I love watching the differences between my male commanders and my female commanders . . . you're both . . . as good as the other, but you both do things differently." This sergeant believed that men make a decision and run with it while women take time to think before they make a decision. But once a woman has made the decision, he said, they stick with it. While this may be true, Soldier #3 felt that it was important for a woman to portray herself as a leader. "I am a leader, who happens to be a female." Self-efficacy is not about what gender someone is but how confident they are in their leadership "I don't want

things because I'm a female, I want to earn it." Soldier #2 agreed. She wanted the measure of leadership to be relative to standards and professionalism. She is comfortable being classified as female, but that, she asserted, shouldn't prevent her from also being seen as an officer and a leader.

The participants discussed the challenges they faced concerning self-efficacy in a male-dominant culture where their gender rather than their accomplishments was what mattered. Their suggestion was that a no gender identification of a soldier would lead to a greater respect and self-confidence within and among soldiers. It is paramount to see female soldiers and male soldiers as just soldiers. In such a climate, all soldiers can have the confidence to take charge without questioning their ability because of their gender.

Selfless service. Selfless service is akin to altruistic behavior. Selfless leaders put the greater good ahead of their own wants and needs. The Department of the Army (2015) described selfless service as "the commitment of each team member to go a little further, endure a little longer, and look a little closer to see how he or she can add to the effort". (p. B-5). Soldier #11 thought that selflessness makes a leader more human and a trait that is personally fulfilling for the leader. Soldier #11's view was that this trait described the majority of men and women who joined the Army Reserve.

This is a critical point for several reasons. Firstly, the pool of eligible civilians is severely limited. According to Captain Eric Connor, U.S. Army Reserve Command spokesman, seven out of 10 applicants fail to meet reserve standards. "The majority of potential Army reservists are either hooked on prescription drugs, have too many tattoos, are overweight, or have mental conditions that prohibit them from joining the military." (Ybarra, 2015). Those who do enter the service should be recognized for the enormous

amount of selflessness and courage, especially in times of conflict, that is involved when they make the decision to enlist. Those who choose to serve should be lauded for their desire to serve and not punished by arbitrary gender-based restrictions. Participants recognized this and whole-heartedly believed that all who are willing and able to fight should have opportunity and access to do so.

Personal identity. A strong sense of self is tied to a soldier's performance in action. It empowers soldiers to accomplish missions, take care of other soldiers, and serve their nation. The Army recognizes the importance of this attribute; thus, one aspect of training is identity development. The defining measures of soldier's military identity are the Army values, the Warrior Ethos, and the military occupation they hold.

Some of the women in this study, such as Soldier #11, professed a strong sense of self. When confronted by others who questioned them based on their gender, Soldier #8 said that women soldiers found it difficult to attain credibility because of gender bias. "You have to show your worth and intelligence, since it's questioned more . . . Your level of seriousness is questioned." When a soldier's credibility is challenged, it can cause self-doubt and second guessing of oneself before action is taken. Both undermine a soldier's personal strength. Institutional policies can have similar effects, as seen, for example, with the Army Reserve's prohibition of women from the Combat Arms Military Occupation Specialty and specifically the Infantry, Armor and Special Forces (Special Operation).

In the Army, identity is supposed to be recognized by what you do on the job. Awards, promotions, and tabs (patches worn on uniform to mark levels of achievement) are forms of recognition of a job well done. Tabs signify an elite status. However, female soldiers are only able to apply for three tabs. The Airborne and Sapper (combat engineering) tabs have been

accessible to women for some time; another elite status tab—for Rangers—became available in 2015 when the Army opened Ranger School to women. This was a pilot program, a result of political pressure and the first ever to allow women to get combat training. Women leaders signed up and qualified for Ranger School. Nineteen women and 381 men began the training in April 2015. Only two women made it through the notoriously grueling course. A pass rate of two is not a bad outcome when one examines the statistics for Ranger School. There is very little difference between the performance of males and females where the pass rate was one in four for men and one in five for women. These numbers demonstrate that a soldier's identity should not be questioned because of gender.

Although the two women graduated from Ranger School along with the 94 men who completed the training, they are still barred from applying for entry into the 75th Ranger Regiment. This raises a number of issues: Where do we place these women? Will they now be able to enter the Combat Arms Military Occupation Specialty? At present, none of the women who qualified for or graduated from the Ranger School are in this specialty. Furthermore, while

only about 3 percent of active-duty soldiers in the Army have earned their Ranger tabs, doing so is considered an unofficial prerequisite for many infantry commands. And it is an explicit requirement for leading combat troops in the Army's 75th Ranger regiment, the services premier light-infantry unit." (Oppel, 2015, para. 3)

The military branches have until January 1, 2016, to decide which positions will remain closed to women. Each branch must provide a rationale for exclusion, but the Secretary of Defense has the authority to make the final decision. In addition to the Ranger School pilot program, the only other service branch to test women's capabilities was the Marines. The Marines opened its rigorous infantry officer course to women; however, none of the 29 female officers who started the program passed.

It is important for the military to recognize the negative consequences for female soldiers who, to avoid stigma, feel pressured to modify their identity in order to align with male evaluative standards. All interview study participants had male supervisors and all participants stated that they wanted to be recognized as just a soldier, and not be separated into categories of female or male soldier. Soldier #2 felt the cost of not doing this was too much; as a result she turned inward in order to preserve herself. It is counter-productive for the Army to create artificial barriers in a voluntary military where soldiers have willingly enlisted and earnestly devoted themselves to support the Army's mission. Creating such barriers has a detrimental effect on soldiers; it undermines their work to achieve their true potential and the total effectiveness of units and the organizations to which they belong.

Social Factors That Impact Women Leaders in Dangerous Contexts

Social factors play a critical role in how relationships and networks function. As stated above social factors are essential to the well-being of soldiers and units operating in dangerous contexts. Two social factors instrumental in achieving this are support networks and strong relationships. A network cultivates and facilitates professional conduct, ethics, morals, rituals, and mentor relationship. Strength in relations is a priority if there is to be mission success particularly in extreme situations.

Social factors effect such things as an individual's stress level and strength and quality of their relationships. Participants described a variety of cultural and social factors that undermined their effectiveness. These took the form of gender, ethnicity, race, sexual preferences, and age biases. Additional factors that were discussed by participants were social networks, trust, social support, home unit, mentorship, home, limited overseas support, peers and workmates, and team building.

Social networks. Social networks are essential for the well-being of soldiers operating in dangerous contexts. These networks can exist at the peer, unit, mentor, and home levels. Networks cultivate and facilitate professional conduct, ethics, and morals. Soldier #1 recognized that social networks help reduce stress, are vital for self-validation, and strengthen relationships regardless if the networks were mixed or single gender. She valued her opportunity to participate in an all-female support group because they freed her to talk about issues she was uncomfortable doing elsewhere. She recounted,

there were a few ladies that helped one another . . . There are things you don't discuss or if it was a male environment, as a female, you couldn't complain. If you did, you got excluded in everything right away.

