

May 2019

# West Point Women: An Oral History of the West Point Experience and Leader Identity Development

Leslie Ann Lewis  
Clemson University, [lalewis@g.clemson.edu](mailto:lalewis@g.clemson.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all\\_dissertations](https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations)

---

## Recommended Citation

Lewis, Leslie Ann, "West Point Women: An Oral History of the West Point Experience and Leader Identity Development" (2019). *All Dissertations*. 2337.  
[https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all\\_dissertations/2337](https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_dissertations/2337)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Dissertations at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact [kokeefe@clemson.edu](mailto:kokeefe@clemson.edu).

WEST POINT WOMEN: AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE  
WEST POINT EXPERIENCE AND LEADER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

---

A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Educational Leadership

---

by  
Leslie A. Lewis  
May 2019

---

Accepted by:  
Dr. Jane Clark Lindle, Committee Chair  
Dr. Robin Phelps-Ward  
Dr. Mindy Spearman  
Dr. Rachel Wagner

## ABSTRACT

Although women have been at the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point for over 40 years, they are an understudied group. This omission also encompasses studies about leader development and leader identity development. Over the years, West Point has focused its leadership research on identifying predictors of leadership performance and, with the integration of women cadets, merely added them into their studies to see if they had the same predictors as men. Other than this shift, the literature neglects how women's experiences at West Point affected their leader identity development. To address this knowledge blind spot, this study employed feminist oral history to capture memories and stories of women from the Class of 1985, the sixth West Point class to include women. The artifact-elicitation interviews focused on how these alumnae interpreted the way their West Point experiences informed their leader identity development at the Academy, in the Army, in subsequent civilian careers, and today.

The intense holistic West Point leadership experience was not the only factor that informed the women's leader identities. Being members of a small, marginalized group at a male-dominated, hypermasculine institution also played a significant role. The effects of tokenism, sexism, misogyny, and sexual misconduct added extra layers of challenge to the women's journeys. As junior officers in a Cold War Army where they were often even more underrepresented, the women drew on and adapted the lessons learned from West Point to be effective leaders. Lessons from West Point continued to inform the women's leader identities in subsequent civilian careers and in raising families and/or caretaking.

This study helped fill a gap in the understanding of women's experiences at West Point, especially around leader identity development, and was the first study to take a longitudinal approach. Future studies on West Point women from subsequent decades would help increase overall understanding of the experiences of women at West Point, in the Army, and in other traditionally male-dominated institutions like STEM. In addition, a more qualitative approach to understanding the leader identity development of all cadets would help make the leadership research at West Point more in-depth and robust.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation study is dedicated to all West Point women everywhere.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my advisor and dissertation chair, Dr. Jane Clark Lindle, for her wisdom, time, and encouragement. Thanks also to my committee members: Drs. Robin Phelps-Ward, Mindy Spearman, and Rachel Wagner for great questions and feedback.

I would like to acknowledge the women from the West Point Class of 1985 who participated in my study. Thank you for your courage. And thank you for trusting me with your stories. You are my heroes.

I would like to thank all my West Point Class of 1985 sisters and brothers for being supportive of me during this journey. Special thanks to Vincent O'Neil for sharing West Point manuals he has kept since Cadet Basic Training, and Tucker Mansager, who entrusted me with his copy of our Leadership textbook. For Excellence We Strive!

To all West Point women, those I have met and those I have yet to meet, thank you for your encouragement and support. Thank you to the 116 who participated in my pilot study on women and leadership at West Point. Your responses helped me design my dissertation study. I hope to hear more of your stories in the future. You are an amazing, inspiring group of women, and the rest of the world needs to hear your stories.

My deepest gratitude and appreciation go to Michelle Boettcher. Her unwavering support, encouragement, faith, love, and unbridled sense of humor ensured that I made it through this very intense journey. I knew doing a dissertation would be challenging; I never anticipated what an emotional experience it would be. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE .....	i
ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
CHAPTER	
I. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY .....	1
Background of the Study .....	2
Statement of the Problem .....	5
Purpose of the Study .....	9
Significance of the Study .....	9
Conceptual Framework .....	11
Definition of Terms .....	15
Research Questions .....	21
Limitations .....	22
Delimitations .....	23
Assumptions .....	24
Organization of the Dissertation .....	24
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	26
Leadership in the Military .....	26
Women in the US Military .....	56
Women and Leadership in the Military .....	77
Leader Identity Development .....	87
Conceptualization of the Study .....	95
Summary .....	106
III. METHODOLOGY .....	107
Pilot Study and How It Affected My Dissertation Plan .....	108

Table of Contents (Continued)

	Page
Study Design and Research Paradigm.....	110
Participant Selection.....	116
Researcher’s Role and Assumptions .....	119
Data Collection .....	122
Data Analysis .....	128
Trustworthiness.....	133
Summary.....	133
 IV. CONTEXT .....	 135
Context: The United States Military Academy (USMA) .....	135
West Point (1981-1985) and the Class of 1985 .....	144
US Army Context: 1981-1985.....	148
The United States: 1981-1985 .....	150
The World Stage: Early 1980s – Mid 1990s .....	151
The Women’s Rights Movement and Feminism .....	154
Context for the Artifacts .....	159
 V. PROFILES.....	 162
Ann.....	164
Beth .....	167
Cate.....	170
Helen .....	174
Jane.....	177
Kim.....	181
Molly .....	184
Sarah.....	188
Leslie .....	194
 VI. FINDINGS .....	 205
Women’s Leader Identities and Understanding of Leadership Before Attending West Point.....	206
How Experiences at West Point Informed Women’s Leader Identities as Cadets .....	210
How West Point Informed Leader Identities in the Army .....	247
How West Point Informed Leader Identities after the Army .....	260
How West Point Informs Leader Identities Today .....	264
Making Sense of Gender, Military, and Leader Identities .....	275



Table of Contents (Continued)

	Page
Additional Themes That Emerged from the Women’s Stories.....	280
Summary.....	302
VII. DISCUSSION.....	304
West Point Women’s Leader Identity Development .....	305
Making Sense of Gender, Military, and Leader Identities .....	321
Being a Woman at West Point .....	324
Additional Themes That Emerged from the Women’s Stories.....	325
Implications for Research and Practice .....	331
Contributions of This Study.....	335
Conclusions.....	337
APPENDICES .....	339
A: Questions for the Demographic/Informational Survey .....	340
B: Interview Guidelines .....	343
C: Interview Prompt/Question Matrix .....	345
D: Follow-On Questions .....	347
E: Organization of the Corps of Cadets.....	349
F: Matrix of Participant Quotes .....	350
REFERENCES.....	351

## LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
4.1	Terminology Used by Cadets in Each of their Four Years .....	138
4.2	Race/Ethnicity of the Class of 1985 by Gender.....	146
4.3	Profiles of the Class of 1985: High School Accomplishments .....	147
4.4	Context of the Artifacts Chosen by Participants.....	160
6.1	Details on Participation and Leadership in High School .....	206
6.2	Participant Explanations of the West Point Motto.....	268
6.3	The Women's Definitions of the Term Leader .....	273

## CHAPTER ONE

### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point touts itself as “the premier leader development institution in the world” (Barrett, 2017, p. 15). As the nation’s oldest federal service academy, founded in 1802, West Point’s mission is to train young men and women to become officers in the United States Army. History and tradition are integral at West Point. Not only is USMA the oldest service academy, West Point is also the longest continuously occupied military post in the United States (Grant, Lynch, & Bailey, 2002). Located along the western side of the Hudson River, fifty miles north of New York City, West Point began as a military garrison whose soldiers had the mission of blocking British ships during the Revolutionary War (Grant et al., 2002). A nickname for West Pointers is “The Long Gray Line,” a term that refers to the traditional gray West Point cadet uniforms and connects present day cadets with alumni going back all the way to 1802 (Grant et al., 2002). For 174 years, only men made up the Long Gray Line. Women reported to West Point for the first time in July of 1976 and have been “curving the Long Gray Line”<sup>1</sup> ever since.

Recruiting posters for West Point have traditionally depicted a pantheon of famous US military leaders (and West Point alumni) like Ulysses S. Grant, Douglas MacArthur, and Dwight D. Eisenhower and state: “At West Point, much of the history we

---

<sup>1</sup> “Curving the Long Gray Line” is a phrase introduced to the West Point Women Facebook group by Andrea Allen Baker, USMA Class of 1984 (personal communication, 2017). This was the working title for a revised version of her English/Creative Writing master’s thesis from the mid-1990s on women at West Point that she hopes to one day publish. West Point women have embraced this phrase, which conveys the impact women have had on the formerly all-male Long Gray Line.

teach was made by people we taught” (Betros, 2012; “Iconic West Point,” 2017; Siry, 2017). Statues of military icons – all men -- are an integral part of the Academy’s landscape, and all new cadets must learn about these famous men of American military history. Most of the cadet barracks (similar to student residence halls) are named after key military leaders and West Point graduates – e.g., Robert E. Lee, John J. Pershing, Douglas MacArthur, Omar Bradley, and Dwight D. Eisenhower. The most recent cadet barracks, dedicated in 2017, was named after General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., the Air Force’s first African American four-star general and the first African American to graduate from West Point in the twentieth century (Davis, 1991; Grant et al., 2002; Stoelker, 2017). Men of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, embedded in the gendered ethos of military and education institutions of the time, designed West Point to train young men to become soldier leaders and engineers. Today, while West Point trains women and men to become officer leaders in the United States Army, the institution is still male-dominated (about 76% male) and is training cadets to become officer leaders in the traditionally male-dominated military profession. The active duty Army, which comprises enlisted soldiers, non-commissioned officers, and officers, is currently around 86.4% male (DoD, 2015, p. 21).

### **Background of the Study**

West Point’s primary focus is leader development, and the USMA website (<http://www.usma.edu>) homepage describes West Point as “the preeminent leader development institution.” Its 47-month leadership development program includes a rigorous undergraduate education, mandatory athletic and physical fitness program, and

challenging military training in a structured, Spartan environment. The goal is to provide “leaders of character” for the nation and the United States Army (*West Point Leader Development System (WPLDS) Handbook*, 2015, p. 6). West Point’s leadership development program has been honed over the course of more than two centuries and is still evolving as the world changes and the nation and its Army’s role changes along with it.

While considerable internal effort has gone into studying the leadership development of cadets, the published scholarly literature on leadership development at West Point is not as rich as one might expect for an institution that touts itself as “the premier leader development institution in the world” (Barrett, 2017, p. 15). Furthermore, while West Point was all-male for most of its history, even recent leadership research is primarily androcentric. Occasionally, West Point has examined leadership development or other leadership issues by gender or mentioned how a finding does or does not apply to women cadets, but West Point has not focused any leadership research on women’s stories of their experiences at West Point.

Between 1976 and 1980, when the first class with women made its way through the Academy, West Point focused considerable effort on documenting the integration of women. The four-volume Athena Project (Adams, 1979, 1980; Vitters, 1978; Vitters & Kinzer, 1977), a joint product of West Point (especially the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership) and the US Army Research Institute, provided extensive research on gender integration (Vitters & Kinzer, 1977). In addition, numerous research articles based on the findings of this project, appeared in the scholarly literature (Adams,

1984; Adams, Rice, Intone, & Prince, 1980; Priest, Prince, & Vitters, 1978; Priest, Vitters, & Prince, 1978; Yoder, Rice, Adams, Prince, & Priest, 1979). There was limited follow-on research to see how women were fairing as new officers in the Army (Yoder & Adams, 1984), but then in 1983, “West Point discontinued all research directed at women cadets” (Yoder, 1989, p. 534).

After that, some individuals tried to describe West Point’s approach to the integration of women. For example, Yoder (1989), who had been a visiting civilian professor at West Point in 1980, examined women cadets as “tokens” in a male-dominated institution. While she applied Kanter’s (1977) social theory of organization, she argued that the key factor in tokenism was not a matter simply of numbers but rather the occurrence of a small, underrepresented group of women within a much larger dominant group of men, such as West Point. She also embraced Laws’ (1975) additional requirements of external pressure and marginality. USMA had only admitted women because of Public Law 94-106 (1975), a direct form of external pressure from Congress. Internally, the men cadets (the dominant group) did not easily assimilate the newly admitted women into the Corps of Cadets, thereby marginalizing this new, much smaller sub-group (Yoder, 1989).

In another example, following up on his 1998 dissertation, Janda (2002) provided the as-yet seminal work on the integration of women at West Point with his book *Stronger Than Custom*. He included extensive interviews and a review of Academy and Army documents to tell the story of the admission and early integration of women at USMA.

Aside from integration, most research on women at West Point has involved issues that revolve around the female body, such as, physical fitness, women's health, eating disorders, and sexual assault (Beekley et al., 2009; Brubaker, 2009; Cosman et al., 2013; Nelson, Uhorchak, LeBoeuf, & Taylor, 1999; Schneider, Fisher, Friedman, Bijur, & Toffler, 1999). Even though West Point's primary focus is on leadership development, no one has studied the leadership development of women at West Point in depth. No one has asked women how their experiences at West Point impacted their leadership development. No one has asked women how they integrated their gender, military, and leader identities. No one has asked women how they took what they learned at West Point and applied it to leading soldiers in the Army or how they took their military experiences and applied their leadership knowledge to subsequent roles in business, education, law, politics, the health sciences, etc. and in their families and communities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Little research exists on how women develop their leadership skills and leader identities at West Point. Most literature on leadership and leadership development in general has been androcentric (Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2003; Hollander & Yoder, 1980), and leadership literature about West Point, a traditionally male institution, has been no different. Some leadership literature about West Point has examined gender differences or included women briefly, but there has been minimal research focused specifically on women. In addition, almost all the research studies on leadership at West Point have been quantitative in nature and from a post-positivist perspective.

When the first group of women entered West Point in 1976, they made up only 8% of their class and 2% of the Corps of Cadets (Yoder, 1989). Gradually, as each new class included women, the percentage of women in the Corps of Cadets increased to 10%. The percentage of women then increased from around 12% in the early 1990s to 16% in the late 2000s (Kirby, Thie, Naftel, & Adelson, 2010). More recently, with the opening of more roles in the military to women and the abolishment of the Combat Exclusion Policy in 2013, the composition of West Point classes has increased to about 23 or 24% women (Associated Press, 2018; USMA [OIR/Dean], 2015, 2016, 2017). Still, at less than a quarter of class enrollment, women remain a minority in a male-dominated institution.

West Point, like most military institutions, has a hypermasculine environment where hegemonic masculinity prevails (Barrett, 1996; Carreiras, 2006). That is, the USMA culture and training approaches remain androcentric and hypermasculine in training cadets to become leaders in a traditionally male-dominated, hypermasculine profession (Hinojosa, 2010). While all cadets go through the same leadership development program, it is historically a program that has been developed for and by men. Women thus go through this program as a minority group surrounded by men. How does this environment impact women's leadership development and how do they integrate their gender, military, and leader identities?

As sexism and misogyny have been a part of American society, so have they been a factor at West Point. When women first entered West Point, many male cadets and officers did not approve of women at West Point (Janda, 2002; Vitters & Kinzer, 1977). Most made their antipathy well known, and a considerable number went out of their way



to harass the women simply because they were women (Janda, 2002). While the levels of sexism and misogyny at West Point have certainly decreased as the number of women has increased and women became more fully integrated into the Corps of Cadets, sexism and misogyny are still present. In a 2017 pilot study for this dissertation which surveyed 116 West Point women representing every class with women since 1980 and current cadets, themes of sexism and misogyny emerged in the responses across all four decades (Lewis, 2017). In fact, although only asked about leadership, two of the three current women cadet participants specifically mentioned sexism as an issue in their responses (Lewis, 2017).

While the Corps of Cadets has seen an increase in the number of women, the teaching and training environment at West Point has also changed from a virtually all-male environment to one where women officers and non-commissioned officers have become more integrated in the faculty, staff, and administration (Betros, 2012). Women officers, many of them West Point graduates, have served and serve as professors and tactical officers and have provided female role models for not only the women but also the men (Stoelker, 2016). Women officers have served (or are serving) in senior leadership roles to include academic department heads, Director of Admissions, Dean (comparable to Provost at a civilian university) and Commandant (somewhat comparable to Dean of Students at a civilian university, but primarily focused on the military development of cadets) (Stoelker, 2016). The only senior administration role at West Point that has not yet been held by a woman is that of Superintendent (a Lieutenant General position, somewhat comparable to President of a civilian university), and part of

that reason is because there is currently only one West Point woman lieutenant general on active duty.

Today, there are multiple West Point women generals in the Army, the highest-ranking being Lieutenant General Nadia West, a 1982 West Point graduate who currently serves as the U.S. Army Surgeon General (Leipold, 2016). West Point women have served in combat and some have been injured or killed. Three West Point women were the first to complete Ranger School in 2015 (Tan, 2015), and multiple others have gone on to graduate since then. West Point women now serve as officers in Infantry and Armor, the last two combat arms branches in the Army to allow women.

While the culture and environment at West Point have certainly changed and women are far more accepted, West Point is still a male-dominated institution with a very masculine culture and traditions. Women and West Point women have seen increased roles in the Army, but again the culture of the military is very masculine and ideas about leadership still pivot around the concept of a male leader. In addition, sexism and misogyny are still issues both at West Point and in the Army. Sexual harassment and sexual assault have been significant problems not only in the military and on college campuses in general, but also at West Point (Francke, 1997; Office of the Inspector General (OIG), 2005; Office of People Analytics (OPA), 2017). How do women develop their leader identities as members of a minoritized group in a male-dominated culture when experiencing different levels of misogyny, sexism, sexual harassment, and sexual assault?

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how women's experiences at West Point informed their leader identity development. All cadets go through the same basic 47-month program. While West Point has been training cadets to become Army officers since 1802, they have only been training women since 1976. Women are a distinct minority in this traditionally male-dominated institution dedicated to preparing cadets to become officers in a traditionally male-dominated profession. I wanted to examine how women perceived their leader identity development in this very masculine, military environment. Further, women cadets have experienced varying degrees of sexism, misogyny, sexual harassment, and sexual assault while at West Point (Drake, 2006; Janda, 2002; Office of People Analytics, 2017; Office of the Inspector General, 2005). I wanted to explore how women described any of these negative factors affecting their leader identity development. Overall, I tried to gain a better understanding of how women at West Point have integrated their gender, military, and leader identities. I was also interested in how women's leader identities developed/changed after West Point and how their experiences at West Point might still inform their leader identities decades after graduation.

## **Significance of the Study**

Today, women make up about 22-23% of the Corps of Cadets at West Point (Associated Press, 2018; USMA[OIR/Dean], 2015, 2016, 2017), about 16.8% of officers in the Active Duty Army, 13.6% of enlisted soldiers in the Active Duty Army, 15.5% of members of the Active Duty US Armed Forces (DoD, 2015) – and 50.8% of the US

population (US Census Bureau, 2018). The number of women in the Army and in the US armed forces in general has increased significantly since the 1970s, which saw the end of the draft and beginning of the All-Volunteer Force. Additionally, women may now serve in all roles and positions for which they qualify by skill and fitness standards (Kamarck, 2016). How women develop their leadership skills, leadership styles, and leader identities in these male-dominated, hypermasculine environments is important to know. While the military will always have a mission that involves the management of violence to help accomplish national security goals -- and may always be male-dominated, the environment need not be oppressive to women. Women have always contributed to our nation's military, initially unofficially or under cover. Their contributions increased significantly during WWII and have transformed the military since the lifting of the rule that limited women to 2% of the armed forces in 1967 (Mahoney, 2012). Women will continue to provide leadership in all areas of the military. A more diverse fighting force can provide a more effective one. Fostering an environment where women can fully use their skills and potential within this fighting force will only make it better in the long run. Knowing more about how women develop their leadership skills and leader identities at West Point will contribute to the literature on women and leadership development at the other military service academies, in ROTC programs, and in the military in general. It also can inform research in other areas where women are distinct minorities in male-dominated fields (e.g., women in STEM).

## Conceptual Framework

I believe that knowledge is socially constructed. I agree with Guba and Lincoln (1990) that “the human world is different from the natural, physical world and therefore must be studied differently (Guba & Lincoln, 1990)” (Klenke, 2016, p. 21). I also believe that gender is an organizing principle in virtually all facets of our society. We live in a very male-dominated world, and often the stories and voices of women go unheard, leaving us with an incomplete understanding of our institutions and society in general. Furthermore, I agree with the argument made by standpoint theorists that the perspectives of marginalized groups can provide different, valid, and insightful views of traditional institutions (Hartsock, 2003). I do not believe that there is one feminist standpoint, but rather that because women are diverse and hold many identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, social class, and other social identities), there are multiple feminist standpoints. “It is precisely within the distinctive characteristics of a particular standpoint, or the uniqueness of a particular woman’s experience, that we can hope to find new knowledge” (Brooks, 2007, p. 72).

Our history and our traditional theories on leadership have all been male-focused. Many of our institutions have been designed by and for men. The military and West Point are certainly two such institutions. Further, most of the literature about West Point, aside from that on the integration of women, has been male-focused. While a few women have written of their personal West Point experiences in memoir form (Barkalow, 1990; O’Dwyer, 2009; Peterson, 1990; Westley, 2016), historically, the West Point experience has been told by men, about men. Today, West Point women need to tell their own

stories of their experiences at West Point for the institution and others to get a better understanding of how they developed their leadership skills and leader identities. The primary focus of this study is on how women perceived their experiences at West Point and how they felt these experiences influenced their leader identity development. In this set of stories, the women participants described how managing and developing their identities at this predominantly male military academy informed their leadership styles. Thus, although I consider myself to be a social constructivist (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 10), I also applied a feminist lens to this study. According to Sims and Van Loon (2009), constructivism can include critical theory, such as critical feminist theory.

Not only is West Point a military institution, it is also an institution of higher education. According to Ropers-Huilman and Winters (2011), feminist research is “underrepresented in mainstream higher education academic journals” (p. 667). This makes it even more important to explore the experiences of women at West Point through a feminist lens, especially as West Point has traditionally been a male-dominated institution that trains cadets for a male-dominated profession. “While feminist research is not a panacea for all issues in higher education, it has much to contribute to understanding and addressing the gender contexts of colleges, universities, and education policy” (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011, p. 667).

Women at West Point have been a marginalized group in a very hypermasculine culture where they have experienced (and still experience) significant sexism and misogyny. All these environmental features affect the experiences of women at West Point, and those experiences likely have an impact on their leader identity development.

Feminist theory was extremely applicable – and I would argue essential -- to my research topic. The concept of tokenism was particularly relevant. Kanter's (1977) theory on token populations/skewed groups corresponded with the experiences of women at West Point, especially in the first years of integration. When I first read Kanter's (1977) article, almost every aspect of it fit with my own personal experience as a woman at West Point in the early 1980s and the experiences I know of other West Point women, at least during the early years that women were at the Academy. Having read critiques of Kanter's theory and more recent articles (e.g., Yoder, 1989, 1991), I embraced a modified version of tokenism that applies to small groups of women marginalized in male-dominated environments, which was exactly what the West Point context provided.

West Point is also both a gendered institution and a gendering one. The military academy was designed by and for men, and even though women have been there for over 40 years, much of the environment, culture, and curriculum is still very androcentric. Cadets are trained to conform to uniform, regulation, and military standards that have traditionally been very male-oriented. Theory related to hegemonic masculinity (Barrett, 1996; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) was also pertinent as I explored how West Point promotes, whether intentionally or not, the dominant social position of men.

Most leadership theories have been androcentric, as has most literature on leadership, leadership development, and leader identity development (Egan et al., 2017). Leadership studies have also traditionally been quantitative in nature and from a post-positivist perspective (Klenke, 2016), as has almost all the leadership literature from and about West Point.

In order to gather rich detail on women's experiences at West Point, I employed an emergent approach in my study. While some may claim that qualitative approaches to leadership studies in business and higher education are relatively new and underrepresented, they are appropriate for exploring "the many how and why questions surrounding the role of leadership in contemporary organization, communities, and society at large" (Klenke, 2016, p. xii). Because the voices of women at West Point rarely have been heard in academic literature, I employed techniques of oral history, an emergent research design.

Feminist researchers have embraced oral history specifically because it allows them to listen to the stories of women, an underrepresented group in historical records, about their feelings and the effects of historical events on their lives, as well as their recollections and perceptions, in their own voices (Leavy, 2011). In order to hear women's multi-layered stories, feelings, and interpretations and represent them authentically, feminist researchers apply their own methods to oral history research (Anderson & Jack, 1991; Borland, 1991; Leavy, 2011). These methods include using very open-ended prompts; listening attentively; encouraging women to feel comfortable about telling not only the events but also their feelings; and using women's ways of communicating (Anderson & Jack, 1991; Minister, 1991). They also involve analyzing without an agenda and employing researcher self-reflexivity throughout the research process (Borland, 1991).

Researchers have used oral history to capture the stories of women in traditionally male-dominated fields. For example, scholars have used oral history to explore the



experiences of women in the military and have provided new insight into what it was like to be women working in a predominantly male, and often sexist and exclusionary, environment (Brownson, 2014). Scholars have also used oral history to examine the experiences of women in higher education, especially when they were breaking barriers in formerly all-male domains (Gibson, 2009). Among the specific techniques in oral history, artifact elicitation has helped in triggering participants' memories and their willingness to share their stories (Leavy, 2011; Wall, 2012). By exploring the experiences of women at West Point through a feminist lens using feminist oral history with artifact elicitation, my research study addressed a missing link in the history of women at USMA and their leader identity development.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### *Feminist Lens*

A feminist lens means examining phenomena based on feminist premises and objectives. A feminist believes that gender is an, but not the only, organizing concept of society (Geiger, 1990) where men's dominant positions subordinate women in our institutions, culture, and society. Thus, women's stories and voices often go unheard in society and in our histories (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011). A feminist promotes women's stories and voices to become a part of our historic record to enable a more diverse and complete view of society (Geiger, 1990). Such a feminist stance facilitates changes in organizations and systems to make society more equitable (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011).

### *Feminist Oral History*

Feminist oral history is a type of oral history methodology that includes both feminist objectives and feminist methods. Feminist techniques of oral history include five aspects:

- (a) open-ended interviewing that focuses on interaction with participants rather than mere information-gathering (Anderson & Jack, 1991);
- (b) attentive and critical listening that is attuned to language, pauses, and silences (Anderson & Jack, 1991);
- (c) an understanding of women's communication patterns (Minister, 1991);
- (d) an effort to help women participants feel comfortable in sharing not only experiences but also feelings and perceptions (Anderson & Jack, 1991); and
- (e) researcher reflexivity (Borland, 1991).

### *Gender Identity*

Lorber (2010), among others, asserted that gender is socially constructed and performed and that individuals develop their gender identities based on socialization and internalization (Herbert, 1998; Lorber, 2010; West & Zimmerman, 1987). For the purposes of this study, gender identity means how one “does gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987). In particular, I was interested in how women at West Point, who are still developing their identities as adult women, manage their gender identities in a male-dominated, very masculine environment where the roles of cadet and leader are traditionally male roles. Do they at times try to act “less feminine” or “more masculine” in order to fit in and succeed in this military environment (Herbert, 1998)?

### *Hegemonic Masculinity*

Hegemonic masculinity describes practices in society that promote the social position of men, the dominant gender in society, and subordinate the social position of women (and other marginalized groups of men) (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is present within the military and at West Point (Barrett, 1996).

### *Hypermasculine*

Hypermasculine is a term that describes exaggerated stereotypical male behavior and usually implies an overemphasis on physical strength, aggression, and sexual activity. In their research on hypermasculinity, Mosher and Sirkin (1984) developed a definition of “macho personality” that comprised three components: “(a) calloused sex attitudes toward women, (b) violence as manly, and (c) danger as exciting” (p. 150). The culture of militaries around the world has been historically and traditionally hypermasculine. The culture at West Point and the other military service academies also traditionally has been deemed hypermasculine.

### *Leader Identity*

Leader identity involves how one perceives oneself as a leader engaged in the realm of leadership (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009). According to Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen (2006), “identity may also be applied to the process of leadership and how one comes to adopt a leadership identity, which is informed by two key families of developmental theory: psychosocial and cognitive” (p. 401).

### *Leader Identity Development*

Leader identity development relates to how one develops one's leader identity. According to Komives, Owen, Longersbeam, Mainella, & Osteen (2005), as one develops one's identity as a leader, "the focus of leadership moves from being completely on the individual to a broadened perspective to include others to an even broader perspective that encompasses everyone" (Day et al., 2009, p. 67). Leader identity development is a component of leader development, as "part of developing as a leader is identifying a more articulated and complex conception of self as leader" (Day et al., 2009, p. 67).

### *Military Identity*

Military identity is one's identity as a member of the armed forces, which could be as an enlisted service member, a non-commissioned officer, a warrant officer, a commissioned officer, or a service academy cadet/midshipman. For this study, military identity refers to identity as a member of the United States Army, as a soldier, a West Point cadet (an officer-in-training), and then as a commissioned officer. According to Franke (1999), "military socialization [at West Point] ... focuses primarily on instilling the warrior spirit and on preparing cadets to 'serve the common defense,'" whether in wartime or peacekeeping missions (p. 84).

### *Misogyny*

Misogyny is defined as "the contempt for or dislike of women" (Griffin, 2017a). According to Griffin (2017a), "practices that denigrate women are misogynistic. Patriarchal cultures are misogynistic in that they constrain women because they regard

them as lesser beings than men.” Misogyny has been an issue within the military in general and at West Point since the integration of women into the service and the military academy, respectively (Janda, 2002; O’Neill, 1998).

### *Oral History with Artifact Elicitation*

According to Leavy (2011), “oral history is a method of qualitative interview that emphasizes participants’ perspectives, and generally involves multiple open-ended interview sessions with each participant” (p. 3). It is an appropriate methodology of qualitative research to use when one is interested in hearing the stories of participants in their own voices and interested not only in the events and activities in their lives, but also their feelings, perceptions, and interpretations. It is common in oral history for researchers to use artifacts to help prompt memories and stories in participants being interviewed (Leavy, 2011). Often researchers ask participants to bring their own artifacts that have a lot of personal meaning relevant to the topic or study (Wall, 2012). Artifact elicitation can be used in feminist oral history to help women feel more comfortable telling their stories in their own words.

### *Sexism*

Sexism is defined as “denigrating attitudes and behaviours [*sic*] towards a person on the basis of their sex which draw on conventional gender stereotypes” (Griffin, 2017b). Sexism is mostly directed at women by men. According to Griffin (2017b), sexism “can involve expecting women in a mixed-sex meeting to make the tea or coffee, calling women by abusive names such as ‘bitch’ or ‘slut’.” Like misogyny, sexism has

been an issue within the military and at service academies like West Point ever since the integration of women (Janda, 2002; O'Neill, 1998).

### *Skewed Group*

A skewed group comprises two sub-groups where there is such a large difference between the sizes of the two sub-groups (e.g., an 85:15 ratio of men to women) that the larger group controls the smaller group and the culture of the overall group (Kanter, 1977, p. 966). The Corps of Cadets at West Point has been a skewed group for most of the time that women have been at the Academy. Even now, women only make up about 22-23% of the Corps.

### *Token*

According to Kanter (1977), a “token” is a member of the smaller subgroup in a skewed group. Members of the smaller sub-group are called tokens “because they are often treated as representatives of their category, as symbols rather than individuals” (Kanter, 1977, p. 966). Those who are in the numerically dominant group of a skewed group are called “dominants,” because they “control the group and its culture” (Kanter, 1977, p. 966). According to Adams and Yoder (1985):

Tokens are defined as members of a subgroup who compose less than 15% of the entire group (Kanter, 1977). Tokens are those who were admitted to the larger group through pressure from external sources, and who remain marginal and not fully accepted by their peers (Laws, 1975). Women in marginal positions frequently fit in this definition. (p. 15).

For many years after initial integration, women at West Point certainly fit Kanter's definition; women made up less than 15% of the Corps of Cadets until the mid- to late-1990s (Kirby et al, 2010, p. 28), with the percentage now being around 22-23%. However, as Yoder (1991) argued, there is more to being a token than just numbers; being a woman in a "gender-inappropriate" male-dominated occupation (like the military) is also crucial.

### *Tokenism*

Tokenism refers to the effects of being a token. Yoder (1991) defined tokenism as follows:

The initial effects of being a token, or one of a small group of low-status newcomers, seem to be performance pressures, social isolation, and role encapsulation, as well as, for women, sexual harassment and limited opportunities for promotion. Gradually, as the novelty wears off and the minority group increases a bit, the work situation becomes more comfortable. However, when numbers of a low-status group increase substantially across the occupation, the reaction is stepped-up harassment, blocked mobility, and lower wages. (p. 188)

Women at West Point, especially in the early years of integration, experienced the effects of tokenism (Yoder, 1989).

### **Research Questions**

This study addressed the lack of literature on women and leadership development at the United States Military Academy. Specifically, it added a layer of information to the history of women at West Point and how their experiences there informed their leader

identity development. For many years, women at West Point were tokens or members of a skewed group in a male-dominated, hypermasculine institution. Given this premise, the research questions for this study were:

How do women's experiences at West Point inform their leader identity development?

- (a) How do women at West Point make sense of their gender, military, and leader identities?
- (b) How do women's experiences at West Point inform their leader identities in the Army and in any subsequent careers?

### **Limitations**

This study included eight women members of the USMA Class of 1985. This Class attended West Point at a time when women were still new at the Academy but did not face the severity of treatment that the first class with women did. Additionally, this Class was not part of early studies on women at the Academy. Each person's experience at West Point is her or his own, and these women shared theirs. The findings of this study cannot be generalized to the entire population of West Point women or even to the population of women in the Class of 1985. They can, however, give us more insight into how women in the sixth class at West Point to include women remember their four years at West Point and the impact West Point has had on their lives afterwards. Much additional research should be done with other classes of West Point women who have experienced USMA at different points along its post-integration history.



## **Delimitations**

I intentionally chose to focus this study on women from the West Point Class of 1985. First of all, women in the Class of 1985 are an understudied group. Research around the integration of women at West Point, like Project Athena, focused on the Class of 1980, the first class with women, and what it was like for women at West Point between 1976 and 1980. There was also some limited research on the women from the Class of 1980 as junior officers (Yoder & Adams, 1984). West Point then discontinued research specifically on women (Yoder, 1989). Women from the Class of 1985 can provide insight on the experiences of women who went through West Point at a time when it was still a relatively new experience, but not the first few years of integration. Women made up only 10% of the Corps of Cadets between 1981 and 1985, and women were still tokens in a male-dominated, hypermasculine institution. The eight women participants in this study provided rich detail on their experiences and on how their experiences at West Point informed the development and integration of their gender, military, and leader identities. These women also shared stories about how they developed and used their leadership after West Point, both in the Army and in a variety of civilian career fields after the Army. I am a woman graduate of West Point, and this is my class. Thus, I have intimate knowledge of the experiences of West Point at this time and have a large degree of rapport and trust already built in with this group of women.

From within the Class of 1985, I also intentionally chose to focus on women who decided not to make the military a career, or who served in the Army for fewer than 20 years. I wanted to be able to see how their West Point experience informed not only

leadership and leader identities at West Point and in the Army, but also in civilian life and subsequent civilian careers and service. By selecting women who have been out of the military for quite some time and pursued subsequent careers and/or raised families, I was better able to discern the impact West Point experiences have had later in life in a wide array of professions.

### **Assumptions**

The participating women, who attended West Point in the early- to mid-1980s, served on active duty in the Army in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Among them were women who have also served in civilian leadership roles. Because their experiences at West Point occurred during their college-age years – a formative experience at a key developmental stage – as well as during a pivotal era of women’s integration into the military, their memories were strong enough for their narratives and insights about their experiences.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

This research study is presented in seven chapters. Chapter One includes an overview of the study. Chapter Two presents a review of the literature and a more thorough examination of my conceptual framework. Chapter Three describes the methodology used for this research study. It includes the research design, researcher role and assumptions, selection of participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures, as well as information on the pilot study that I did for my dissertation research.

Chapter Four provides context for the study, including more information on the United States Military Academy and what West Point was like when the Class of 1985

attended. It also includes context on what was going on in the US Army, the United States, and the World at the time the women attended West Point and served as Army officers. Chapter Five comprises profiles of the eight women participants, as well as my own researcher profile. Chapter Six presents the study's findings, especially as related to the research questions. Chapter Seven provides discussion of the findings, implications of the findings for research and practice, and conclusions.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter I review the pertinent literature on leadership development and leader identity development in the military, with emphasis on the US Army and West Point. I give a brief overview of the history of women in the military and then focus on the integration of women at West Point. I explore how existing literature has addressed women and leadership at West Point and in the military. Lastly, I explain my conceptual framework in more depth, addressing why I am using an emergent epistemology with a feminist lens and the methodology of feminist oral history.