A support network is critical for a soldier if she is to cope with stress. Her network can come from many sources including her home, unit abroad and unit at home, mentors within the Army, and civilian workmates and peers. Yet, it is evident from the interviews that 75% of the participants lacked the support they needed. The interviews suggested that military policies, personal agendas, and some male leaders did not assist female soldiers in coping with the stress of operating in dangerous contexts. Hence it is important for support networks to be built, cultivated, and enabled at all steps of a soldier's deployment.

Trust. Building trust cultivates a climate of well-being and engagement and a sense of belonging. Soldier #4 referred to an array of trust: trust in her leader, in those with whom you serve, and in the system. Soldier #1 believed that social support up and down the command chain fosters trust. "It is essential that when you send someone, you check on them. You communicate with them. Ask how are they doing . . . making sure soldiers are alright is critical."

Although soldiers learn to trust their battle buddy, it is equally important that they have a sense of being part of a group in other contexts—a group that will look out for and care for the

soldier. Feeling isolated renders a soldier vulnerable and open to the possibility of abuse by toxic leaders and of toxic substances as well as increased susceptibility to depression and PTSD.

Social support. Social support can come from sources outside as well as within the military system. If there are to be healthy soldiers adequately prepared to achieve unit and mission success, it is extremely important to provide a social climate that empowers everyone.

As Soldier #1 explained social support is also about networks of faith. It is important to allow soldiers to exercise their religious beliefs. She mentioned that some soldiers have met with resistance when they attended church services. Resistance is evidenced by comments such as: “Hey, you have work to do; pray when you get off and not during work hours.” The implication was that jobs didn’t get done because the soldier was attending service. Leaders who attend religious services cultivate acceptance of the behavior and demonstrate a recognition of its value to soldiers.

Soldier #1 also commented on how some male leaders do not understand the need of women to seek support from other women. In particular, one commander directed women to be less social and to focus more on work. This commander provided no incentive for anyone to facilitate any social activity. The situation demonstrates that some leaders lack an understanding of the psychological and physical benefits of social interaction and its contribution to well-being. As we have seen from the interview responses, the male-dominant climate degrades and minimizes support within the military system.

Home unit. A soldier’s home unit functions as a support network when commanders communicate with their soldiers. This link serves as more than just social support, it provides greater assurance that soldiers are not being abused by the unit leadership. There is an implicit understanding that someone is watching out for the well-being of every soldier and that the

soldier has all that is needed to succeed in the mission. Soldier #1 certainly felt “It would have been nice to have the commander check on you through the chain and have that communication.” Such behavior demonstrates to a soldier that her home unit “has her back”. This maintains an open channel so the soldier feels comfortable to reach back for support. If this connection is not built and cultivated the unit abroad is left unaccountable for its treatment of soldiers. Conversely, communication of the home unit with the deployment unit ensures accountability in the opposite direction. Soldier #1 discussed a home unit that sent a soldier to the front line even though he had domestic issues. The end result was disastrous for that soldier.

The coordination of both the home and deployed units ensures that soldiers have a better support system in place. One can only wonder how many suicides could be prevented by better screening, better communication between these units as soldiers deploy, and a better support system at the home unit.

Mentorship. Mentorship, whether by a male or female mentor, provides a sounding board and source for advice. Participants suggested that a formal mentorship program designed specifically for the needs of women would be helpful. Soldier #1 was frustrated by the fact that she didn’t have enough time to reach back for support and was only able to talk to her mentor about once a month. “The key irritating thing was not getting enough feedback.” Regardless, she did very well.

As indicated by the interviewees, it is very important that soldiers have a mentor who guides them in their career and goals. Although the gender of the mentor is not always important, it does matter in some situations. Male mentors may focus on achievements and the job while female mentors may focus on strategies for coping and being successful in the Army’s male-dominant culture or issues that directly concern women operating in dangerous contexts.

As Soldier #1 noted, women don't wish to be accused of complaining; however, there are things they need to discuss with other women. Commanders who enable networks for women to connect and support one another, especially while they are deployed, provide a vital form of support for women leaders. However, this need isn't unique to women. Leaders must consider the needs of all their soldiers and provide avenues of support for soldiers especially in dangerous contexts. The stress within the environment is high enough without having to deal with the addition of personal issues. This double load may render a soldier ineffective in their job and mission.

Home. Support for a soldier comes from sources both inside and outside of the military. Soldier #1 said: "Support is really important from home and from the unit." She illustrated the beneficial effects of home support (e.g., messages, care packages, letters) and discussed the significance of her spouse to her success. She felt she was married to the best man ever and credited him for being critical to her success. Before Soldier #2 took command of a unit that was about to deploy, she spoke to her husband about the lack of a family support group. Her husband took over the job of organizing such a support network. She felt that the support group really helped people and her husband's efforts on her behalf empowered her as well.

The participants' statements highlight the need for the Army to encourage support from home for deployed soldiers and to provide sufficient time and space for soldiers to receive such support. Home support is an important contributor to the well-being of soldiers and their optimal functioning during deployment. Those at home who provide support also feel better off when they believe they've supported their loved ones, friends, and colleagues.

Peer/teammates. Peer relationships serve as a type of support network in working environments. These relationships provide others to lean on throughout one's career and resource

to lean upon in moments of critical need. For example, Soldier #2 had such a relationship with her executive officer who she described as her battle buddy. The rule when deployed was not to go anywhere alone. “At 4 a.m. to do PT or meals, she was there. It was interesting too because she was the complete opposite. It was neat because we were going for the same end state. It was the unifying effort.” Soldier #1 supported this idea: “Strong relationships with the people you work with were essential.”

The opposite, when a support network is unavailable, has terrible consequences. For example, Soldier #5 was challenged by not having a support network; as a consequence she chose to isolate herself. Soldier #10 was denied access to a Latina network; she was prohibited from joining because she was an officer. This caused her to feel isolated. Soldier #11 said such isolation can happen because,

there are few women who have had combat experience. You don't always get along with every other female in the military either. We need to start a women's support group. It's nice to have a support group with the same experience.

Relationships are important to unit cohesion and esprit de corps; yet actual interaction and training does not offer much of an opportunity for collaboration and relationship building. This should be a greater part of training from the onset of a soldier's career. Connections among peers are vital to the survival of the soldiers and their mission. It is also important to provide and support connections between soldiers and their families.

Organizational Factors, Culture and Leadership Factors That Impact Women Leaders in Dangerous Contexts

Organizational factors, according to the literature reviewed in Chapter II include policy, procedures, practices, leadership, resources allocations, culture and system. In reviewing the interviewees' views on military organizational systems, culture, and leadership it becomes clear how poor leadership or a lack of leadership impacts the organization: barriers are created (either

intentionally or unintentionally) and soldiers and organizations are weakened. This runs contrary to Army doctrine and policies which are meant to enable leaders. Every participant identified a situation where standards were subjectively applied by male superiors. The women experienced bias in assignments, evaluations, levels of trust, and lack of confidence for their actions as qualified leaders. Changes within the Army to correct this inequity will have to be made at all levels of the organization's structure.