#### **Leadership in the Military**

Leadership is a central concern in the military, as effective leadership helps ensure the accomplishment of missions (Bartone, 2003). Thus, developing leaders is an important function in each branch of the military.

While leadership is crucial in the military, the manner of accessing personnel and leaders is different than in business or most other professional fields. The military cannot pull in leaders from the outside to fill key leadership roles. Instead, it must develop its leaders from within and promote them (Day, 2013). Thus, leadership development becomes even more important in the military and important at all ranks and levels.

#### **The Concept of Military Leadership**

Just as there are multiple definitions of *leadership*, there are also multiple definitions of *military leadership* (Hannah & Sowden, 2013). A very generic description of military leadership is: “Leadership in the military context is about the human element,

of guiding the social interactions of people fighting wars to achieve victory” (Hannah & Sowden, 2013, p. 291). According to Hannah and Sowden (2013), that military context is two-fold, with both the internal context of the “profession of arms” and an external context of the “combat operating environment” (pp. 292-293).

When the USMA Class of 1985 was in the fall of its junior year at West Point, the Army published a new version of its leadership manual, *FM 22-100: Military Leadership*. According to this publication: “Military leadership is a process by which a soldier influences others to accomplish the mission. A soldier carries out this process by applying his leadership attributes (beliefs, values, ethics, character, knowledge, and skills)” (Department of the Army, 1983, p. 44). The focus was very much on the leadership development of a soldier at the direct, tactical level.

By 2006, the Army defined leadership as “the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization” (Department of the Army, 2006, pp. 1-2). Six years later, the Army defined leadership as:

A complex mix of organizational, situational, and mission demands on a leader who applies personal qualities, abilities, and experiences to exert influence on the organization, its people, the situation, and the unfolding mission. Difficult and complex situations are the proving ground for leaders expected to make consistent timely, effective and just decisions.

An *Army leader* is anyone who by virtue of assumed role or assigned responsibility inspires and influences people to accomplish organizational goals.

Army leaders motivate people both inside and outside the chain of command to pursue actions, focus thinking and shape decisions for the greater good of the organization. (Department of the Army, 2012, p. 1)

The military and the Army tend to define leadership in a general way, without specifying particular leadership styles. Over time the definition has become more complex and nuanced. Still, the basic components involve accomplishing a mission and taking care of and/or developing soldiers and the organization as a whole.

### **Leadership Development in the Army**

Leadership development is a critical goal of the military, with attention to the leader development of soldiers and officers at all ranks. Each branch of military service in the United States has its own leadership development concepts, strategies, and manuals, and the current US Army leadership development system is based on the *Army Leader Development Strategy* (ALDS) (Department of the Army, 2013).

There are three levels of leadership in the Army: direct, organizational, and strategic. Direct leadership applies to Army leaders at the tactical level, involving face-to-face leadership at the battalion level or below. Organizational leadership applies to larger size organizations like brigades, divisions, and corps and is usually accomplished indirectly through several layers of subordinates. Strategic leadership applies to the major command through Department of Defense (DoD) level and involves a lot of complexity and uncertainty (Department of the Army, 2012).

Traditionally, the US Army has focused on direct, tactical leadership development in its doctrine, manuals, and publications (Purvis, 2011). A survey of the literature in

Army journals from 1888 to 1985 revealed an emphasis on the development of direct, tactical skills (Purvis, 2011, p. 6). The primary Army leadership manual when women were first admitted to West Point was the 1973 version of *FM 22-100: Military Leadership*, designed for the Vietnam War environment.

In 1983 a new version of *FM 22-100* replaced the 1973 version. The Vietnam War was over, the Army was now an all-volunteer force, and the Soviet Union remained the primary adversary in a continued Cold War. The Army wanted to focus more on leadership development and how Army leaders could improve their leadership skills. This revised leadership manual brought the introduction of the “Be Know Do” framework that has remained with the Army to this day. Under this framework, leadership involves character, competence, and taking action, which are represented by the Be, Know, and Do concepts, respectively. According to *FM 22-100*, “Be, Know, Do clearly and concisely state the characteristics of an Army leader” (Department of the Army, 1999, p. 1-6). The Army used 11 principles of leadership developed after WWII as guidelines for *Be, Know, Do* in the 1983 *FM 22-100* (Purvis, 2011). These 11 principles were:

1. Know yourself and seek self-improvement.
2. Be technically and tactically proficient.
3. Seek responsibilities and take responsibility for your actions.
4. Make sound and timely decisions.
5. Set the example.
6. Know your soldiers and look out for their well-being.
7. Keep your soldiers informed.

8. Develop a sense of responsibility in your subordinates.
9. Ensure that the task is understood, supervised, and accomplished.
10. Train your soldiers as a team.
11. Employ your unit in accordance with its capabilities. (Department of the Army, 1983, pp. 42-43)

The intent of the 1983 version of *FM 22-100* was to put renewed focus on developing Army leaders. There were problems with training, drug use, and morale in this new volunteer force. Thus, the Army wanted to put renewed emphasis was on direct leadership (Purvis, 2011).

By the 1990s, the Cold War was over, the Army had served in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in the Persian Gulf, and the US was the world's only remaining superpower. Although there was a minor revision of *FM 22-100* in 1990, there was a more significant one in 1999. The new *FM 22-100* addressed all three levels of leadership (direct, organizational, and strategic) for the first time and consolidated the Army's different leadership publications into one single manual (Purvis, 2011). The main focus was still on direct leaders, but the other levels of leadership (organizational and strategic) were included in this one manual.

The combination of events after September 11, 2001, including combat operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan and the Global War on Terror, created a completely new environment that required more strategic leadership skills for Army leaders at all levels. In 2006, the Army published *FM 6-22: Army Leadership: Competent, Confident, and Agile*, which superseded *FM 22-100* (Purvis, 2011). *FM 6-22* moved away from a



primary focus on direct leadership. According to Purvis (2011), “*FM 6-22* defined leadership, leadership roles and responsibilities, and how to develop leaders in the Army, as well as outlining the leadership levels and how to succeed in all three” (p. 35).

The Army again revamped its leadership doctrine in 2012, with the *Army Leadership Development Publication (ALDP) 6-22: Army Leadership*, which replaced *FM 6-22*. With over a decade in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army saw the need to “renew emphasis on developing Army leaders to meet the security challenges of tomorrow” (Department of the Army, 2013, p. 1). The *Be, Know, Do* framework (*FM 22-100*), however, remains the primary framework for the direct level of leadership.

**Summary.** Between 1983, when the first post-Vietnam revision of *FM 22-100* was published, and now, there has been an evolution of leadership theory in Army doctrine and the integration of a more complex and nuanced multilevel leadership model into the Army’s leadership development doctrine and manuals. No longer does the Army focus primarily on direct leadership development, but on all three levels of leadership as the context demands.

**Leadership development of officers-in-training.** The US military devotes a lot of time and energy into developing the leadership of cadets/midshipmen (i.e., officers in training) so that they will be prepared to be commissioned as Second Lieutenants/Ensigns in the officer corps.

There are four ways the US military *accesses* (the term the military uses to mean *selects* among pools of qualified personnel) commissioned officers: (1) DoD service academies, (2) Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs, (3) Officer Candidate

School (OCS), and (4) Direct Commission (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, 2000). The first two methods combine an undergraduate education with military training and considerable emphasis on leadership development. In contrast with the service academies, which are federally-funded institutions designed specifically to educate and train cadets/midshipmen to become commissioned officers, ROTC programs provide a way for students to train to become military officers while attending civilian institutions of higher education or Senior Military Colleges (e.g., VMI and The Citadel) (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, 2000). OCS and Direct Commission, on the other hand, are designed for those who already have at least undergraduate degrees.

Additionally, OCS provides a way for enlisted soldiers to obtain a commission (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, 2000). Direct commission is usually reserved for those with professional degrees (e.g., law, medicine, or ministry), and individuals who become officers via direct commission usually enter at higher ranks (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, 2000). Those who become officers via the service academies, ROTC, and OCS are commissioned at the rank of O-1 (i.e., second lieutenants or ensigns).

As a point of reference, West Point provides about 20% of the new second lieutenants for the Army, while ROTC provides over 50%. The rest come from OCS or Direct Commission (Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, 2000). The Army typically obtains, or in military terms *accesses*, over 7,000 officers per year (Lesinski, Pinter, Kucik, & Lamm, 2011).

The leadership development concepts and strategies of the US Army, US Navy, and US Air Force guide the leadership development programs at the three military service academies and in Army, Navy, and Air Force ROTC programs. West Point's current leadership development system is guided by both current Army leadership doctrine and West Point's strategic plan.

### **Leadership Development Program at USMA**

West Point has a 47-month leadership development program that includes four pillars: (a) academics, (b) athletics, (c) military, and (d) ethics (Callina et al., 2017). Only one academic course is devoted exclusively to leadership development. All cadets are required to take PL 300 – Military Leadership during their junior year. The Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership is responsible for teaching this course which “applies the scientific method, using concepts from the behavioral and social sciences, to the study of leadership in an organizational context” (McNally, Gerras, & Bullis, 1996, p. 176). McNally, Gerras, and Bullis (1996) described the rest of the West Point leadership development program as follows:

Other aspects of the program include exposure to the experience of followership (beginning most intensively in a cadet's freshman year during the rigors of Cadet Basic Training), hands-on leadership experiences (through cadet chain of command leadership positions and summer military training), analysis of past and present leaders (history and military science courses), and exposure to role models (professors, company tactical officers, military mentors, etc.). (p. 176)

Athletics and physical fitness are integral parts of the West Point experience, and the Academy sees athletic participation as part of leadership development. General Douglas MacArthur, one of West Point's most famous alumni and Superintendent of USMA in the years immediately following WWI, penned a quote that all cadets are required to memorize as plebes: "Upon the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that upon other fields, on other days will bear the fruits of victory" (Suddarth, 1981, p. 102). Ethics also play a crucial role in the West Point leadership development program with the Cadet Honor Code, the Honor System, and the desire to develop "leaders of character."

During the time that women have been at West Point, the Academy has had three different overarching leadership development systems: (a) the Fourth Class System (FCS), (b) the Cadet Leadership Development System (CLDS), and (c) the West Point Leadership Development System (WPLDS).

**The Fourth Class System.** The Fourth Class System (FCS) was the traditional leadership development system at West Point, its origins dating back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Betros, 2012). The focus of the FCS was on the fourth class (or first-year) cadets. The women in this dissertation study, who were cadets between 1981 and 1985, attended West Point under the FCS. According to the 1981 *Bugle Notes* (a handbook with information about West Point and the military that all plebes were required to memorize) that was distributed to all members of the Class of 1985 when they reported to West Point, the FCS supported the mission of the United States Military Academy in the following manner:

- A. It teaches new cadets the customs, traditions and heritage of the Military Academy and the United States Army so that they will be prepared for acceptance and recognition by the Corps of Cadets.
- B. It provides an environment in which first year cadets learn, through the use of high standards of duty performance and multiple requirements, the need for planning, organization, and efficient utilization of time and effort so that they will develop a sense of responsibility, self-discipline and pride in themselves and the military profession.
- C. It contributes to the sense of identification and motivation of the individual as a member of the military profession.
- D. It provides a practical system for the efficient administration and functioning of the Corps of Cadets.
- E. It establishes minimum standards against which the fourth classman's performance may be evaluated. (Suddarth, 1981, pp. 70-71)

One of the drawbacks of the FCS was that it implicitly encouraged hazing and the demeaning treatment of fourth class cadets by the upper-classmen, despite these two behaviors being antithetical to officer conduct with their soldiers and subordinates in the active duty Army. Although hazing was illegal and most physical hazing had stopped by the early 1980s, most cadets (and alumni) felt that a demanding fourth class year was necessary to protect and ensure West Point's traditions (Betros, 2012).

According to Betros (2012), West Point's historical approach to leadership development depended on paternalism and attrition, dating back to the Academy's early

years. In the early 1800s, West Point was a remote and isolated location where cadets could easily be sequestered and trained in a very strict and regimented manner. The reasoning, tied to a 19<sup>th</sup> Century view of schooling as combination of obedience and rote drilling (Kaestle, 1983; Stearns, 2014), was that cadets needed privation and strict discipline because such ordeals led to effectiveness as Army officers. Thus, the early institutional mission required a rigorous academic and military program in a strict, Spartan environment to weed out any who lacked the mettle and fortitude to rise to West Point's standards. This philosophy undergirded the FCS's relegation of plebes as lower-class citizens with the side-effects of hazing.

The FCS was deeply entrenched at West Point and supported not only by cadets and military officers, but also by alumni. It was not until 1990 that the Superintendent, Lieutenant General David Palmer, replaced the outdated FCS with a new leadership development system, the Cadet Leadership Development System (CLDS) (Betros, 2012; Grant et al., 2002).

**The Cadet Leader Development System (CLDS).** Instead of focusing only on the fourth class (or first year) cadets, the CLDS focused on the leadership development of all four classes at the Academy. It also incorporated a more positive approach to leadership development based on positive psychology (Betros, 2012). While maintaining a rigorous training program, the new program shifted from attritional goals to developmental ones and cadets were given more autonomy and opportunities to engage in more genuine leadership experiences (Betros, 2012). The CLDS remained in place until

2013, when USMA replaced it with the current West Point Leadership Development System (WPLDS).

According to Snook (2006), West Point re-evaluated its leader development program following the end of the Cold War to meet the needs of a more complex and chaotic world. At this time, West Point embraced the Army's "Be Know Do" model, which provided "a conceptual framework to leadership development at West Point" (Snook, 2006, p. 516). West Point also added "disciplined reflection" to help cadets become more self-aware and thus more effectively develop as "leaders of character," a desired goal of the West Point program (Snook, 2006, p. 516).

**The West Point Leader Development System (WPLDS).** The current WPLDS focuses on all four classes and includes the entire West Point community in the leadership development of cadets. According to Lieutenant General Robert Caslen, Superintendent of West Point from 2013-2018, "it is the responsibility of every member of the West Point community to understand, apply, and continuously seek to improve our leader development system" (*West Point Leader Development System (WPLDS) Handbook*, 2015, p. 3). West Point's current leadership development system is guided by both the Army Leadership Development Strategy (ALDS) and the USMA Strategic Plan (*WPLDS Handbook*, 2015, p. 5). Thus, West Point still embraces the *Be, Know, Do* philosophy of Army leadership doctrine but also realizes the complexity and uncertainty that even junior officers will encounter in today's military operations.

**Summary.** Although leadership development has been a primary activity at West Point for over 200 years, for most of the Academy's history, it was rooted in concepts of

paternalism and attrition (Betros, 2012). When the women in the Class of 1985 attended West Point, USMA was still using the traditional Fourth Class System, which focused primarily on the first-year cadets and fostered hazing and negative leadership. In 1990, West Point intentionally moved away from this outdated model towards one based more on positive leadership and a developmental concept. For most of its history, West Point has relied on a very atheoretical model of leadership development. The administration, faculty, and staff long believed that the rigorous academic curriculum and regimented military training alone helped “worthy” cadets develop into officer leaders while weeding out those who could not meet the Academy’s high standards.

### **Literature on Leadership and West Point**

Research on leadership at West Point has predominantly employed a positivist perspective, and, not surprisingly, has been very male-focused. West Point leadership researchers have tended to treat the Corps of Cadets as a homogeneous group even well after the admission of women. Granted, West Point was all male until 1976. Not only was West Point all men, it was also almost entirely white men as until the 1970s, there were very few African American cadets. When women were admitted to the Academy, West Point leadership researchers simply added women into their androcentric studies to see if they would respond/ behave in the same ways as the men cadets (Yoder et al., 1979).

Research done on West Point cadets and leadership by West Point personnel has traditionally focused on the impact of a variety of factors on leadership performance (Yoder et al., 1979). In essence, the Academy was looking for reliable predictors of leadership performance among its cadets. Most of this research has involved various



forms of quantitative analysis looking for correlations and statistically-defined significance of specific variables. Over the years, the studies included independent variables such as measures of cognitive, intellectual, personality, psychosocial, and physical traits or skills/accomplishments, with dependent variables surrounding leadership performance, usually represented by cadet leadership ratings. At the end of each academic semester and following major summer military training sessions, cadet peers, cadet subordinates, the cadet chain of command, and/or tactical officer supervisors rate West Point cadets on leadership variables. In their studies, researchers used leadership ratings provided by one or more of the different categories of raters to represent leadership performance.

According to Wong, Bliese, and McGurk (2003) in their review of literature on military leadership:

Given that many leadership researchers have backgrounds in psychology or other individual-oriented disciplines, it is perhaps not surprising that a great deal of research has been focused towards understanding individual capabilities of leaders. The goal of research of this nature is to identify attributes of the individual that predict effective leadership with an eye towards designing leadership development programs to enhance leadership. (p. 679)

Most of the leadership research done by those at West Point has been by faculty (mostly male military officers) in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership. This focus, however, has also meant there has not been research on leadership development as

a process or on *how* the leadership development program (or the West Point experience) affected the leadership or leader identity development of cadets.

**Leadership studies related to the integration of women at West Point.** When Congress mandated the admission of women to the military service academies, West Point decided to record and study the integration of women at the Military Academy. Project Athena was “a longitudinal, multi-faceted program of research designed to assess the impact of admitting women to the Corps of Cadets at the United States Military Academy” (Adams, Rice, Intone, & Prince, 1980, p. 1). The project was a joint effort by faculty from West Point’s Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership and the US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (Vitters & Kinzer, 1977). The researchers published four reports, one volume a year between 1977 and 1980. Part of their research addressed leadership and examined how women fared in comparison with men. Several researchers used the Project Athena data and findings to contribute to the scholarly leadership literature with gender comparisons at West Point.

As mentioned, leadership research at West Point has traditionally focused on demographic characteristics and perceived predictors of leadership performance. When West Point was all men, research had shown that high school rank, physical aptitude, and leadership potential scores were the key predictors of leadership ratings throughout all four years at the Academy (Yoder et al., 1979, p. 1). Once women were accepted at the Academy, the researchers merely shifted ongoing research to see if women had the same leadership performance predictors as the men (Yoder et al., 1979).

Yoder, Rice, Adams, Prince, and Priest (1979) studied the Class of 1980, the first class to include women, at three points during their first year at West Point: (a) after Cadet Basic Training (CBT), (b) at the end of the first academic semester, and (c) at the end of the second academic semester. They measured leadership ability by creating a composite score of leadership ratings as reported by first-year peers, sophomores in the same company, junior and senior cadets in the chain of command, and supervising officers. The potential predictors included physical, attitudinal, personality, intellectual, and demographic measures collected by the Academy before the class arrived or during the first part of Cadet Basic Training. They found that physical factors (e.g., upper body strength, running ability, and physical fitness test scores) were the strongest predictors of leadership ratings for both men and women at the end of basic training, with the effects being stronger for women than men (Yoder et al., 1979, p. 4). During the academic year, this relationship disappeared for men, but remained for women throughout their entire first year at the Academy (Yoder et al., 1979, p. 5).

Part of the physical training (PT) in Cadet Basic Training included running in group formations at a traditional pace geared for men, and significantly more women fell out of the runs. Falling out of a run means one did not finish the run with the formation group, but probably still finished the run at a slower pace. The men cadets reacted very negatively to this phenomenon and perceived this “failure” as making the women less able leaders (Rice, Yoder, Adams, Prince, & Priest, 1984). Thus, women who fell out of PT runs tended to receive lower leadership ratings, and this negative effect on ratings lasted throughout the entire academic year (Yoder et al., 1979, p. 5).

Finally, men and women who rated themselves as being more masculine on the Personal Attributes Questionnaire received higher leadership ratings (Yoder et al., 1979, p. 6). According to the authors, “these results paint a picture of leadership ratings at West Point that is related to what is stereotypically masculine – physical prowess, a masculine self-image, and organizational commitment” (Yoder et al., 1979, p. 6). They concluded that “in a traditionally male-oriented culture, leadership seems to be related to masculinity, both for men and for the newly introduced women cadets” (Yoder et al., 1979, pp. 6-7).

Also using data for the Class of 1980, Rice, Yoder, Adams, Priest and Prince (1984) applied correlation and hierarchical multiple regression to extend the Project Athena analysis. They selected 20 variables from the Class of 1980 dataset to determine their association with leadership ratings across men and women cadets. The 20 independent or predictor variables included measures of physical performance; commitment; personality; attitudes toward women; intellectual performance; and a variety of demographic factors related to prior education, parents’ education, and family income. While men cadets were rated higher in leadership ability than women cadets at all three points in time (the end of CBT, the end of the first academic semester, and the end of the academic year), gender accounted for no more than 8% of the difference in leadership ratings (Rice et al., 1984, p. 891). During summer training, high physical performance related positively with leadership abilities for both genders. Good marksmanship scores related positively for men only, and the rate of falling out from unit physical training runs related negatively for women only. During the academic year, GPA

related positively with leadership ability for both men and women. The researchers noted that the women's physical/military performance during summer training had a long-lasting impact on ratings from their male classmates and supervising officers sustained across the first semester and somewhat in the second semester as well (Rice et al., 1984, p. 894).

Rice, Instone, and Adams (1984) examined the effects of leader gender for two six-week cadet summer training sessions at West Point. They looked at how the new cadets (the Class of 1983) evaluated their upper-class squad leaders during CBT and how new sophomore cadets (the Class of 1982) evaluated their upper-class platoon leaders during Cadet Field Training (CFT) using a 64-item questionnaire. The leaders being evaluated were primarily senior cadets from the Class of 1980, so there were very few female leader – female follower combinations. Following intercorrelation, ANOVA, and moderated regression analysis, Rice et al. (1984) concluded that “leader sex cannot be considered a pervasive factor” (p. 20). According to Rice et al. (1984), “there were few differences between male and female leaders in terms of either their success as leaders or the nature of their leadership process” (p. 26). Although this study focused on the Class of 1980 when they were rising seniors as opposed to first-year students, it still only related to leadership comparisons by gender in the first West Point class with women. Additionally, this investigation included perceptions of leadership by both men and women cadets from the Classes of 1982 (rising sophomores) and 1983 (new first year cadets).

**Summary.** Leadership studies during the integration of women at West Point, especially with the Class of 1980, the first class to include women, followed the pattern of studies done when the Academy was all-male. These studies traditionally focused on discerning whether certain characteristics or traits predicted leadership ability, as measured by cadet ratings. The studies done during the early years with women either looked at whether women had the same predictors as men or how the predictors differed by gender. Once the women moved into upper-class leadership positions, the Academy looked at whether there were differences in leader effectiveness by gender and whether subordinate cadets perceived women cadet leaders differently than they did men cadet leaders. Traditionally, the Academy's published research has relied on numerical ratings of perceived leadership with few self-reports or narratives about experiences in leadership development.

**The 1990s.** There was little research on leadership at West Point published in the scholarly literature in the 1990s. In 1990, West Point changed from the Fourth Class System (FCS) to the Cadet Leadership Development System (CLDS). In addition, the Cold War had ended, and in 1990-1991, the US military was involved in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. It was a different world and a different Army, and what would be required of junior Army officers had changed. Although certain Academy leaders had been pushing for an end to the FCS for years, especially after WWII, the West Point leadership now seemed to realize a new leadership development program for cadets was warranted.

Snook (2006) reported that while reviewing how leadership development training at West Point should be done in a post-Cold War world, the West Point staff had a shocking realization: “After 200 years ‘in the business,’ we were embarrassed to learn that West Point had no clearly articulated theory of leadership development” (p. 515). This critical admission indicated a realization that while West Point had been focusing for years on what leadership traits/skills predicted leadership performance, the institution had not examined *how* cadets developed their leadership while at the Academy or – theoretically – how best to develop leadership in cadets.

McNally, Gerras, and Bullis (1996) wrote about Military Leadership, the core, required junior-level leadership course at West Point. They described the Academy’s method for teaching organizational leadership in the classroom and how it was integrated into the four-year leadership development program. The Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership was responsible for developing and teaching this course. The authors described an Intellectual Procedure (IP) model designed to help cadets develop critical thinking skills in different types of leadership scenarios. In the application of the model, cadets were required “to perform three primary intellectual tasks: *identify* what [was] happening, *account* for what [was] happening, and then *formulate* and apply leader actions to the situation” (McNally et al., 1996, p. 177). According to the authors, the methods taught in the core West Point leadership course also worked well with other organizations, and they gave an example of assisting the New Jersey Association of Chiefs of Police in developing a similar leadership training program (McNally et al., 1996).

In the 1990s, researchers at West Point also turned towards a more longitudinal approach to their traditional style of leadership predictor research. They decided to study West Point cadets over their entire four years at the Academy to measure the stability or changes in certain factors related to leadership performance over time. The Baseline Officer Leadership Development Study (BOLDS) used an extensive dataset on the USMA Class of 1998, beginning with the measurement of a wide variety of potential predictors from before the cadets' entry to the Academy and during their first summer in 1994 until their graduation in 1998. Research with this dataset did not appear in publication until the 2000s and made up most of the leadership research from West Point in the 2000s.

**2000s.** By the 2000s, the focus of research at West Point expanded the types of predictors to include more personality and psychosocial factors, including constructs known as the *Big Five Personality* factors (Neuroticism, Openness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness), as well as grit and hardiness (McCrae, 1992; Tupes & Christal, 1961/1992). Using the BOLDS dataset, the research team included gender as a demographic factor in its analyses, but, for the most part, gender was not of primary concern. Rather, the new personality and psychosocial factors were the main focus (Bartone, Eid, Helge Johnsen, Christian Laberg, & Snook, 2009; Barton & Snook, 2000; Bartone, Snook, Forsythe, Lewis, & Bullis, 2007; Bartone, Snook, & Tremble, 2002; Milan, Bourne, Zazanie, & Bartone, 2002). As mentioned earlier, the BOLDS dataset included data from before the USMA Class of 1998 entered throughout their four years at the Academy and comprised extensive cognitive, physical, motivational,



demographic, and other personality data (Milan et al., 2002). The use of this more extensive and comprehensive dataset showed a desire to see more longitudinal effects of predictors on leadership performance.

In 2007, Bartone, Snook, Forsythe, Lewis, and Bullis reported on their work tracking the psychosocial development of West Point cadets over their four years at the Academy and how psychosocial development related to leadership performance. They used Kegan's Theory of Human Development and his six stages of psychosocial development to guide their study. This study was part of the larger BOLDS and included a subgroup of 55 cadets from the Class of 1998. They assessed the participants' Kegan levels of psychosocial development by using the "Subject/Object Interview" method during the cadets' first, second, and fourth years at the Academy (Bartone et al., 2007). Leadership performance was represented by cadets' Military Development grades and Cadet Performance Reports, which included ratings on 12 different dimensions of leadership by peers, subordinates, supervisors, and instructors (Bartone et al., 2007). The authors found significant psychosocial development over time for almost half of their cadet participants with most of the growth occurring between the second and fourth years (Bartone et al., 2007). They also found that psychosocial development predicted leader performance ratings during junior and senior years. Lastly, they found that performance ratings by high school teachers and active involvement in high school activities predicted the psychosocial development levels of first- and second-year cadets (Bartone et al., 2007).

The authors argued that “leader development programs need to take into account psychosocial development and try to foster growth appropriate for that level” (Bartone et al., 2007, p. 501). The authors asserted that while certain experiences may help with leader development, the timing of these experiences could also be “critical” (Bartone et al., 2007, p. 501). This observation indicated that the researchers realized more than predictive factors were important to leadership development. Although this 2007 BOLDS article omitted any gender information, two other BOLDS-based articles included information on women and gender differences as part of their research findings (Bartone & Snook, 2000; Morgan, 2004). I will discuss these two studies in a later section on literature that focused on women and/or gender differences in leadership at West Point.

Bartone, Snook, and Tremble (2002) examined cognitive and personality predictors of leadership performance in the Class of 1998 over a four-year period. The dependent variable, leader performance, was measured with military development grades from both cadet supervisors and Army officer supervisors. For the independent variables, the authors used five factors to measure cognitive characteristics (college entrance scores, social judgment skills, logical reasoning, spatial judgment, and problem solving) and the Big Five personality factors (Neuroticism, Openness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness) to measure personality characteristics (Bartone et al., 2002, p. 326). These factors were all measured before or at entry to the Academy with a variety of tests/instruments.

Of the demographic variables, they found that gender correlated with leader performance, with women having significantly higher military development scores (Bartone et al., 2002, p. 328). Of the other variables, they found that logical reasoning, social judgment, college entrance scores, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness correlated positively with leader performance (Bartone et al, 2002, p. 328). Using regression analysis, they found that gender, college entrance scores, social judgment, and Conscientiousness were each significant predictors of leader performance (Bartone et al., 2002, p. 330).

According to the authors, earlier Academy data showed that women who apply to West Point, on average, score higher in academics, athletics, and extracurricular activities than men who apply (Bartone et al., 2002, p. 333). “What is especially striking, however, is that female cadets as a group continue to outperform male cadets in military leadership performance even as upper-class cadets” (Bartone et al., 2002, p. 333). The authors were surprised by this result and called for further research. The authors surmised that “the increased [A]greeableness of female cadets may lead them to be more transformational in their leadership styles, a style that is, in turn, more effective and valued in modern organizations” (Bartone et al., 2002, p. 333).

The authors called for research into additional predictors of leader performance. They specifically called for more research on “the potential influence of experiential factors, including experiences prior to entering institutions like the U.S. Military Academy, as well as experiences while a cadet” (Bartone et al., 2002, p. 334). It is interesting that they perceived experience as a potential predictive “factor,” similar to

cognitive, personality, and psychosocial factors and something to be added into their quantitative analysis mix. They did not suggest exploring cadet experiences in a more qualitative manner.

Bartone, Eid, Helge Johnsen, Christian Laberg, and Snook (2009) used the BOLDS dataset to examine several personality variables: the Big Five personality factors, hardiness, and social judgment (similar to emotional intelligence, but more like “social intelligence”) as predictors of leader performance over four years in two different settings: (a) the academic year and (b) summer field training. They also included college entrance exam scores (to measure general intellectual capabilities) and gender as independent variables.

According to their correlational results, women performed slightly better than men in leadership ratings during the academic year, but not in summer field training. This result did not hold up, however, in the regression analyses (Bartone Eid, Helge Johnsen, Christian Laberg, & Snook, 2009, pp. 19-20). Women tended to score higher in the Big Five factors of Openness, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (Bartone et al., 2009, p. 20).

In the regression analyses, the only Big Five factors that predicted leader performance were Extraversion and Conscientiousness, and this depended on the context (Bartone et al., 2009, p. 21). Extraversion was only a predictor during summer training periods, while Conscientiousness was only a predictor during academic periods. Neither of these seems particularly surprising. General intellectual abilities, as measured by college entrance exam scores, were predictors of leader performance only during the academic year. Social judgment was a marginally effective predictor during the academic

year only. Hardiness was the strongest predictor of leader performance and held true in both the academic and field training contexts (Bartone et al., 2009, p. 24). This study indicated that context really mattered when looking at what factors might predict leader performance. While Bartone et al. (2009) looked at gender as a predictor of leader performance and measured how women and men cadets differed as far as the Big Five personality factors were concerned, the authors were not necessarily looking at the deeper aspects of the social construction of gender when they looked at how the different personality factors predicted leadership performance.

In the BOLDS, women tended to score higher on the Big Five Personality trait of Agreeableness. According to Barrick and Mount (1991), Agreeableness includes “being courteous, flexible, trusting, good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, soft-hearted, and tolerant” (p. 4). Research has shown women to be more relational as leaders than men (Rhode, 2017), and depending on conceptualization and measurement, Agreeableness may fit with assertions about relation building and relationships. The fact that women cadets scored higher in leader performance over time surprised Bartone et al. (2002), and they called for further research. Bartone et al. (2009) found that women scored higher in leadership during the academic year, and men during summer field training. Thus, context proved important when looking at leadership performance. Finally, Bartone et al. (2002) called for future research on the impact of experiences both before and during West Point. The authors sought further predictive studies in a purely post-positivist approach. There was no call to examine the qualitative understandings of *how*

experiences during leadership development may provide insights into either military or civilian identities or life.

Outside of the BOLDS research, Matthews, Eid, Kelly, Bailey, and Peterson (2006) conducted a three-group comparison of self-assessments on Values in Action (VIA) strengths in which they intentionally excluded women. The three groups included scores of West Point cadets from the Class of 2008, Norwegian Naval Academy midshipmen, and similarly-aged civilian counterparts. Given their research design and the “relatively small numbers of women respondents” (Matthews, Eid, Kelly, Bailey, & Peterson, 2006, p. S60), the researchers only used men’s’ responses. In absolute scores, the male West Point cadets scored the highest (Matthews et al., 2006). When the authors looked at the rank ordering of character strengths, they found that the two military samples had more in common with each other than either did with the civilian sample. The most prevalent strengths among the male military participants were honesty, hope, bravery, industry, and teamwork (Matthews et al., 2006, p. S58). While this study’s results support West Point’s reputation in leadership development, the exclusion of the women participants’ data indicates the importance of further research on women’s military leadership.

**2010s.** More recently, some published research on leadership at West Point used mixed methods and/or newer methods of research. Graves, Pleban, Mundell, and Perdomo (2013) used a mixed methods approach to examine what they termed, “far transfer of leadership,” trying to determine how cadets who had taken the core academic leadership course applied concepts from the course to their leadership duties during the

academic year and then during subsequent summer military training. Lemler (2013) used ethnography and network analysis to study leadership identity development among West Point cadets. Callina et al. (2017) were in the process of a five-year study on leadership development at West Point based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development as re-termed by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) to be a bioecological model. Callina et al. (2017) aimed to assess the effectiveness of the current West Point leadership development program. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006),

In the bioecological model, development is defined as the phenomenon of continuity and change in the biopsychological characteristics of human beings, both as individuals and as groups. The phenomenon extends over the life course, across successive generations, and through historical time, both past and future. (p. 793)

Graves et al. (2013) examined how much *transfer of knowledge* cadets showed after they took the core leadership course, PL 300. The authors used an instrument development research design to examine how West Point cadets applied their PL300 learning and created a scale for assessing leadership knowledge, the Leadership Knowledge Application Scale (LKAS). Cadets responded to closed and open-ended questions at three points concerning what they had learned: (a) immediately after taking the course, (b) while in leadership positions during the academic year soon after they had taken the course, and (c) while in leadership positions during summer training 10-20 months after having taken the course. The authors looked at a different group of cadets for each of the three situations. They had the first group identify the key takeaways from

PL 300 in a survey and then used content analysis to determine key concepts learned. They had the second group describe their use of PL 300 concepts and skills in everyday leadership situations during the academic year. The authors used thematic analysis to help them create a thematic framework and develop a Leadership Knowledge Application Scale (LKAS). They then had the third group describe how they applied skills learned in PL 300 to summer field training leadership problems and complete the LKAS. The authors used the LKAS to help them quantitatively measure awareness during transfer of leadership skills (Graves et al., 2013, pp. 5-7).

This was the first time that researchers looked at *far transfer* of leadership knowledge and skills with West Point cadets (Graves et al., 2013). The authors were surprised by the large percentage of cadets (72% in the academic year sample and 82% in the field training sample) who could give detailed accounts of how they applied what they had learned in the leadership course (Graves et al., 2013). The authors suggested that perhaps the cadets offered more detailed accounts due to the open-ended questions. While the samples included both men and women cadets, there was no examination of gender or differences between men and women cadets in this study. The concept of far transfer of knowledge, particularly about leadership, was relevant to my dissertation research as I asked West Point women not only about how their experience at West Point affected their leader identity development then, but also how they believe their West Point experience informed their leader identities today.

Callina et al. (2017) described Project Arete, a five-year study of leadership development at West Point. The authors used a more bioecological approach based on



Bronfenbrenner's revised theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), with West Point as “a sample case for understanding character development processes within an institution of higher education” (Callina et al., 2017, p. 9).

Callina et al. (2017) described a relational development systems (RDS)-based model for character development at West Point. They built this model with input from USMA faculty, staff, and documents as well as literature related to character development and the West Point Leadership Development System (WPLDS), the current leadership development system at the Academy. In examining the character and leadership development of West Point cadets, the authors planned to explore issues of alignment and integration of goals, the roles of trust and moral leadership, and the impact of bureaucracy and cynicism (Callina et al., 2017). The authors argued that a person-centered approach worked best and that “character development programs within higher education institutions must be framed by RDS ideas that highlight the potential for diverse pathways toward positive outcomes” (Callina et al., 2017, p. 23). The authors asserted that this approach, by focusing on individuals, could provide a broader, more inclusive approach than ones focused on either men or women. Rather, this approach would account for the environment at different levels, as well as experiences within the environment.

**Summary.** While published leadership research on West Point has been predominantly positivistic with a focus on identifying predictors of leadership performance, more recent research has examined other aspects of leadership and included both mixed methods and emergent methods. Newer research studies indicated the

importance of experiences on leadership development, as well as the timing of those experiences, and researchers called for more research in this area. Overall, though, published leadership research on West Point has not examined *how* cadets develop their leadership. In addition, the research done by West Point faculty and staff has not examined how – or whether – elements of the USMA leadership development programs actually help cadets develop their leadership. Before looking more closely at women and leadership development at West Point and in the military, it is important to have a better understanding of (a) women’s involvement in the US military over time and (b) the integration of women at West Point.

### **Women in the US Military**

Women have always contributed to our nation’s military, initially unofficially or under cover. Before WWI, women served primarily as civilian nurses, cooks, laundresses, clerical workers, or military hospital administrators. In the Revolutionary, Mexican, Civil, and Spanish-American Wars, multiple women disguised themselves in order to pass as men and serve as soldiers. During the Civil War, for example, over 400 women disguised as men served in the militaries of both the Union and Confederacy (U.S. Army, n.d.). During the Revolutionary, Civil, and Spanish-American Wars, some women also served as spies (U.S. Army, n.d.). While in most instances, women were not officially part of the US military, they were still supporting the military in a variety of important roles.

## **History of Women in the US Military**

The history of women in the US military shows a gradual change in when and how women could serve in the military from a time when they had no formal official role to today when virtually all roles are open to them. Historically, the US military (and the federal government) resisted integration of women into the military, but eventually tended to accept (or at least tolerate) them more during times of war, at least in support roles.

The first area where women officially became a part of the US military was in the field of nursing. During the Civil War, the Army contracted civilian nurses, both men and women. About 6,000 women served as contract nurses for the Union Army during the Civil War (U.S. Army, n.d.). Because the Army did not see a need for women nurses after the Civil War, no women nurses were affiliated with the Army between the end of the Civil War and the Spanish-American War (*History*, 2016). During the Spanish-American War, the Army contracted women nurses to help handle a typhoid fever epidemic. Because of this experience, the Army created a Nurse Corps specifically for women in 1901 (U.S. Army, n.d.). Although not commissioned as officers, women nurses could have three-year, renewable appointments in the Regular Army. The Army also established the first Reserve Corps for women nurses at this time. Initially, the Nurse Corps was authorized 100 women nurses, and the size remained that until 1912 (*History*, 2016).

During WWI, over 35,000 women served in the U.S. military. While most of these women were nurses, others served as clerical workers or administrators, or as

telephone operators in the U.S. Army Signal Corps (U.S. Army, n.d.). At the beginning of WWI, the Nurse Corps had about 400 active and 170 reserve nurses, but by the end of the war, over 21,000 women had served as Army nurses (*History*, 2016). Over 10,000 of these women nurses served overseas, many of them close to or at the front lines, but none died as a result of enemy action (*History*, 2016). Following WWI, the Nurse Corps became the Army Nurse Corps, and for the first time, women gained officer status, although they were paid about half of what men officers received (*History*, 2016; U.S. Army, n.d.).

Women's contributions to the military increased significantly during WWII. Over 400,000 women served in the US military as nurses, mechanics, ambulance drivers, pilots, administrators, code breakers, clerical workers, and in other non-combat related roles (Mundy, 2017; U.S. Army, n.d.). With war imminent in 1941, Congress saw the need for more women in the military and authorized the creation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). This organization was not an integral part of the Army and thus, the women did not receive the same benefits as the men. In 1943, the organization was changed to the Women's Army Corps (WAC), and women then received military status and the same rank, privileges, benefits, and disciplinary system as men. Additionally, the Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASPs) became the first women pilots in the military (U.S. Army, n.d.), and the Navy created a women's branch of the United States Naval Reserve, better known as Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) in 1942.

The WAC was designed to be temporary with disbandment projected for six months after the end of WWII. However, following the war, both the WAC and the Army Nurse Corps were integrated into the Regular Army (U.S. Army, n.d.). In 1948, Congress passed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, which granted women permanent status in the military as part of the WAC and WAVES and as women in the Marines and Air Force. The percentage of women in the military, however, was capped at two percent of the total armed forces. The act also created an organized Reserve for women in each of the branches of service (U.S. Army, n.d.). The Army opened the first WAC Training Center in 1948. Women could become officers in the Army by going through officer training for WACs.

During the Korean War, over 50,000 women served in the US military. Twenty-five thousand WACs and 5,000 nurses served in the Army (U.S. Army, n.d.). About 500 Army nurses served in combat zones, and many Navy nurses served on hospital ships (*History*, 2016.; U.S. Army, n.d.).

During the Vietnam War, over 11,000 women served, mostly as nurses, in all five branches of service. In 1967, Public Law 90-130 made promotion and retirement rules the same for all military officers (U.S. Army, n.d.) and removed the restriction that had limited the number of women to two percent of the armed forces (Mahoney, 2012; Morden, 1990, p. 211). From that point, women were able to serve in all Army occupational specialties except for combat ones, and for the first time, women could command men, except in combat units (U.S. Army, n.d.).

In 1973, conscription (or the “draft”) ended, and with the creation of the new All-Volunteer Force, the military needed more women. Between 1972 and 1978, the number of women in the WAC increased from just over 12,000 to almost 53,000 (U.S. Army, n.d.). In 1978, Public Law 95-584 eliminated the WAC as a separate component of the U.S. Army, and by 1979, women had all the same enlistment qualifications as men (U.S. Army, n.d.).

Women’s opportunities in the military increased significantly after the 1978 change. For example, women in the Navy and Marines first served on non-combat ships (1978) and then combat ships (1998). In 1991, Congress authorized women to fly combat missions. During the Persian Gulf War, over 41,000 women deployed to combat operations areas with more than half, 24,000, in the Army.

The Army began to recognize the increasingly important role that women were playing in a changing combat environment (U.S. Army, n.d.). In 1994, the Secretary of Defense issued the Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule, which allowed women to be assigned to all positions for which they qualified, except in units battalion-sized and below whose primary mission was direct combat (U.S. Army, n.d.). (This meant primarily Infantry and Armor units.) Since 2003 and the beginning of the Global War on Terror, thousands of women have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the nature of combat blurred lines of combat or non-combat.

In 2010, the Army began to use Female Engagement Teams (FETs) and Combat Support Teams (CSTs) in Afghanistan. These teams of women, trained like Special Forces soldiers, operated with Army Special Forces teams and were able to interact with

women Afghanis, who culturally were not allowed to interact with men soldiers. The women soldiers in the FETs and CSTs were seen as a “third gender” and helped gather vital intelligence and build relationships with the civilian population (Lemmon, 2015; U.S. Army, n.d.). In 2013, the Secretary of Defense eliminated the combat exclusion rule, and women may now serve in any military role for which they qualify and meet the standards. In 2015, three women became the first to complete the elite US Army Ranger School, all three of them West Point graduates. In 2016, women began to serve in both the Infantry and Armor branches of the U.S. Army.

**Summary.** Initially, women supported the military in a very limited way, filling traditional women’s roles (e.g., nursing, cooking, and laundry) and only during wartime as civilians attached to the military. In the next phase of military association, women’s war-time-only roles expanded beyond traditional women’s roles to additional non-combat roles, but they were still civilians contracted to the military. Eventually, women held temporary military service roles during war-time only, but they served separately and at first did not receive the same rank, pay, or benefits as men. Following WWII, women began to serve a permanent role in the US military, but still separately, and it took a while for them to receive the same rank, pay, and privileges as men. Not until 1978 were women integrated into the military without separate organizations. They could fill all roles, except combat ones, and had equivalent rank, pay, and privileges as men. Only very recently have women been allowed to serve in all roles and all types of units, including combat units, as long as they qualify and meet the standards for those roles. While the role of women in the US military has expanded gradually over the course of

US history, women, who are about 50% of the US population, comprise less than 20% of the military.

Today, women make up 15.5% of the US Active Duty Armed Forces, 19% of the Selected Reserve (Reserve and National Guard) force, and 16.8% of the Total Armed Forces (Active Duty and Reserve forces) (DoD, 2015, p. iii, p. v, p. 6). The Army is the largest component of the US Armed Forces with about 1,147,867 personnel, and women comprise 13.6% of the Active Duty Army enlisted soldiers and 16.8% of the Active Duty Army officers (DoD, 2015, p. 4, p. 20). They also comprise 22.6% of the Army Reserve enlisted soldiers and 24.6% of the Army Reserve officers, as well as 16.7% of the Army National Guard enlisted soldiers and 13.4% of the Army National Guard officers (DoD, 2015, p. 68). Although the US military is still predominantly male, women play a significant role as enlisted soldiers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and officers in the Army (both Active and Reserve/National Guard) and the US armed forces in general.

### **Women Training to Become Officers in the US Military**

Officers make up about 17% the US Armed Forces (DoD, 2015, p. 6, p. 13). Of Active Duty officers, about 17% of them (or 39,000) are women (DoD, 2015, p. 19), and of the Reserve/National Guard officers about 19.1% (or 25,000) are women (DoD, 2015, p. 67). As stated earlier, individuals can become officers in four different ways: through the federal service academies, ROTC, OCS, or Direct Commission. The primary mode of accession for officers in the US military is ROTC. Before the 1970s, the only ways women could become officers were through OCS or Direct Commission. At the end of the Vietnam War, along with debates about women's rights and The Equal Rights



Amendment, most civilian schools became coeducational, and women were able to attend ROTC to become officers. Women first entered the Army ROTC program in 1972 (U.S. Army, n.d.).

The other major educational route for civilians to become military officers is the federal service academies. Many argued that it was discriminatory not to allow women to attend the service academies, and Congress certainly agreed with this reasoning. Public Law 94-106 (1975) opened the military service academies to women. In 1975, the US Merchant Marine Academy was the first federal service academy to admit women. And then in 1976, the other four service academies admitted women.

#### **Use of the Term *Integration Versus Coeducation***

The military has historically used the term *integration* or *gender integration* when talking about the assimilation of women into the armed forces. The Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 made women a permanent component of the US military. More recently, after the Secretary of Defense directed the removal of all remaining "gender-based barriers to service" (Arnhart et al., 2015, p. 1) in 2013, the Army conducted its own Gender Integration Study (GIS) and formulated the Gender Integration Implementation Plan, the Army's "detailed approach for integrating women into all military occupational specialties (MOSs)" (Army G-1, 2016).

Because USMA and the other service academies are part of the military and most of the USMA faculty, staff, and administration are Army service members, West Point has also traditionally used the term *integration* when talking about the assimilation of women into the Academy. Between 1975 and 1980, West Point conducted Project

Athena, which has been described as “one of the nation's first systematic studies of the integration of women into an all-male institution” (Corbin Forum, n.d.).

USMA, like the other service academies, is also an institution of higher education that provides its students with a math, sciences, and engineering-heavy liberal arts baccalaureate (Keith, 2010). West Point scholars recognized that USMA was also an educational institution and at times embraced the term *coeducation*. For example, in a 1978 article “Co-Education at West Point” that was published in *Armed Forces & Society*, Priest, Vitters, and Prince argued:

In describing West Point’s experience, it would be worthwhile asking to what extent military education should be distinct from education at civilian colleges. One could make a case that West Point is *not* an educational institution but rather a “school for soldiers.” In this paper, however, we shall accept the dominant assumption in the U. S. Congress, that West Point is primarily an educational institution rather than a vocational school, and should therefore be subject to the same kinds of forces that affect the mainstream of American higher education. (p. 589).

The authors then went on to apply Jencks and Riesman’s (1968) argument for co-education in higher education, which asserted that “in order to educate professionals and specialists, the question is not whether to become coeducational but rather when and how to undertake the process” (Priest, Vitters, & Prince, 1978, p. 590) to West Point. At the same time, Priest et al. (1978) still also used the language of integration. In fact, the first

sentence of their article stated: “We have no definitive empirical study of the process of integrating a single-sex institution of higher learning” (p. 589).

*Coeducation* is the term generally used in the field of education to describe the transition from a single-sex institution to one where both men and women attend (Brubacher & Rudy, 2004). USMA is both a military institution and an educational institution. Its military nature, along with its status as one of five federal service academies, makes it a relatively unique type of institution of higher education. In describing the assimilation of women into the Military Academy, I will use the language that West Point and the military have traditionally used, that of *integration* or *gender integration*.

### **Integration of Women at USMA**

When President Gerald Ford signed Public Law 94-106 on October 7, 1975, making the three DoD service academies, USMA, USNA, and USAFA, as well as the USCGA, coeducational by law, many in the military were opposed to this change. The opposition included most of the male administration, faculty, and staff and male cadets at West Point (Betros, 2012; Janda, 2002). Most of West Point’s all-male alumni also vehemently opposed admitting women (Betros, 2012). USMA had been an all-male institution since its founding in 1802, and many felt that women did not belong there, arguing that West Point’s mission was to train officer-leaders for combat, in which women were not allowed to serve (Betros, 2012). USMA, in fact, provided officers for not only the combat arms branches like Infantry and Armor, but also the combat support branches (e.g., Engineering, Military Intelligence, and Signal Corps) and many of the

combat service support branches (e.g., Quartermaster, Ordnance, and Transportation). Women officers in the Army were already serving in many of these combat support and combat service support roles. Although many in the military were not happy with the change in the law, the Department of the Army took the charge to integrate women very seriously. The Superintendent of West Point, Lieutenant General Sidney Berry, had threatened to resign if women were admitted to the Academy, but once the law was passed, decided it was his duty as a soldier to make integration happen professionally. He had his staff work hard to prepare for the arrival of women (Betros, 2012).

Women first entered West Point in July of 1976. One hundred and nineteen women entered with the Class of 1980. While they made up 8% of their class, they only made up 2% of the Corps of Cadets their first year at the Academy (Yoder, 1989). In other words, only about 1 in 40 cadets at West Point in academic year 1975-1976 was a woman. All first (or plebe) years at West Point are difficult, but the initial year for these women was a particularly difficult one (Betros, 2012; Janda, 2002). All four of their years at West Point were particularly challenging. Sixty-two women graduated, which was a 52% retention rate, 10% lower than the retention rate of their male classmates (Irwin, 1980).

The experiences of women in the first several classes with women were difficult, although not as harsh as that of the Class of 1980. The Academy gradually integrated women cadets into the 36 different companies of the Corps of Cadets, and many men in the still all-male classes were particularly resistant to having women at their school. There was considerable sexism and misogyny and overt displeasure at women being at

West Point (Janda, 2002). As all four classes became integrated and there were no longer memories of an all-male institution within the Corps, the situation improved considerably (Betros, 2012). Yet, women from classes in the 1980s remained a minority of 10% of the Corps, a small group that experienced the effects of tokenism and considerable sexism and misogyny.

**Tokenism.** The integration of women at West Point in small proportions of the Corps fit the definition of “tokens” (Kanter, 1977; Yoder, 1989, 1991), and women cadets experienced many of the effects of tokenism. In her study of women in large corporations, Kanter (1977) identified three negative effects of being a token: visibility, contrast, and assimilation. Visibility meant that the individual women who a very small percentage of the total group were very noticeable and thus open to scrutiny. In the contrast effect, differences among members of the dominant group (men) became less noticeable, while differences between the dominant group and the tokens were accentuated. In the assimilation effect, the dominant group (men) feel uncomfortable with the presence of members of the token group (women) and tend to “assimilate” them into stereotypical roles.

Yoder (1989) examined effects of tokenism among women cadets during the early years of women at West Point and found that they indeed experienced the effects of visibility, contrast, and assimilation. The small proportion of women among the Corps ensured their high visibility. Although many of the women just wanted to blend in and not stick out in any way, they were obviously present. As a result, the women felt a lot of pressure to perform well. Additionally, in the eyes of men cadets, if a woman cadet

performed poorly, this was a reflection of *all* women cadets. The men cadets also worried that because the women were so visible, they would get preferential treatment (Yoder, 1989). While the differences among men cadets were minimized because of the addition of women, differences between men and women cadets were accentuated, even though all cadets wore uniforms. Under the influence of the contrast effect, men's uncertainty about these new, strange women cadets led many men cadets to avoid women as much as possible. As a result, the women often felt isolated (Yoder, 1989). Many of the men also tended to "assimilate" the women cadets into stereotypical roles. For example, in challenges that required a lot of physical strength, men cadets would often relegate the women to peripheral tasks (Yoder, 1989). Men cadets also tended to label women cadets in one of three categories: "bitches" or "ice queens," "whores" or "sluts," and "lesbians" or "dykes," none of which had anything to do with being a cadet or Army leader. Janda (2002) referred to women in the Class of 1980 being called slurs, and Herbert (1998) discussed how men in the military often called women "deviant labels" to try to enforce gender rules (p. 60). When the Class of 1985 attended West Point, I heard other women (or myself) called the above specific terms. While effects of tokenism lessened as more women entered the Academy, numbers alone did not solve the problem. Women at West Point from 1981-1985, during the time that the Class of 1985 attended the Academy, also experienced the negative effects of tokenism.

**Women and leadership positions.** Overall, women did well at West Point, and they began to fill the cadet leadership positions, with a woman from the Class of 1980 selected as the first woman Brigade Executive Officer (Corbin Forum, n.d.). A woman

from the Class of 1985 was selected as the first woman Regimental Commander during summer CBT; she was also selected as the first woman Regimental Commander during an academic year (Corbin Forum, n.d.). The first woman Brigade Commander, or First Captain, which is the highest-ranking position in the Corps of Cadets, achieved this appointment in 1989 (Corbin Forum, n.d.). Today, women consistently hold key leadership positions at all levels of the Corps of Cadets and in summer training chains of command as well.

**Women and academics.** Women did very well academically at West Point, with the first woman Rhodes Scholar coming from the Class of 1980 (Corbin Forum, n.d.). West Point women have consistently won prominent academic scholarships to include Rhodes, Marshall, Olmstead, National Science Foundation, Hertz, and Truman awards (Corbin Forum, n.d.). As was mentioned earlier, the women who apply to West Point tend to have higher academic records than the men who apply (Bartone et al., 2002). Women and men earn similar grades overall. However, women cadets have tended to do better in humanities and social sciences courses, while men cadets have tended to do better in math, science, and engineering courses (Betros, 2012).

**Women and athletics.** West Point women have also done very well athletically and now participate in a wide variety of varsity and club team sports. When women were first at the academy, there were no varsity sports, and it took a while to field varsity level sports teams. In addition, many women's varsity teams started out as club teams, only later becoming varsity sports (e.g., soccer and lacrosse). In 1978, women's basketball was the first sport to become a varsity-level sport, and the team went on to have an 18-5

record (Corbin Forum, n.d.). Women's swimming was the next sport to gain varsity status in 1979; they went on to an undefeated season and won the New York State AIAW Division B Swimming Varsity Championship (Corbin Forum, n.d.). West Point women's athletics teams quickly began winning regional and state championships, and women athletes began winning regional, state, and national level awards. Today there are 10 varsity women's sports teams at West Point and multiple club sports teams.

While women at West Point have done well in formal athletic teams and programs, there has long been an issue, especially among men cadets, with women and physical fitness standards at West Point. While West Point kept the standards for men and women at West Point the same in most areas, they established a different set of standards for physical fitness for women because of physiological differences (Vitters & Kinzer, 1977). Women tend to have weaker upper body strength, and most women cannot run as fast as most men. Even though the Army had long had different physical fitness standards by age, men cadets were unhappy women did not have the same physical fitness requirements that they did (Janda, 2002). Men cadets tended to perceive physical prowess, strength, and fast running as indicators of leadership (Francke, 1997; Rice et al., 1984). They were particularly critical of women cadets who fell out of mandatory formation runs (Francke, 1997). While men took mandatory boxing and wrestling classes, women took self-defense courses. This difference in physical education training further accentuated the fact that women could not enter the combat arms branches of service and were thus "lesser than" (Betros, 2012). Today, women cadets must participate in boxing just as men do, and there is even a women's boxing team (Nakrosis, 2017).



**Numerical representation of women at West Point (both as cadets and as faculty/staff/administration).** As new classes with women entered the Academy, the percentage of women in the Corps rose to about 10%, where it stayed until the early 1990s. Between 1992 and 2009, the percentage of women ranged from 11-17%, with an average of 15% (Kirby, Thie, Naftel, & Adelson, 2010, p. 28). The percentage of women cadets has increased recently with the opening of combat roles to women, and the most recent classes have been about 22-23% women (USMA [OIR/Dean], 2015, 2016, 2017). The Class of 2022 entered with 24% women (Associated Press, 2018). While West Point did not have quotas for women, they did use class composition goals. These goals were dictated by West Point and the needs of the Army for women officers (Betros, 2012).

There were very few women Army officers at West Point during the early years of women cadet integration (Janda, 2002; Vitters & Kinzer, 1977). While the faculty and tactical department staff at that time were primarily Army officers, there were very few women officer role models for the women cadets. When women first entered West Point, the highest-ranking woman officer was a major, and most women officers were not in positions with high visibility to cadets (Vitters & Kinzer, 1977). Over time, this has changed, with women officers (many of them West Point graduates) serving as faculty and tactical officers, as well as department heads, Director of Admissions, Dean, and Commandant. As of AY2015, 13.1% of USMA faculty who were officers were women, about 32% of civilian faculty were women, with a total of about 19% of the faculty being women (Institutional Research, 2015). While the percentage of women faculty is small compared with most civilian institutions, it is still considerably higher than it used to be.

Thus, over the four decades that women have been at West Point, both the percentage of women cadets and the percentage of women officers and female role models have increased noticeably. However, women are still a significant minority both at West Point and in the Army.

The gradual integration of women into West Point and the Corps of Cadets has taken more than 40 years, and the women cadets still face many challenges in a male-dominated, hypermasculine institution. Among the challenges of hypermasculinity, West Point women face sexism and misogyny, as well as instances of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

**Sexism and misogyny.** Women at West Point have faced discrimination based solely on their gender since they first arrived at West Point in July of 1976 (Janda, 2002). While all plebes went through a rigorous first-year set of experiences as part of the Fourth Class System, the hazing of women cadets focused on the simple fact they were women. There was a lot of name calling and disparagement of women cadets, and many were told they did not belong at West Point and should leave (Janda, 2002). Men cadets sabotaged women's rooms, damaged their uniforms, and hazed women cadets not just because they had done something wrong, but simply because they were women (Janda, 2002). Although women are more accepted than they were in the 1980s, women cadets still report experiences of sexism and misogyny (Lewis, 2017).

**Sexual harassment and sexual assault.** Women at all three military service academies have experienced significant sexual harassment and sexual assault over the years. A high-profile 1989 sexual harassment incident at the Naval Academy alarmed

Congress enough to task the Government Accounting Office (GAO) with thoroughly investigating the hazing and sexual harassment situation at all three academies, particularly focusing on the treatment of women and minority cadets/midshipmen (Francke, 1997). The GAO published five separate reports between 1992 and 1994, with an update specifically on sexual harassment in 1995 (Francke, 1997). The 1994 GAO survey on sexual harassment revealed that 76% of the women at West Point reported recurring harassment; 50% of women at the Naval Academy and 59% at the Air Force Academy reported similar harassment (Francke, 1997, p. 191).

Because incidents of sexual assault were also high at the service academies, Congress mandated an annual DoD report on both sexual harassment and sexual assault beginning in 2004 (Cook, Jones, Lipari, & Lancaster, 2005). Although both the Army and West Point have put forth considerable effort on sexual assault prevention training, sexual assault is still an issue at West Point and the other service academies (Johnson, Carter, Caslen, Helis, & Stosz, 2015; Rough & Armor, 2017). In her 2003 study on why women at the service academies are reluctant to report incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault, Pershing found that women believed reporting incidents would lead either to a) nothing being done or b) their receiving retribution from the men cadets. West Point has instituted its own version of the Army's Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention (SHARP) training that includes a cadet-initiated component called Cadets Against Sexual Harassment/Assault (CASH) (Eberhart, 2017; USMA Public Affairs, 2013). While the number of sexual assault reports at USMA have increased, the DoD and West Point have asserted this is because cadets in general are made more aware of what constitutes sexual

misconduct and women feel more comfortable reporting incidents (Baldor, 2018). Still, sexual assault and “unwanted sexual contact” remain serious issues that face cadets at West Point and all three DoD service academies (Myre, 2019).

**Other issues that have affected women at West Point.**

*Physical injuries.* Historically women cadets have suffered more physical injuries than men during military training in the summers’ Cadet Basic Training (CBT) and Cadet Field Training (CFT) (Janda, 2002). Some of this has been attributed to performance pressure on women cadets and reluctance to report injuries, which might be perceived as weakness.

*Amenorrhea.* Because of the intense military and physical training, especially during CBT, it was not uncommon for women to experience amenorrhea, or absence of a menstrual period (Anderson, 1979; McCracken, 2003). Women athletes often experience amenorrhea, so it is not really a surprise that women cadets undergoing intensive physical and military training also experienced this phenomenon.

*Weight issues and body shaming.* West Point tracks the height and weight of cadets over the course of four years to make sure that they are meeting Army (and West Point) standards. Women have had more difficulty meeting the standards for a variety of reasons (Adams, 1980). The mess hall historically served 4,000 calories a day in three meals geared to meet the needs of active men between the ages of 18 and 22 (Janda, 2002). This far exceeded the caloric needs of most women, and many women began to experience weight issues. The men cadets were often very unkind and demeaning towards the women. They often joked that women cadets were suffering from “Hudson

hips disease,” a saying that alluded to the nearby Hudson River and was popular when women in the Class of 1985 attended West Point (Janda, 2002). Some women athletes also had more muscle mass than was typical for the average woman. Although they might exceed their height/weight limit, these women were well within the percent body fat limits. Yet, they had to endure tape tests or other percent body fat tests to ensure they were meeting the standard (Lewis, 2017).

There was considerable body shaming of women at West Point. There was little tolerance for women who appeared overweight. The cadet uniforms were designed for men and often were not terribly flattering to women’s body shapes. This added to the negative impression many men cadets had about women cadets, which only increased the stress and anxiety that many women had about their physical appearance.

*Eating disorders.* Historically, West Point has had a higher than average percentage of women with eating disorders. According to Francke (1997), “not only did fat jokes abound in the male culture, but one out of three female cadets was estimated to be suffering from bulimia or anorexia” (p. 202).

*Dating.* The Fourth Class System and rules against fraternization prevented upper-classmen and plebes from dating, but plebes were allowed to date each other. And once women entered the upper-classes, upper-class cadets were allowed to date each other. Initially, there was considerable stigma against men dating women cadets. Traditionally, West Point bussed in women from surrounding civilian schools to attend dances (called “hops”) so the men cadets would have dancing partners. Even when men and women cadets did date each other, there was a military rule against Public Display of

Affection (PDA), which made it illegal to show affection in public, even prohibition of holding hands (Grant et al., 2002). In addition, if men and women cadets were ever together in the same barracks room, they had to keep the door open. There was very little privacy or opportunity for men and women cadets to date/spend time together in the ways that their civilian peers typically did.

***Pregnancy.*** At West Point, if a woman became pregnant, she would have three options. She could (a) resign from the Academy, (b) have a legal abortion and remain in the Corps of Cadets, or (c) take a leave of absence to have the baby and then return with a later class as long as she was not the primary financial provider for the child. According to West Point regulations, a cadet cannot be married or have any dependents for which she/he is financially responsible. Thus, women who chose to return after pregnancy and the birth of a child faced the difficult choice of handing over their child to someone else in their family who also had to assume legal and financial responsibility for the child or place the child for adoption.

Although women cadets went through the same 47-month West Point training experience that men cadets did, the women experienced it as a very small minority in a male-dominated, hypermasculine setting and culture. In addition to sexism, misogyny, sexual harassment, and incidents of sexual assault, women also experienced other negative factors, simply because they were women. Part of the purpose of this study was to explore how these negative factors intruded on women's leader identity development.

## **Women and Leadership in the Military**

The focus of this dissertation was on women and leadership at West Point and afterwards. Because of this, I looked first at the literature on women or gender differences and leadership at West Point. Because there was not a lot published in this area, I then expanded my search to women or gender differences and leadership at the other service academies and in ROTC. I also looked at literature on women and leadership in the military in general for relevance to my study.

### **Women and/or Gender Differences and Leadership at West Point**

Once the Class of 1980 began the integration of women at West Point in 1976, ongoing correlational studies of leaders occasionally added a comparative analysis based on gender. Those studies focused on predictors of leadership ability, and the comparisons relied on cadet ratings as the dependent variable with perceived behaviors and skills as independent variables.

*1990s.* I found very little research on women and/or gender and leadership at West Point from the 1990s. I found one study (Watkins & Bourg, 1997) that compared the attainment of cadet leadership positions by men and women. This research appeared as part of a conference celebrating the twentieth anniversary of women at the service academies that was held at the US Coast Guard Academy (UCGA). Watkins and Bourg (1997) found that overall cadets were being selected for important roles based on academic and military performance (p. 79). They did, however, find that “gender bias creep[ed] in during the selection process for peripheral positions most visible to the environment” (Watkins & Bourg, 1997, p. 79). Thus, gender bias showed up in staff

positions at the battalion, regimental, and brigade levels. This suggested that West Point was more likely to put women in peripheral positions at higher levels, where they might be easily seen in parades, for example, “as proof to the environment of West Point’s claim of successful gender integration” (Watkins & Bourg, 1997, p. 79).

By the mid-1990s, then, 20 years after women had entered the Academy, the concern seemed to be on how West Point selected cadets for senior leadership positions and how much gender was a factor in that selection. Again, there was no research on *how* cadets developed their leadership. The 1990s was also the time of more longitudinal leadership research with the BOLDS dataset on the Class of 1998. This research was not published, however, until the 2000s.

**2000s.** In one of the published studies that used BOLDS, Bartone and Snook (2000) focused specifically on gender differences. Again, BOLDS used longitudinal data on the Class of 1998 from pre-matriculation through graduation to identify predictors of leadership performance, Bartone and Snook (2000) found differences in predictors by gender. They looked at cognitive variables, including college entrance exam scores, logical reasoning, problem solving, a figure rotation test, and a measure of social judgment ability, as well as personality variables, including hardiness, the Big Five personality factors, and an Army Research Institute personality measure (Bartone & Snook, 2000, p. 2). In addition, they included transformational leadership style as represented with ratings done by subordinate cadets using the Multifactor Relationship Questionnaire. All independent variables except hardiness and transformational



leadership were measured during freshman year. The dependent variable, leader performance, was measured for each of the four years using ratings by cadet supervisors.

For both men and women cadets, hardiness and transformational leadership style were predictors of leadership performance. For women, the Big Five Personality factors of Self-assurance and Agreeableness were additional predictors, while Extraversion, traditional values, and social judgment skills were additional predictors for the men. (Bartone & Snook, 2000, p. 1).

The authors suggested that while West Point used one “standardized leader development program that does not distinguish between the sexes” (Bartone & Snook, 2000, p. 3), perhaps the Academy should consider those characteristics related to leader success in women more closely. At the time of this study, women had been attending USMA for over two decades.

The other gender-focused BOLDS study was completed by a West Point graduate (Morgan, 2004). Morgan, who was not affiliated with West Point when he performed his research, explained his purpose in using BOLDS data as a response to a gap in the literature on “military leadership gender differences” (p. 2482) at West Point. In particular, he looked at how cadets in their junior year only were rated by their (a) chain of command (seniors), (b) peers (juniors), and (c) subordinates (freshmen and sophomores) on the 12 dimensions of the Cadet Leadership Development System (CLDS), which was West Point’s current leadership development program at that time. These 12 dimensions of leadership included: duty motivation, military bearing, teamwork, influencing others, respect for others, professional ethics, planning and

organizing, delegating, supervision, developing subordinates, decision making, and oral and written communication (Morgan, 2004, pp. 2488-2489). Morgan (2004) found “minimal gender differences on leadership performance or style” (p. 2482). Of the 36 possible cases (12 leadership dimensions evaluated by each of the three different types of raters), only seven showed any statistically significant differences, and women cadets scored lower in all of them, except for duty motivation as rated by supervising cadets.

While the author stated that “the purpose of his study [was] to identify the unique characteristics of the female minority at the United States Military Academy...” (Morgan, 2004, p. 2483), he was not focusing on women; rather he was comparing leadership ratings of men and women cadets. Further, he only looked at one year of ratings, not ratings over time, for one class, and he did not know the genders of the raters (Morgan, 2004, p. 2496). Although the author recommended more comprehensive quantitative research, he did write: “A qualitative dimension to the research might be valuable. Asking either graduates from the Class of 1998 or current cadets about gender differences and integration might add insight in interpreting the results of quantitative analysis” (Morgan, 2004, p. 2497). This implication for further research alongside Barton and Snook’s (2000) conclusion that West Point’s leadership development might require adaptation to women’s leadership success highlighted two important aspects of this literature review. First, both indicated an emerging recognition about women at West Point and how the slow degree to which the institutional culture with its unyielding traditions contributed to a *blind spot* (Wagner, 1993) in the research about integration of women in the military services academies. Second, these results point to paradigmatic

single method error (Kuhn, 1970) in West Point or any service academies' investigations of leadership development.

Vecchio and Brazil (2007) took a different approach to gender differences and leadership by examining leadership and “sex-similarity” in leader-subordinate relationships at West Point. The participants were 1,974 West Point cadets who had completed a four-week summer field training exercise where rising junior cadets served as squad leaders for rising sophomore cadets. Using multiple regression to test the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, the authors analyzed questionnaire responses where squad leaders evaluated their squad members and squad members evaluated their squad leaders. The analysis “yielded results that indicated that same-sex leader-subordinate pairings had more positive working relationships than different-sex pairings” (Vecchio & Brazil, 2007, p. 303). However, same-sex leader-subordinate pairings did not “clearly influence leadership performance ratings in a comparable manner” (Vecchio & Brazil, 2007, p. 326). The authors acknowledged that the small number of female squad leaders and followers impacted the study results. The small number of women meant that the researchers were looking at a smaller range of potential gender representation which directly affected statistical power (Vecchio & Brazil, 2007, p. 328).

The 2000s then saw a continuation of quantitative research on predictors of leadership performance that included more personality and psychosocial traits, as well as the possibility of a more longitudinal approach with the comprehensive dataset on the Class of 1998. When gender differences were noted, the researchers reported them, but there was no concerted effort to study women cadets specifically. The decade also

brought some research on sex-similarities of leaders and followers and LMX theory (Vecchio & Brazil, 2007). Despite conclusions about the Class of 1998, which included insights about a dominant single design approach to leadership research (Morgan, 2004) as well as raising questions about the narrowness of the leadership development curriculum for both genders of cadets (Bartone & Snook, 2000), the West Point investigations appear to have halted during the 2010s.

### **Women and/or Gender Differences and Leadership at Other Service Academies**

Because there was little research on women (or gender differences) and leadership development at West Point, I also examined the literature on women (or gender differences) and leadership development at the two other DoD service academies, USNA and USAFA. Although West Point is a unique institution, the other two military service academies have significant similarities with USMA, and all three DoD service academies became coeducational at the same time.

Boyce and Herd (2003) examined the relationship between gender stereotyping and perceptions of effective leadership with cadets at the US Air Force Academy (USAFA). The authors applied role congruity theory to the “masculine tradition of the military and its academies” (Boyce & Herd, 2003, p. 367), a replication of the analysis conducted in the 1970s by Schein (1973, 1975) in civilian business contexts. The authors found that men cadets did not tend to see women as leaders, while women cadets did (Boyce & Heard, 2003). Boyce and Herd (2003) also found that more senior men cadets had stronger masculine gender role stereotypes than did freshmen men cadets and that having more experience with women leaders did not affect men cadets’ gender role

stereotypes of successful leaders (Boyce & Herd, 2003, p. 365). Lastly, Boyce and Herd (2003) found that women who were successful cadet leaders felt that both women and men could make good leaders (p. 365).

This research showed that more than 25 years after women had been admitted to USAFA, men cadets had masculine gender stereotypes of leaders similar to civilian men from the 1970s (Boyce & Herd, 2003). Further, more time in the military environment seemed to increase the men's gender stereotyping. This finding carries an implication that the culture at USAFA was still very masculine and traditional.