Organizational support systems. Organizational support systems provide a bridge between work and people. Thus, if effective, they can enhance the individual factors discussed earlier and facilitate the building of positive social relationships, both of which are important in enabling women leaders to be effective in dangerous contexts. These organizational systems provide training and social support for such individual factors as self-assessment, physical and mental strength. As well, they can instill a sense of confidence and safe, formal and informal ways for open communication between and among the chain of command. These organizational systems are also an important part of problem-solving and essential in promoting the bonding between soldiers that is fundamental to survival in dangerous situations. The experiences reported by interviewees with respect to this organizational and social support varied all the way from negative to positive, and their views on the types of systems needed to provide adequate support for women leaders varied too.

Some examples of these positive and negative experiences were seen in the interviews with Soldiers #2, #8 and #5. Soldier #2 had a positive experience with her male commander and utilized her female mentor and a Major General for reach back support and open communication. The organizational system also worked for Soldier #8 because her first commander created a trusting and positive environment. This was not the case with her second commander who was

self-serving and resented his position as he felt it was beneath him. Soldier #5 was concerned that the organizational network in her unit was nonfunctional because it was geared toward pleasing the commander. Issues were brushed under the rug instead of subjecting them to fair and objective due process.

Comprehensive training. Basic combat training, soldier skills training, mission specific training and professional development training all comprise comprehensive training. Along with comprehensive training comes experience and a soldier's commitment to the mission and to the general cause they serve creates a framework for decision-making in dangerous contexts (Hannah & Sweeney, 2007). Training is important because human behavior is unpredictable in dangerous contexts and along with discipline may prove invaluable in conditions that depend on cohesive response (von Schell, 1933/1999). Participants highlighted the value of training, and these women called for a focus on communication, standards, and integration.

Training. Training is the backbone of a soldier's competency. Training is necessary to have a sound foundation to maintain a culture of soldierhood and to integrate women and men throughout the force. It is important to identify soldier's training needs, create and implement training to counter current organizational or non-organizational challenges. A light infantry skill set maximizes the physical and mental abilities of each soldier. Training ensures that soldiers are able to engage enemy forces while in direct and indirect combat situations. This also is why every soldier needs a solid background in their Military Occupation Specialty.

Soldier #4 was a strong proponent of training. She said that soldiers trained to the point that their skills have become routine, are well prepared and confident. Training "really helped them keep it together when things would go badly. Didn't have to think about. It just became a routine." She also believed that training prepares soldiers to be adaptable, which is necessary in

dangerous contexts where things can change rapidly. Soldier #3's attitude toward training for dangerous contexts focused on a soldiers' physical and mental strengths. She instructed women, "I'm going to teach you how to take 'em down and take an eye out, you know, that kind of thing, so you don't get captured;" this was because she knew they were unlikely to have the strength of a man.

Soldier #4 also insisted that once women are fully integrated into these combat occupations, not only will this generate females qualified to train other women, but women will then be more readily accepted in direct combat roles.

Communication training. Effective communication is essential for organizational success in extreme and violent contexts. Interviewees discussed the merits of developing formal mentoring and professional development programs to address communication skills. They emphasized how communication is essential for optimal functioning. They noted in this context, that culture, and therefore, communication can be different at each level of the organization.

Communications training should address such things as: how to promote positive relations and networks; recognizing a variety of communications styles; encouraging effective inter-gender communication; open continuous and ongoing communication between and among different branches and units such as lateral and vertical communication, and viable interconnected CONUS (within the continental United States) and OCONUS (outside the continental United States) communications. Many battles and wars have been lost based on the lack of communication. Communication is critical to the success of any mission. These are some of the interviewees' responses that reinforce this notion:

Soldier #10 was concerned by the serious lack of training in how to handle toxic work environments and their effects on effective communication skills. She said there was a need for,

training on how to deal with difficult people. You have to be willing to step back in yourself and evaluate yourself. I look at myself, and see how I'm portraying and doing the steps. It's like a marriage, if you can't step back during an argument, it's not going to work. You have to know how to move forward. If there's a leadership class [training] that would help dealing with toxic leadership.

Soldier #3 recognized that communication has a direct link to relationships and individuals in building a team:

Communications is essential. I want the people I lead to feel responsible to one another and to me. I don't care to be liked or be a friend. I want to earn the respect. I want them to feel like they should do well for me. I try to instill that we are a team and when you fail or succeed, it reflects on everybody on the team. I will take input, but I will make decision and I expect you to get on board even if you don't like it. If they did something above and beyond, I do recognize them.

Culture. This section contains examples of male leaders hindering women leaders to be effective. The Army's Equal Opportunity policy states that one of its purposes is to create and sustain effective units by eliminating discriminatory behaviors or practices that undermine teamwork, mutual respect, loyalty, and shared sacrifice of the men and women of America's Army (Department of the Army, 2010). The women in this study who served under only male leaders, have experienced a host of factors that undermined their effectiveness as leaders. These included labeling and stereotyping; perception biasing by gender, ethnicity, and race; biasing of evaluations and dispensing of awards; autonomy without regard; segregation, toxic leadership, resistance to change, harassment; and, ineffective EO policies and staffs.

It is reflective that the culture of male dominance and the tactics used to maintain it, are still deeply ingrained in the Army—and there are those who are intent to maintain the status quo. Although younger soldiers appear to be more egalitarian, senior leaders have the power; this perpetuates the traditional male-dominant culture. This situation has led to the exclusion of women soldiers and to obstacles that impede the progression of women's military careers. An attitude of superiority prevails that dates back to earlier times when men were soldiers and

women were there only to assist. It is my experience that women's efforts continue to go unrecognized, even though they are actively involved in the success of the mission and goal. It appears that men from different backgrounds and ethnicities consider themselves, either subconsciously or consciously, in a hierarchical position above women. As a woman soldier, a field grade officer, I wonder when women leaders will be fully integrated and truly accepted as peers by their male counterparts and leaders. The military is supposed to be objective and reward on merit. How can meritocracy be achieved without biases towards gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual preference?

Labeling and stereotyping. One way that male leaders and male subordinates express negative regard for female leaders is in the form of labels and stereotypes. This behavior is directed toward a woman's appearance or her personality. It involves the description of a woman's level of physical attractiveness or personality in terms of passivity versus aggressiveness. Such behavior caused a divisiveness that erodes unit cohesion and reduces effectiveness. When not addressed or dealt with properly, the environment becomes harassing toxic and ultimately has a negative impact on the female leader's ability to lead effectively.