Shepherd and Horner (2010) examined four indicators of leadership development in a military undergraduate environment. In the first phase of their project, the authors used Komives' Leader Identity Development (LID) model (2006) to review the military leadership curricula at service academies and military colleges. Given their analysis of the curricula, they decided that leadership development was, in fact, delivered to students at these institutions. In the second phase of their study, they conducted a quantitative study of the Class of 2007 at a "highly selective, East Coast [US] military college" (Shepherd & Horner, 2010, p. 24). Shepard and Horner investigated four potential indicators of leadership development over the four years: (a) company ranking, (b) leadership course grade, (c) GPA, and (d) varsity athletic participation (Shepherd & Horner, p. 18). They used "aptitude for commission grade" (p. 18) as the dependent variable. They found one independent variable, "company rankings by peers was significant regardless of gender and ethnicity" (Shepherd & Horner, 2010, p. 18). They also found that for women in this anonymized military service academy, company ratings

by peers and GPA were positive predictors of leadership, while participation in varsity sports was a negative predictor. Overall, these findings, except for participation in varsity sports, mirrored the performance predictor research from West Point (Bartone & Snook, 2000; Bartone et al., 2002; Bartone et al., 2009).

Like West Point, the other service academies did not focus leadership research specifically on women. They performed comparative analyses on gender differences in perceptions of leader variables and associated constructs. Also, like West Point, the other service academies' studies used behavioral and post-positivistic theories with hypotheses, construct testing, and modeling as opposed to delving into explorations and descriptions of leadership development experiences among any of the academies' students.

### **Women and/or Gender Differences and Leadership in the Military**

Because there was relatively little leadership literature specifically about women at West Point or the other service academies, I looked more broadly at women and leadership in the military. Again, while I found considerable literature on leadership development in the military, little of it focused specifically on women. According to Wong et al. (2003) in their literature review on military leadership, "there have been very few studies examining the role of gender and military leadership" (p. 681). Despite Wong and associates' 2003 assertion, I found a recent study on the Army National Guard (Manke, 2015) as well as two other studies on the Canadian military (Febbraro, 2003) and the maritime industry (Ortega et al., 2015), respectively.

Manke (2015) examined women officers and leadership development in the Army National Guard. She examined the women officers' narratives about their lives in the

Minnesota Army National Guard and how they perceived their professional development in a male-dominated environment. The author interviewed nine officers with ranks from captain to lieutenant colonel. She found three major themes among the responses: (a) personal and professional relationships, (b) leadership strategies, and (c) operational experiences and assignments (Manke, 2015, p. 11). According to Manke (2015), “the themes revealed the multifaceted dimensions of female officers and their experience with leader development. The findings suggest a stronger need for leader development programs in the military” (p. 11). The author was trying to fill a gap in the literature on the role of gender and military leadership, to which her exploratory study contributed by uncovering issues in how women officers talked about their leadership.

In her report to the Canadian Department of Defence, Febbraro (2003) studied women in the combat arms branches (infantry, armor, field artillery, and combat engineers) of the Canadian Army. She conducted semi-structured interviews with 26 women, whom she identified as “leaders” (eight officers) and “followers” (18 non-commissioned officers) (Febbraro, 2003, p. iii). She was interested in knowing what these women considered effective leadership qualities and then how they perceived leader effectiveness in other women service members. Febbraro (2003) chose a qualitative research design because previous studies had depended on quantitative methods and she wanted to get more detailed and nuanced perceptions (p. 11). Her study had contradictory findings. On the one hand, all the participants identified both masculine (i.e., task-oriented) and feminine (i.e., person-oriented) attributes as being part of effective leadership (Febbraro, 2003, p. 60). Additionally, the eight leaders (i.e., officers)

described themselves as using approaches to leadership that included both masculine and feminine attributes and even mentioned how they felt using feminine attributes made them more effective (Febbraro, 2003, p. 60). On the other hand, many of the participants perceived the use of feminine attributes by women leaders as negative, and about half of the followers (i.e., non-commissioned officers) stated that women leaders in the military needed to use more masculine attributes in order to be seen as effective (Febbraro, 2003, p. 60). Febbraro's results raised more questions for further research in US military contexts.

In a study of women officers in the maritime industry, Ortega et al. (2015) found that these women officers tended to underestimate their leadership skills while men officers tended to overestimate them. More specifically, women officers tended to underestimate their positive leadership skills and be overly critical of their negative leadership skills, while men officers tended to do the exact opposite (Ortega et al., 2015, p. 12). An additional finding was that co-workers tended to rate women officers slightly higher on positive leadership skills than men officers, with no discernible difference in negative leadership skills (Ortega et al., 2015, p. 12). The research team concluded that women maritime officers tended to have noticeably lower self-esteem than male officers. While this study involved officers in the maritime industry, it made me wonder how the self-esteem of men and women cadets at West Point and other service academies compared. If there was a similar pattern of self-esteem by gender at the service academies, how might that affect cadets' leader identity development?



The broader literature on women and leadership in the military and extra-military organizations offered more exploratory studies focused on women officers' self-described journeys of leadership and leadership development. These studies looked more explicitly and deeply at women's experiences, feelings, and perceptions. Such studies provided a foundation for studies examining women's perceptions of their leader identity development in the context of the U.S. services academies, generally, and specifically, for the purposes of this project, addressing the question of how West Point shaped such experiences over time.

### **Leader Identity Development**

According to Day et al. (2009), *leader identity* is “how one thinks of oneself as a leader; the subcomponent of one's identity or self-concept related to being a leader” (p. 299). Leader identity development is a subset of leadership development. There are multiple leader identity development theories. The most well-known college student development theory is Komives' Leader Identity Development (LID) model (Komives et al., 2005; Komives et al., 2006). At least one study raised a different approach to leader identity development based on a revised bioecological model of human development by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006). Another recent proposal suggested a women's leader identity model (Le Ber et al., 2017). These and other studies suggested the relevance of studying the leader identity development of women at West Point (Egan et al., 2017; Fisher & Fox-Kirk, 2015).

### **Komives' Leader Identity Development Model**

Komives' model is "a stage-based model of leadership identity development (LID) that resulted from a grounded theory study" (Komives et al., 2006, p. 401). The LID model has six stages and depicts "a developmental process of how students situate themselves in the construction of leadership over time" (Komives et al., 2006, p. 403). Komives et al. (2005) wanted to understand students' processes when developing a leader identity.

While this model was designed around the leader identity development of college students, it does not take into account gender. Furthermore, it is geared for a civilian undergraduate environment and not a military one. It was not my intention to try to fit the women in my study into different phases of a model, but rather to find out more about what their experiences were and how they felt those experiences informed their leader identity development.

### **A Third-Phase, Bronfenbrenner Model of Human Development**

Several scholars have proposed approaches to leader identity development based on an update of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socio-ecological model of human development referenced now as a bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Egan et al., 2017; Fisher & Fox-Kirk, 2015; Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Egan et al. (2017) developed what they termed the *capacious model of leadership identities construction*, which looks at leadership identity construction through multiple lenses. According to Egan et al. (2017), the androcentric nature of most leadership theories and literature has implied that leadership is a male or masculine gender role, thus making it more challenging for

women (or anyone else who does not fit this “norm”) to develop a leader identity. Claiming the use of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological approach, what some claim is a third phase of his human development theory (Rosa & Tudge, 2013), Egan et al. (2017) asserted that context dominantly shapes leaders and their actions. Each individual develops a unique leadership identity model that changes with “a lifetime of experiences and in particular environments” (Egan et al., 2017, p. 125). These theorists used the term *capaciousness* to indicate “the space and fluidity for individuals to explore and construct their leadership identities with movement, reflection, flexibility, and potential” (Egan et al., 2017, p. 125). They posited that “leadership identities are multifaceted and changeable over space/context and time/life, and that an individual may hold more than one conceptualization of leadership identity at a time” (Egan et al., 2017, p. 126). While the capaciousness model provides an alternative to androcentric models, it is appropriate for anyone, not just women (Egan et al., 2017).

### **Women and Leader Identity Development**

According to Karelaia and Guillen (2014), “surprisingly little research exists on how women leaders see themselves and how they experience leadership roles” (p. 204). Le Ber et al. (2017) used collaborative autoethnography to find out more about women’s leader identity development, especially during childhood, adolescence, and into young adulthood. The seven women participant-researchers “reflected upon [their] own key leader identity development experiences and leader identity trajectories to construct individual leader identity development narratives” (Le Ber et al., 2017, p. 230).

In writing and analyzing their autoethnographies, Le Ber et al. (2017) found:

1. formation of leader identities in childhood that were “not intentional” (p. 232);
2. divergence of leader identities in adolescence, with some young women “becoming more confident as leaders and finding social support in those roles” (p. 233) and others “rejecting leadership roles and labels in order to be more socially accepted” (p. 233) or “withdrawing” to find themselves (p. 233); and
3. leader identity development in college and early adulthood that was “not in a linear progression” and often involved “experiencing sudden advances and discouraging setbacks” (p. 233).

The authors also found that women’s leader identity development proceeded with four overarching themes: “voice,” “experiential learning,” “resilience,” and “giftedness and associated responsibilities” (Le Ber et al. 2017, pp. 235-238).

From this grounded approach, Le Ber et al. (2017) developed a model to explain the integration of gender identity and an “other” social identity (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, sexual identity, etc.) with leader identity. This nascent grounded theory approach offered an alternative to the dominance of behavioral and perceptual theory-testing designs used thus far in military studies.

### **Leader Identity Development in the Military**

The military has not focused on leader identity development as much as it has focused on leader development and leadership development. The Army has traditionally focused its leadership doctrine and manuals on direct leadership, which involves face-to-face leadership and interactions with soldiers at the tactical level (i.e., squad, platoon, company, and battalion levels). The Army’s *Be, Know, Do* framework (*FM 22-100*)

focuses on a leader developing character, competence (i.e., tactical and technical proficiency), and the ability to take appropriate action. This approach represents a behavioral and skills-based stance and does not focus on the socio-cognitive or developmental aspects of identity per se. Nevertheless, a leader's identity is an important aspect of her or his enactment of leadership. Egan et al. (2017) stated "construction of a leadership identity is integral to an individual's leadership and entails a complex process of identity work" (p. 122).

**Women and leader identity development in the military.** While there was not much literature devoted to women and leadership in the military, even less focused on women and leader identity development in the military. I found one recent study that addressed the interaction of gender, leader, and military identities in 33 women senior leaders in both the police force and the US Army (Gregory, 2017). Gregory (2017) was interested in what characteristics made these women effective senior leaders in male-dominated, masculine professions. He analyzed the women's stories of their experiences and how they described navigating obstacles and barriers. Gregory (2017) chose a phenomenological approach to provide "women leaders the opportunity to express where they [were] as women, where they [were] as leaders, and where they [were] within their organizations as leaders" (p. 18). He found that senior women leaders in both the police and the Army were "care-givers, selfless servants, over-achievers, and great communicators" (p. vii). Transformational leadership resonated with most of the women senior leaders, and many described "the ability to listen to their subordinates and solicit input from their staff to create a collaborative environment" (pp. 182-183). The women

also talked about the challenges they faced in male-dominated organizations, lack of access to mentors, and the importance of resilience to their success (Gregory, 2017).

**Leader identity development at West Point.** I found scant research that focused specifically on leader identity development at West Point. Lemler (2013) used ethnography and network analysis in his dissertation on leader identity development at West Point. Although he did not focus on women or even address gender per se, he did include women in his study and had quotes from some women cadets. In his mixed methods, three-article dissertation, Lemler (2013) proposed a new leader identity development model that included phases for “leader identity stagnation” (p. 19) and “leader identity destruction” (p. 20) and described how individuals move in and out of different phases. In other words, he did not perceive leader identity development as continually forward and increasing. This perspective on leader identity development was thus very similar to that of Le Ber et al. (2017), who described the leader identity development of young adult women as “not in a linear progression” and “more like the childhood game of Chutes & Ladders” (p. 233).

Lemler (2013) used network analysis to examine cadet companies at West Point. He also did extensive interviewing of cadets, both men and women. He provided insight on leader identity development of cadets who attended West Point between 2011 and 2013 and thus fell under the current West Point Leader Development System (WPLDS). While Lemler (2013) included women in his study, he did not examine results by gender. I did not find any literature that focused specifically on women and/or gender and leader identity development at West Point.

**Women and/or gender and leader identity development at other service academies or in ROTC.** Because I did not find any literature on women and/or gender and leader identity development at West Point, I looked for leader identity development research about the other services academies and ROTC.

In her narrative inquiry dissertation, Mahoney (2012) explored how women ROTC cadets at a Senior Military College wrestled with their gender, military, and leadership identities. This study was very relevant to mine as I explored how West Point women made sense of their gender, military, and leadership identities. Mahoney (2012) found that women ROTC cadets felt they had to “appear more masculine than civilian women to reach the level of respect necessary for them to be successful leaders in a military environment” (p. 145). The ROTC women also felt their accomplishments and leadership skills were often undervalued because of their gender, and despite their reports of having to work “twice as hard” as their men peers (Mahoney, 2012, p. 141). According to Mahoney (2012), the ROTC women who aligned themselves with the hypermasculine values of the military seemed to be more successful leaders in this male-dominated environment. “Female cadets balance their gender by aligning themselves with the military patriarchy and abject all things feminine as weak and unworthy of military inclusion” (Mahoney, 2012, p. 144). Although the ROTC experience is somewhat different than the service academy experience, this study provided insight into how women negotiated gender, military, and leadership identities in a male-dominated military environment where cadets were training to become officers.

## **Formative and Lived Experiences and Leader Identity Development**

Literature has supported the impact of formative experiences on leadership development. Olivares (2011) discussed “momentous events” as being formative and capable of informing leadership development. Olivares (2011) drew on Pillemer (2001)’s definition of *momentous events* as events that occur at a specific time and place and are “distinctive, circumscribed, and highly emotional” (p. 123). How one then processes such momentous events influences how these key events inform leadership development. The four-year West Point experience would probably qualify as far more than a “momentous event,” but one could argue the intense, holistic West Point experience is a very formative one.

There is not as much literature on formative experiences and leader identity development. However, Lemler’s (2013) proposed model for organizational leader identity development was based on the experiences of cadets going through West Point. He was looking at the West Point experience as primarily the 47-month West Point leadership development experience. He did not consider gender in his studies, and he did not include the experiences that are unique to women cadets in a male-dominated, very masculine military environment. He also did not look at the impact of the formative West Point experience over time. However, he certainly was looking at the impact of West Point as a formative experience. In my study, I was interested in seeing how the West Point experience informed women’s leader identity development not just at West Point but over the courses of their lives.



There is also literature that discusses how one's lived experiences in general could inform one's leadership development and style (Kempster, 2006; Mumford, Marks, Connelly, & Zaccaro, 2000). There is scant literature on lived experiences and leader identity development. Egan et al. (2017), however, did discuss one's individual unique leader identity development as "changing with a lifetime of experiences" (p. 125), and Le Ber et al. (2017) examined the role of "experiential learning" in women's leader identity development over time and the impact of "sudden advances or discouraging setbacks" (p. 233). There is no literature on how West Point women's lived experiences have informed their leader identity development over the courses of their lives.

The women in this study have not only their formative West Point experiences but also their Army experiences and experiences in subsequent civilian careers and/or raising their children/taking care of family members. All these experiences informed their leader identities.

### **Conceptualization of the Study**

Since at least the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, researchers of West Point's leadership development programs have focused on predictor traits or characteristics of strong leadership performance. Their post-positivist approach used perceptions of behaviors and traits for quantitative modeling of leadership. When women entered the Academy, researchers added them into the line of research underway and merely shifted their modeling to compare perceptions of leadership by gender.

Somewhat surprisingly for an institution that touts itself as the "preeminent leader development institution" on the homepage of its website (<https://www.usma.edu>), West

Point has not focused on research that examines *how* cadets develop their leadership or leader identities. Instead, they have tended to presume inseparability of the West Point mission and the West Point experience, which, by definition, ought to develop cadets into officers and leaders for the Army. Wagner (1993) deemed this sort of presumption a pitfall for knowledge development and termed it a “blind spot” (p. 16). The current literature on West Point leadership development and results reveals a *blind spot* in that it fails to address the how and why of leadership development.

Given this blind spot and the associated singular epistemology of most of the leadership research done on West Point, neither men’s nor women’s voices have been heard in relationship to their experiences in USMA’s leadership development program or in descriptions of their leader identities in the military or in civilian roles. Because women, a significant minority in this male-dominated military institution, become officer leaders in the US Army, this blind spot needs to be overcome to understand their descriptions of identity and leadership development in a profession that purportedly values leaders. To date, though, West Point has only examined gender differences in traits identified as possible predictors of leadership performance, as measured by cadet leadership ratings, and how cadets perceive women cadets in leadership roles.

Few research studies have offered insight on how women describe their West Point years in general, other than during the period of initial integration. In order to elicit women’s stories of their experiences at West Point and how the academy’s environment shaped their leader identity development, a feminist epistemology offers a lens into this blind spot.

## **Feminist Epistemology**

In a feminist epistemology, gender is at the center of analysis, with gender as an – though certainly not the only – organizing characteristic of society (Geiger, 1990). Feminists perceive society and most of its institutions as male-dominated and patriarchal. In such a society, the voices and experiences of women often go unnoticed or unheard. As Anderson and Jack (1991) stated, “anthropologists have observed how the expression of women’s unique experience as women is often muted, particularly in any situation where women’s interests and experiences are at variance with those of men” (p. 11). Given West Point’s purpose and history as a hypermasculinized academy for a hypermasculinized military profession, women remain both marginalized in historical presence and underrepresented in current numbers.

Feminists believe that men and women perceive and experience the world and their roles in it differently (Anderson, Armitage, Jack, & Wittner, 1987). Thus, according to Anderson, Armitage, Jack, and Winter (1987), “in order to understand women in a society that limits their choices, we must begin with the assumption that what they think may not always be reflected in what they do and how they act” (p. 107). In addition, “feminist researchers understand that much of the knowledge already constructed in any given area may omit women’s experiences altogether, or, at least, women’s own interpretations of their experiences” (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011, pp. 674-675). Thus, the feminist position promotes, not only women’s experiences, but also their perspectives and feelings, as a means of exposing society and institutions as a whole and making society more equitable and just.

A feminist standpoint epistemology asserts that women's stories and perceptions reveal social injustices and inequalities in general. According to Lather (1992), seeing the world through women's eyes "provides the possibility of more complete and less distorted understandings" (p. 93). Modern proponents of feminist standpoint epistemology readily acknowledge that although women's experiences of the world are significantly different than men's, there is no such thing as a singular women's view of the world (Brooks, 2007). Rather, there is a multiplicity of standpoints. Women, just like men, have complex identities, tempered by race/ethnicity, class/socioeconomic status, and other social identities. According to Longino (1999), "each woman's unique experience and standpoint directs our attention to details and features that we might otherwise overlook" (p. 335). Feminist standpoint epistemology, therefore, has become "more complex and multifaceted" (Brooks, 2007, p. 78).

### **Multiple Identities**

Although women at West Point have traditionally made up a small proportion of the Corps of Cadets, they are by no means a homogeneous group. Most women cadets, just like most men cadets, are White and from middle-class backgrounds, but the Corps includes women of color, of different ethnicities, from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and with differing sexual identities (Kirby et al., 2010). Not only do West Point women hold multiple identities, they also have their own individual experiences. Women who share the same multiple identities probably share some similar group experiences. Still, I would assert that women cadets as a whole have an experience that is significantly different from that of men cadets and one that is unique to being a woman.

I feel that each woman with her own set of intersecting social identities has her own experience and her own story to tell. Each story adds to our understanding of an organization, an institution, or society as a whole.

### **Using a Feminist Lens**

In my dissertation research, I wanted to explore how women perceived their experiences at West Point and how they felt these experiences informed their leader identity development. I was also interested in how they managed and developed their gender, leader, and military identities at this predominantly male military academy and the extension of that into their lives decades removed from that seminal set of experiences.

In this study, I used a critical feminist lens to examine how women experienced West Point. I listened closely to selected women's personal stories and lived experiences. My feminist lens was informed by my own enrollment and graduation from West Point. I shared some similar personal memories and events with the participants but was able to keep in mind the individuality of everyone's experiences. My familiarity with the West Point experiences affirmed that women hold significantly different perspectives and experiences from their male counterparts then and now.

While women have been at West Point for over 40 years now, they are less than a quarter of the Corps of Cadets and live in a very masculine culture. Only a few women have written of their personal West Point experiences in memoir form (Barkalow, 1990; O'Dwyer, 2009; Peterson, 1990; Westley, 2016). In 2010, McAleer compiled profiles of 14 West Point women from across the first three decades of women at West Point in her

book *Porcelain on Steel*. Men's memoirs and histories, however, dominate publications about the West Point experience. Even after four decades of women at West Point, the literature lacks a critical feminist perspective of this esteemed military institution.

### **Feminism and Research in Higher Education**

According to Ropers-Huilman and Winters (2011), feminist research is “underrepresented in mainstream higher education academic journals” (p. 667). While West Point is a military institution, it is also an institution of higher education. Thus, it is even more important that there be feminist scholarship on the experiences of women at West Point, especially as West Point has traditionally been a male-dominated institution preparing cadets for a male-dominated profession. Ropers-Huilman and Winters (2011) declared: “While feminist research is not a panacea for all issues in higher education, it has much to contribute to understanding and addressing the gender contexts of colleges, universities, and education policy” (p. 667).

According to Ropers-Huilman and Winters (2011), “feminist research, then, can offer different interpretations of social interactions and, potentially, provide possibilities for change both in higher education as well as in other settings” (p. 668). For the purposes of this study, feminist research on women's experiences at West Point may offer an exploratory model to provide insight for those studying women at the other service academies, at civilian institutions of higher education with ROTC programs, or at civilian institutions with male-dominated disciplines such as science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM).

## **Feminism and Identities**

Young women enter West Point, which has a very masculine environment, with a male-dominated population training them to become leaders (a traditionally male role) in the Army, a hypermasculine profession. Although the academy and its culture, intentionally or not, reinforce male cadets' gender identities, arguably, young women's emergent gender identity development may not be supported given the institution's focus on masculinized leader development. Thus, I explored how selected women reflected on their gender, leader, and military identities in this male-dominated, hypermasculine environment.

**Gender identity.** As young men and women enter college and/or the military, they are still developing their gender identities as adult men and women (Acker, 1992; Barrett, 1996; Herbert, 1998). This fact raises a number of questions. How do young women at male-dominated, masculine institutions training for careers in a male-dominated, hypermasculine profession manage their gender identities? More specifically, how do young women at West Point manage their gender identities when they are trying to become leaders (as cadets and officers) in the Army? Do they find themselves at times suppressing femininity or increasing masculinity to fit in, be accepted, and succeed at West Point or in the Army (Herbert, 1998)?

***West Point as a gendered institution.*** "The military is a gendered institution.... But it is also a gendering institution. It helps create gendered identities" (Barrett, 1996, p. 141). According to Acker (1992), the concept of a gendered institution means "that gender is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of

power in the various sectors of social life” (p. 567). Acker (1992) perceived virtually all major institutions in the United States as gendered institutions:

The law, politics, religion, the academy, the state, and the economy... are institutions historically developed by men, currently dominated by men, and symbolically interpreted from the standpoint of men in leading positions, both in the present and historically. These institutions have been defined by the absence of women. The only institution in which women have had a central, defining, although subordinate, role is the family. (p. 567)

West Point is clearly a gendered institution, and while women have been there for over 40 years and have held, at one time or another, all key leadership positions in the Corps of Cadets, the literature is silent about the gendering effects at West Point or any of the service academies. Presumably, the challenge of gender integration may be greater for women at institutions like West Point, where the focus is on training cadets to become officers in a traditionally male-dominated profession where hegemonic masculinity has long been a core feature.

***Gender as process.*** Acker (1992) also examined gender as process. “Gender is a pervasive symbol of power. In this approach, gender is a process, not a characteristic of persons, although, of course, the assignment of persons to gender categories is a central aspect of the process” (Acker, 1992, p. 567). Acker (1992) identified four gendered processes that she felt perpetuated male privilege and discriminated against women:



- (1) “the overt decisions and procedures that control, segregate, exclude, and construct hierarchies based on gender, and often race” (p. 568), whether consciously made or not;
- (2) “the construction of images, symbols, and ideologies that justify, explain, and give legitimacy to institutions” (p. 568) (e.g., images of hegemonic masculinity);
- (3) “processes of interaction” (p. 568), especially between individuals and groups where individuals “do gender” “as they do the ordinary work of the institution” (p. 568); and
- (4) “the internal processes in which individuals engage as they construct personas that are appropriately gendered for the institutional setting” (p. 568).

Acker’s (1992) “internal processes” would apply directly to how women made sense of their gender, military, and leader identities to survive and succeed in this very male-dominated military institution. How did their experiences at West Point affect young women cadets who were, on the one hand, trying to fit in to West Point and Army culture (as all cadets are) and, on the other, still developing their identities as adult women? Over a lifetime, how were these formative experiences key to West Point alumnae’s recollections and insights about identities and their leadership in military or civilian experiences?

***Masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, and hypermasculinity.*** Both West Point and the military in general are male-dominated domains characterized by hegemonic masculinity and hypermasculinity (Barrett, 1996; Hinojosa, 2010). In an environment

where hegemonic masculinity or hypermasculinity prevails, discrimination against women, sexism, and misogyny are common, and this is certainly true within the military (Higate & Hopton, 2005). How did living in such an environment affect women and their gender identity development? What recollections might West Point women graduates relay about that environment's long-term implications in their lives since their undergraduate years?

**Leader identity.** *Leadership* has been a traditionally male concept and *leader* an identity traditionally held by men (Rhode, 2017). Women face many barriers to leadership, especially in traditionally male-dominated fields like the military (Hoyt & Johnson, 2011). Yoder (2001) credited the work of Eagly and Johnson (1990), Eagly and Karau (1991), and Eagly, Karau, and Makhijani (1995) in fleshing out the type of leadership context most challenging for women:

A setting is increasingly uncongenial for women leaders if it is male-dominated, especially if the woman is a token or solo; if the task is masculine stereotypic; if task completion is the only rewarded goal; and if hierarchy and power are stressed over egalitarianism and influence. (p. 816)

The military, the Army, and West Point would certainly fit within the realm of this masculinized context. Research has shown how challenging it is for women to develop their leader identities and become effective leaders in this type of environment and structure. How did women develop a leader identity in the military while also maintaining their gender identity as women? In their lives, post-West Point, what did

women recall about developing their leader identities in this male-dominated environment?

**Military identity.** The military has traditionally been an all-male domain, and, one could argue, the military has been the most masculine of all domains in history (Carreiras, 2006). Young men have traditionally considered entering the military as a male rite of passage (Francke, 1997). What did West Point alumnae recall from when they developed a military identity while negotiating their gender identity as women?

### **Feminist Oral History**

In addition to using a feminist lens, I also employed a feminist methodology in my study. I used feminist oral history because it allowed me to listen to women freely tell their own stories, experiences, and feelings about those experiences in their own words. Chaitin (2008) asserted that those who use oral history “ask people to talk about their overall life experiences or to discuss specific experiences and events in a narrative form” (p. 2). While oral history in general is an appropriate methodology to use to prompt others’ stories in their own words, feminist oral history applied particularly well to eliciting stories and feelings from women, who often censor aspects of themselves when they detect possibilities that their stories or feelings might contradict the social norm. I wanted the women participating in this study to feel comfortable and at ease telling their own stories about their experiences at West Point and how those experiences affected their leader identity development.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I have reviewed literature on leadership in the military, women in the military, women and leadership in the military, and leader identity development as related to West Point and the military. My intent was to situate women and leader identity development at West Point within the literature on these topics. Lastly, I discussed why I employed a critical feminist lens and its appropriateness for investigating women who experienced formative identity development with respect to gender and leadership at a US military academy.

In Chapter Three, I describe in more depth the selection of feminist oral history as my methodology. I explain how the pilot study I did on women and leadership at West Point informed my dissertation plan. I then describe my selection of participants, researcher positionality, and data collection and data analysis methods and procedures.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

This study addressed a rare postsecondary environment for women's leadership and gender identity development, that of the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point during the early- to mid-1980s. This particular focus responded to an identified blind spot in the literature concerning military leadership development programs and a tendency of studies to rely on behavioral constructs to create models of perceived leadership. Although such work moved to comparisons of perceptions of male and female leadership at the academies, scant literature provided descriptions of general students' experiences in the hypermasculinized service academies' environments. And no literature came to light concerning women's perceptions of leader identity development in these educational environments. Such omissions became apparent because I used a feminist epistemology regarding how women experienced their military education. A pilot study further revealed the viability of a critical feminist perspective because the pilot showed the degree to which gender, identity, and the hypermasculinized environment represented a persistent theme across all former and current West Point cadets. From these results, I designed the following research questions:

How do women's experiences at West Point inform their leader identity development?

- (a) How do women at West Point make sense of their gender, military, and leader identities?

(b) How do women's experiences at West Point inform their leader identities in the Army and in any subsequent careers?

In this chapter, I explain how the pilot study supported my perspectives and validated the blind spot I discovered in the topical and research literature. I explain the saliency of my epistemology and the choice of feminist oral history with artifact elicitation techniques. I describe the steps I took for this study to answer the research questions.

### **Pilot Study and How It Informed My Dissertation Plan**

During the summer of 2017, I conducted a pilot study to inform my future dissertation research (Lewis, 2017). I used a survey research design, and 116 women who graduated from West Point, attended West Point but did not graduate, or were current cadets responded to the survey. The alumnae respondents represented every class from 1980 (the first group admitted to West Point) to 2017, the most recent graduates. The participants completed a brief online survey that included two demographic questions and four open-ended prompts related to the women's definitions of leadership, key leadership experiences at West Point, and perceptions of how experiences at West Point affected their leadership development.

Because I used an online survey, I had to rely on the responses the women gave; I was not able to ask for clarification or follow-up information. Although I only asked questions related to leadership in the pilot study, many women wrote about experiences with sexism and misogyny. Many of the women in the pilot study also wrote about their time in the Army and careers after the Army and how their West Point experiences

played into their leader identities long after they left the Academy. The results of the pilot study directly influenced the research questions for my dissertation. Because of the women's responses in the pilot study, I decided to narrow my focus from leadership development to leader identity development. I also wanted to explore more deeply how women integrated their gender, leader, and military identities. Several pilot participants thanked me for doing the survey, and one woman from a class in the 1980s wrote: "Thanks for giving me a chance to voice what I experienced at school." Because of these factors, I gravitated toward using oral history as the methodology for my dissertation. Because I would be working with women who were a marginalized group at a male-dominated military institution and their stories largely remained untold, I decided that feminist oral history would be an appropriate methodology.

Even though my pilot study involved women from every class with women at West Point and current cadets, I decided to focus my dissertation on women from the West Point Class of 1985. I knew in my dissertation I wanted to study women from the earlier years of integration, but not the first class with women. There is considerable literature on the Class of 1980, especially around their four years at the Academy, and I knew that West Point had discontinued research specifically on women in 1983 (Yoder, 1989). I wanted to capture the experiences of women from the 1980s while their stories were still readily available. I also was interested in capturing the perspectives of women who had been out of the Academy for a while and had served in the Army and moved on to subsequent civilian careers and/or raised families. I wanted to hear not only their retrospective stories about West Point but also how their West Point experiences had

affected their leader identities throughout their lives. I selected the Class of 1985 because (a) these women were understudied; (b) these women fit my study criteria; (c) this was the class with the largest representation in the pilot study; and (d) I graduated in this class and already had established a large degree of rapport and trust with my women classmates.

In alignment with a feminist oral history approach, I used open-ended interviews. I adapted some of the open-ended prompts from my pilot study and included them in my oral history interview guidelines, so that I could more fully elicit women's stories about West Point and the impact of their West Point experiences on their leader identities. Based on the responses I received in the pilot study, I felt that encouraging women to tell their own stories about their experiences at West Point would reveal a lot about their leader identity development and how they integrated their gender, military, and leader identities.

### **Study Design and Research Paradigm**

Leadership studies in the military and at West Point have been rooted primarily in an objectivist, post-positivist paradigm. Only recently have we begun to see studies more emergent in nature (Brownson, 2014; Febbraro, 2003; Gregory, 2017; Lemler, 2013; Mahoney, 2012; Manke, 2015). Often, but not always, these qualitative studies have been dissertations. Many of the qualitative studies on leadership in the military have been about women in the military.

Emergent paradigms can be particularly helpful for leadership studies about women. Women are still a minority of the leaders in many traditionally male-dominated



fields, especially business, politics, and the military. Because leadership studies have been so androcentric, women's stories, experiences, voices, and perceptions about developing their leadership or holding leadership roles largely remain untold. A variety of emergent designs enable women to tell their stories in their own voices. Of the different emergent methodologies available, oral history was an appropriate methodology for a study on women and leader identity development at West Point.

### **Oral History as a Methodology**

Oral history provides a way for participants to tell their stories in their own words. Oral history is “a method of qualitative interviewing that emphasizes participants’ perspectives, and generally involves multiple open-ended interview sessions with each participant” (Leavy, 2011, p. 3). Furthermore, oral history is unique in that “the researcher guides a process where each participant narrates his or her story” (Leavy, 2011, p. 9) and “participant and researcher collaborate as the participant shares his or her story” (Leavy, 2011, p. 13). In addition, oral history gives the opportunity to ask participants not only about what they did, but also how they felt and what meaning they made of events (Anderson et al., 1987, p. 109).

Oral history has been used for hundreds of years and has its roots in anthropology (Leavy, 2011). Oral history is well suited for interviewing ordinary citizens and people from underrepresented and marginalized groups from whom we might not ordinarily hear. According to Ryan (2009), “oral history offers a way for ordinary individuals to evaluate their lives in relation to the historical metanarrative” (p. 26). For example, scholars have used oral history to elicit stories from women who participated in new

ways in major historical events like WWII and the Vietnam War or who were pioneers in once male-dominated fields (Brownson, 2014; Gibson, 2009).

In her 2014 oral history of 67 women Marines, including both officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs), Brownson focused on what the women felt they had to do to succeed and be accepted in the Marine Corps. Brownson's goal was to capture the perspectives of women Marines from WWII to the present. Although Brownson's (2014) primary question asked what participants' experiences had been like as women in the Marines, what emerged from the interviews were "descriptions of complex personal, social, and professional interplays of sexuality, the physicality of the environment and its inhabitants, and gender constructions/manifestations" (Brownson, 2014, p. 770). By using oral history, Brownson (2014) found out not only what the women did in the Marine Corps, but also how they experienced working in such a male-dominated, military organization and culture.

In the realm of higher education research, Gibson (2009) wrote an oral history dissertation on what Harvard Business School (HBS) had been like for the women in the first few coeducational classes. Gibson herself was a member of one of the first classes with women. Gibson (2009) captured stories not only from the women's time at HBS but also the women's family histories, high school and undergraduate experiences, as well as their later professional careers and how they handled both personal and career decisions. This dissertation provided a good example of using oral history with women who were pioneers in higher education.

Because oral history is a methodology appropriate for capturing and exploring the stories of women pioneers in both the military and higher education in their own voices, it is an appropriate methodology for studying women and their lived experiences at West Point. In this study, I will be applying a specific form of oral history, that of feminist oral history.

**Feminist oral history.** Feminist oral history is a methodology appropriate to elicit women's recollections of their formative years at West Point and their leader identity development. Feminist oral history allows one to create an environment where women feel comfortable sharing not only their stories, but also their feelings about their experiences. It also allows them to explain "what they mean in their own words" (Anderson & Jacks, 1991, p. 17).

According to Geiger (1990), "there is nothing inherently feminist... about women's oral histories or women doing women's oral histories" (p. 169). Rather, feminist oral history requires one to have feminist objectives and to use feminist methods. As far as feminist objectives, I believe that "gender is a (though not the only) central analytical concept" (Geiger, 1990, p. 170). Secondly, I intend my study to "serve as a corrective for androcentric notions and assumptions about what is 'normal' by establishing a contribution to a new knowledge base for understanding women's lives and the gendered elements of the broader social context" (Geiger, 1990, p. 170). Thirdly, I "accept women's own interpretations of their identities, their experiences, and social worlds as containing and reflecting important truths, and do not categorize and, therefore, dismiss them, for the purposes of generalization as *simply* subjective" (Geiger, 1990, p.

170). And lastly, I believe that my scholarship should try to make a realistic albeit modest difference in the world by striving to “change the ways [women’s] lives are interpreted, appreciated, and understood” (Geiger, 1990, p. 179).

*Techniques of feminist oral history.* Besides having feminist objectives, what makes oral history feminist is the methods one uses in collecting and analyzing data – i.e., in interviewing women and analyzing their stories. Feminist methods help one be more attuned to women’s ways of communicating and potential self-censoring. For feminist oral history, data collection “demands a shift in methodology from information gathering, where the focus is on the right questions, to interaction, where the focus is on a process, on the dynamic unfolding of the subject’s viewpoint” (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 23). Techniques of feminist oral history include “shedding agendas” (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 14), active and critical listening (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 17; Leavy, 2007), understanding women’s communication patterns (Minister, 1991, p. 35), and being reflective (Borland, 1991, p. 65). One uses an interview guide as opposed to a protocol of set questions, as this helps discourage a researcher agenda and makes it easier for participants to tell their stories as they see fit. An interview guide is “a set of topical areas and questions that the interviewer brings to the interview” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 121). When listening to women’s stories, one should note when a woman pauses, backtracks, or is silent and then later ask for clarification or probe more deeply. According to Anderson and Jack (1991), “we need to hear what women implied, suggested, and started to say but didn’t” (p. 17). In ordinary oral history with women,

“what is often missing is the woman’s own interpretation of her experience” (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 19).

Anderson and Jack (1991) recommended three ways of listening in feminist oral history; one should (a) “listen to the person’s moral language” (p. 19), (b) “attend to the subject’s meta-statements” (p. 21), and (c) “attend to the logic of the narrative” (p. 22). In interviews, women often make “moral self-evaluative statements” (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 20). These statements help us “examine the relationship between self-concept and cultural norms, between what we value and what others value, between how we are told to act and how we feel about ourselves when we do or do not act that way” (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 20). I believed that women who were members of a token population at a male-dominated, hypermasculine military institution would be likely to make moral self-evaluative statements while telling their stories. Meta-statements are what occur when participants stop, go back, and make comments on something they have already said. According to Anderson and Jack (1991), “meta-statements alert us to the individual’s awareness of a discrepancy within the self – or between what is expected and what is being said” (p. 22). Again, I thought it likely that the West Point women would make meta-statements while telling stories about their experiences. Lastly, in attending to the logic of the stories, we as researchers should look for “internal consistency or contradictions in the person’s statements about the recurring themes and the way these themes relate to each other” (p. 22).

During data analysis, a feminist oral historian listens critically to the interview recordings and immerses herself in the transcripts looking for meaning, not just of the

words and language used, but also for the pauses and silences (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 18). One also wants to be open-minded as one focuses on the women's stories and language, careful not to allow one's own biases or agenda to interfere. I wanted to be able to hear how women experienced West Point in the early- to mid-1980s and how those experiences affected their gender, leader, and military identities.

### **Participant Selection**

For this oral history study of women and leader identity development, eight women participated, all of them West Point graduates from the Class of 1985. I was looking for between six and 10 women to participate. I initially had nine participants, but one woman decided to withdraw from the study after completing her initial interview. I determined that I had saturation of information for this study with the information from the eight other participants.

I decided to focus my study on women from the USMA Class of 1985 for several reasons. The Class of 1985 was the sixth class at West Point to include women. They attended USMA when it was still early in the time of women at West Point, but not in the first few years when women had a significantly more difficult time because of the initial adjustments to integration. While there was considerable research on the Class of 1980 and classes during the initial integration of women because of Project Athena, West Point discontinued research focused on women in 1983 (Yoder, 1989). Thus, women from this relatively early class with women were understudied.

In the pilot study I did on women and leadership at West Point, the Class of 1985 was also the class from which I had the most respondents (15 out of 116) (Lewis, 2017).

This class's rate of participation in the pilot study indicated that they might be willing participants for further research. Because I am in the same class as these women, I also had well-established rapport with them. I knew they might be sharing stories about their West Point experiences that could be sensitive or difficult to discuss and being with someone they trusted and who knew what West Point was like would help.

I used purposeful sampling in this study; more specifically, I used judgment sampling and actively selected "the most productive sample to answer the research question[s]" (Marshall, 1996, p. 523). The criteria for selection were: (a) woman graduate of West Point's Class of 1985 with (b) active duty Army service as a commissioned officer; (c) separation from active duty military service with fewer than 20 years (i.e., not a *military career*); and (d) a subsequent civilian career and/or family life. (A military career is usually considered to be service of at least 20 years as the Department of Defense (DoD) generally requires a minimum of 20 years of service to receive military retirement pay (DoD, n.d.)). Although I am reporting the participants' race and ethnicity as part of the overall participant descriptions, these demographics were not selection criteria for this study.

The pilot study provided a selection pool for this study. Several women from the Class of 1985 expressed an interest in participating in further research. Initially, I contacted women from the Class of 1985 who (a) met the criteria for this study and (b) had expressed interest in participating in further research. I acquired seven participants in this manner. I then approached several other women who met the selection criteria following a reunion for the women of the West Point Class of 1985 in the spring of 2018.

I acquired three more participants in this manner. One of these 10 potential participants was a civilian employee of the US Army; there were substantial added IRB requirements from the US Army for this participant. Given the timeline of my study, I decided not to pursue IRB approval for this participant. Also, as mentioned earlier, another participant withdrew from the study following the initial interview. Thus, I ended up with a total of eight participants.

I asked each participant to choose her own pseudonym. Six chose their pseudonyms, and two asked me to provide them. I wanted to protect the privacy of my participants as much as I could, but because there are not very many women graduates in the West Point Class of 1985 (about 100 out of 1,000) and the women were all very well known as a distinct minority, it is possible that some of them will be identifiable. For example, if a participant had a high cadet leadership position or was a prominent athlete, other classmates might infer their identity from their descriptions and perhaps even from their histories. If a participant was a “first” woman to achieve something or hold a particular leadership position, others could potentially identify that participant by looking at histories of women at West Point or news sources from the era. I discussed privacy and anonymity with each of the participants, and in some cases, they gave me guidance on information they did not wish to be shared. In addition, I asked participants to review transcripts of their interviews, as well as their profiles, and said they could redact any information they thought was too revealing.



## **Researcher's Role and Assumptions**

In alignment with feminist oral history, my role in this research project was as researcher and participant. I was the one collecting the data, which included interviewing the women participants; analyzing the data; and drawing conclusions. However, oral history is a collaborative endeavor, and the narrators and I collaborated in the story telling process. As the women told their histories, I asked them to clarify points or language and probed them more deeply around any pauses or silences. I also used member checking, and seven of the eight women chose to provide me with feedback and changes, to include additions, to their interview transcripts. I encouraged the women to share any additional stories that came to mind after our interview, and five of them emailed or called me with additional stories or examples of points they had been trying to make. All the participants also provided clarifying or additional examples to follow-on questions that related to emerging themes.

Given my classmate status among the alumnae of the West Point Class of 1985, I brought a level of insight that other researchers could not. Because of my shared experience and prior relationships with the participants, I brought a level of rapport and trust over that of other researchers. I was able to elicit more detailed stories with contexts I recognized and information I already knew. I was also able to relate the women's stories effectively to readers not familiar with either West Point or the Army. My alumna and classmate status privileged my position as a researcher to provide insight into the experiences of women at West Point in a way that no other researchers have had thus far.

My own experiences as a West Point woman from the Class of 1985, Army officer, and subsequent civilian informed my perspective as a researcher. I tried to be very aware of the impact of my own experiences and perspective by being reflective throughout the dissertation process. Reflexivity is crucial in feminist oral history, so I kept a researcher's journal and wrote reflective memos throughout the research, data collection, and data analysis phases. I also debriefed after each oral history interview with the faculty member who had been the Primary Investigator for my pilot study and who, although not associated with West Point in any way, was very familiar with my research topic. After I analyzed my data and initial themes emerged, I talked with a peer debriefer, another woman from the West Point Class of 1985 who met the criteria for my study but was not a participant.

In addition, I did a practice oral history interview with myself as the narrator. A third-party individual, a West Point woman from the Class of 2002, prompted me to talk about the topics outlined in the interview guidelines before I began meeting with the participants (Chenail, 2011). Talking about my own history in the mock interview was helpful to me as the researcher (Tenni, Smith, & Boucher, 2003). I later reflected on my responses to the interview guideline prompts and incorporated my own story in my researcher journal. Chapter Four presents profiles for each participant in the study, and I decided to include my own profile there as a means of providing transparency and insight to readers about who I am as the researcher.

This was my initial experience conducting feminist oral history interviews as a researcher. To better prepare for facilitating the interviews, I completed a practice

feminist oral history interview with a West Point woman graduate who was not in the study. She met all the criteria for the study except that she was a member of the West Point Class of 1984. In this way, I got to practice asking the prompts, employing active listening, and asking clarifying or probing questions with someone who was very similar to my participants. The practice interview also helped me test the effectiveness of my interview guidelines (Hesse-Biber, p. 121). The interviewee gave me feedback on the wording of the prompts and the topics I had included in the interview guidelines. She also completed the demographic/informational survey to help ensure that those questions were worded clearly.

For an assignment in a qualitative research course, I interviewed a woman West Point graduate from the Class of 2002 and discovered the depth to which such interviewing can be an emotional experience, both for the narrator and the researcher. Before each initial interview in this project, I explained the potential for emotionality during our session, and we discussed steps the participants preferred if they got emotional (e.g., stopping the recording temporarily, taking a break, and/or agreeing to switch to a different topic). Although some participants did get emotional (e.g., voice cracking, tearing up) during their interviews, we never had to pause or stop a session. Making the participants aware ahead of time that they might get emotional and then brainstorming possible courses of action helped make the women feel safer and more comfortable during their interview sessions.

## **Data Collection**

For the collection of data in this study, I employed techniques of feminist oral history. As one would do in a generic oral history project, I incorporated open-ended interviews with probing and follow-up questions, follow-on interviews, and observations. I audio recorded each interview session and provided participants with transcripts for member checking. I strove to create an environment where the women felt comfortable telling their stories, whether we met in person or via an online video chat interface. I also used artifact elicitation, asking the women to bring artifacts that had meaning to them around their West Point experience to our initial interview sessions.

Several days to a week before each initial interview session, I had each participant complete a brief demographic/informational survey. This provided another source of data for my study. I also used reflective memos and archival documents (e.g., pertinent West Point and Army documents, pamphlets, manuals, and books) to provide additional data for this project.

Once I had received Institutional Review Board approval, I arranged one-on-one, audio-recorded interview sessions. I was able to interview three of the women in person, meeting with them in a place convenient and comfortable for them, such as their home or mine. For those with whom I was unable to meet in person due to distance or travel restrictions, I conducted interviews via Facetime or a similar video chat venue that allowed us to see as well as speak to each another. It was important to me to be able to observe my participants as they told their stories, so I could observe facial expressions and non-verbal cues, which I then included in my analytical memos and interview

transcripts. There was one interview session where the audio quality on the video chat was poor, and we ended up conducting the second half of the interview via telephone. Because I knew this woman as my classmate and we had conducted the first part of the interview via online video chat, I did not feel that our session was lessened in any way by moving to audio only.

### **Demographic/Informational Survey**

To help both the participants and me as the researcher prepare for the interviews, I employed a brief demographic/informational survey. This survey included basic demographic questions about age and race/ethnicity along with multiple choice prompts about leadership positions in high school and at West Point, career fields after the Army, and family information. I also asked the women to briefly describe their understanding of the West Point motto “Duty, Honor, Country” and provide a favorite leadership or inspirational quotation. The survey gave the participants a mindset about what we were going to talk about in the interview session and included instructions about bringing a memento or artifact about their West Point experiences and leadership. The survey responses also provided me with starting points for further questions and information I would use in the participant profiles.

A few days to a week before our scheduled interview session, I emailed the participants a link to the demographic/informational survey and asked them to complete it before our session. I allotted several days’ time in case participants needed time to think about or look up information to answer some of the questions. At the end of the survey, participants had instructions to bring an artifact from West Point related to their

leadership experience as a cadet to their interview session. The survey was stored in Qualtrics online survey software (qualtrics.com), and I have included a copy of the survey in Appendix A.

### **Use of Artifacts**

Using artifacts as a means for eliciting memories or stories is a valid technique in oral history interviews (Chaitin, 2008; Leavy, 2011; Wall, 2012). While setting up interviews via email and again on the demographic/informational survey, I encouraged participants to bring an artifact to their interviews pertinent to their West Point experiences and leadership. I indicated that artifacts might include letters, diaries/journals, photos, yearbooks, documents, physical items like uniform components, or any number of other items that participants had kept as important to their West Point experience. According to Wall (2012), having participants bring and talk about artifacts during oral history interviews can stir memories or spark stories the participants want to tell. I obtained copies of print items or photographs and either took photos of other physical artifacts or had the participants take photos of their artifacts and send them to me electronically (if we were doing interviews via video chat) so that I could examine them further during the analysis phase of the study. I begin the formal part of each initial interview session by asking the participant to show me the artifact she brought and tell me why she brought it. This approach allowed the participant to start with an easy prompt, gain confidence in telling her own story, and feel more comfortable with the process as we began our interview session.

## **Interview Guidelines**

Oral history calls for the use of interview guidelines as opposed to interview protocols. This generally means a less formal format with topics and potential probe questions as opposed to a list of set interview questions. While some feminist oral history researchers go into an interview with just a list of topics, I had some potential probe questions listed with my topics. This was my first time conducting feminist oral history interviews as a researcher, and I wanted a bit more support to assist me in asking probing questions of my participants.

Topics related to my research questions included leader identity before West Point; gender, leader, and military identities while at West Point; leader identity while in the Army; leader identity in any subsequent civilian careers; and leader identity today. I wanted the women to feel free to tell their own stories about each of those topics in their own ways. I also had potential open-ended questions ready to ask the women if they did not address these topics in their stories. I have included a copy of my interview guidelines with topics and potential probing prompts/questions in Appendix B. My prompts/questions were based on my literature review, as well as the survey questions and findings from my pilot study. I have included an interview prompt/question matrix in Appendix C.

## **Initial Interview Sessions**

Three of my initial interview sessions were in person, four were conducted via online video chat, and one was a combination of online video chat and telephone. Before each interview, I went over informed consent with the participant and answered any

questions. I also asked the participant to provide a pseudonym of her own choice, if she so desired. I then went over the responses to the demographic/informational survey and asked for more specific details concerning different leadership positions/experiences. This proved to be invaluable when I went to write the participant profiles.

At the beginning of the formal portion of the interview, I asked each participant to show me the artifact(s) she had selected, to tell me about it/them, and then to explain why she had chosen the artifact(s). I allowed the participant to talk about the artifact as much as she wanted and at the end asked some clarifying or probing questions. In most cases, the participant touched on topics related to the research questions and her own leader identity. I then used the topical probes from the interview guidelines to pose open-ended initial questions about any major topic I did not hear in the participant's initial story. I took care to allow the women to respond in the ways they wanted to and listened attentively not only to their content, but also to the language they used and any pauses or periods of silence. I noted, with markers, any clarifying or probing questions I wanted to ask later or when there was a break in their storytelling. Getting participants to go back and explore certain topics helped reveal more about what they were really thinking/feeling. Asking probing questions prompted the participants to delve more deeply into a topic they had already been discussing. As the researcher, I was interacting with the participants, or narrators, so that "during the storytelling process the co-construction of meaning" was occurring (Leavy, 2007, p. 19).

Initial interview sessions lasted from between one to almost two hours, depending on how much each participant wanted to share. I recorded each interview with a digital



audio recorder. I then had the digital audio recordings of the interviews transcribed. While I took notes during each interview, noting facial expressions, non-verbal body language, pauses, and periods of silence, I focused on being an attentive listener, which is crucial in feminist oral history interviews. I encouraged the participants to share any additional stories or examples that came to mind after our interview sessions, and several of the women did so either via email or phone call. I also invited the participants to review their transcripts for accuracy and any sensitive topics they could amend or redact. I wrote an analytical and reflective memo of each interview as soon after each interview as possible.

### **Follow-On Questions**

As I reviewed, coded, and analyzed the interview transcripts, the revised transcripts, and additional stories/examples, initial themes began to emerge. I developed a set of follow-on questions related to my findings and initial themes. I was looking for clarification in some topic areas, and I wanted to know if the participants had additional stories/examples to share if they knew something was emerging as a theme or was not just their own isolated personal experience. A copy of the follow-on questions is available in Appendix D.

In addition to the follow-on questions, I also asked the women certain clarifying or follow-up questions about their initial interviews or follow-on responses. These questions were unique to each woman and allowed me to better understand the stories they told and the points they were trying to make. I have not shared these questions as I feel they could potentially reveal participant identities.

## **Additional Data**

During the literature review, data collection, and analysis phases of the project, I collected a variety of relevant West Point and Army documents. For example, the *Howitzer* yearbook from the year we graduated, as well as West Point documents related to rules and regulations when the Class of 1985 attended the Academy, provided helpful additional information. In particular, I obtained print copies of the *Fourth Class System* manual, the *New Cadet Guide for Cadet Basic Training*, *Bugle Notes*, and the leadership textbook used by the Class of 1985. I also used several reports by the USMA Office of Institutional Research on characteristics of the West Point Class of 1985 that I found digitized online. In addition, I referred to the letters I wrote home from West Point over the course of four years that my mother had saved in a shoebox and which I only recently found. I also used print or electronic copies of major Army leadership documents such as *FM 22-100: Military Leadership* and *FM 6-22: Army Leadership*. I wrote reflective memos throughout the research, analysis, and writing processes of the dissertation and referred to them multiple times during data analysis and the writing of the dissertation.

## **Data Analysis**

I created folders for each participant which included responses to the demographic/informational survey, the transcript from the initial interview with any redactions/additions, responses to the follow-on questions, and any additional stories shared with me via email. I read over these materials multiple times, first as I completed each interview and then as I received any additional materials. I examined how each participant talked about her artifact(s) and responded to the different probes related to

leader identity at different points of her life. I coded and looked for themes that dealt with leader identities and managing and integrating gender, military, and leader identities. I also used open coding with the interview transcripts and follow-on responses and was open to any themes that emerged from the women's stories (Saldaña, 2016). I compared how the women answered different prompts and how they talked about leadership and their experiences as women developing their leader identities in high school, at West Point, in the Army, and afterwards.

In comparisons, an analytic tendency is to apply data reduction for commonalities and similarities, and sometimes to neglect the importance of a discrepant case (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). In some recommendations for theory-building studies, the discrepant, or extreme, case requires closer inspection as a counter-narrative to improve the theory's robustness (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). However, for this study, the participants' vulnerability to exposure as recognizable within this purposive sample outweighed the pursuit of non-exemplary and uncommon responses (Lipscomb, 2010; Wolcott, 2010). Instead, these discrepancies are noted beyond the identifiable narratives as potential lines of further research outside the scope of this single study.

Just as it was important to listen critically while the women were telling their stories, it was also important to listen critically to the interview recordings and read over the transcripts during the analysis phases of the study. I paid attention not only to content, but also to language used, pauses, silences, and notes on facial expressions and gestures. I used these nonverbal cues during the analysis phase to better inform my interpretation of

responses and tried to include key non-verbal cues in my presentation of quotations in the findings chapter for readers.

I asked each participant to read over the transcript of her interview. Seven of the eight women did this and returned their amended transcripts to me. Aside from checking the transcripts for accuracy and meaning, some participants added more details to stories and/or provided new stories. Some women also emailed me additional stories after their interviews.

Once I had done my initial rounds of analysis and coding, I sent the participants follow-on questions related to my initial findings and emerging themes. Because of my researcher timeline and because I wanted to honor the participants' time, I sent the follow-on questions via email instead of trying to schedule formal follow-on interviews. I told the participants I would greatly value their input on these questions and that if they wanted to respond, they could do so in writing via email or orally via phone. All eight participants chose to respond to the follow-on questions. Three did so in writing via email, four over the phone, and one in person. I audio recorded the phone and in-person responses and had them transcribed. The participants' clarifications and additional stories/examples helped me understand the emerging themes more clearly and, in some cases, alter or remove themes. In this way, the participants assisted additionally in the analysis process.

### **Participant Profiles**

I used responses from the demographic/informational surveys, as well as information shared during the interviews or follow-on responses, to construct profiles of

the participants. I included how the women described themselves and incorporated quotations from their interviews. I wanted readers to get to know the participants and develop a better understanding of their lives, personalities, and leadership styles before I presented my findings.

In each profile, I talked about what the women were like in high school, at West Point, in the Army, in subsequent careers, and today, especially as related to leadership. I began each profile with the leadership/inspirational quotation each woman had shared in the demographic/informational survey. I also tried to bring out certain characteristics or experiences for each woman that might serve as examples for other women in the Class of 1985 who shared similar characteristics or experiences (e.g., being a first-generation college student, being a first woman in a position or accomplishment, deploying to a combat environment, etc.). I sent each woman her profile and asked her to review it for accuracy and meaning.

I also wrote a profile for myself as the researcher and a woman West Point graduate of the Class of 1985. I used my responses to the initial survey and transcript from my own interview session to help me write my profile. Like the eight participants, I included my favorite leadership quotation and talked about the artifact I selected. I wanted to provide readers with transparency and the opportunity to know me better both as the researcher and as a woman graduate of West Point from the Class of 1985.

In addition, as part of my analysis, I read over my field notes, studied the artifacts/photos of artifacts, and referred to documents relevant to the women, West Point, and the Army. I referred to documents from West Point about the organization of

the Corps of Cadets, the Fourth Class System, academics, military training, and rules and regulations during the time these women attended the Academy. I watched documentaries on West Point and looked at photos posted by my West Point classmates on the closed Facebook group pages for our class and the women in our class respectively, as well as relevant postings and photos on the West Point Women Facebook page. I also used relevant newspaper articles, news releases, and other articles from popular mainstream media sources from the early- to mid-1980s to help me maintain accuracy for certain events the women described.

I employed reflective practices throughout my research process. I wrote analytical memos after each interview and reflective memos throughout the research process. I also debriefed with the faculty member who had been the Primary Investigator (PI) for my pilot study after each initial interview. After completing my analysis and initial themes emerged, I discussed my findings and themes with a peer debriefer, a woman from the West Point Class of 1985 who met the selection criteria for my study but was not a participant. I provided her with copies of my interview guidelines and follow-on questions, as well as drafts of the participant profiles (with pseudonyms) and the findings chapter. Our discussion and her feedback were extremely helpful. She identified several points where I needed to provide more context, and she helped me flesh out or eliminate a few themes. Overall, reviewing my analytical and reflective memos and talking with others helped me discern how data fit or did not fit together (Hesse-Biber, 2007).

## **Trustworthiness**

In this study, I addressed the four components of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Shenton, 2004). To help ensure credibility, I employed triangulation by interviewing multiple participants and using artifacts from the participants, as well as additional document sources from West Point and the Army. To address transferability, I provided context for USMA in Chapter Four, included participant profiles in Chapter Five, and made use of the rich, thick description the participants provided in their interviews. In this way, others can make their own judgments about fit or similarity for their own circumstances. To address dependability and confirmability, I kept an audit trail and saved and organized all documents related to my research. The participants in the study provided input and reflection on their stories, in addition to regular member checking. I also conducted interview debriefings with the PI from my pilot study, as well as a peer debriefing with another West Point woman member of the Class of 1985.

## **Summary**

My 2017 pilot study on women and leadership and their experiences at West Point significantly informed many aspects of my dissertation study, in particular my decision to focus on leader identity development and women from the Class of 1985. The pilot study also influenced my research questions, methodology, and the prompts in my interview guidelines.

I used feminist oral history with artifact elicitation as the methodology for my dissertation. As such, I followed the data collection and analysis techniques appropriate

for feminist oral history. These included open-ended prompts, active listening, input and feedback from narrators, reflective memos, and open coding.

I asked the participants to bring artifacts related to leadership and West Point to their interview sessions, and I feel this helped elicit stories or memories of their West Point experiences. For this study, I interviewed eight women graduates of the USMA Class of 1985 who pursued civilian careers and/or raised families after separating from active duty Army service. As a woman graduate of this same West Point class, I brought significant rapport and trust with the participants, as well as intimate knowledge of the institution, the Army, and what it was like to be a woman cadet during the 1980s.

In the next chapter, before presenting my findings, I will provide more context on the US Military Academy (USMA) as an institution. I will discuss the organization and structure of the Academy and the Corps of Cadets, outline the leadership development program, and describe academics, athletics, military training, and ethical training. I will also provide information on what West Point was like when the Class of 1985 attended the academy, as well as what was going on in the Army, the US, and around the world when the Class of 1985 were cadets and then officers in the US Army.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONTEXT

In order to understand better how women from the West Point Class of 1985 talk about their experiences at USMA and how these experiences informed their leader identity development, it is important to be familiar with the context of West Point as an institution and what it was like to be a cadet there. There are only five federal service academies, and these institutions provide a very small percentage of college graduates in higher education. While many people know that West Point, or the United States Military Academy (USMA), is a military service academy, they may or may not know about the organization, operation, and culture of this service academy that provides officers for the US Army. Because this study focuses on women in the USMA Class of 1985, it is also important to be familiar with what it was like to be a cadet at West Point between 1981 and 1985 and what was going on in the United States, in the Army, and around the world at that time.

#### **Context: The United States Military Academy (USMA)**

Service academies, despite their historical place in the US, are a rare type of institution in higher education. While there are five federally funded service academies, only three are under the purview of the Department of Defense (DoD). (The other two, the US Coast Guard Academy [USCGA] and US Merchant Marine Academy [USMMA], are under the auspices of the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Transportation, respectively.) The DoD service academies (USMA, the US Naval Academy [USNA], and US Air Force Academy [USAFA]) provide officers for the Army,

Navy, Marines, and Air Force. Among the DoD service academies, USMA, also known as West Point, is the oldest and trains cadets to become commissioned officers in the US Army.

While there are numerous books about West Point and its history, most are mainstream or coffee table books. I decided to rely on *Carved from Granite: West Point since 1902* by Betros (2012) as my main reference source about West Point in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century because the author took a more academic approach. The author also addressed what West Point was like when the Class of 1985 attended. In addition to being a 1977 graduate of USMA and career Army officer, Betros earned a doctorate in history, was a History professor at West Point, and served as Chair of the History Department for seven years (“Army War College Faculty,” 2012; Kingseed, 2012). He also taught a graduate level course on the history of West Point to officers preparing to become cadet tactical officers (Betros, 2012). Betros (2012) presented a thorough and critical analysis of West Point during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

I also used a variety of West Point sources from the time the Class of 1985 attended the Academy. These included the 1985 *Howitzer* (the cadet yearbook) and the 1981 *Bugle Notes* (the “plebe bible” for the Class of 1985), as well as Academy manuals we were issued as plebes (HQ, USCC, 1981; Office of the Commandant, 1981). For dates and details on specific noteworthy events that occurred at West Point during this time, I found *The New York Times* and other local newspapers to be good sources. Since West Point is located only 50 miles north of New York City, *The New York Times* often features stories on West Point. I also relied on my own memories and experiences from

my time at West Point, as well as letters I wrote home over the course of the four years I was there and my general knowledge of the Academy.

The organization, structure, and culture of USMA include information on the cadet chain-of -command, as well as the four pillars of the West Point leadership development program: military, academic, athletic, and ethical training (Callina et al., 2017).

### **Organization, Structure, and Culture of USMA**

The USMA Corps of Cadets has an authorized strength of 4,400 cadets and is organized as a brigade composed of four regiments. Each regiment has three battalions and each battalion three companies for a total of 36 companies with between 120 and 125 cadets per company. The core unit during the academic year at West Point is the company. (See Appendix E for an organizational chart of the USMA Corps of Cadets, which is officially known as the United States Corps of Cadets [USCC].)

Cadets live with the members of their assigned companies in the cadet barracks (somewhat similar to residence halls), eat with their company mates in the Mess Hall (a dining facility that can feed the entire Corps of Cadets family-style at one time), and participate with them in drill, parades, intramurals, and unit social functions. A company is organized into three platoons, each of which is made up of squads, the smallest units in the Army with roughly 10 per squad. Cadets attend West Point for four years, and USMA and cadets employ terms for each year's status that differ from those commonly seen in higher education. (See Table 4.1 for further explanation.)

Table 4.1

*Terminology Used for Cadets in Each of Their Four Years*

<b>Official USMA Term</b>	<b>West Point Cadet Slang</b>	<b>Commonly-Used Higher Education Term</b>
Fourth class cadet	Plebe	Freshman or First-year student
Third class cadet	Yearling	Sophomore
Second class cadet	Cow	Junior
First class cadet	Firstie	Senior

**Cadet chain-of-command.** The Army, like all branches of the military, has a hierarchical leadership command structure. The cadet leadership organization at USMA mimics this structure with a chain-of-command, hierarchical model for cadets. The cadet chain-of-command ranges from a team leader/assistant squad leader in charge of two to three plebes in a squad (a sophomore leadership position) all the way up through the brigade commander. The brigade commander is a senior cadet, deemed the “First Captain,” and responsible for overseeing all 4,400 cadets.

Every level within the cadet chain of command includes official leadership positions, from squad to platoon to company to battalion levels and up through regimental and brigade levels. The command positions at platoon level and above are all cadet officer positions held by first-class (senior) cadets. Cadet officers hold the rank of cadet lieutenant or cadet captain. There are different levels of cadet captain, though, depending on how high one is within the chain of command. A cadet captain who is a

company commander, for example, has four chevrons for rank insignia, while the cadet brigade commander, or First Captain, has six chevrons and a star.

Each level of command also includes cadet staff officers and/or cadet non-commissioned officers who support the cadet commander in different areas such as personnel management, training, and logistics. During the time that the Class of 1985 attended West Point, second-class cadets (juniors) served mainly as squad leaders (with the rank of cadet corporal) and other junior non-commissioned officer roles (e.g., assistant first sergeant) within the company level. First-class cadets filled both the cadet officer and cadet senior non-commissioned officer positions at all levels platoon and above. Although West Point cadets are commissioned as officers in the US Army (with the Army rank of O-1, or second lieutenant) upon graduation, they may hold a variety of cadet ranks ranging from cadet private to corporal to sergeant to lieutenant and captain as they progress through their four years at the Academy. The cadet chain of command somewhat mirrors that of a regular Army unit which includes enlisted soldiers (privates), non-commissioned officers (corporals, sergeants, and sergeants major), and officers. The cadet hierarchical organization and chain of command help to expose West Point cadets to the roles that enlisted soldiers and non-commissioned officers, as well as officers, play in the real Army.

In their academic-year chains of command and then in summer training details, another term for required summer tasks, cadets are exposed to different experiences of followership and leadership. In addition, cadets wear uniforms, live in military-style barracks, drill and march in parades, and follow both USMA and Army regulations. They

take military science courses during the academic year and receive different types of military training throughout their four years.

**Military training as cadets.** Although cadets lead a regimented, military existence during the academic year, most of their military training occurs during the summers. Incoming cadets attend six weeks of Cadet Basic Training (CBT), affectionately known as “Beast Barracks,” during the summer before their freshman or first year. Incoming students go from being Cadet Candidates to New Cadets during their six weeks of basic training and then become Fourth Class Cadets (or “plebes”) after being accepted into the Corps of Cadets during a parade before the beginning of the academic year. During CBT, new cadets learn not only the basics of being a soldier, but also how to be a West Point cadet.

Each of the following summers serves as a benchmark for cadets as well. Between freshman and sophomore year, rising sophomores (also called “yearlings”) attend Cadet Field Training (CFT) at Camp Buckner, a training facility near West Point, where they are introduced to the different branches of the Army in a tactical field environment. Cadet juniors and seniors provide the cadre and cadet chains-of-command for both West Point summer training programs. During the summer before junior year, most cadets attend one of several Army specialty schools (e.g., Airborne School, where cadets learn to parachute out of airplanes at Fort Benning, Georgia) and serve in active duty Army units or Army basic training units to gain experience in the “real” Army. During their final summer, rising senior cadets provide the higher-level leaders and cadre for both CBT and CFT and

often participate in other military, academic, or public service opportunities away from West Point.

While West Point is a military institution, it is also an institution of higher education that provides cadets with a four-year baccalaureate program. Academics is a major pillar of the West Point experience.

**Cadet academic program.** Cadets have a rigorous liberal arts curriculum that is heavy in mathematics, science, and engineering (Betros, 2012; Keith, 2010). There is a core curriculum, but cadets may choose from multiple majors in virtually all fields of study (Keith, 2010). Regardless of major, all cadets receive a Bachelor of Science degree. West Point began as a school to train engineers (primarily civil engineers) for a growing nation (Betros, 2012; Keith, 2010). USMA was the first engineering school in the United States and remained the top engineering school until after the Civil War (Betros, 2012). For years, West Point prescribed a single curriculum, and cadets had no choice in what courses they took. Electives were not available until 1960 when senior cadets were allowed to choose one elective course from the disciplines offered at West Point (Betros, 2012; Keith, 2010). Gradually, the USMA curriculum expanded, permitting cadets to take more electives and eventually requiring cadets to choose what West Point called a “concentration of study” (Betros, 2012). The Class of 1985 was the first class to be able to choose academic majors (Keith, 2010). Although, traditionally, more cadets selected majors in math, science, or engineering fields, recent trends show more cadets majoring in the humanities and social sciences (Betros, 2012).

Cadets usually attend small classes with a ratio of 20 cadets or fewer to one instructor (Grant et al., 2002). Even core courses are divided into sections with roughly 20 cadets. The tradition of small class sizes goes back to early 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the time of Sylvanus Thayer, one of West Point's earliest Superintendents, designated the "father of West Point" (Betros, 2012). He believed in a rigorous academic curriculum, with a daily assessment process known as "taking boards" (i.e., solving problems on the blackboard to demonstrate work to others) (Betros, 2012).

Most of the faculty at West Point are military officers. Until 1993, all faculty members, except for occasional visiting professors, were military officers (Betros, 2012). Today, about 28% of the faculty is civilian (Institutional Research, 2015). Among today's faculty members, most are mid-career junior Army officers (i.e., captains) whom the Army has sent to graduate school to earn master's degrees and then assigned to a three-year tour teaching at West Point. Permanent Professors are senior Army officers (lieutenant colonels and colonels) with doctoral degrees who spend the rest of their military careers at West Point teaching and doing research. Academic department heads are always senior Army colonels with terminal degrees (Betros, 2012).

In addition to military training and academics, athletics provide a third pillar of the West Point leadership development program. When Douglas MacArthur was Superintendent of USMA right after WWI, he coined the phrase "Every cadet an athlete" (Betros, 2012, p. 147).

**Athletics at West Point.** Athletics and physical fitness are a central component of the West Point program. In addition to having to take physical education courses all four



years, cadets must also participate in varsity (also known as Corps Squad), club squad, or intramural athletics throughout the academic year (Betros, 2012). Cadets must also take periodic physical fitness tests, which include a challenging Indoor Obstacle Course Test and the cadet equivalent of the Army Physical Fitness Test. This test consists of two-minutes of pushups, two-minutes of sit-ups, and a two-mile run. Cadets also participate in organized physical training (PT) during CBT and CFT that is similar to the PT done by regular Army units and includes group calisthenics and formation runs. Although West Point began with less emphasis on physical development or sports, the Academy has emphasized physical fitness, athleticism, and competitiveness since the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Betros, 2012).

The final pillar of the West Point leadership development program is ethics. While ethics is its own separate pillar, it is also incorporated within military training, academics, and athletics and is integrated into every aspect of cadet life.

**The Cadet Honor Code and ethics training.** The Cadet Honor Code states that “A cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do” (Grant et al., 2002) and is the bedrock of the Cadet Honor System and ethics training at West Point. The mission of USMA is to develop “leaders of character” for the Army (Callina et al., p. 10), and, starting in 1981, when the Class of 1985 entered West Point, there were classes and training in honor and ethics all four years (Betros, 2012). Cadets accused of violating the Honor Code go before an Honor Board, which is a group of cadet peers. After hearing the accused cadet’s story and testimony from character witnesses, the board decides whether the cadet has violated the Honor Code or not. Punishment for violating the Honor Code

can vary, depending on severity of the offense and/or the seniority of the cadet, but at the time the Class of 1985 attended West Point, expulsion was the usual punishment for those found guilty of violating the Honor Code.