A primary source of labeling and stereotyping in the Army is the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). It set standards without regard for a woman's body. There isn't a standard formula for a woman's hips or waist, as there is for men. Women have various body types that are dictated by genetics. Recall Soldier #8 noting that a female body comes in many other shapes—apple, pear, hour glass, triangle, column, rectangle. When this difference is not accounted for sufficiently, the result is a barrier that women cannot overcome.

Another source of stereotyping is based upon biological differences and some men's lack of understanding of such things as the female menstrual cycle. As a result disparaging remarks

are made about emotional instability. Soldier #11 suggested that references to a woman's emotions were meant to discredit her to indicate she was not in control. Statements of this kind referred to “girly time,” “on the rag,” “that time of the month,” or “PMS-ing.” These types of remarks undermine the female’s effectiveness as a leader.

Judgmental statements and unequal interpersonal relationships must be addressed by training for men and women so they are better equipped to understand and interact with one another. Training and integration will reduce the misunderstandings between the genders. Labeling and stereotyping is a cultural issue that can be addressed through knowledgeable leadership.

Soldier #11 acknowledged the difficulties and offered ways to overcome them:

Once you start getting angry, it shows with our soldiers. Conflicts came along and I became ineffective. You got to mentor and find time to do it. It’s hard to replicate in training. You need replicate the constant of changes, because you don’t understand your reaction until you face it. It needs to be talked about even if it’s hard to train. De-centralizing authority down to the bottom is important to teach managing, personal conflict with others and how to manage their time. You de-centralize the power and authority.

Soldier #11 learned from her deployment:

In the first deployment, I just had to survive. I was the only female in my field artillery unit, and I had to make it. I was more independent. I learned a lot more about team work on my second deployment while in a Military Intelligence unit. I came in more realistic in the second one.

However, she also stated that during her first deployment she had to deal with a male peer who had very little self-control. This points out that both male and female soldiers have the need for training on how to control their emotions in a positive and productive way.

Women sometimes are judged by harsher standards than their male counterparts so that women’s behavior is seen more negatively. Recognizing this as an issue and being prepared to deal with the negative ramifications is a leader’s responsibility. One way to address this is to

provide a course on appropriate behavior early in a soldier's training. Having respect for one another and building rather than breaking down relationships, should be part of the etiquette course and SHARP training. Periodical reviews also must be made to ensure that soldiers act with professionalism towards one another.

Soldier #5, #3, #8, and #1 discussed gendered stereotyping and labeling and the negative consequences it has on women leaders. Experiences and labels may follow women through their career. Understandably, such long-term behavior can have adverse effects on the individual, elicit strong emotions, and adverse reactions. This is an additional reason why there is a need to eliminate double standards and train all soldiers in proper etiquette. Soldier #9 mentioned how women who speak out against stereotyping and discrimination risk being labeled as troublemakers and open themselves to retaliation.

Cultural biases. Participants described encountering various cultural biases in many forms (e.g., gender, ethnicity, race, sexual preferences, and age); all undermined a female soldier's effectiveness. Soldier #6 said that addressing cultural issues would have a significant impact for leader effectiveness. It was her opinion that "The culture is the key element that needs to change for females to be in dangerous contexts." Culture, however, is not always a straightforward issue to confront. As Soldiers #10 and #5 pointed out, cultural biases can be very complex.

Soldier #5 recognized the necessity for training leaders to navigate cultural issues. Soldier #8 observed that this requires both the leader's experience and introspection to identify and acknowledge their own biases. The alternative is that the influence of personal biases result in detrimental and potentially toxic consequences.

Evaluations, recognition, and awards. The Army's evaluations and recognition programs are supposed to objectively judge performance and reward excellence. According to participant's responses, the ideals of these programs are not always applied equitably to women or minority leaders in dangerous contexts. Soldier #10 felt she was unfairly denied a combat badge as a result of her gender. Soldier #5 experienced evaluative and recognition biases on both the gender and ethnic levels. Soldier #8 recommended the Army review the evaluation process because the process is not always taken seriously or enforced and gender bias is pervasive throughout.

Segregation. Some leaders may abuse their authority and make it difficult for a soldier to do her job. This can be doubly problematic for minority women as Soldier #5 discussed. Soldier #8 acknowledged that while the Army offers equality training to help address the kind of biases that Soldier #5 experienced, training alone may be insufficient to correct the problem. Leaders must enforce the rules and standards that promote equity, otherwise there is no standard.

Toxic Leadership. Toxic leadership is negative leadership. According to the publication ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership*,

Toxic leadership is a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance. This leader lacks concern for others and the climate of the organization, which leads to short- and long-term negative effects. The toxic leader operates with an inflated sense of self-worth and from acute self-interest. Toxic leaders consistently use dysfunctional behaviors to deceive, intimidate, coerce, or unfairly punish others to get what they want for themselves. . . . Prolonged use of negative leadership to influence followers undermines the followers' will, initiative, and potential and destroys unit morale. (Department of the Army, 2012, p. 3)

Leadership within the military has cascading effects from superiors to subordinates. This chain of influence can have both positive and negative consequences. However, if the link between leaders is severed and a subordinate leader is toxic, it can lead to purely negative

effects. Leadership at each level has the capacity to develop others as leaders, facilitate relationships and esprit de corps, and, ultimately, determine the success of both the mission and the organization.

When male leaders exhibit disruptive unprofessional behavior, whether intentional or unintentional, it further degrades and undermines women leaders' effectiveness. Such disruptive behaviors included examples of male-dominant culture, breaking down Army values and Warrior Ethos, different rules for garrison versus deployment, inappropriate comments on feminine appearance, and lack of trust and control. These behaviors deprived all women leaders in this study, of the ability to employ the best and most effective leadership models and forced them to operate in less than an optimal way within the unit and organizations while deployed and operating in dangerous context. The extent to which this study found how pervasive unprofessional male behavior still is in today's military, surprised me. As I began collecting data from the 12 women leaders, I anticipated many of the issues they discussed. Not only had I reviewed the key scholarly literature on the subject, I am an experienced women leader in the Army Reserves and was deployed in combat situations in Afghanistan. While a little younger than those interviewed, I have led in dangerous contexts and have been a part of the Army culture for over a decade. What I did not fully anticipate was the depth of the interviewees' reaction to the second basic question I asked: "Describe for me an experience serving in a leadership position with the U.S. Army where you felt ineffective?"

When the first interviewee was discussing experiences where she felt ineffective, she suddenly started talking about toxic leadership. I hadn't asked the participant specifically about the subject so I was very interested that the subject had arisen organically. I was intrigued and reviewed the tape recording. I listened carefully to the conversation. I didn't hear anything that

suggested that I intentionally asked this during the conversation. To make certain I did not inadvertently cause such a discussion in the future I decided to arrange for a neutral party to sit in on all future interviews.

This shift in the focus of my dissertation made me feel very uneasy. I love the service and didn't want to paint it negatively; however, as 75% of the participants discussed toxic leadership as well as other negative experiences, I had little choice. As a scholar and as a good soldier, it was important that I explore the data I collected.

Right from the beginning of the interviews, the theme of toxic leadership emerged. Although interview participants did not identify themselves as toxic leaders, 75% of the women stated they had endured a toxic leader during their deployment. Soldier #1 characterized it as debilitating; Soldier #8 and Soldier #10 described personal experiences that underscored how toxic leaders undermine unit esprit de corps, teamwork, focus, and moral. Soldier #10 believed that having this added stress in combat significantly increased a soldier's risk of experiencing PTSD. Soldier #1's observation was that it was difficult to get help to deal with a toxic leader and, as Soldier #10 noted, when toxic leaders have responsibility for soldier evaluations, the result can be devastating for those who fall into disfavor with the toxic leader.

I can say from personal experience that toxic leadership can have a devastating effect on individuals and cause great emotional and psychological discomfort. The stress is compounded by bureaucratic pitfalls in trying to deal with toxic leaders particularly in instances where gender biases are an issue.

Currently, the Army recognizes that toxic leadership exists but seems to provide little or no intervention for those who experience it—or consequences for those who practice it. The interviewees' and my experience was that soldiers are given woefully inadequate assistance to

deal with toxic leaders. Even the Army's whistle blower system is directly tied to the chain of command and, thus, not independent of the toxic or abusive leader. An abusive leader is someone who engages in practices that create a hostile work environment or perpetrate sexual harassment. Any report of abusive and toxic behavior has to go first through the Inspector General, which is within the command. Furthermore, there is no support system for soldiers who speak out about toxic leadership. The process of redress, from the onset of the investigation to the completion, may take years and the soldier may experience an extended period of mental and emotional strain.

It, is therefore, imperative that toxic leaders be identified, retrained or dismissed before they assume key leadership roles or roles with positional or absolute power. This requires an effective screening system similar to the Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF) 360 assessments, currently utilized to gain feedback from soldiers about their leaders. MSAF is described as a 360 degree view that provides insights that are multi-directional: top down, lateral, bottom up (Department of the Army, 2014b). Additional ways discussed by interviewees to address toxic leadership were to insure that all leaders be held accountable and communicate directly with their senior raters and possibly two levels up. This would hold leaders accountable for their behavior and actions. Also, there should be a formal mentorship program that is implemented as part of the soldier's performance evaluation. In addition, each leader should be required to have at least one mentee, one level down, and one mentee, two levels down.

Finally, while leaders are accountable to the mission, it is time that they achieve their goals in a way that is non-threatening to their soldiers. Abuse of soldiers must not be tolerated. Soldiers who experience a toxic leader must be given protection from their abusers; any interaction with such a leader must be ceased. Further, the soldier must be provided an advocate

to assist in the challenging investigation and redress process. Counseling and other support system must be in place and made accessible to the abused soldier. If a soldier requests assistance from the leader's supervisor, one or two levels up, the request must be taken seriously. If the soldier's request is redirected to the Inspector General instead of taking action, the reason for the redirection must be critically reviewed. Failing to take action should be met with disciplinary action. Toxic leadership is too common and is severely degrading to the morale and well-being of soldiers and the Army organization. Soldiers are the Army's most valuable asset and they deserve to be respected and protected.

The current military EO and SHARP policies continue to be inadequate to fully and fairly address issues of gender bias and sexual assault, and without stigmatizing female victims as troublemakers and problem soldiers who are not team players. Female soldiers expect and deserve a system that provides access and integration for all soldiers and want leaders who authentically cultivate and support them. It is a change that is necessary of women are going to reach their full potential as soldiers and leaders.

Panel Discussion of Themes

As described in the previous chapter, three themes emerged during the panel discussion: culture, training and leadership. The panel agreed that the Army's male-dominant culture negatively impacted female soldiers and that there was a need for change. When male leaders exclude female leaders from doing their jobs, a women leader's effectiveness is impeded as are her chances for advancement to senior leadership positions. The panel found that gender inclusive practices appeared to be more common at lower levels and recommended that this approach needs to be extended to all ranks and positions. The panel recognized that women need to be better armed with skills and support (e.g., self-defense against sexual assault, preparedness

for combat) in order to operate more effectively as well as to be considered capable in all aspects of their profession. The panel agreed that changes were necessary in order to achieve equality for all soldiers and to build an authentic profession of arms. Additionally, the panel saw a need within the Army to be more aware of toxic leadership and proactive in the support and training to identify, intervene, and punish.

The panel acknowledged that change would take time. A successful change in culture demands an aggressive implementation of the solution. Successful execution of policies will require that leaders in positions of authority be committed to and capable of catalyzing and enforcing the change.

Summary

The central thesis of this study, to repeat is: How individual, social and organizational factors in the Army Reserve cultivate effective women leadership in dangerous context. It became clear in my work that when individual factors are cultivated, along with positive social and organizational support, women are enabled as leaders. However, equally clear was that a lack of training to cultivate individual factors, as well as negative or lack of social and organizational factors, stifled and undermine women leaders' effectiveness in dangerous contexts.

Individual factors that enable women leaders to be effective. Self-assessment, strong personal identity, physical, mental, spiritual confidence, self-efficacy, selfless service, were identified as the individual factors that enable women leaders to be effective in dangerous contexts. Leaders in dangerous contexts must be prepared to conduct self-assessment and to understand and counter the challenges of their experiences. Physical fitness is an integral element in a soldier's ability to endure the stress of dangerous contexts. Soldiers also need to be fit to

reduce the chances of injuries. Additionally, they need to get adequate nutrition and sleep in order to function optimally. Mental strength carries a soldier through the toughest times while in dangerous contexts.

A number of factors cultivate and sustain the well-being of soldiers. Training helps soldiers to confront fears, build resilience, competencies, and embrace daunting situations while spirituality gives a soldier the inner strength to push through difficult situations. Self-efficacy is a combination of competence, ability, self-control and trust in oneself to lead and provides a leader with the confidence to accept that there is not always just one way to do things. Self-efficacy facilitates leaders who are effective in dangerous contexts. Selfless service is a trait that describes today's volunteer Army force. It is an identity that links soldier's performance and position. xxx

Social factors that enable women leaders to be effective. Positive social networks and relationships are the glue between the organization and people. Social networks are critical for a soldier's well-being. These networks reduce stress and strengthen relationships. Social support can come from within the service or from outside.

Within the service, the home unit is a critical part of the network that provides direct support to the soldier. If the home unit neglects its responsibilities and duties, a soldier's optimal performance and well-being may be undermined and chances for abuse are increased. Mentorship is another network that provides support and guidance. Mentors can help with soldiers' distress in challenging situations and offer assistance in dealing with challenging or toxic leaders. Mentors can protect their mentees from toxic leaders by communicating within the chain of command. A soldier's connection with other soldiers provides another source of connection with the world.

Outside the service family and friends offer connection. When opportunities for connecting to the home network are limited, the results can be debilitating, sometimes with dire circumstances.