With an overall understanding of the four pillars of the West Point leadership development program, it is also important to know what West Point was like when the Class of 1985 attended the Academy. A brief profile of the Class of 1985, which entered West Point in the summer of 1981, also provides context for the women participants in this study,

### **West Point (1981-1985) and the Class of 1985**

The USMA Class of 1985 attended West Point between July 1, 1981 (Reception Day, or R-Day) and May 22, 1985 (Graduation Day). When the Class of 1985 reported for R-Day, the Class of 1980 (the first class with women) had graduated just over one year before, and the Class of 1981 (the second class with women) had graduated just over one month before. Classes scheduled to graduate in 1982, 1983, and 1984 formed the First Class (seniors), Second Class (juniors), and Third Class (sophomores), respectively. These upper three classes of cadets formed the hierarchy of student leadership throughout the brigade, down through regiments, battalions, companies, platoons to squads.

The Class of 1983 was the first class to experience a Corps of Cadets with women in all four classes. The Class of 1983 was also the first class to experience Beast Barracks and plebe year with women in the senior class as cadre and cadet officers and senior non-commissioned officers. The Class of 1982, which provided most of the cadre for the Class of 1985's CBT, was the last class to have been trained by a senior class that was all

men (Class of 1979). The Class of 1985 was the sixth class at West Point to include women. So, while women had been at West Point since 1976, this was still a relatively early time for women at the Academy. Between 1981 and 1985, women made up about 10% of the Corps of Cadets (Abramson, 2013).

West Point admitted 1,538 students (1,349 men and 189 women) for the Class of 1985 (Office of Institutional Research, 1981a). Of that total, 1,524 were new cadets, and the other 14 re-entered the Academy or were turned-back cadets (i.e., cadets who had failed their plebe academic year and had to repeat it). The Class of 1985 was the largest class to date that the Military Academy had admitted (Whitehouse, 1985). When 1,072 cadets graduated four years later, the Class of 1985 was also the largest class to graduate. One hundred and seven women graduated in 1985, the largest number since women had been admitted to the Academy (Whitehouse, 1985).

At this time, West Point classes were almost 90% White and 90% male. For a complete breakdown of race/ethnicity for the Class of 1985 see Table 4.2. The diversity of women cadets was roughly the same as that of men cadets, with slightly higher percentages of women identifying as Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Other.

Over 84% of the class attended public school prior to matriculation, and about 16% attended private school (Office of the Director of Institutional Research, 1981a, p. 9). About 13% of the class attended the USMA Preparatory School (USMAPS) between high school and West Point, many of these being former enlisted soldiers (Office of the Director of Institutional Research, 1981a, p. 15). USMAPS provides candidates (either high school graduates or enlisted personnel) selected by the USMA Admissions Office

Table 4.2

*Race/Ethnicity of the USMA Class of 1985 by Gender*

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Women</b>
White	87.4%	86.5%
Black/African American	7.0%	8.4%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.7%	0.0%
Asian	2.1%	1.9%
Hispanic/Latinx	2.9%	3.9%
Other	1.5%	2.6%

*Note:* Adapted from Office of the Director of Institutional Research, 1982, p. 4, applying current naming conventions. (The percentages in the original table added up to more than 100%.)

with additional academic and athletic preparation for admission to West Point (“Welcome,” n.d.). About 11% of the class had attended at least one month of college (Office of the Director of Institutional Research, 1981b, p. 19). About 70% of the class were ranked in the top fifth of their high school class (Office of the Director of Institutional Research, 1981b, p. 19). The class entered West Point with considerable academic, athletic, and extracurricular accomplishments, as well as a significant amount of leadership experience (see Table 4.3).

**Pop Culture and West Point**

Before reporting to West Point, many prospective cadets read not only newspaper/magazine articles about their future school, but also works of fiction. Women in the Class of 1985 would have had access to mainstream media accounts of the first

Table 4.3

*Profile of the Class of 1985: High School Accomplishments*

<b>Accomplishments During High School</b>	<b>Number/Percentage of the Entering Class of 1985</b>
Senior Class President	77 (5.1%)
Senior Class Officer (Other than President)	242 (15.9%)
Student Body President	76 (5.0%)
President of a High School Class (Other than Senior)	121 (8.0%)
President, Student Council	75 (4.9%)
Debate Team	170 (11.2%)
Participated in Varsity Athletics	1,352 (89.0%)
Earned at Least One Varsity Athletics Letter	1,268 (83.5%)
Athletic Team Captain	692 (45.6%)
Scouts, All	735 (48.4%)
Boys/Girl State Delegate	297 (19.6%)
Drama Club	219 (14.4%)
National Honor Society	896 (59.0%)
Valedictorian	67 (4.4%)
Salutatorian	65 (4.3%)

*Note:* Adapted from Office of the Director of Institutional Research, 1981a, p. 14 and Office of the Director of Institutional Research, 1981b, pp. 18-19.

women at West Point, especially of the well-documented Class of 1980. Lucian K. Truscott, IV's first novel, *Dress Gray*, was published in 1979. Truscott, himself a West Point graduate, set his fictionalized account in the late 1960s, during the Vietnam War and before women had been admitted, but the novel described what West Point and key events like Beast Barracks were like. In 1980, Pat Conroy's novel, *The Lords of*

*Discipline*, about a thinly veiled Citadel was published. While neither book featured women as cadets, these were popular sources for cadet candidates, both men and women, eager to learn more about what it was like to attend any military school, including West Point.

Many women in the Class of 1985 also likely watched the made-for-TV movie *Women at West Point* that aired in February of 1979. Linda Purl starred as a woman cadet in this fictionalized version of what it was like when women first entered the Academy, and the movie was filmed largely at West Point (Maslin, 1979). In an interview with the West Point Oral History Center, Colonel Deborah McDonald (2015), a member of the Class of 1985 and current USMA Director of Admissions, reported that watching this movie was a factor in her considering West Point as a viable college option.

### **US Army Context: 1981- 1985**

During the time the Class of 1985 attended West Point, the US Army was still fighting the Cold War. The Vietnam War had ended in 1975, and the military had shifted from a draft-time force to an all-volunteer force. The Army was struggling with issues of morale, motivation, and drug use in its forces (Nielsen, 2010; Segal, Lynch, & Blair, 1979).

At this time, the United States saw the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as its primary adversary, and this was accentuated by President Reagan's use of the term "Evil Empire" (Busch, 1997; Goodnight, 1986). The United States military had a very large presence in Western Europe, with a focus on protecting their NATO allies from invasion by the USSR and Eastern Bloc countries. The US also had significant military presence

in South Korea, protecting that nation from potential invasion from communist North Korea. While the threat from communist nations still seemed real, most cadets who attended West Point in the early- to mid-1980s really did not imagine themselves going to war, or at least nothing more than smaller-type incursions like the invasion of Grenada, which took place in 1983 when the Class of 1985 were juniors. This is in stark contrast with classes that have attended West Point since September 11, 2001 (9/11). Cadets today know that they will likely serve in combat zones and have come to expect multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as to other areas as part of the Global War on Terror or on peacekeeping missions.

While the Class of 1985 was at West Point, there were additional changes to the lives of cadets at USMA because of changes within the US Army. The Army changed the field uniform from green fatigues to the camouflage colored Battle Dress Uniform (BDUs). The Class of 1985 was the last class to wear fatigues, which they wore during summer/military training their first two years. They were issued BDUs before summer training as rising juniors. The Class of 1985 also experienced the change from canned C-rations, which had been around since the WWII era, to the new, lighter weight Meals-Ready-to-Eat (MREs) where entrees and accompaniments came in foil packets sealed within a larger plastic pouch. Cadets wore fatigues/BDUs and ate C-rations/MREs primarily during military field training during the summers or while in training out in the Army.

The gray wool cadet uniforms, however, had remained basically the same since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cadets had different uniforms for class, athletics, parades, and more

formal situations, and they were required to wear specific uniforms for almost every occasion. Cadets during the 1980s ate most of their meals, at least during the academic year, in the Cadet Mess Hall, which could feed hot meals to all 4,400 cadets at the same time. Cadets typically ate family-style, at tables of ten, within company areas.

### **The United States: 1981-1985**

Ronald Reagan was President of the United States during the entire attendance of the Class of 1985 at West Point. The first time most cadets in the Class of 1985 were eligible to vote for President was during the 1984 general election when President Reagan ran for re-election against former Senator and Vice President Walter Mondale. Even before the class arrived at USMA, however, President Reagan and West Point were in the national news.

On January 20, 1981, the same day Ronald Reagan was sworn in as President, Iran released the 52 Americans they had held hostage for 444 days. The hostages returned to the United States via Stewart International Airport, a small airport in Newburgh, NY, not far from West Point. Buses carried the freed Americans through the West Point post, and they stayed with their families for a few days at the Thayer Hotel, which was located just inside the gates of West Point (Haberman, 1981). The return of the Iranian hostages was a significant event not only to the nation but also to the West Point Corps of Cadets.

In the spring of 1981, a Bob Hope special including Brooke Shields and Marie Osmond was filmed at West Point. In one skit, Brooke Shields and Marie Osmond played women cadets (wearing cadet uniforms but with long hair), while Bob Hope played a male cadet who had mistakenly been assigned to room with them (Mills, 2009). The skit



included sexist jokes that the male cadets in the live audience found hilarious. Not long after, President Reagan was the graduation speaker for the Class of 1981 (Raines, 1981). Thus, during the six months before the Class of 1985 reported to USMA, West Point had been in the national news and on TV multiple times.

While the Class of 1985 attended West Point, significant national news events included President Reagan's major tax cuts in 1981, the opening of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, in 1982, and Reagan's proposal for the Strategic Defense Initiative Program (aka, Star Wars) in 1983. Sandra Day O'Connor became the first woman Supreme Court justice in September of 1981, and Sally Ride became the first American woman to travel in space in June of 1983.

### **The World Stage: Early 1980s – Mid-1990s**

The women participants in this study were on active duty in the US Army from 1981 when they entered West Point until the early 1990s when they separated from service as captains. Five of the women left active duty in 1990 upon completing their five-year service commitment for having attended West Point. Two of the women served in Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm during 1990-1991. One of the women remained on active duty until 1994, leaving the Army as a senior captain. Thus, it is important to understand what was occurring around the world between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s and how these events might have affected the women participants of this study.

While the Class of 1985 was attending West Point, they witnessed the occurrence of several small-scale military events in the news. The 10-week Falkland Islands War between the United Kingdom and Argentina over control of the Falkland Islands occurred

in the spring of 1982, as the Class of 1985 was finishing its plebe year (Freedman, 1982). In October of 1983, when the Class of 1985 was in the fall of junior year, terrorists bombed the barracks of Multinational Forces in Beirut, Lebanon, killing over 300 peacekeeping forces, to include more than 200 US marines (Hof, 1985). Just days later, President Reagan ordered the US invasion of the Caribbean island of Grenada to help quell a brief period of unrest. About 200 Army women service members were involved in this operation in combat support and combat service support roles (Becraft, 1992). Regardless of these smaller incursions, the Cold War was still the nation's primary military preoccupation, and cadets learned about military tactics and operations as if the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were their most likely opponents.

When the Class of 1985 became second lieutenants, they found themselves stationed in their first units at a variety of stateside posts; in Germany or Italy in Europe; in Alaska or Hawaii; or in South Korea. Many of those stationed in Germany in the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the beginning of the end of the Cold War, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany.

Mikhail Gorbachev became leader of the Soviet Union in 1985 and introduced the ground-breaking policies of glasnost and perestroika (Mason, 1988). The early 1990s saw the dissolution of the Soviet Bloc alliance, the end of the Soviet Union, and a period of increased openness and democracy in Eastern Europe (Lemke, 1997). This created a radical change for both the US Army and for those within the Class of 1985 who were serving in the military.

George H. W. Bush was elected President of the United States in November of 1988. In December of 1989, the US invaded Panama to oust General Manuel Noriega as leader. Among the 14,000-strong invasion force were about 170 Army women service members, and Captain Linda Bray, a US Army Military Police company commander, became the first American woman to lead soldiers under fire (D'Amico, 1990). Although none of the women in this study participated in the invasion of Panama, some were in units that supported the soldiers deploying. 1989 also brought a populist movement in China with student-led protests in Beijing. During the Tiananmen Square Massacre, Chinese military troops killed hundreds of Chinese students when martial law was declared to end the protests (Lui, 2000).

Meanwhile, in the Middle East, the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq ended in 1988 (Takeh, 2010). In May of that same year, the Soviet Union began withdrawing troops from Afghanistan after nine years of conflict in that country (Hughes, 2008). In August of 1988, Osama Bin Laden formed Al Qaeda (Katzman, 2005). In the summer of 1990, Saddam Hussein, the leader of Iraq, invaded neighboring Kuwait. The United States, along with a coalition of other nations' forces, sent military troops to the region. Members of the Class of 1985, to include two members in this study, deployed to the region as part of Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm and participated in the brief First Persian Gulf War.

Five of the eight women in this study separated from the military in 1990 after completing their five-year West Point service obligation. They thus left military service just as the Cold War was coming to an end but before the conflict with Iraq emerged. The

Class of 1985 was one of the last West Point classes to serve in a Cold War Army. Members of the Class of 1985 went on to serve not only in the First Persian Gulf War but also in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. While none of the participants in this study served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, several of them had spouses and other family members who did.

### **The Women's Rights Movement and Feminism**

When women began to enter the service academies in 1976, the women's rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s had brought about significant changes for women. Congress had passed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 1972, and it had been sent to the states for ratification. In that same year, Title IX of the Educational Amendments was also passed. In 1973, with their decision on *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court established a woman's right to choose a safe and legal abortion, thus giving women much more power over reproduction and their own bodies. Admitting women to the service academies in 1976 seemed in line with women's rights and other issues of equal opportunity. In 1982, however, when the Class of 1985 had just finished its plebe year and was in Cadet Field Training, 15 states failed to ratify the ERA, and the amendment fell below the required 38 states needed for ratification.

Women who attended West Point, by virtue of attending an institution that was a traditionally male bastion, were living out feminism in their daily lives. However, many women at West Point (and in the military in general) during the early 1980s did not label themselves as feminists or at least were reluctant to use that language (Dunevin, 1988).

Research has shown that the men who attended West Point and the other service academies tended to be more traditional and conservative, especially in their views about the role of women in society (Boyce & Herd, 2003). The women who attended West Point and the other service academies, however, tended to be more progressive in their views on women's roles in society (Boyce & Herd, 2003). This dichotomy tended to cause tension between men and women at the service academies (Boyce & Herd, 2003).

### **West Point Wives Try to Start a NOW Chapter**

In the early 1970s, several civilian wives of Army officers stationed at West Point tried to establish a chapter of the National Organization of Women (NOW). Their request was initially denied by then Superintendent, Lieutenant General William Knowlton, but then approved a year later by the succeeding Superintendent, Lieutenant General Sydney Berry, (Garfunkel, 1976, p. 1). This was the first NOW chapter established on a military installation (Garfunkel, 1976). The creation and existence of the NOW chapter at West Point caused a stir and dismay among many of the Army officers stationed at West Point and even some of the Army wives. The women who led the chapter received pushback that they were "subversive" and "too radical" and warnings that their husbands' military careers might be adversely affected (Garfunkel, 1976, p. 4). Lucy Draper, one of the founders and president of the NOW chapter, as well as the wife of an Army major who taught in the Physics department at West Point, was deemed a "manipulator" and a "troublemaker" (Garfunkel, 1976, p. 6).

The creation of the NOW chapter and subsequent pushback occurred right before women were admitted to West Point and revealed the conservative culture at that time

among most of the West Point faculty, staff, and administration, who were primarily male Army officers, around the issue of women's rights, the ERA, and the role of women. Even many of the Army wives disapproved of the NOW chapter and perceived it as too radical (Garfunkel, 1976). The women who were to enter West Point for the first time in the summer of 1976 were not only joining a historically all-male institution but also a very conservative, traditional culture and community where women's rights and feminism were viewed with suspicion.

### **Acceptance of Women Civilian Faculty Members at West Point**

When women first entered West Point in 1976, there were very few military women stationed at the Academy as either faculty or staff. The faculty at West Point in the late 1970s and early 1980s was about 97% male Army officers (Yoder, 1985). Thus, the women cadets had very few women officer role models as instructors. Because there were not very many women officers in the Army at that time who would have been eligible to teach at West Point, the Academy tried to address this shortage of women role models by recruiting several civilian women visiting professors (Yoder, 1985). Dr. Janice Yoder was one of these recruited civilian professors, and she was hired in 1980 on a two-year contract to teach in the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership (Yoder, 1985). Her experience as a token woman academic was extremely negative. She was treated so poorly by the male Army officers in that department and felt so isolated and lonely as a single woman civilian that she left West Point after only six months. Ironically, as a graduate student, Yoder had assisted in some of the Project Athena research, especially around the effects of tokenism (Yoder & Adams, 1984; Yoder,

Adams, & Prince, 1983; Yoder, Rice, Adams, Priest, & Prince, 1982; Yoder, Rice, Adams, Prince, & Priest, 1979). Yoder conducted additional research on tokenism and women at West Point (Yoder, 1989, 1991) and even wrote an article about her own experience as a token woman visiting professor as a case study (Yoder, 1985).

Yoder's example provided insight on what it was like for the few civilian women visiting faculty at this time and showed the attitudes of many of the male Army officer faculty members toward civilian women faculty members, most of whom would have had more advanced degrees. Most officer faculty members were stationed at West Point for a three-year tour after having earned master's degrees specifically so they could teach there, while most visiting faculty members had doctorates. Yoder's (1985) case showed that in the culture at West Point in the early 1980s, many male Army officers looked unfavorably upon both women and civilian faculty.

### **Phyllis Schlafly visits West Point**

Phyllis Schlafly, a conservative political activist who held very conservative views on the roles of women, was a vehement opponent of the ERA. While she saw a role for women in the US Armed Forces, she did not believe that women should serve in combat (Marley, 2000). In March of 1984, at the invitation of the USMA Department of Social Sciences, Schlafly visited West Point for a debate with Sarah Weddington, a women's rights activist and lawyer who had argued *Roe v. Wade* in front of the Supreme Court (Meehan, 1984). They debated about the ERA and a woman's role in society and the military. When Schlafly asserted that women did not belong at West Point, many male cadets stood and ecstatically cheered. Many women cadets in attendance were

offended, and some stood up and walked out in protest. This was an event that some women from the Class of 1985 attended. In fact, Helen, one of the participants in this study, recollected:

[Schlafly] basically said that women should not be at West Point and that every man in that audience deserved to have a woman greeting him with a warm meal each evening.... Her comments came fast and furious - I remember nothing about what [Weddington] said. I remember the anger boiling up in me not so much at [Schlafly] but at the whoops and hollers from the men around me who might as well have been in a strip bar for all the yelling and anti-woman sentiment they were not just supporting but CHEERING.....You could see the heads of female cadets bowing towards each other as they discussed what was happening. At one point, the [Superintendent's] wife started to rise in protest and his huge arm whipped over and literally pushed her down into her seat. One woman [cadet] stood up and was followed quickly by several others seated near her. THEY WERE WALKING OUT. Cadets NEVER were to show any kind of anger or emotion like this. As the protestors headed toward my row, my head buzzed - should I join them? I am sad to say I did not - my sponsor had organized the event and it was hosted by my academic department and I was worried about the repercussions.

As Helen stated, this was a very divisive event, and even women who did not attend the debate were well aware of what Schlafly had said and how the male cadets had stood and cheered. It is significant that some of the women cadets stood up and left the event as a



form of protest, as that would not have been considered acceptable behavior on the part of cadets. As far as I know, none of the women cadets who walked out were reprimanded in any way. This event showed, in a very visceral way, that there was still a prevalent feeling among men cadets that women did not belong at West Point.

Having provided context about USMA and what was going on in the US and around the world when women in the Class of 1985 attended West Point and served in the Army, I also want to provide some context for the artifacts the women participants in the study chose to bring to their interviews

### **Context for the Artifacts**

I used artifact elicitation in my oral history interviews to help the women participants tell their stories about experiences at West Point and how those experiences informed their leader identity development. Many of the artifacts the women chose were related specifically to West Point and, as such, need some explanation (see Table 4.4). I will explain why the women chose their artifacts in Chapter Five, but it is important to understand the context of these West Point- or Army-related items.

Participants in this study chose a variety of artifacts based on their experiences at West Point. They selected artifacts that resonated with them on a personal level, but most selections were also informed by the history and culture of West Point and the Army as institutions.

Table 4.4

*Context of the Artifacts Chosen by Participants*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Artifact(s)</b>	<b>Context/Explanation</b>
Ann	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College magazine article</li> <li>• Homemade campaign flyers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Article featured Ann as a successful woman at West Point and included her photo</li> <li>• Used for running for class office. In sophomore year, West Point classes elect class officers who will serve for the rest of the class's time at USMA.</li> </ul>
Beth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chunk of granite that had fallen from a cadet barracks building after a lightning strike</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almost all the buildings at West Point are constructed of gray granite. Instead of residence halls, cadets live in barracks buildings with gray granite exteriors all four years they are at USMA.</li> </ul>
Cate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal photo from Northern Warfare (NORWAR) School, Alaska</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the summer between sophomore and junior year, most cadets attend an Army school (e.g., Airborne, Air Assault, Jungle, or NORWAR). NORWAR was an Army school in Alaska that taught skills needed in arctic combat operations. At that time, women could only attend NORWAR as West Point or ROTC cadets.</li> </ul>
Helen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small, soft doll</li> <li>• USMA class ring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A personal item the participant brought with her from home to West Point</li> <li>• USMA was the first college to have class rings, and they date back to 1835. All cadets must purchase a cadet ring. Rings are presented to first class cadets early in the fall semester of senior year. The West Point class ring is an extremely significant object to cadets and alumni. Every class ring has the USMA crest on one side and the class crest on the other. Cadets choose the stone, type of gold, and other decorative</li> </ul>

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Artifact(s)</b>	<b>Context/Explanation</b>
		elements of their own rings. A cadet's name is engraved inside her or his ring.
Jane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffee table book on West Point</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book found at the bargain table of a bookstore; contained a full-sized photo of the participant</li> </ul>
Kim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USMA class ring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See Helen's artifact explanation.</li> </ul>
Molly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Framed West Point diploma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All cadets who graduate from USMA receive the same basic diploma. What makes each diploma unique is the graduate's name and state of residence when entering West Point. Like alumni from other institutions of higher education, many West Point alumni frame their diplomas and display them in their homes or offices.</li> </ul>
Sarah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hooded USMA sweatshirt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cadets are issued USMA athletic wear along with their cadet uniforms. They often purchase additional USMA sweatshirts or receive them as members of a sports team/club. A hooded sweatshirt would have been an additional item of clothing and not an issued one.</li> </ul>

In the next chapter, I provide profiles of the eight participants in this study, along with their reasons for selecting the artifacts they did. I also include my profile as a fellow woman graduate of the West Point Class of 1985.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PROFILES

Eight women who graduated from West Point with the Class of 1985 participated in this study. All were between the ages of 54 and 56 at the time of their interviews. Six of the women identified as White and two as women of color. The women reported a wide range and variety of leadership opportunities and experiences at West Point and as cadets. Seven of them participated in varsity or club-level athletic team sports at West Point, and three of them were team captains or co-captains. Several reported being the “first woman,” in a cadet chain of command, athletic, academic, or class officer role.

The women in this study served in either combat support branches (i.e., Chemical, Signal, Military Intelligence, and Military Police) or combat service support branches (e.g., Ordnance, Quartermaster, and Transportation). During the Class of 1985’s era, women were not allowed to serve in the combat branches of Infantry or Armor, and their roles were restricted within the combat branches of Field Artillery, Air Defense Artillery, Aviation, and Engineering. Women were also restricted in the combat support and combat service support branches from serving in certain roles or with certain units. Still, some of the women in this study were often the first women to serve as platoon leaders in their combat support or combat service support units, and many were the only or one of few women officers in their units.

The women in this study served on active duty for between five and nine years, with five years of service marking their service obligation for West Point. Two of the

three women who served beyond their five-year commitment served in Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm (or the First Persian Gulf War).

Of the five women who separated from active duty service upon completion of their West Point commitment, four said they did so because they had children and felt it was in the best interests of their family. All of these women were in dual military couples, which means both the women and their husbands were active duty Army officers. In three of the cases, the women's husbands wanted to continue military service and in the fourth, both the husband and the wife decided to separate from the Army.

Following their time in the active duty Army, the participants pursued careers in business, education, healthcare, and non-profit organizations, many of them serving in multiple fields. The women also volunteered in their communities, schools, churches, professional organizations, and/or with the Army. Seven of the women became parents and raised children, and five served as caretakers for aging parents and/or other extended family members. Several of the women were full-time stay-at-home parents, at least when their children were young.

The following profiles present information on the individual participants and their leadership experiences over the courses of their lives. The profiles are in alphabetical order by participant pseudonyms. The participants selected the quotations that preface their profiles. I asked them to provide a favorite leadership quotation, or quotation they found inspirational or motivational. A few of the women selected more than one quotation. These favorite quotations provide a means to frame other aspects of the women's profiles and stories about their leadership experiences.

## **Ann**

*“Choose the harder right over the easier wrong.”* – The Cadet Prayer

*“The joy is in the journey.”* – Kathy Boyd Fellure

Ann came of age on a small farm in the rural Midwest. Only five people from her high school graduating class of 100 went on to college. Not only a stellar student and athlete, Ann also held key leadership positions in her class and high school, to include senior class president, president of the student body, National Honor Society president, and sports team captain. Her aunt, a public-school principal, encouraged Ann to consider the service academies when she started to look at colleges. Ann was recruited to play an NCAA sport not only by West Point but also by several other large public institutions. She was the first person in her small, rural high school to attend a service academy.

Ann participated in her varsity sport her first two years at the Academy. She then decided to concentrate her efforts on academics and spending more time with classmates in her cadet company. She was active in the West Point Catholic Chapel, teaching Sunday School and serving as a Eucharistic minister. She was also a member of the class’s Ring and Crest Committee. Each West Point class has its own class crest, which includes the class motto. The motto for the Class of 1985 was “For Excellence We Strive.” The Ring and Crest Committee helped design the class crest and class ring.

Ann described herself as an “affable” cadet. She talked about coming from a small, rural area where she stood out in high school and the differences between her high school and West Point classmates:

You had people from all over the United States who were all going [to West Point] for different reasons. So, as a cadet, I was probably hungry for the connections with people and the relationships with people. I wasn't fabulous in everything, I was above average in about every area.

As a first-class cadet, Ann held top-level staff positions during both Cadet Basic Training and the academic year. She was also the first woman elected to a class office.

Ann served five years on active duty as an officer in a combat service support branch. Her assignments included platoon leader for an all-male platoon that had never had a woman leader before; company executive officer (XO); and a battalion-level staff position. She married another Army officer and had the first of two children while still on active duty. Both Ann and her husband decided to separate from active duty upon completion of their service commitments.

Ann was a full-time stay-at-home mom for several years. She started and ran a mom's club during this time. When her children got older, she wanted to work outside the home again and began a career in education. She started as a substitute teacher but soon became a full-time teacher and has taught for the past 18 years at all levels of primary and secondary education. She has a passion for teaching and making a positive difference in students' lives. Ann is also still very active in athletics, although not in the sport she participated in at West Point. She participates, coaches, and teaches adults of all ages in her new sport, sharing her passion and joy for "the journey."

Ann brought several artifacts to her interview. Her first was a college informational magazine that included an article profiling her and her time at West Point.

It talked about her top-level leadership position and that she had grown up on a farm. She said she selected this article as an artifact because it included a photo of her with her short curly hair “out of control.” At the time the Class of 1985 attended West Point, all women cadets had to keep their hair cut short, no longer than the bottoms of their uniform collars. Ann found out the night before that she was going to be interviewed for the article, and while she knew the journalists would take her picture, she figured “what you see is what you get.” “I mean, it’s like hat head, helmet head.... And you can see I’m smirking.” She said this image described her attitude and approach. “That’s the whole point, that I never forget my roots. I knew where I came from.... I’m not really out to impress anybody. That’s shown by that [photo].” Ann talked about her artifact being an example of her humility and ability to laugh at herself rather than as a tool to shine the spotlight on her as a leader.

Her other artifacts were handmade campaign flyers from her run for class office. She said, “I think one of the hardest decisions that I ever made was deciding to run for a class office at West Point... Because of a fear of failure.” However, these flyers showed her that “even when you think you might be doing something individually, there are really people out there supporting you.” One flyer was made by an upperclass woman teammate, one by her grandfather, one by her mother, and one by her. At a time before personal computers and easy printing, Ann took these hand-drawn flyers and made copies of them. She then put them up around the cadet areas as her campaign advertisements. Ann talked about how much it meant to have a friend and close family members support her in this tangible way. She said:



These were the people who believed in me and were going to help in their own little way.... So, anyway, that kind of gave me the courage to run, and I did end up getting elected.

Again, while asked to bring an artifact to represent her experience at West Point, Ann chose an artifact that also spoke to her connection with others. This related to her sense of team and how much people meant to her.

### **Beth**

*“The discipline which makes the soldiers of a free country reliable in battle is not to be gained by harsh or tyrannical treatment. On the contrary, such treatment is far more likely to destroy than to make an army. It is possible to impart instruction and to give commands in such a manner and such a tone of voice to inspire in the soldier no feeling but an intense desire to obey, while the opposite manner and tone of voice cannot fail to excite strong resentment and a desire to disobey. The one mode or the other of dealing with subordinates springs from a corresponding spirit in the breast of the commander. He who feels the respect which is due to others cannot fail to inspire in them regard for himself, while he who feels, and hence manifests, disrespect toward others, especially his inferiors, cannot fail to inspire hatred against himself.” -- Major General John M.*

Schofield (from an address to the Corps of Cadets, August 11, 1879.)

Schofield’s Definition of Discipline was one of many quotations that cadets were required to memorize as plebes at West Point. This quotation in particular stuck out in Beth’s mind and was one of the few pieces of Plebe knowledge she felt was worth

remembering. And she uses it to this day as a way of motivating herself and others. “Yep. I’ve used that as late as last summer here at work... I talked to people about leadership and community [in the context of education].” While Schofield’s Definition of Discipline was a quotation Beth had to memorize as a plebe at West Point, it is a sentiment that guides her to this day as a leader.

Beth grew up in the suburbs of a medium-sized city in the Midwest. She was a natural athlete who loved many different sports. She was the first girl in her area to play little league baseball, where only one set of male coaches would accept her onto their team. A scholar-athlete in high school, Beth was recruited by both Army and Navy to play at the intercollegiate level. She was team captain for two sports in high school and senior class vice president. Her parents were strict and required her to take so many Advanced Placement courses her senior year she did not even have time for lunch. She said:

I did not have the ability to do well in all those classes. I did learn a lot, but my actual grades weren’t that good.... I think that gave me a really good advantage when I got to West Point because I was used to managing a big load and not worrying about being perfect.

Beth was able to connect her experiences before West Point to her success at West Point. She spoke to the academic rigor she encountered and how she was prepared to meet the challenge in ways perhaps some of her peers were not.

Beth’s leadership positions at West Point included both staff roles and athletics. Her firstie (senior) leadership positions included company level staff positions during

both Beast and the academic year. Additionally, Beth was a star athlete at West Point and played on a women's varsity sports team all four years. She was team captain her senior year.

Beth described herself as "kind of a little bit of a rebel." She said, "I played as much as I could. I didn't worry about grades, because, as I said, I was academically prepared, and it didn't matter to me as long as I was playing sports. So, I just needed Cs." While West Point stressed both physical and academic ability, Beth prioritized athletics. Because of her high school academic experience, she was confident she could meet the academic expectations of her institution. Her pursuit of excellence was in athletics, whereas in academics she sought to meet expectations.

As an officer, Beth served in a combat support branch for nine years. Her leadership positions included platoon leader, company executive officer, and company commander. She deployed with her company to Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm. The Army sent Beth to get her Master of Science degree in Management, and after completing her service obligations in 1994, she went on to have a career in business working in leadership positions for several major corporations. More recently, she has moved from business to education and works in operations at a private primary/secondary school. Beth's love for sports continues, and she has done a lot of refereeing, officiating, and coaching in several different sports for both adolescents and adults.

Beth's artifact was a chunk of granite from her cadet barracks building. Cadets live in barracks instead of dorms, and all the cadet barracks have Gothic gray granite exteriors. Immediately after Graduation Parade her senior year, she and other first-class

cadets in her company were standing outside their barracks celebrating their impending graduation. All of a sudden, a bolt of lightning struck the top of the building, and chunks of granite tumbled down, narrowly missing them. Beth has kept a piece of that granite all these years, explaining:

I took a big chunk of the granite of the building. For me, it symbolizes so much of my time at West Point.... I could take part of West Point with me forever... I don't know how long that building's been up, but... it gave itself up to me in a way. Instead of the school breaking you, you end up taking that strength, breaking a part of that strength up and taking it with you. For me, that kind of symbolized a lot of my time and energy and what I got from the school as well as what I gave to the school.

To Beth, that piece of granite represented both the strength of the academy and the strength that she took with her as someone who had endured all four years and graduated.

### **Cate**

*"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."* – Helen Keller

Cate grew up in a small town within 50 miles of West Point. She confessed: "Despite my proximity to the academy, I had not visited it prior to starting to look at it as a school option." Like several of the other study participants, Cate was a scholar-athlete recruited to play an NCAA sport at the Academy. She said, "I wouldn't have looked at [West Point] as an option if I hadn't been recruited by the [women's sport team] coach." Cate was team captain for three sports in high school and volunteered in the children's

room at her local public library. Growing up, Cate was very close with her siblings, and they did a lot of activities together. Family was very important to Cate.

As a cadet, Cate excelled at academics while playing varsity sports all four years. She served as team captain her senior year. She described herself as a cadet:

I think I was diligent in what I did. I think I wanted to have fun. I always wanted to make sure that I had opportunities to laugh and enjoy myself. I wanted to be myself. I didn't want to change. I didn't want to let the military totally transform me, but I wanted to learn, too, and experience a lot of things that I don't think I would have had the chance to experience, so that was definitely my approach. Cate wanted to learn as much as she could and gain from her experiences at West Point and in the military, but she also wanted to maintain her sense of self and her sense of humor.

As a senior cadet, Cate served in top-level leadership positions during both a summer training detail and the academic year. Women in top leadership positions were still a rarity then, so her positions brought her a lot of attention or notoriety, often unwanted. She was stunned by the amount of attention she drew, much of it negative; there were still many at that time who did not believe women should be at West Point. She said:

You know, I would get hate mail, I would get people yelling things, I would march in parades and people would yell slurs and throw things. And it was just something that was so surprising to me, because for the two years before I'd kind

of carved out or found a way to navigate [being a woman at West Point] without being exposed to those components or behaviors or people.

Cate was excelling as a leader at West Point, but there were still male cadets, alumni, and members of the public who felt women had no business in top leadership positions.

In the Army, Cate served on active duty for five years as an officer in a combat service support branch. She had the opportunity to serve in some unique officer slots in Germany during the end of the Cold War and witnessed the tearing down of the Berlin Wall. In her first duty as an officer, she was responsible for maintaining the movement of civilian and military populations across various areas of West and East Germany and, at times, that duty required her to interact directly with members of the Soviet Army. She then served in a military protocol role and, as someone who spoke German fluently, often was called upon to speak with German citizens of all ages in more of a public relations role. Her last assignment was as commander of a headquarters detachment, which included leading and supervising 30 to 40 infantry soldiers, as well as German, British, and Turkish-German civilians who provided finance, administration, and maintenance services. She was the first woman to lead this type of unit.

After getting out of the Army, Cate obtained her MBA and pursued a career in business. Her career included “experiences of general management, co-CEO of a company, starting new companies, and just running divisions and having profit and loss accountability” in several different large and small companies. One unifying theme with the companies that she worked for was that they were growth entities, or firms growing faster than other firms in their industry or the overall economy. This experience led her to

form her own company that works directly with high-growth companies across all industries. Also, she has done considerable volunteer work and served on several non-profit boards. She currently teaches business and leadership courses at a nearby community college and continues to serve on several boards.

Cate's artifact was a photo of her at the top of a mountain in Alaska where she had attended the Army's Northern Warfare School (NORWAR) as a cadet the summer before her junior year. She said she selected the photo because:

It's me doing something I never would have thought I wanted to do. Me doing something that was challenging for me to do, to climb to the top of a mountain. I don't like hiking up steep hills that much. And me having a smile on my face by realizing that I could do it and enjoying it and being able to push those boundaries that we sometimes apply to ourselves. So, that was the thinking behind it, and if I think back about West Point, I would think those are some pretty key things I learned while I was there.

Cate's artifact emphasized how West Point provided her opportunities to do things she probably never would have done elsewhere and that she enjoyed pushing boundaries and succeeding at challenges.