Organizational factors that enable women leaders to be effective. The three main organizational factors that work together to enable women leaders in dangerous context are: positive organizational systems, inclusive culture, and good leadership (see Figure 5.1). Most of the participants discussed how resistance to change and the existence of pockets of resistance continue to subvert the Army's core traditions and beliefs. Other organizational factors that rendered women leaders ineffective in dangerous contexts, are lack of access to organizational systems access, lack of training, and poor leadership.

Poor leadership or a lack of leadership, either intentionally or unintentionally, permits barriers to be created in the organization that render women leaders ineffective. Issues of gender, ethnicity, race, sexual preferences, and age bias, if left unchecked by responsive and proactive leadership, will continue. Every interviewee described at least one experience where a male leader or subordinate used negative stereotypes when referring to female leaders and most participants observed male leaders condoning these attitudes either consciously or unconsciously. Importantly, and not fully anticipated, was the prevalence of the interviewees' experience with toxic leadership; 75% of the women leaders encountered toxic leadership.



Figure 5.1. The mechanism of organizational factors enhancing women’s leadership.

The result of such encounters was that the women felt ineffective. Organizations with positive and inclusive cultures promote mission success and have the greatest positive impact on personnel and the organization as a whole.

According to some participants resistance to expanding the role of women soldiers and support for equal opportunity policies remained prevalent. Leaders must be held responsible for ensuring barriers do not arise to impede women leaders and soldiers. These barriers degrade the individual and interfere with the mission. To accomplish this all leaders should be trained and knowledgeable in different leadership styles and when it is appropriate to switch leadership styles.

The health of an organization and its leaders is a delicate balance. Leaders can promote strong relationships by modeling positive social relationships with other leaders and soldiers. They can demonstrate the positive consequences of such relationships, provide interventions, and arrange mentorships.

Culture, training and leadership. The panel discussion provided three areas for consideration—culture, training, and leadership—which reinforced the results of the interviewee responses and the discussion of these. The panel recommended that inclusive practices be encouraged at all ranks. The panel saw a need for leadership to be more aware of toxic leadership and proactive in intervention and punishment. Women leaders need to be better equipped with skills and given support so they can operate more effectively. These changes are necessary in order to achieve equality for all soldiers and to build an authentic profession of arms.

Implications for Leadership and Change in the U.S. Army

This dissertation topic was initiated and researched because of a deep concern for how the Army, and especially the Army Reserve, can effectively integrate women into the force as a result of Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta's announcement in January 2013 that the U.S. military would eliminate policies and actions formally excluding women from direct combat roles (U.S. Department of Defense, 2013).

Historically, the Army has always aimed to create a meritocracy within its ranks. The Army has also striven to adapt to and incorporate important cultural changes in American society seen most notably in regard to racial desegregation in 1948; in the total integration of women into the force in 1978; and, the ending of "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy in 2011. Army doctrine, policies and regulations such as AR 600-20 (Department of the Army, 2014d), were created and continuously amended to address how to incorporate these changes. Given the amount of time and attention the Army devoted to adopt these changes, one would expect better progress than what the findings of this study revealed. Even though considerable resources have been expended to address these changes, gender bias and a male-dominated leadership culture still persist and continue to degrade the effectiveness of women soldiers and leaders. The findings of

this study—after interviewing 12 women leaders (i.e., four senior officers, four mid-grade level leaders, and four senior Non-Commissioned leaders)--have shown the need for significant improvement and changes in four major areas:

- the behavior and accountability of leaders;
- the manner in which the Army's organizational systems reinforce a male-dominant culture and, thereby, create impediments to female's being effective leaders;
- the need for changes in how Army enlistees and officers are trained to address recent policy shifts in a 21st century volunteer Army; and,
- the overarching need to change the male-dominant culture.

Along with additional concerns, these findings were corroborated by a panel consisting of two male and two female Army leaders.

The study's findings became the basis for the following recommendations on the types of leadership and organizational changes needed to enable the Army to fully integrate women into the service.

Leader behavior and accountability.

Leadership awareness. Leaders have to do better enforcing the Army polices regarding equal opportunity to eliminate not only gender bias but all social biases in order to better cultivate the goal of a true meritocracy. Leaders must be able to recognize these biases as barriers and intervene to make changes that cultivate trust, communication, cohesion, and esprit de corps. Barriers can be both internal or external. Leaders must have the skills and tools to counter barriers that they or their soldiers identify. Aggressive intervention is required to eliminate the destructive, degrading and unproductive side effects of toxic leadership, bias,

sexual assault and sexual harassment. Continuous and collaborative effort in communication, planning, and execution of countermeasures and punishment are also required.

Leadership education. Leaders must be educated to identify these biases and barriers, and how to promote and create strong relationships through communication and trust among other leaders and their soldiers. The Army must assess what is working and what is not working in the present education system and develop strategies to arrive at better solutions. Standards must be established so that all units and leaders respond consistently. One way to do this is to incorporate mandatory training as part of After Action Reports (AAR). Strong relationships, communication, and trust should be elements in the AARs. In doing so, leaders will have an opportunity to change things when standards are not met. They will be provided with clear examples of deficiencies and given the opportunity to make the necessary adjustments to correct them.

Leaders must understand the importance of providing opportunities for their soldiers to interact. This allows the soldiers to build relationships amongst themselves. These relationships can be developed during training events, exercises, and through various social and organizational factors.

Leaders also must understand the importance of building communications within and among all Military Occupation Specialties, vertically and horizontally. They need to provide an open and collaborative communication network. Communication between experts must be open and continuous during planning, training, and execution of missions and during AARs so that a unit can address the vast variety of challenges and overcome them as a team.

Leaders need to be capable of building trust among their soldiers and other leaders and in the organization. Trust is paramount for cohesion and esprit de corps.

Additional training and refresher training will be valuable for leaders at all levels. These programs should also have modules that identify biases and barriers and how to eliminate and correct these divisive behaviors within their organization. Leaders should take part in Officer Professional Development (OPD) and Non-Commissioned Officer Development (NCOPD) in order to create strong relationships, communications, and trust. This should be done in several stages:

1. Goals and standards must be articulated for each OPD and NCOPD;
2. ODP and NCOPD must be conducted separately and then integrated;
3. Train;
4. Rehearsals must follow with an AAR to compare before and after results;
5. Leaders implement the training with their troops;
6. Repeat the above stated training until all standards are met.

Zero tolerance of toxic leadership. The Army is based on the Army values and Warrior Ethos. All soldiers, regardless of rank, should be held accountable to these. Where sexism and racism may be directed towards whole groups or classes of people, toxic leadership can cross all gender and races and have the same divisive effects as biases and personal barriers.

Toxic leaders destroy the Army values and Warrior Ethos; therefore, there should be zero tolerance for toxic leadership. It should be dealt with immediately and effectively. Toxic leaders should be dealt with three steps:

1. Immediately removing them from service;
2. Assigning them to corrective training, and
3. A probationary period during which time they are without a key leadership role.

Any additional occurrences would result in immediate separation. This should be standardized in Army policy and, thus, added to AR 600-22.

Accountability. While it is expected that leaders at all levels will be held accountable for their actions, it is essential to increase the scope of leader accountability to assure adherence to Army values, especially when dealing with leader toxic behaviors. Senior leaders need to be accountable two levels up and down, and laterally, in order to assure they are held accountable for their leadership, not only for soldier skills but also for enforcing a commitment to the idea of a meritocracy and eliminating biases and barriers.

Soldiers must have access to leadership two levels up and provide feedback and recommendations about their leaders. An external and neutral entity, outside the chain of command, should mediate any interactions so that no negative impact or reprisals result from such feedback. Furthermore, the Multi-Source Assessment Feedback (MSAF) must be linked with the rating chain. Additionally, the MSAF must be linked to quarterly counseling and evaluation. Reports should be sent to the Evaluation Entry System and linked to the leader's evaluation. This assures leadership evaluation from the top, bottom, and laterally, which renders a more complete picture of performance. This is key to identifying biases, barriers and toxic leadership traits. If a deficiency is discovered then it should be addressed prior to the next evaluation. If a senior leader supports or enables toxic behavior, then that leader should be viewed as abetting the toxic behavior and subject to administrative separation. Senior leaders must model and uphold the Army values and Warrior Ethos and ensure their subordinates and peers do the same.

If leaders continue to resist the enforcement of existing standards for eliminating biases and barriers and fostering a meritocracy, they should be given the opportunity to resign or retire.

Senior leaders should be given a one-year period in which to elect early retirement; however, they should be removed from any position of authority during this period. On the other hand, senior leaders who fully support change should be rewarded.

Leadership selection. Leaders should be selected based upon merit and competence. Selection should be made by a board that interviews that candidate. The board should consist of a diverse group of leaders from a variety of backgrounds. Categories and questions presented to the candidate should be based on their past assessments and the demands of the new position. Each interviewee should get rated, based on the interview and how they addressed the questions. The best qualified interviewee should be awarded the position.

Advocates essential for redress. Soldiers who experience actual or perceived biases and barriers should be provided with advocates to aid them in any redress process—EO, EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity), IG, WB (Whistle-blower) and Sexual Harassment/Sexual Assault. The fact that a reported experience of bias or toxic behavior is perceived, even if not proven intentional, is just as important to identify and correct. Perceptions can quickly become reality if the issues are not addressed. Advocates must be sufficiently trained to understand the process and have the resources and skills to help the impacted soldiers navigate the emotional, physical, and cognitive stresses of the redress process and the situation that led them to file a complaint.

Mentorship. All leaders should be required to mentor at least two soldiers during their career. Mentorship represents the passing of experience and good sound practices from successful leaders to future leaders. Mentoring by successful leaders who represent their Military Occupation Specialty and serve as guardians of the organization, culture, beliefs, customs, Army values and Warrior Ethos, will be important in addressing the issues of biases and barriers. This mentorship can lead to the establishment of best practices to achieve the goal of meritocracy

within each occupational specialty, especially among the combat arms, where the need to integrate female soldiers and leaders will be great.

Overcoming impediments to women's effective leadership.

Training changes. Complete, integrated training is needed for active and reservist soldiers. Moreover, changes in training are needed to deal with the biases and barriers between Active and Reserve and to deal with the complete integration of male and female soldiers. As the Army proceeds with gender integration it is essential that gender and cultural biases be identified and corrected. All soldiers must be given the training they require to overcome these internal and external barriers. As an example, all soldiers should be taught SHARP resiliency using practical exercises, LANE training (battle-focused training specific to particular tasks), classroom training, and in commissioned officer and noncommissioned officer professional development.

Organizational change. Clear standards and timelines for change must to be established and enforced to achieve the goal of fully integrating women into the Army and combat situations. This requires eliminating existing biases and barriers and creating a true meritorious culture within a military organization or unit. To assure effective implementation, at the beginning of the implementation of this integration, all leaders should receive training and be taught what steps to take to implement the proposed changes. Reports of implementation, enforcement, challenges, and recommendations must be made on a regular basis both within the military and to the public.

The Army needs to focus on filling their ranks with the best soldiers and not be limited by perceived gender biases. All Military Occupations Specialties should be opened to competent soldiers regardless of gender. Furthermore, all special and elite schools and positions (e.g., Special Force, Ranger, SAPPER, and Airborne) must be opened to all soldiers. To eliminate

gender bias, all performance evaluations must be redesigned to be gender neutral. No first names or gendered pronouns should appear in the evaluation and no pictures should be used for selection for promotion or election to a position.

Changing the male-dominant culture.

Culture change. To change the Army's male-dominated culture, all leaders must be held accountable and should enforce equality policies. This starts with leaders in the current male-dominated culture recognizing the problem within their ranks and acting to implement the changes necessary for eliminating existing biases and barriers. In effect, commanders must be cultural change agents and provide support for activities that enrich a unit and create cohesion among and between cultural groups. Achieving the goal of senior leaders' being on the forefront of these changes in the present Army male-dominated culture is a tall order; but it is essential if the Army is to achieve its goals of a 21st century volunteer Army that fully integrates women into all aspects of its force. To assure the effectiveness of such leadership may well require special training for these commanders as well increased levels of accountability.

Conclusion

As I conclude this dissertation I have been struck by how the interviews and the panel discussion gave me a sense of camaraderie and took me back to my experiences while deployed in Afghanistan in 2008/09. I remain as strong, passionate and devoted to the U.S. Army as when I began this dissertation. As a soldier, a leader, a practitioner of leadership and change, and a scholar it is my duty to help facilitate the changes needed to make the Army more effective and successful. There are many positive features of the U.S. Army; however, it is time to check out "our armor" and fix what needs fixing. This is especially true as the Army faces the reality of fully integrating women into a 21st century volunteer force.

It is every leader's responsibility, to reflect and ponder on viable solutions, and then, together, as a team, identify what we need to change and address it. This is particularly true of the U.S. Army; we need to identify, problem-solve and aid in the changes necessary to have the most effective soldiers, leaders, networks and organization that can be all they can for each other, the U.S. Army and our nation. I hope that this dissertation is a step in that direction.

Appendix

Appendix A: Initial Pre-Screening Survey

Effective Combat Leader Survey

Thank you for completing the below survey on Effective Combat Leadership. This research is designated to target women leaders who were deployed and in dangerous context from 2008–2013. I am grateful for your participation and input.