## Helen

*“We will either find a way or make one.”* – Alexander the Great

*“It is amazing what you can accomplish if you don’t care who gets the credit.”*  
– Harry S. Truman

*“Always eat last.”* – Anonymous

Helen’s family moved several times when she was growing up due to her father’s job. She spent most of her childhood in the Northeast and Midwest but attended high school in Texas. She was president, vice-president, and/or secretary for multiple clubs in her large public high school, served as a class officer several times, and volunteered with her church youth group. She also was a shift leader for waitresses at a steakhouse.

She found the South, and Texas in particular, somewhat of a shock as a woman. She had grown up with two brothers and thought “girls were loud and rough and tumble.” She was not used to the view that women should be quiet and followers. “I was used to speaking my opinion. I was used to stepping into a void.”

As a cadet, Helen excelled at academics and participated in several competitive academic clubs. She held company and battalion level command leadership positions during Cadet Basic Training and the academic year, respectively. During the early- to mid-1980s, it was still very unusual to see women in company or battalion command positions. Helen described herself as a cadet:

I was very driven. I worked hard to please everyone who had expectations around me, because I felt like there were a lot of officers there who expected me to achieve, and do, and accomplish certain things.... I’m a planner. I kind of planned it out. Then, I made it happen.



Helen served for seven years as an active duty Military Intelligence officer. Her leadership positions included platoon leader and company commander. She said, “That was a goal. When I left West Point, my main goal was to be a company commander in the Army.” Helen said that she loved the Army and that she “got to do all sorts of jobs that women weren’t supposed to do” because she was good at her job and could multitask and process multiple pieces of information simultaneously. She said that she was the first woman to command a ground-based military intelligence line unit.

Helen really wanted to go back to West Point to teach, but the Army told her that she had far too much tactical expertise and experience and they wanted her to continue on the tactical track as an officer. Helen said, “I’m a stubborn person. I wanted what I wanted. I had done my time. I had done very well as company commander.” Rather than continue on the track the Army had chosen for her, she chose to leave the Army.

Helen had gotten an MBA on her own while still in the Army, and after leaving active duty, she pursued a business career, serving as a brand manager for a major corporation, which she found to be a lot like being a company commander. She said:

It was really great in that brand management was a chance to learn a 360-degree business. You learned about operations, production, sales, marketing. It was not a niche. Just like I ran a whole company in the Army, I got a chance to run a whole business using [the corporation’s] money....

After taking some time away from the business world to have her children, Helen then began a career in marketing, first as a team leader with several different firms and now as the owner of her own company. She is also a very active volunteer as a civilian

with the Army, running a family readiness group and using her leadership expertise to mentor women in the Army.

Helen brought two artifacts to her interview. The first one was a small, soft doll that fit in the palm of her hand. She said she had gotten the doll in high school and named it Charlotte. She brought the doll with her to West Point and kept it in her room (or in her pocket). Charlotte was a talisman for Helen, something that brought her a sense of comfort and safety in her daily life at West Point, especially as a plebe in a company that had a reputation for misogyny and wanting to run women out of the Corps of Cadets. It was Helen's second artifact, however, that resonated with her around leadership.

Helen's other artifact was her West Point class ring, which she was wearing during our interview. She said, "I don't wear it around the house every day, but when I leave my home, I always have it on." She said it gave her a sense of strength, especially when she needed a little boost.

I always have my ring on where I feel like I need power, you know? It's kind of like Wonder Woman's golden cuffs, because you look down at that ring, and that ring is a connecting point. It connects you to the institution and to all the institution stands for.

She said the ring was also a connecting point with others who see her ring and recognize it and then know that she graduated from West Point. "We immediately have a common ground.... It's something that connects you to other people."

Helen's class ring is a talisman for now, an object that gives her strength and comfort like Charlotte did while she was at West Point. Her class ring, however, reminds

her that what she gained at West Point empowers her through life. Helen said, “I’ll hold my ring sometimes, because there’s something about it that gives me strength, I think because we worked so hard for these rings.”

Helen wears her class ring with pride in her alma mater, but the meaning goes far beyond that. The ring connects her with others who have gone to West Point and also with herself and her own strength. Ultimately, her class ring is a symbol of all that she went through at West Point, all that she learned there about leadership, and her own strength as a leader. And when she has a challenging task ahead of her and feels she needs a bit of extra strength, her class ring provides that for her as well.

### **Jane**

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead*

Jane grew up in a large city in the Northeast. She was not as active in high school activities as the other participants in the study. She said, “I never had lunch at high school. I never went to a school dance in high school. I was just there to get done and get out of there.” She attended a large public high school with about 3,000 students, and she said it was easy to be “lost in a number.” Outside of school, however, Jane volunteered with the Junior Grenadiers, a non-profit group in New York state. The Junior Grenadiers was a military-type organization for young people; they wore uniforms and conducted marching drills. Jane held a leadership role within the group and remembered doing service projects like working with underprivileged youth in parts of the city.

Jane had initially wanted to go to the Air Force Academy, and she applied for ROTC scholarships at several universities in addition to West Point. She was the first in her family to go to college. She said, “My parents weren’t helpful with college because they didn’t go. They just had no concept.” She ended up spending a year at the US Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS) to work on her athletic abilities, so she could meet the admissions requirements for West Point.

She described her time at USMAPS: “We had academic classes and sports. It was very much a mini West Point, but without the pomp and circumstances.” While there, she had a leadership role in the cadet chain-of-command that got her involved with the day-to-day activities of her class. Jane’s year at the prep school prepared her well for many of the aspects of West Point. She said:

So, really West Point was less of a shock in terms of culture. Like you know, I knew how to shine shoes, how to wear a uniform, but when we’d have to recite our knowledge of what an infantry squad is made of to upperclassmen, I felt like I was speaking [a foreign language] still.”

While Jane learned many of the military basics, like wearing and maintaining uniforms, marching, and participating in inspections, at the Prep School, she still had to learn about West Point and its history, organization, and traditions, as well as more in-depth knowledge about the Army, once she got to West Point.

Jane described herself as a cadet:

Plebe year, I was actually pretty motivated. So, I had fun. I got into trouble for doing stupid stuff. Walking across the Plain when I shouldn’t... One of my

sergeants saw me and yelled at me later. So, I think I had a little bit of a rebellious streak plebe year.... But... then yearling year I got in trouble. And that kind of devastated me.

She had a disciplinary board hearing for disobeying an order, in a situation she felt was misunderstood, and had to serve multiple hours of “room tours” (i.e., being restricted to her cadet room on weekends except for meals or going to the bathroom) as punishment. She felt that incident adversely affected her future leadership opportunities in her company. “I felt marked, to some extent.”

Jane participated in several club team sports while at West Point and served in company- and battalion-level staff positions as a senior. She said her most memorable leadership experience, though, was as an assistant squad leader when she worked one on one with her plebes. She did not view her other cadet positions as leadership roles. “I guess it’s a self-fulfilling prophecy, right. Those that you work on become better, but then you have those that could have used the help, but because they’re not seen as great they become activity sergeant.” Activity sergeant was a low-ranking non-commissioned officer role at the company level that involved planning company parties and other social events; it was not a leadership position per se.

Reflecting on her time at West Point, Jane wished she had advocated more for herself:

We didn’t grow up challenging authority. It’s taken me a long time to get to that. So, I didn’t know that you could do that. And I guess what West Point really instilled in me was you follow rules and you don’t challenge.... For the most part

– even through the Army, I realized, managing my Army career, I didn't know we had choices. I felt like you were told what to do and that was it.

Jane said it has only been recently that she has found her own voice and feels able to challenge and push back or advocate for herself.

Jane served on active duty for five years as an officer in a logistics branch. She was a platoon leader and held several other staff and support positions. She said, “I felt very naïve going into the Army from West Point.... So, when I got to my unit to deal with my platoon sergeant and stuff, I was not very effectual.”

After she had her first child, Jane decided to get out of the Army. She was in a dual military family, and her husband stayed in the Army. Jane was a full-time mom for a while, very active in scouting and other volunteer activities with her children. After her husband got out of the Army and was pursuing a second degree, Jane served as a tactical officer for the ROTC program at her husband's school. She went back to school to earn degree in the healthcare field and served as a healthcare professional in a variety of community settings. She is passionate about environmental issues and has both worked for and volunteered with several environmental organizations. She has also been active and a leader in various other nursing and women's organizations. For example, she recently founded a chapter of “Dining for Women” in her current hometown. Dining for Women is a national organization, “a global giving circle that funds grassroots projects working in developing countries to fight gender inequality” (“About us,” 2019).

Jane described herself as a leader:

I like to be the behind-the-scenes kind of person.... Sometimes those that do things that need to be done without needing the credit get more done than those that are putting themselves out there and making a name for themselves. So, I'd rather be behind the scenes getting stuff done and kind of pushing everything along and getting the greater good accomplished. I don't need the... in fact, I feel uncomfortable in... the public eye. [I'm] too private that way. I mean, I've chaired committees and stuff like that, but I don't need to be the in-charge person.

Jane's artifact was a coffee table book about West Point that she found in the bargain bin at a bookstore while she was still in the Army. After handing the book to me, Jane told me to open it and look at one of the first pages. There was a full-sized photo of Jane in full-dress uniform, in rank with the plebes in her squad. She said she was shocked to find herself in a book about West Point and had no idea this photo had been taken. The photo, however, reminded her of what she considered to be her most salient leadership position at West Point: assistant squad leader responsible for three plebes when she was a sophomore. She considered this her "one experience being a leader at West Point;" her other cadet positions were staff positions that she felt did not involve having to be a leader or take charge.

### **Kim**

*"Be the change you wish to see in the world."* – Often attributed to Mahatma Gandhi

Kim grew up in a small working-class town in the Northeast. She went to a very small public high school where only about 20% of the graduates went on to college. She

was valedictorian of her high school class and active in athletics. She played two sports in high school and was active in 4-H where she raised dairy goats and served as club president. She was the first woman in her high school to attend West Point; another male classmate went to USNA that same year. It was unusual at that time, right after the Vietnam War, for people from her hometown to join the military. Kim said, "I wanted to have a challenge, I wanted to see if I could do it.... I wanted to see if I [could] hang with the big dogs and go to a hard school and see how I could do."

At West Point, she did well in academics and played all four years on a women's club team sport. She served as a team captain her senior year. She was a platoon leader during Cadet Basic Training (CBT) and a company commander during the academic year, a leadership position that few women had held thus far at West Point. Kim described herself as "pretty focused and intense." She said:

I was very focused on my grade point average and getting along with my peers in class and in our company.... Really connected with my peers in the company, but I wasn't one to go out. I would say I was pretty quiet as a cadet. I believed strongly in the Honor Code and did not want to violate any aspect of it. I was motivated to get good grades because I wanted my choice of branch [as an officer] and an assignment in Europe later.

Kim served for six years as a Military Intelligence (MI) officer. Her first assignment was in Germany, so she got her wish to serve in Europe. She was a platoon leader there and later, as a captain in a stateside division, she served in different battalion-



level staff positions. Her unit deployed to Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm where she was in charge of personnel for her MI battalion.

Following Desert Storm, both Kim and her husband, who was also a Military Intelligence officer, decided to get out of the Army. She then pursued a business career, working for several major food service corporations as a director of operations in charge of between 10 and 65 restaurants at a time. Like Helen, who found her role in business as a brand manager very similar to that of company commander, Kim found being a restaurant area manager “very similar to my role in the Army, actually even including the age of my employees or the people I was supervising.”

She worked in the food services industry for 16 years. While her children were growing up, she decided to leave the food services industry and worked part time in two smaller companies. Now that her children are older and/or out of the house, she is thinking about going back to work full time in the service industry.

Kim’s artifact was her West Point class ring. She said, “What I loved about [my class ring], getting it and wearing it... I really love the history and the tradition of what it represents. To me, it’s a symbol of leadership.” She went on to describe the Commandant’s words to our class at our Ring Banquet in the fall of senior year: “This ring represents service and responsibility... and don’t think it’s any more than that.” Kim said:

I loved that because it was a reminder that we were in the Army to serve. The ring we each wear makes us a part of a long tradition, and it ties us to our class of 1985. It reminds me of “Duty, Honor, Country.” It symbolizes the responsibility

we have to our soldiers and to each other. Yet we could each choose a stone et cetera, which made it specific/individual to each cadet. I think it also symbolizes, to me, leadership: put your country and your soldiers before yourself.

To Kim, her class ring tied her to the Long Gray Line and to our class and symbolized a tradition of service that we each would enter as officers. The West Point class ring has the USMA crest on one side of it and the class crest on the other. Cadets are allowed to pick the type of gold, the stone, and other design elements they want, and one's name is inscribed inside the ring, thus also making each class ring unique and personal.

Kim noted that ironically, because she was in the restaurant business where you could not wear rings for safety reasons, she never wore her ring in a business setting. She wished she could have worn it more. She said:

Right now, busy life and hands-on, it's just too bulky to wear every day, but I love it. It symbolizes all the training that we went through and all the leadership development we received and mostly the responsibility that we have.

She went on to add that she would wear her ring more in an office-like business setting or an academic setting. "I would wear it; I'm proud of it. Yeah, it's like an ongoing reminder that you're there to serve."

### **Molly**

*"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than... successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every*

*day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you... we are in charge of our Attitudes.”*

– Charles R. Swindoll

Molly was an Army brat who moved around with her family until her father retired when she was in middle school. She attended a small high school in the Midwest. Molly held major leadership positions in her high school class, school government, and various clubs. She was also a multiple sport athlete who captained three of her high school athletic teams. Molly was recruited by West Point for a women’s NCAA sport.

Molly played varsity athletics all four years at West Point. She described herself as a cadet:

I worked hard. It was a lot of work, and I think balancing [varsity sports] and school was difficult. I spent a lot of time, late hours, studying. I had to study, I had to go to the library because that was the only way I could study, or in [one of the company] study rooms.... I actually, I enjoyed West Point, except the academics were very hard and stressful.

Molly was a platoon leader within her cadet company as a firstie, but she said her most memorable leadership experience was as a Beast Squad Leader during first detail of CBT the summer before firstie year. She said:

I loved it, and I wanted that [position during the first detail] because it was the first time the cadets had exposure to West Point. I felt I had a big impact on their initial impression, so I felt a big responsibility in molding them, in building this little team. It was a lot of work, but I enjoyed that.

Molly served as an officer in a combat service support branch for five years. She was a platoon leader in two different types of units, and the first woman to lead a particular type of platoon. She also worked on battalion staff. After the birth of her first child, Molly decided to get out of the Army. She, too, was part of a dual military couple, and her husband stayed in the Army to have a military career.

Molly was a full-time mom to her children and an Army wife. She supported her husband in his career as an Army officer and volunteered in her children's schools, with both Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, her church, community organizations, and a variety of organizations that supported the Army, soldiers, and Army families. She facilitated leadership training for Army spouses as well as women's leadership symposiums. She taught group dynamics in conflict resolution and liked to emphasize the importance of team building. She also encouraged women of all ages not to judge others as, she said, one never knows what stressors or challenges others may have going on in their lives. Today, with her children grown, she continues to be very involved in community outreach.

Molly's artifact was her framed West Point diploma. She said that to her, it represented all four years she spent at West Point. "It represents four years of leadership and team building." To her leadership and team building work together, and "a great team

comes from a great leader building that team.” West Point represented four years of starting from the ground level and building on that foundation of leadership and team building, through summer training, academics, military history, leadership opportunities, inspections, athletics, and company camaraderie. She said:

Every year came more responsibility, more freedom. Every year until our senior year, where we were the cadre for summer training as well as the [academic year]. So, that’s what [my West Point diploma] represents: the foundation [I could build on] in the Army and for what I am today.

On Graduation Day at West Point, the senior class receives its diplomas in front of not only family and friends but also the rest of the Corps of Cadets. Each member of the class crosses the graduation stage individually to receive her or his diploma. At the end of the ceremony, the Brigade First Captain is given the order to dismiss the senior class for the final time. After the words “Class dismissed,” the newly graduated cadets let out an exuberant yell of joy and toss their white uniform caps up into the air. They then hug classmates and friends, overjoyed that they have finally completed their four years as cadets but also realizing they will never again all be in the same place at the same time. USMA graduates take with them their West Point diplomas, which are identical except for their individual names and their state of origin. The diploma is a tangible symbol of all they accomplished and learned during their four years of challenge, leadership development, and team building as a class and as individuals at the United States Military Academy.

## Sarah

*“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”* – Theodore Roosevelt

Sarah grew up in a small town in the Northeast. She played two sports in high school and was co-captain of one of them her junior and senior years. She was also very active in both the Math Club and the Creative Writing Club. She worked part time in a pharmacy throughout high school, starting out stocking shelves and ending up in charge of at-home billing, which at that time involved a lot of paperwork. Sarah also volunteered at a nursing home during junior and senior high school and was often called upon to train new volunteers or set up programs. When it came to attending a service academy, Sarah said: “Everyone was shocked that I was going to West Point. They had never known anyone to go to West Point and thought there were far better options than that for me.”

Sarah did not come from a military family, and although she had read a lot about West Point before attending, she said, “I think overall it was probably a total shock.” She

knew that West Point would involve a lot of military things like uniforms, formations, and marching, but it was the “everyday-ness” of it that surprised her. She said:

They wanted you to do it every day, and they wanted you to do it early in the morning, and they wanted you to do it late at night. And you were thrown together with people you had never met, and people were yelling at you. It was a bit of a shock, but not a surprise.

Sarah majored in engineering while at West Point and did well academically. But she was never one to make a show of her GPA. In fact, she disliked it when cadets showed off their leadership ability or academic success. Her tactical officer called her out on this one time and said her classmates had no idea how smart she was and she should let them know. She told him “Thank you. I really think that I will just keep working hard. And if someone needs me for help, I’ll help them. But I don’t need to advertise it.”

Sarah played on a women’s club team sport all four years. Like Molly, she served as a Beast Squad Leader. During senior year, she was a platoon leader first semester and then served on battalion staff second semester. Sarah described herself at West Point:

I was a smarty-pants as a cadet. Because I think that that is how I have handled life forever... kind of with a sense of humor. And so, as a cadet, I typically used humor and kind of the system as it was set up against itself. I became kind of... subversive.

She went on to describe several pranks she had coordinated while at West Point and how she tried to bring humor to the day-to-day lives of her friends and company mates. She said:

As an upperclassman, my “nemesis” was [the Regimental Tactical Officer, a Colonel]. He somehow knew I was goofing around but could never quite catch me.... One of the best pictures I used to have is me with my feet on [the Colonel’s] desk and his pipe in my mouth. The picture was taken during one of my late-night recon missions of his office.

She added: “I’m not sure why I lived for such pranks, but the ‘game’ of it helped me keep a good attitude and helped me keep things in perspective.”

In the Army, Sarah served in a combat service support branch for five years. She was a platoon leader, and then a battalion operations officer (S-3) as a first lieutenant. Most S-3s are majors, so it was very unusual for a senior lieutenant to serve in such a role. Her last job in the Army was as the director of an Army instruction course, supervising 180 instructors. After the birth of her first child and while pregnant with her second, Sarah decided to get out of the Army. Her husband, who was also in the Army, had considerably more time in service, so they decided it made more sense for him to stay in.

Following the Army, Sarah worked as an engineering consultant until she realized that job kept her away from her children too much as well. Because her children had some serious health issues that caused them to miss a lot of school, Sarah homeschooled her children for many years. She was a leader and volunteer in their activities and sports and often tutored others in math and science. She also led a variety of academic groups within her homeschooling community. For 10 years, she taught swimming to both children and adults and coached local, high school, and even college-level swim teams.



She then found herself working part time at a local public library. The library sent her to get her master's degree in library science, and she became a full-time librarian.

She served as the head children's librarian at a large community-based public library in a low-income, high-crime area. She said, "It's a community of great need, and I absolutely loved and adored my time doing that." She is proud of bringing science into the county libraries and starting a special-needs library program that eventually expanded throughout the state. Sarah currently works as the media center specialist at a school for special needs children, but still works part time at the public library. She said:

I am definitely a leader at school. I, again, serve on some state-wide committees geared towards engagement of students with severe and profound disabilities. I am a member of the school's leadership team, so we plan curriculum and professional development for all teachers and staff within the building. I lead some of those staff development opportunities. And I provide... assistance and teaching and leadership [for all of the library media specialists who serve special needs students in schools within the country].

Religious leadership has also been an important part of Sarah's life. She has always been active in her church and taught Sunday School. She leads a small community-based women's ministry in her home. She also became a certified minister in order to officiate at the marriage of her oldest son, and she has helped others with marriages and baptisms as well. She said, "I love the freedom of creating my own ministry and following God's call without the restraints of a large organized church."

Sarah's artifact was an Army hooded athletic team sweatshirt that a male classmate and friend gave her at West Point. She has kept it ever since as a symbol of acceptance. She said:

During yearling year, when [he] gave me this sweatshirt, it... symbolized that we really did have a true friendship. That I really did help him with his math classes, and he really did help me with the history classes. And he acknowledged me that I *was* accepted. Because he gave me the sweatshirt. And it just... I've kept it, and I've often thought of it because I've had a good group of classmates in my upperclass company.... For my real teammates, those who I really worked with and who worked with me, I was accepted. I did have value in their eyes.

Sarah still has close friendships with men classmates from her company, as well as with their wives and children. She created genuine bonds with her male classmates that lasted to this day. She was describing the power of having strong and supportive friendships with her male peers at a predominately male institution. She concluded:

It wasn't about being a woman. It was about being a cadet and a soldier together with you. So, that's kind of what this sweatshirt reminds me of, that someone saw that I did have a value and did accept me as a cadet.

Sarah had experienced a difficult plebe year in a company that did not want women at West Point, and many of the upperclass men cadets had exhibited sexism and misogyny. As a plebe she had worked together with her own classmates in the company, both men and women, to help everyone make it through. So, she thought of her own men classmates as supportive of her and other women. At the end of Cadet Field Training, the

summer training for rising sophomores, she had been standing in line behind a male classmate she did not really know. He suddenly turned to her and out of the blue told her that women did not belong at West Point, that she should “go be a woman somewhere.” She was shocked. She said:

I’d never heard that expressed from any of my classmates. I thought that we were all a team. I thought that we were all in it together, and it was my really first very real, really true realization that “Wow. Maybe not everyone did want me here.”

The Army hooded sweatshirt, then, given to Sarah in friendship by a male classmate in her upperclass company, was a symbol that there were men cadets who accepted and supported women at West Point and accepted and supported her.

These profiles of the eight women participants in this study showed examples of the West Point experiences and types of cadet, military, and civilian careers that women from the West Point Class of 1985 have held. Again, the participants in this study were all women who left the Army sometime after their initial five-year service obligation but before 10 years of active duty service. These profiles do not necessarily represent the experiences of women in the Class of 1985 who stayed in the Army for longer than that or made a career of the military by serving for 20 years or more. They do, however, show women with a great breadth of experience who have assumed leadership roles in a variety of military, professional, volunteer, and /or family situations.

All of the women participants had strong voices. Appendix F shows how the women’s voices are represented throughout the dissertation with direct quotations from their interviews and follow-on sessions.

As part of my preparation for conducting this study, I had a third party, a West Point woman from the Class of 2002, interview me with the same protocol I planned to use with the study participants. Just as I was a member of the West Point Class of 1985 and shared many of the same or similar experiences as my women participants, I also wanted to experience the same interview process as each of my participants.

In addition, I wanted to share my profile, my own personal story, in a way similar to the other women in this study. As the researcher, I was also a woman in the West Point Class of 1985, and I was doing a feminist oral history project with other women from the same class. I am sharing my personal story so that readers will better understand my own background and experiences, especially with respect to West Point, leadership, and being a woman at West Point.

### **Leslie**

*“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.” – John Quincy Adams*

I grew up in a suburb of a mid-sized city in the Northeast and attended the same private independent day school from nursery school through twelfth grade. My graduating class had 85 students, the largest class the school had thus far seen. I was always active in sports and Girl Scouts and swam on a community swim team for 10 summers. During high school, although I was not a standout athlete, I played four sports, including being a girl on the boys’ golf team. I was a high school class officer during my sophomore year, was very involved with drama throughout high school, and as a senior was features editor for the high school newspaper. I also organized and ran a writing club

that helped students who had trouble with writing. I was valedictorian of my high school class and was the first woman to go to West Point from my school. Because my school was a college preparatory high school, almost all of my classmates went on to college, but it was very unusual for students to go to a service academy.

My father had gone to West Point, which was how I knew about it, and once women could attend the service academies, I knew that it was now an option for me, too. I wanted a college experience that was challenging in more ways than just academics, and I was interested in serving my country. I also was drawn to the prospect of being able to work my own way through college, with no one supporting me financially or my incurring any debt.

I did very well academically at West Point and graduated second in my class. I participated in a co-ed athletic club team all four years, in a sport I had never engaged in before West Point and was co-captain my senior year. As a cadet, I was very intense. Academics were my strong suit, but I did well in military aspects as well. I liked structure and organization and was good at following the rules, or if breaking the rules, not getting caught. I tried to be a good team player and embraced the “cooperate and graduate” mantra taught to us during Beast. Integrity was extremely important to me and I believed in doing the right thing, even if sometimes breaking the rules. I was a quiet cadet and often was told that I was not assertive enough; my tactical officer made me go through assertiveness training my sophomore year. My sense of humor and penchant for sarcasm helped me make it through all four years and entertain my classmates and roommates along the way.

The summer before my junior year, I took part in the Drill Cadet Program at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and attended Northern Warfare School (NORWAR) in Alaska. In the Drill Cadet Program, I worked with an Army basic training unit which involved teaching new Army recruits how to be soldiers. This intense environment included long hours, and I developed a lot more self-confidence in myself as a leader. NORWAR was a challenging Army school that taught skills soldiers would need in arctic warfare. We learned mountain climbing, glacier traversing, and small craft water skills in a rugged Alaskan environment. The only time women could attend this school was as cadets in the three-week Junior Leaders Course, and our class included only West Point and ROTC cadets. The cadre, who were primarily Infantry NCOs, included some particularly sexist and misogynistic members who made the course even more difficult for the women. I remember struggling physically at times, trying to keep up with the men. I tried really hard to master some of the tougher physical skills and in doing so, injured myself. Trying to scale a rock ledge using upper body strength alone, I slipped and severely twisted my ankle. Luckily, this happened very near the end of the course, and I tried to “soldier on.” A month or so later, when I still could not run on my leg, I went to the cadet hospital and had to have a cast put on my leg for a torn ligament or tendon.

I had the opportunity to be an exchange cadet at the US Air Force Academy (USAFA) in Colorado Springs, Colorado the first semester of my junior year. In the Service Academy Exchange Program at this time, West Point selected six rising juniors to attend USAFA, six to attend USNA, and three to attend the USCGA, which had a much smaller student body than the DoD service academies. It was considered an honor

to be selected as an exchange cadet, as West Point selected so few cadets for this semester-long experience. This experience both showed me how another service academy operated and raised my appreciation of different aspects of my leadership and potential. To me, in many ways, women seemed more accepted at USAFA than at West Point. One small example was that the women USAFA cadets felt very comfortable wearing skirts to class, which was something very few women at West Point did at that time. Wearing a skirt made it very obvious that we were women, and we did not want to stick out as women at West Point in the early- to mid-1980s. While at USAFA, I was assigned to a cadet squadron (the USAFA equivalent of a cadet company), attended classes, and was considered a member of the USAFA Cadet Wing. I also had the opportunity to be a platoon sergeant while there, a position held by juniors at USAFA but seniors at USMA. I was excited to get the chance to have a leadership position higher than what I would have been able to have at West Point.

The summer before my senior year, I served as the regimental S-3/operations officer for the first detail of Cadet Field Training at Camp Buckner. In this position, I supervised two of my classmates and worked with many of my peers to help ensure that the rising sophomore class had a quality field training experience and introduction to the different branches of the Army. During the academic year, I was an assistant S-3/operations officer on brigade staff first semester. This was a high-ranking staff position but not one that demanded much leadership. Most of the workload entailed planning and preparing for cadet parades. Second semester I served as a platoon sergeant for a second time, this time as a senior in my company working closely with a male platoon leader

who was also an Army football player. We worked well together as a team and brought a sense of humor to our leadership.

My most meaningful leadership experiences in the cadet chain-of-command were probably as an assistant squad leader or squad leader during sophomore and junior years, and I reflected that my story may seem similar to one of the study participant's, Jane's, view on her most meaningful leadership experience. These two positions provided the first times I was working on my own with a small group of people. Plus, I was developing my plebes. It was in these lower level leadership positions that I learned the most about myself as a leader, working with peers and subordinates, and learning how to communicate more effectively.

I served five years on active duty as an officer in a combat support branch. I spent my first two years as an officer at the University of Oxford in England as a Marshall Scholar. I was the first woman from West Point to earn a Marshall Scholarship. I often say that I probably did more good for the Army as a Marshall Scholar at Oxford than in any other capacity of my service, given that experience's outreach aspects. For many people at Oxford – other graduate and undergraduate students, international students, faculty and administrators – I was the first woman Army officer they had ever seen. Many had a stereotypical view of a military officer as a rigid martinet. I provided a more realistic example of what a woman officer could be like. Many of my fellow graduate students were from other countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, Canada, and Central America. I served, in effect, as an ambassador not only for the United States but also for the US Army.



By the time I got to my first real active duty unit, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division (2AD), at Fort Hood, Texas, I was a senior first lieutenant. 2AD had a Cold War follow-on mission to deploy to Europe in case war with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe developed. Because of my graduate schooling and because I had majored in International Relations/Soviet Area Studies and studied Russian at West Point, I was assigned to the division-level intelligence section (G-2). During my time with the G-2, I served as the chief of two sections responsible for the collection, management, analysis, and dissemination of intelligence at the division level. As such, I supervised 20 to 30 enlisted soldiers, non-commissioned officers, warrant officers, and second lieutenants. While I knew that I would never have the chance to be a platoon leader, which is the leadership position most second lieutenants hold, I treated my two section chief positions as if they were my platoon leader experience.

One of my roles was to brief the division commander, a Major General, and his staff on the intelligence situation for the division during field exercises both in Texas and in Europe during our deployment for a Return of Forces to Germany (REFORGER) exercise. Usually, I was the only woman who briefed the general and his staff and was often the only woman in the Division Tactical Operations Center (DTOC), a fact that I often did not even notice or realize. I took a very hands-on approach with my soldiers and really enjoyed opportunities to train and develop them.

At West Point, physical fitness and running in particular were emphasized strongly. Although I enjoyed sports and liked to stay physically fit, I was not a particularly fast runner. There was an attitude, especially among men cadets, that if you

could not run fast, you were not a good leader. I fell out of several formation runs during Beast, which was not only embarrassing but also humiliating. As a result, I developed a huge anxiety around running. I worked hard at my running all four years, but running was always my Achilles heel as a cadet.

I continued to work hard on my running both at Oxford and while at my officer basic course and was in the best running shape of my life when I reported to my first Army duty station. While I was a much faster and stronger runner as an officer, I would have still been a mediocre runner at West Point. However, the physical fitness standards at West Point were much higher than in the Army, and when I got out into the Army, I always scored very high on my physical fitness tests. That gave me a lot of visible credibility with my soldiers, NCOs, and fellow officers. I did not need to run fast to do my intelligence job in the Army, but being able to run fast (by Army standards) was a definite plus.

Because I had always had so much trouble with running at West Point, I felt empathy for any of my soldiers who struggled with PT. I ran a remedial physical fitness program for soldiers who needed some extra assistance with running and PT. I spent a lot of time outside of normal hours helping and encouraging my soldiers with their running and general fitness and saw many of them go on to succeed on their PT tests and gain increased self-confidence. While I had been taught at West Point that you needed to be a fast runner to be a good leader, I feel that my *not* being a fast runner at West Point made me a better leader out in the Army. I had more humility and empathy for others than I

might have had otherwise, and I feel this helped me become a stronger, more compassionate leader.

I got out of the Army after five years of service. While I did not have children yet, one of the reasons I wanted to leave active duty was because my husband, who was also an Army officer, and I were having a difficult time getting pregnant, and we really wanted to have children. My husband, who was two years my senior in the Army, wanted to make the military a career. So, I got out of the Army, and he stayed in. This was a mutual decision on our part, but I did not fully appreciate what it would mean going from being an Army captain to a civilian and military dependent in the Army environment. It was a difficult transition and one that I found at times quite humbling.

I was an Army wife and stay-at-home mother for the next 13 years. During that time, our family moved eight times, including moves overseas to Germany and Alaska. As an Army wife, I served as the Family Readiness Group (FRG) leader for my husband's units and families when he was both a company and battalion commander. This included during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm when his unit was deployed to Saudi Arabia for nine months and engaged in combat during the brief war in Iraq. I also volunteered in my children's schools, both in their classrooms and school libraries, wherever we lived, as well as with the Boy Scouts, our church, and in the community.

When my husband and I divorced in 2003, I moved with my children back to my hometown to be closer to family. I returned to graduate school to earn my master's degree in Library and Information Science and subsequently became an academic

librarian. I worked as a research and instruction librarian at a mid-sized Catholic university for 10 years. While I never supervised anyone in my job, I was responsible for training all new librarians and served as the chair of the Library Faculty Committee and on Faculty Senate. I also taught multiple sections of the core information literacy course to both traditional and non-traditional undergraduate students. I volunteered on campus, at my children's schools, and in my community. In 2015, with my children grown, I decided to go back to school yet again to pursue my doctorate in Educational Leadership at Clemson University.

I have a passion for teaching and service to others. I enjoy teaching and working with students, both undergraduate and graduate, much as I enjoyed working with soldiers. I feel strongly that you can be a leader wherever you are and that you do not need to be in a formal leadership position to effect change and make a positive difference in the world around you. I believe in leading by example and am very mission-driven. For example, I was particularly drawn to the Catholic university where I worked as a librarian because of its very strong mission: "Serving God by serving students." I am drawn towards professions of service, whether that be in the Army, in libraries, or in education.

The artifact that I brought to my researcher-as-participant interview session was a shoebox filled with letters. When we moved my mother into a senior facility several years ago, we had to move her out of my childhood home and her home of 54 years. As we were sorting through personal belongings she would not need anymore, I came across a women's shoebox that contained not shoes but letters. They were the letters I had written home from West Point to my parents. Not only had my mother kept the letters,

which I had not known, she had also numbered them in the order she received them. Reading through these notes and letters over 30 years later gave me a sense of what I had been experiencing and what was on my mind from plebe through firstie year. These letters were a record of who I was and how I changed over the course of four years. So, to me, these letters were all about leadership and the making of a young leader.

The letters included not only my hopes and aspirations, but also my fears, anxieties, and self-doubts. I discussed what courses I was planning to take, what major I was going to choose, and what branch I wanted to select. I described military and leadership opportunities and shared my trials and tribulations with running. These notes and letters offered a surprisingly open and honest window into what it was like to be a woman at West Point between 1981 and 1985. They were a record of my evolution from a shy, mild-mannered high school girl to a more mature and somewhat more confident, albeit still naïve, young woman Army officer.

My profile shows that I had many experiences similar to those of the women participants in the study. In addition to our West Point experience, we share an Army experience as women officers in the mid- to late-1980s. Both the participants and I separated from active duty service between five and nine years of service. I share the experience of raising children with several of the women, as well as the experience of being an Army wife and/or full-time stay-at-home mother for a period of time. Like most of the women participants, I went back to school to earn a graduate degree and pursued at least one subsequent civilian career. I included my profile in part to show transparency as a researcher who has much in common with her participants. I also felt free to include

more details in my profile since readers know my identity as the researcher; I thought this might give a more complete view of the experiences of women from the West Point Class of 1985.

In Chapter Six, I present the findings and themes that emerged from the stories the eight women participants told me about their experiences before, during, and after West Point. They talked about themselves as leaders and as women leaders and discussed how their leader identities changed over time.

## CHAPTER SIX

### FINDINGS

My findings address my research questions, as well as additional themes that emerged from the women's stories. In the first part of this chapter, I address findings related to the women's leader identity development. I examine the women's leader identities before West Point, at West Point, in the Army, in any subsequent civilian careers, and today. I also describe how the women perceived their West Point experiences informing their leader identities at West Point and over the courses of their lives. I then discuss findings related to how the women made sense of their gender, military, and leader identities at West Point. And lastly, I address additional themes that emerged from the women's responses as related to leader identity.