1. What describes your position best?

Active Duty

Reserve

National Guard

Retired

Other (please specify)

2. How many years have you served?

3. What is your branch and current position?

4. Have you been deployed? If yes, where and when were you deployed?

5. What position did you hold during your deployment?

6. Briefly summarize the main points of your leadership philosophy.

7. Please chose one of the following for your participation:

Interview participant

Panel discussion member

8. Do you hold a terminal degree? If yes, please specify.

9. Are you currently undergoing any treatment for PTSD?

Yes

No

Other (please specify)

10. If you are interested in participating, please provide your information

Name

Email Address

Phone Number

Appendix B: Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Project Title: Women Leadership: Individual, social, and organizational factors that contribute to effective leadership in dangerous contexts?

You have volunteered to participate in a research study conducted by Diana Ellerman a doctoral candidate in the Leadership and Organizational Change program at Antioch University, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

This research involves the study of identifying individual, social, and organizational factors impacting effective leadership in dangerous contexts. This study will include 10–12 participants who are over the age of 18. The study involves semi-structured interviews about your experiences in dangerous context describing work responsibilities, work meanings and practices, social factors, networks and cohesiveness, and organizational policies and procedures, current and outdated, which affected or stifled engagement or mission success during the period 2008–2013. Interviews will take place either in person or on the telephone and are expected to last one hour per interview. Transcripts will be available should your request them and will be sent to you in an encrypted file in order to maintain your confidentiality and anonymity. At no time will your name be associated with interview content and made known to parties beyond yourself and the principle investigator.

The risks to you are considered minimal; although unlikely, there is a chance that you may experience some discomfort as a result of the interviews. If you do, please contact your Life Skills Support Center (LSSC) representative to discuss your reactions. Army chaplains are an alternative resource and your conversations with them are protected from disclosure. The Army offers a full range of support services and materials at the Army Suicide Prevention. Crises intervention and other sources are available to you. 1. Army chaplains are a source on each of the units and bases as a resource. Any conversation with them is protected and preview from disclosure. 2. Military One Source - On-line topics under Heath may provide assistance or a point of contact to make an appointment with a professional. Please view the topic under Mental Care: Army Medicine, Benefits, Coping with Deployment, Rehabilitation, Tricare and Quick Links. You may also utilize their hotline 1800-342-9647. Other sources: 3. The Defense of Excellence (DCoE) at <http://www.dcoe.health.mil/> or call 1866-966-10204. Army G-1 Army Well Being Liaison Office at <http://www.armywell-being.org/skins/WBLO/home.aspx> or call 1800-833-6622, 5. Call Wounded Soldiers and Family Hotline at 1800-984-8523 CONUS DSN: 421-3700, OCONUS DSN 312-421-3700, 6. Real Warrior Campaign at <http://www.realwarriors.net/> and 7. Alternatively, in order to combat stigma associated with seeking care, Army officials have partnered with the Defense Center of Excellence of Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury and information is provided at www.realwarriors.net. Included on this site are phone numbers for the Outreach Center which provides information and resources (866.966.1020). 8. National Suicide Prevention Line is available 24 hours every day – 1800- 273-TALK (8255) or you may access it on line

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> 9. There are also post-deployment wellness resources at <http://www.afterdeployment.org>. All records will be coded in numbers and participants name will not be disclosed during the interview process.

The principal investigator will begin and end each interview session with contact information of the nearest military mental health treatment facility. In addition, you may withdraw from this study at any time (either during or after the interview) without negative consequences. Should you withdraw, your data will be eliminated from the study. There is no financial remuneration for participating in this study. If you have any questions about any aspect of this study or your involvement, please contact Philomena Essed, PhD., Chair, Institutional Review Board, Ph.D. in Leadership & Change, e-mail: essed@antioch.edu.

Two copies of this informed consent form have been provided. Please sign both, indicating that you have read, understood and agreed to participate in this research. Return one to me and keep the other for yourself.

____DIANA D. ELLERMAN_____

Name of Researcher

Name of Participant

____//signed//_____

Signature of Researcher

Signature of Participant

Appendix C: Main Interview Questions

- Describe for me an experience serving in a leadership position with the U.S. Army where you felt effective?
- Describe for me an experience serving in a leadership position with the U.S. Army where you felt ineffective?

Appendix D: Additional Possible Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself – personal/family/community.
2. Please tell me about your professional career – MOS, how you progressed in your career (mini biography), including what engagement were you in during your assignment/deployment.
3. Describe a situation you were in dangerous context.
4. What did you do as a leader in that situation?
5. What happened based on their actions/inactions/lessons learned?
6. What are individual leadership factors that are applicable to your leadership?
7. What skill set did you attain to be more an effective leader in dangerous contexts?
8. How does these skill set sets you apart from other leaders?
9. What kind of training do you believe is required to attain effective leaders in dangerous contexts?
10. How can organizations' support, with policies, practices, and procedures, aid in developing leaders in dangerous contexts?
11. What kinds of formal and informal social networks are established and need to be established to assure a solid support network?
12. How has the 2013 policy impacted women leaders in jobs involving dangerous contexts?
13. What effects will this policy have on women leaders?
14. How will unit cohesion be affected by the resent policy of including women into combat roles change?
15. How will this policy be implemented and sustained Army wide?

16. What lessons have we learned from previous engagements such as Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) and how are we implementing changes to align them to today's warfare and policy changes? What further policies must be implemented to aid in the transformation to today's military challenges?
17. What support/ training/ resources /mentoring is required for future leaders to be successful?
18. What are the organizational policies and procedures that hindered individual leaders, social factors, and mission success? How did you overcome them?
19. How do you think the recent policy change allowing women in all areas of jobs in the service will impact training, organization, and leaders? What training would you implement, to be pro-active, for future female leaders in dangerous context?

Appendix E: Glossary

AO	Area of Operation
APFT	Army Physical Fitness Test
AR	Army Reserve(s)
ASI	Additional skill identifier
CCMD	Combatant Command
CENTCOM	Central Command
CO	Commanding Officer
COB/FOB	Contingency Operating Base/Forward Operating Base Units
CSF	Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (program of U.S. Army)
DA	Department of the Army
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity (as in Army policy)
EO	Equal Opportunity (as in Army policy)
FDO	Foreign Disclosure Officer
FOB	Forward operating base
FORSCOM	U.S. Army Forces Command
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IO	Intelligence Officer
IG	Inspector General
ILE	Installations, Logistics and Environment
JTF	Joint Task Force
METL	Mission Essential Task List
MFAS 360	Multi-Source Assessment Feedback, using views from above, below and laterally.
MOS	Military Occupation Specialty
NCOER	Non-Commissioned Officer evaluation report

NCOPD	Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OER	Officer Evaluation Report
OIC	Officer-in-charge
OIF	Operation Iraqi Freedom
OPD	Officer Professional Development
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
ROTC	Reserve Officers Training Centre
SHARP	Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention policy and procedures
SRP	Soldier Readiness Processing)
USCENTCOM	U.S Central Command
USNORTHCOM	U.S Northern Command
USAFRICOM	U.S Africa Command
USEUCOM	U.S European Command
USSOUTHCOM	U.S Southern Command
USPACOM	U.S Pacific Command
XO	Executive Officer

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