My primary research question for this study was: How do women's experiences at West Point inform their leader identity development? A closely related subordinate research question was: How do women's experiences at West Point inform their leader identities in the Army and in any subsequent careers? I wanted to see how women in the Class of 1985 perceived their West Point experiences informing their leader identities at West Point, in the Army, in any civilian careers afterwards, and today. I also asked the women about their leadership experiences and leader identities before they went to West Point, so I would know what their understanding of leadership and being a leader were before attending USMA.

## Women's Leader Identities and Understanding of Leadership

### Before Attending West Point

Most of the women described having very unformed, immature, or nascent views of leadership before entering West Point. Many noted that while they thought of themselves as leaders and most held multiple leadership positions during high school (see Table 6.1), they did not really have well-formed ideas of what being a leader meant.

Table 6.1 shows that most of the women actively participated in high school sports. Five of the six women who played varsity athletics in high school were team captains. Service was also important to many of the women as six of the eight volunteered outside their schools. Several of the women were class officers and leaders in school government, as well as in a wide variety of school clubs and activities. Their activities and leadership positions in high school aligned with those of the overall Class of 1985 (see Table 4.3).

Table 6.1

#### *Details on Participation and Leadership in High School*

<b>Positions Held / Accomplishments in High School</b>	<b>Number of Study Participants</b>
Senior Class President	1
Senior Class Officer (Other than President)	3
Student Body President	1
President/Officer of a High School Class (Other than Senior)	3
President/Member, Student Council	1
Participated in Varsity Athletics	6



<b>Positions Held / Accomplishments in High School</b>	<b>Number of Study Participants</b>
Earned at Least One Varsity Athletics Letter	6
Athletic Team Captain	5
Scouts, All	2
Drama Club	1
Other School Clubs	3
National Honor Society President	1
Four-H	2
Future Homemakers of America	1
Valedictorian	1
Employment	3
Volunteering (Outside of School)	6

*Note:* This table parallels the categories, structure, and order in Table 4.3, with some additions, to show how the participation and leadership of women in this study before West Point compared with that of the Class of 1985 as a whole.

The women in this study described their leadership experiences and concepts of leadership before West Point in somewhat different ways. Ann and Sarah both described themselves as “doers” in high school and saw a leader as someone “who gets things done.” Ann’s perspective was that others turned to her because they knew she would get the job done, whether that job was a banquet, prom, or some other high school activity. Although she held many high-level leadership positions, she said she very rarely sought them. Sarah described a similar situation where others would ask her to fill leadership positions, but in clubs, sports, or activities she enjoyed. If she felt she could do the role or contribute significantly, she would say yes. She said, “I don’t think I had a true concept

that I was a leader, just that when I was asked I typically would say, ‘Okay, I can do that. Sure, if you want me to.’”

Kim’s high school concept of leadership echoed Ann and Sarah’s: “I’d say leaders make things happen, lead groups of people, help people reach a goal.” While Kim was at the top of her class and very active in high school, she emphasized how small her high school was. She said:

I thought of myself as a leader... but I felt like I was in this little small town and I didn’t know how good I was or could I compete or could I be successful in the big real world and the Army. That’s one of the reasons I wanted to go to West Point... to have a real challenging undergraduate experience and then see what I could do, what kind of leader I could be.

Ann, Sarah, and Molly also talked about the fact that they held their multiple leadership positions in small high schools in either rural or small-town settings. By doing this, they downplayed the leadership roles they held. They also indicated that they saw West Point as providing an opportunity for them to see how they fared on a much larger, more intense scale.

Beth, on the other hand, saw leadership primarily through sports. She was an outstanding athlete and served as captain in several high school sports. She saw a leader as the “best athlete on the team.” She felt her selection as team captain came from being the best athlete on the team. This concept of leadership changed drastically when she played on a varsity sports team at West Point and learned there was more to team captain than being the best athlete on the team.

Cate echoed Beth's perception of the team captain as leader by stating: "... a lot of leadership was bestowed on individuals because they might have been athletically adept." She said other than her school sports experiences, a lot of her leadership concepts came from her family: honesty, stepping up and doing the right thing, and being competent in the area that one would offer leadership. She added: "But it wasn't really a very thoughtful effort on my part."

Molly also talked about the role of family in her pre-West Point understanding of leadership. She emphasized the impact that her father, who had been in the military, had on her and her siblings growing up:

My dad... taught us basic character traits of being honest, integrity. If you borrow something from someone, you turn it back better than it was. You fall, you get back up. So, he taught us that foundation, and strive to do the best you can. You can be anything you want to be, so that did help as far as being a team captain and the different activities I was in.

Helen had a very different perspective on the origins of her leadership. She said: My mother could not function as a parent. My brothers and I were born, three of us in three years. From the smallest time of my life, I remember, because my dad had to go to work every day, he'd be like, "You're in charge." I feel like my whole life, I've been leading.

She saw her roots as a leader stemming from necessity, being the oldest of four in what she described as a dysfunctional family. Throughout her life, Helen said she has found herself as someone who likes to take charge, as someone who sees a need and steps in to

fill a void. “If you’re all standing around, and there’s a crisis, or somebody needs to be in charge, I’m the first one to jump in and say, ‘Okay, let’s go.’”

Jane, who described herself as not being very involved in her large urban high school, said she really could not speak to her concept of leadership in high school.

I was not active in high school activities. Couldn’t wait to get out of high school actually. So, I don’t think I had a concept of leadership. [Maybe that is] why I was drawn to the Army and West Point. Maybe that’s what I was searching for to some extent, but I couldn’t articulate that.

As a whole, the women’s participation in leadership positions before West Point, accompanied by a very nascent understanding of leadership, was in alignment with the findings of my pilot study. Many of the women in the pilot study said that while they held leadership positions and saw themselves as leaders before attending West Point, they did not have very well-developed leader identities.

### **How Experiences at West Point Informed Women’s Leader Identities as Cadets**

All the women in this study became more conscious of leadership concepts while they were at West Point. They also learned what being a leader meant from West Point’s perspective. Most of the women described having a variety of leadership opportunities, except for Jane, who felt she did not have very many opportunities as a cadet. In some ways she felt “cheated,” she said, and believed she left West Point unprepared to be a second lieutenant. Again, this paralleled the findings of my pilot study where most participants felt they had many leadership opportunities at West Point, while only a few felt they did not.

The women in this study talked about how the holistic West Point experience – the one that *all* cadets experienced – informed their leader identity development. They also described how their experiences as women in a very male-dominated, hypermasculine environment also informed their leader identity development. For women in the Class of 1985, the West Point experience meant undergoing more than just the four-year leadership development program with academics, athletics, military training, and ethics that all cadets faced. It also meant maneuvering their way through a predominantly male institution with a hypermasculine culture at a time when women had only been at West Point for five years and many men cadets still thought that women did not belong there. The women reported a jarring dichotomy between holistic experiences as developing leaders alongside their male classmates and moments of blatant individual, group, and sometimes public, misogyny. The women perceived being a woman at West Point at this time as significantly informing their leader identities and leader identity development.

### **Being a Woman at West Point**

When I asked the women what it was like to be a woman at West Point in the early- to mid-1980s, their immediate responses varied from long, knowing glances or smiles to outright laughter. This was a means of unspoken acknowledgement of a shared experience and indicated how well we as women had been conditioned not to talk or complain about what we experienced as women either at West Point or in the Army. Not only did the women know what it was like being a woman at West Point, they knew that I knew what it was like. We had experienced it together. It was also not a topic often

discussed in later life. We all knew what it was like, and it was water under the bridge. Why discuss it? However, the women knew the purpose of my asking that question, and they trusted me to record and share their stories. They wanted their experiences to be part of the permanent record.

From my experiences with West Point women over the past 38 years, women who went through West Point between 1981 and 1985 often do not think of themselves as having gone through anything extraordinary. They were not in the first class with women, where the women experienced four extremely difficult years, simply because they were the first women cadets at West Point (Janda, 2002). Instead, they were at a West Point where women were in all four classes. Only the Class of 1982, which was the senior class when the Class of 1985 were plebes, had known a class without women; the senior class that had trained them was the Class of 1979, which was the last all-men class. Further, West Point is difficult for everyone – and is designed to be that way. It is a challenging training ground for future Army officers. However, women who attended West Point in the 1980s also often lose sight of the fact that a significant part of their West Point experience was one shared by only 10% of the Corps of Cadets.

The masculine environment of West Point was pervasive. For most of the women, this was a new experience. Beth had broken through the all-male barrier of Little League as a young adolescent, and she said, “I just remember the ripple that that caused.” At the time, going in, she had been a bit oblivious. “I just wanted to play baseball,” and I was happy to play in any level of Little League. She was able to play at Level A, which she qualified for in try-outs, only because two male coaches saw her talent, stepped forward,

and agreed to have her on their team. She said, “I just remember that feeling of not being able to do something because you were a girl. I try to explain that to people, because I don’t think guys truly understand being limited by... your sex.”

At West Point, the women were living in a world composed of virtually all men. Not only was the student body 90% men, it had been 100% men for its first 174 years – and up until just five years before. Almost all the faculty, staff, and administration were men. The West Point campus was very masculine with its Gothic-style gray granite buildings. The classroom buildings and barracks were all designed for men and named after men, and the statues around campus were of famous military men. In addition, the cadet uniforms, rules, regulations, and standards had all been designed with men in mind. While the women desired to be a part of this world, they were still, by and large, outsiders, and they were reminded of this every day. Still, they persisted. And, overall, they not only survived, they did well.

Three of the women in this study were Distinguished Cadets, which means they ranked in the top 5% of their class, and several made the Dean’s List. Seven of the eight women played on either varsity or club sports teams, and three were team captains. Four of the women became cadet captains their senior year with command or staff positions ranging from company to brigade levels. Some of the women were the first women to hold these top-level positions, and at that time it was still unusual for women to hold any of these captain-level positions. Some of the women excelled in more than one area, and a few in all three areas: academics, athletics, and military. In addition, many of the women were also engaged in a variety of non-athletic extracurricular activities ranging

from competitive academic clubs to class committees to religious activities like teaching Sunday school.

Simply making it through West Point, whether as a man or a woman, was an achievement in and unto itself and demanded a level of excellence not required of most undergraduate students in the US. In addition, the women exhibited levels of persistence and resilience that would not have been required in the same ways at civilian institutions of higher education. Not only did the women have to do well academically, in a curriculum that demanded so many math, science, and engineering courses they would end up with a Bachelor of Science degree regardless of their major, but also athletically and militarily. They had to participate in sports, if not at the varsity or club team levels, then at the intramural level, all year, for all four years. They also had to take physical education courses every semester and pass multiple physical fitness tests that were originally designed for men. They lived in a very regimented, strict military environment that had been designed with men in mind. And they held a variety of leadership positions with increasing levels of responsibility over the course of their four years, in addition to all their academic and athletic requirements. They learned how to be soldiers and officer leaders in the US Army, an entity that was also male-dominated, very masculine, and traditionally all-men. And they did it well.

West Point is challenging for everyone, and everyone's West Point experience is her or his own. For the women in the Class of 1985 who participated in this study, part of their challenges came from simply being women in a male-dominated institution with a



history and tradition of being all-men at a time when women were relatively new to the Academy.

**Effects of tokenism.** Yoder (1989, 1991) and others have written extensively about tokenism with specific attention to the initial years of integration at West Point. Official West Point studies specifically on women ceased in 1983. Presumably, West Point's administration anticipated that the effects of tokenism would wear off or at least significantly lessen as women moved into all four classes and the Academy no longer had any all-male classes (Vitters & Kinzer, 1977; Yoder, 1989). The belief was that women would become more accepted, and the effects of tokenism would dissipate. While women were certainly more accepted at West Point when the Class of 1985 went through the Academy than when the Class of 1980 matriculated through graduation, women were still relatively new at the service academies. They also only made up about 10% of the Corps of Cadets. The women who participated in this study all related stories that revealed that the effects of tokenism were still quite strong between 1981 and 1985, and I will relate these below.

The three effects of tokenism identified by Kanter (1977) and described by Yoder (1989, 1991) about women at West Point during the initial years of integration were: visibility, contrast, and assimilation. All the women talked about feeling performance pressure as women cadets at West Point. Performance pressure is one of the ramifications of a token's visibility in a male-dominated environment (Yoder, 1989). Sarah said: "It was an underlying truth while I was at West Point...If you were a woman who wanted to lead, you'd better be better than the men and you'd better be ready to put up with a lot of

flak related to your success.” Sarah’s observation also encapsulated another negative ramification of visibility: men cadets’ fear that women, because they were so few and so visible, would have a “competitive edge” (Yoder, 1989, p. 525) in getting leadership positions or slots for summer training.

Men’s fears that women’s positive achievements would be more noticed than men’s because women were so few also contributed to “claims of preferential treatment” (Yoder, 1989, p. 526). This was a ramification of the second effect of tokenism: contrast (Yoder, 1989). Helen provided an example of this fear in some men cadets. She said, “I had a male classmate who was really angry that I was selected for a leadership position over him, and he actually went to the officer chain of command and complained about it.”

Another effect of tokenism was that if one woman did not do well in something, this negatively affected the rest of the women. The other women, who desperately wanted to fit in, then felt they had unfairly been labeled. Jane said:

You represented everybody, whether or not that was accurate. And so that was a big hindrance. We would talk about other women. “Oh, can you believe she did that? She’s tainted us.” Whatever that person did: She failed. She didn’t run [fast]. She was too fat. It would put the mark on all of us. I think that was the driving factor of the early 1980s: The one represented the all.

The women also described role stereotyping of women cadets by men cadets, the dominant group, at West Point during the early- to mid-1980s. Role stereotyping is a manifestation of assimilation, the third major effect of tokenism (Yoder, 1989). Men

cadets often saw women cadets as “lesser than” and unsuited for combat, a role they felt only men could assume effectively and in which women at that time were not allowed to participate. Men cadets also often stereotyped women cadets into one of three basic roles: a) “bitch” or “ice queen;” b) “slut” or “whore;” or c) “lesbian” or “dyke.” Women in this study reported being called these and other slurs, and such name-calling of women servicemembers by men servicemembers was common throughout the US military (Herbert, 1998). These terms were intended to be derogatory and were a way for the men to avoid looking at women cadets as individual women. These terms were also not in alignment with cadet roles or the idea of “an officer and a gentleman.” The first two categories of slurs were sexist/misogynistic and the third homophobic.

The effects of tokenism added an extra layer of challenge to the women’s experiences that the men did not have to deal with. For example, Cate talked about having to be more self-aware of her appearance and what she said and did in her cadet leadership positions than her fellow men classmates in similar roles. None of the men cadet commanders were called sexist names when they walked across the cadet area or were cursed at by male alumni when they marched by in a parade during reunion weekends. Yet, these were common occurrences for Cate. She explained further:

I think that as a woman, you definitely had to be aware of it because you were being judged on so many different variables. And that took place not only from your peers but also from the officers, and also from society at large. And you know, being the first, you also gain some notoriety with that as well.

Participants had to do additional work related to tokenism and struggled with how it affected the ways in which expectations were different or intensified for them as women at West Point.

The effects of tokenism could be hurtful and adversely affect women's self-esteem (Yoder, 1989). Most of the women in this study talked about having to learn to deal with the negative effects of tokenism. They often did so by trying to ignore it, by trying to perform extra well, and/or by trying to be invisible and blend in. Several women also talked about being more self-aware of their appearance and behavior in order to try to avoid criticism or to prepare themselves for inevitable criticism. Thus, the women cadets were very aware of their gender. They knew that many men cadets did not consider women their equals. Women were lesser than, and to some men cadets, women did not belong at West Point and were not welcome there.

Overall, the effects of tokenism led to increased stress, as well as feelings of loneliness and lowered self-esteem. The women had to develop tougher skins and become more resilient to deal with the effects of tokenism, something their men counterparts did not have to endure.

**Effects of sexism and misogyny.** All the women talked about experiencing sexism and misogyny while at West Point. For the purposes of this study, sexism involves denigrating attitudes and behaviors towards women by men, while misogyny is the dislike of or contempt for women by men (Griffin, 2017a, 2017b). Some participants talked about experiencing sexism and/or misogyny more than others. Most gave examples when they were talking about what it was like to be a woman at West Point in

the early- to mid-1980s, but some also gave examples when talking about other aspects of life at the Academy. The women experienced sexism and misogyny from men cadets, especially upperclassmen when they were plebes, but also in some cases men classmates; men faculty and staff; men alumni; and even, in some cases, the general public.

For some of the women, West Point was the first time they experienced overt sexism and misogyny, at least that they were aware of. Many had been told growing up that they could do and be anything they wanted to. In most cases, sexism and misogyny were more extreme when the women were plebes and came primarily from men upperclassmen or faculty. However, some of the women also talked about sexism or misogyny exhibited by upperclassmen when they, too, were upperclassmen. One woman told a story about an incident that happened in her company when she was a junior. The seniors in her company happened to be all men; she and the junior women in the company were the most senior women. She said:

That senior class, when they took their [company class photo], one of the pictures that they chose to take was with balls. They had footballs, baseballs, basketballs. And I just remember, all [the tactical officers] made them do was retake the picture. I just remember how incensed those guys were, that they were not allowed to express that.

Not only were these senior men cadets misogynistic, they were also upset that they were not allowed to express their misogyny in a public photo that would appear in the West Point yearbook.

Several of the women noted they were a bit shocked to experience sexism and misogyny from faculty members. Although most faculty were male Army officers – and many of them West Point graduates, they were also supposed to be role models for cadets to emulate. Beth said, “There was a situation where I happened to walk past professors talking in a classroom.... They were disparaging of women being at West Point. That kind of also didn’t set too well with me.”

Women related experiences of professors making sexist or misogynistic comments in the classroom. Molly recounted her military history professor announcing on the first day of class: “If you’re a female, you’re going to have a hard time understanding this class.” Her instructor was being sexist in assuming that the history of war would be more difficult for women to comprehend simply because of their gender.

Molly also told a story about how her male academic advisor told her to go the Humanities and Public Affairs track as opposed to the Math, Science, and Engineering track, even though she wanted to do the latter and her grades in math and science were much higher than her grades in English and history. She did not feel confident enough at the time to contradict him or advocate for herself, but she said his advice was not sound and was clearly rooted in sexism.

Several women noted that they experienced sexism and misogyny from men classmates for the first time at Camp Buckner (during Cadet Field Training the summer between plebe and yearling years). It was during this summer training that cadets were introduced to the different branches of the Army, especially the combat arms branches (e.g., Infantry, Armor, and Field Artillery). At that time, women were not allowed to

serve in Infantry or Armor or in combat roles in other branches. Although women cadets went through the same training as men cadets during CFT, physiological differences between men and women became more apparent on long tactical road marches where cadets had to carry heavy packs and weapons or where upper body strength was required (e.g., when loading rounds in a tank). Beth, who was an excellent athlete, could keep up on difficult road marches and perform tasks that required a lot of upper body strength. Still, she felt disdain from some men classmates. She said:

[Camp] Buckner was really the first time I felt as though there was a real rift, male to female rift. My classmates at Buckner, the guys, they started to... I don't know, feel their oats now that they were no longer plebes so to speak. The big "Oh, you can't go infantry" bullshit started at that point in time. So..., that was kind of a beginning of feeling like a second-class citizen in the military.

Similarly, Sarah told the story of how a male classmate had turned to her in line at the end of CFT training and, seemingly out of the blue, told her women did not belong at West Point and she should "go elsewhere." Sarah recounted her feelings from that day:

I was just very shocked. I'd never heard that expressed from any of my classmates. I thought that we were all a team, I thought that we were all in it together, and it was really my first very real, really true realization that, "Wow. Maybe not everyone did want me here."

These quotes exemplified experiences from participants about the ways their identities as women surfaced during their Cadet Field Training (CFT) experiences as rising sophomores at West Point.

It was not just during CFT that participants had these experiences, however. Cate reflected on the sexism and misogyny that women at West Point faced on a daily basis and how male classmates who did not participate in this behavior could have done more:

I also think that being a woman became an easy criticism to make, right? And sometimes people might believe they're lifting themselves up by having to push others down, and I view that as a very weak person. But I did see that behavior at West Point, and I always viewed it as a weak person trying to make themselves look stronger or more forceful or powerful to a small clique.... I don't believe the majority of our classmates were sexist.... But I also fault them for not standing up and speaking out more. Many of them just assumed that was part of the "right of passage"; you had to navigate that on your own. And I think a lot of them could have just spoken up and said "Hey, cut it out. That's inappropriate."

Day-to-day microaggressions could range from off-handed comments, slurs, or sexist jokes to malicious criticism and outright hate. Cate talked about the impact of this additional layer of challenge for women. She said, "So those were things that were difficult, that made you defensive, I think, and made you less open or a bit weary when you would walk around campus normally."

The women became more self-aware of their gender and how men cadets perceived them. Most wanted to fit in and be accepted by their men classmates. Sometimes this meant distancing themselves from women who were not performing up to standard, who appeared overweight, or who otherwise attracted negative attention. Several said that in hindsight they regretted doing this. Ann stated:



As a woman, I would say probably the biggest disappointment... is that we were really, as women – and again as competitive women, it was more like we were competing against each other. Like instead of bonding together, we kind of aligned ourselves with males in a way, so that way we could kind of distance ourselves from maybe even a weaker female that we thought was going to drag us down.

Women at this time were still a very small percentage of the Corps of Cadets and relatively new to the Academy. As such, women often found themselves in survival mode and were trying to blend in and be accepted by the men.

The sexism and misogyny that the women experienced were additional layers of challenge to their West Point experience. As first-year cadets, sexism and misogyny created additional layers to the challenge of being a plebe at West Point, which was challenging enough by itself. As upperclass cadets, experiencing continued sexism and misogyny was dispiriting. For some of the women who held top cadet leadership positions as seniors, they saw a resurgence of extreme sexism and misogyny, this time from men alumni and the public, as well as men cadets. After thinking they had figured out how to navigate West Point as women during their sophomore and junior years, this was both surprising and disquieting. When asked how the negative attention and hate talk affected her leader identity as a high-ranking cadet, one of the women said:

I don't think it did. I think it just made me more cognizant of how I communicated.... I couldn't let that upset me, right? I couldn't respond in a way

that was angry or not being constructive. And I knew I had a finite period with [this leadership position].

This renewed and often extreme sexism and misogyny for a woman in a highly visible cadet leadership position was just one more thing to have to endure to make it through West Point.

As they had as plebes when facing sexism and misogyny, the women found the best way to deal with these additional challenges was to try to ignore them and carry on and keep trying to do the best they could. By taking the high road and by remaining professional, they believed they would get through this, graduate, and move on. Dealing with sexism and misogyny on a daily basis placed more stress on the women and created an extra burden the men did not have to deal with.

**Treatment as a woman depended on which cadet company one was in.** During the 1980s, the Corps of Cadets comprised four regiments of three battalions each with three companies per battalion. Thus, there were nine companies in each regiment for a total of 36 companies. At the end of Cadet Basic Training (CBT), cadets were assigned to their academic-year companies. At the time the Class of 1985 attended West Point, cadets changed academic-year companies again after plebe year. They were “scrambled” going into Cadet Field Training (CFT) and then assigned to new academic-year companies in different regiments for their sophomore year. Cadets remained in that same second academic company for the rest of their time at West Point. Thus, cadets were usually in two different academic companies (in two different regiments) – one their plebe year and the other their upperclass years.

Many of the women in this study felt that how any individual woman was treated as a woman at West Point during the early- to mid-1980s often depended on which company she was in. Cadet companies developed their own cultures, depending to a large extent on what the cadets in that company valued and their assigned tactical officers (Army captains or majors, mostly men) permitted or promoted. Some companies had reputations within the Corps as being more difficult for plebes, and some had reputations for being more difficult for women. A few companies had climates of toxic masculinity where misogyny, sexism, and mistreatment of women were tolerated, accepted, or even promoted. Cate said:

...I think there were some companies that created cultures where... it was okay to disparage women. It was okay to make comments about things, that in other companies, might not have been accepted. And I do believe it's at that small level you have the ability to impact choices people make and set the tone for how people treat one another.

All cadet companies have nicknames, like the A-2 Spartans, the I-1 Good Dudes, or the C-4 Cowboys. While Company B-1 had an official nickname of the B-1 Barbarians, for many years after the admission of women, the company was also known throughout the Corps of Cadets as "Boys-One." Several of the women in this study mentioned the fact that B-1 was known as "Boys-One" and that it was common knowledge throughout the Corps that the company did not welcome women cadets. It is unclear how long this nickname lasted, but a participant in my pilot study from the Class

of 2007 said the men cadets in B-1 still called the company “Boys One” when she was at the Academy.

Women who happened to be assigned to companies like B-1, especially as plebes, tended to have extremely challenging experiences simply because of their gender. And other women within the Corps were aware of these inequities. Women who did not live in companies with a culture of toxic masculinity all knew other women who did, and the women in this study gave examples. Several of the women in this study expressed the feeling that those who had been plebe women in First and Second Regiments had a more difficult time as women than those who had been plebes in Third and Fourth Regiment. One woman, who had been in Second Regiment as a plebe, said that if the Class of 1985 had not “scrambled” (i.e., changed regiments and companies) at the end of plebe year, she probably would have left West Point. Her experience in her plebe company, especially as a woman, had been very negative. After CFT, she ended up in a company in Fourth Regiment, and her experience as an upperclassman was completely different.

Another participant said:

I spent my plebe year in B1 or, as it was known, Boys 1. The company motto was “Be male or be gone.” [For me] it was a year of constant torture and an attempted sexual assault. [This experience] honestly scarred me for life. Life was very different when I became an upperclass woman in [a different regiment].

A woman who had been in a different First Regiment company said, “My plebe year in [my company] was ridiculous as a woman.” She described the absence of women’s bathrooms in her barracks and how this caused safety issues for the women.

In my plebe company... we didn't have female bathrooms yet. So, we had flip signs on the bathroom and shower doors.... So, when there was a female in there, you would switch the sign to "Female." And when there was a male in there, it would be "Male." Well, that worked fairly well during the week. But, I mean, it became quite a fearful situation to be in the bathroom on Saturday night when the upperclassmen were coming back [from Eisenhower Hall, a student center where upperclassmen were allowed to drink alcohol on Saturday nights] not totally in their right mind all the time. And you just kind of learned that, okay, well, after midnight on Saturday, I think I'll stay in my room until ... Or after 11:00, or whatever, stay in my room until the light comes up Sunday morning. And then they'll all be sleeping, and it will be safe for me to shower.

She explained that the upperclass men cadets often ignored the "Male/Female" sign on the bathroom, especially on Friday and Saturday nights when they were allowed to drink alcohol. She said, "The message of the sign was clear to each female plebe in [the company] .... We were 'in the way' and in a place where we 'did not belong.'"

Through these examples, participants surfaced the ways in which they were made to feel unwelcome at West Point. While much of the discomfort was connected to attitudes, there were also environmental issues that made them feel as if they did not belong and were not welcome.

Women who had been plebes in Third and Fourth Regiments described experiences that were less harrowing. In talking about her experience in her plebe year

company in Third Regiment, one woman stated that the upperclassmen were “very mellow” there compared with companies like B-1. She added:

The senior leadership were hard on me. I’m not saying they were hard on me because I was a woman. Did I get more attention because I was a woman? Absolutely. And if I did something wrong, I’d be treated and corrected appropriately, but I don’t believe... that they were hunting for a way to drive me out of the Corps. [pause] I don’t think they were hunting for a way to welcome me into the Corps, either.

The women who had been in companies that did not treat women poorly learned from other women in their academic classes or on their athletic teams that this was not the case throughout the Corps. One woman said:

I was always treated well in the company I was in as a plebe and upperclassman. [Because of this] I honestly thought all the companies treated women the same. However, on my sporting team, I was surprised to find out this was not true. I had a woman on our team who was two years older than me. She told us that the upperclassmen in her company wanted to run the women out of the company. She had a very difficult time, nothing physical; it was the environment of not wanting the women cadets at West Point. The seniors in the company were only male cadets [i.e., there were no women seniors in that company]. Being on a sports team was her sanctuary.

Several women commented that they were uncertain how things would have been for them if they had been in companies with cultures of toxic masculinity instead of the

more even-handed ones they had experienced. One woman said she was not sure she would have stayed at West Point if she had been a plebe woman in a company like B-1.

That said, Ann stated there were “assholes in every company,” and women could be targets of extreme sexism, misogyny, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct elsewhere within the Corps. All the women gave examples of mistreatment they experienced specifically because of their gender, and mistreatment occurred to some degree within all four regiments, even if only by one or two male cadets in any one company. Beth said, “It just takes one or two flaming, chauvinistic assholes in a company to change the whole dynamic of the company, right?”

Overall, the women found themselves more targeted as women when they were plebes, as opposed to when they were upperclassmen. And while the women described some misogyny and sexism from men classmates, most of their negative experiences were with men from the Classes of 1982, 1983, and 1984. The biggest complaint the women had about their own male classmates was the number of times these men had the opportunity to speak up or stop sexist or misogynistic comments/treatment and chose not to.

### **Role of the West Point Leadership Development Program**

The women talked about how their experiences within the formal 47-month West Point leadership development program significantly informed their leader identity development. In particular, they talked about how many leadership opportunities they had, learning from not only good but also bad leadership examples, and learning to lead by example.

**Role of leadership opportunities.** Most of the women said they had multiple leadership opportunities while at West Point and felt well prepared to become Second Lieutenants and platoon leaders in the Army. The women who held command leadership positions (e.g., company commander, battalion commander) talked about the impact of this type of role, while some of the women who held top-level staff positions wondered if their experiences would have been different if they had held command positions instead of staff ones. One woman, who held several executive officer (or second-in-command) positions, wondered if perhaps she had been “pigeon-holed” into this type of role as a woman. Only one of the participants felt she did not have enough leadership opportunities at West Point and that this put her at a disadvantage when she went out into the Army as a new officer.

Overall the women saw the importance of leadership opportunities to leadership development and leader identity development and to their own development in these areas. Those who perceived that they held a lot of leadership opportunities felt these opportunities significantly helped them. Several participants talked about how multiple leadership opportunities gave them opportunities to try out different leadership styles over the course of their four years at West Point. They could then decide which leadership styles worked well for them and which did not. Notably, several women talked about trying out the more traditional, negative leadership styles that were still prevalent at West Point under the FCS leadership development program. These negative leadership styles included employing a lot of yelling and negative feedback.



Beth described the leadership style she took as an upperclass cadet trying to mentor women plebes:

I could have been a better female leader to some of the plebes, too. I think I wanted to support them, but I think I tried to support some of them the wrong way. Almost by like toughening them up as opposed to saying “Hey, I got your back.”

But if I could go back, I would be a different leader to them. It’s not like I would be easy on them, but I would have a different message for them. “You can get your shit together. Let’s get it together, so you can get this done” versus “Stop crying or I’m going to crush you.” I would definitely do things a lot differently.

The leader that I am today would definitely be a different leader as a cadet.

Like Beth, the women who talked about trying these negative approaches said they found them ineffective and later regretted using them.

**Learning from both good and bad examples of leadership.** Many of the women cited learning about leadership and how to treat (or not treat) others by observing cadets and even officers around them. Some of these cadets and officers exemplified effective leaders and provided positive examples that the women tried to emulate, while others exhibited examples of poor leadership and behaviors the women strived to avoid.

Learning from both good and bad examples of leadership was also a theme in the pilot study. Over the years I have heard both men and women West Point graduates talk about what they learned from both good and bad examples of leadership at West Point,

and future research with men cadets in this area would be helpful for gaining a better understanding of the effect of good and bad leadership examples on all cadets.

Sarah said:

...as a cadet, you get to view a lot of leadership styles. And you get to view a lot of leadership successes, and a lot of leadership failures. And you get to grow for yourself your own sense of what type of leader you want to be based on who you are as a person and what your strengths are. What your strengths *and* weaknesses are.

She then went on to talk about how influential her first detail Beast squad leader was, in a positive way, and how his example influenced her own leader identity development.

Several of the women talked specifically about their male Beast squad leaders and how influential they had been as examples of good leaders. Molly said her Beast squad leader influenced how she filled the role of Beast squad leader three summers later. One of the things her male Beast squad leader emphasized was working together as a team, and Molly learned the value of team building beginning her first weeks at West Point. She took what she admired in her Beast squad leader and adapted that for her own leadership style.

Helen's experience with her male Beast squad leader informed her identity as a CBT (or Beast) company commander three summers later. She said:

I think I learned how to be a Beast company commander from my first detail squad leader when I was a new cadet.... He wasn't a yeller. He acknowledged that we were in a stressful environment. He tried to keep it light and humorous

and to give us the freedom to make mistakes without having the whole world rain down upon us.

It is important to note that the Class of 1985 went through West Point under the Fourth Class System, the traditional leadership development program that had a more attritional than developmental underpinning and focused on training first-year cadets (fourth classmen or plebes). Cadet Basic Training (CBT) was also known as “Beast Barracks” or “Beast,” because there was a lot of yelling and negative leadership styles involved. Not all cadet cadre, to include men, believed in or followed this ultra-negative approach, and those leaders who exhibited a more positive leadership approach resonated most with the women in this study.

In observing examples of good and bad leadership around them, the women admired and tried to emulate those who “led by example” – i.e., those who exemplified the behavior they wanted to see in their subordinate cadets. Leading by example was a positive leadership trait that resonated with all the women and was a trait many of them described as essential to their own leader identities and leadership styles.

**Leading by example.** Many of the women stated that West Point taught them to lead by example. The women believed that a good leader sets an example for her subordinates to follow. Leading by example was something the women strove to do at West Point, in the Army as officers, and afterwards.

Those who worked closely or one on one with plebes or new cadets talked about the importance of leading by example. This concept emerged when the women were talking about being an assistant squad leader as a yearling (sophomore) and training two

or three plebes. It also emerged in discussions of being a Beast squad leader as a rising firstie and indoctrinating 10-15 new cadets into the West Point and Army way of life. Those who held higher ranking cadet leadership positions also talked about the importance of leading by example. Helen described accidentally dropping her cadet saber in front of her entire company formation as a CBT company commander:

I don't know what, if it was sweaty, or I wasn't focused, or whatever, but I pulled that saber out to my side, I held it up high, and it fell out of my hand onto the concrete. It made this horrible, metallic sound. I was like, "Oh, dear gosh."

One of the things you try to teach new cadets... is you had to hang onto your weapon. Weird as it was, that saber was my weapon, and I had just dropped it. I stood there, and I was like, "Well, what would I make a new cadet do who dropped a rifle? They have to do pushups." I was like, "First Sergeant." I called the first sergeant up. I'm like, "You got to drop me." I'm whispering to him, "You got to drop me for pushups right now. You got to put me down and punish me." He did. I stood up, put my gloves back on, picked up my saber. Afterwards, a number of people came up to me and were like, "Man, that was so cool," because the new cadets were like, "She's doing pushups," because they realized that I had [dropped my weapon].

In a very public and humble way, Helen was showing her new cadets that *all* soldiers need to be responsible for their weapons. The fact that she as their company commander was doing push-ups for dropping her weapon sent a very powerful and loud message to her young charges.

## **Role of the Honor Code and Character Development**

Ethics is one of the four pillars of the West Point leadership development program (Callina et al., 2017). The women in this study talked about how the West Point Honor Code, their four years of Honor training, and the emphasis on “choosing the harder right instead of the easier wrong” informed their views of character. They also expressed that the character development they experienced at West Point significantly informed their identities as leaders.

**Integrity.** The Cadet Honor Code states: “A cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.” Cadets take the Honor Code very seriously, and a cadet’s word is her bond. All the women talked about the importance of integrity and doing the right thing as part of who they were and their leader identities.

Kim talked about how West Point’s emphasis on character informed her leader identity development:

The other key leader concept I embraced at West Point was the Honor Code and leading with integrity. I learned how to be a leader who was always honest and prioritized my soldiers’ well-being in order to accomplish the mission.

She said that serving as a character witness at Honor Boards for several cadets accused of Honor Code violations made a very strong impression on her. Some of the cadets for whom she had been a witness were “found” on Honor, or found guilty of an Honor Code violation, and expelled. She remembered feeling very sad about the outcomes of those Honor Boards. At the same time, she said:

[I felt] I had done my part. I'd think, gee, I did all of what I could, I told the truth, I defended them, I told what I knew. And so, those were pivotal leadership lessons, I think. You have to tell the truth. You have to be honest. Even if it's bad news.

Through this example, Kim highlighted how the Honor Code was not simply a document or a premise to which cadets were obligated. Her example is one of the oath in action and exemplifies the importance of the West Point Honor Code for the women as leaders.

**Doing the right thing.** Cate described a time where she felt she did the right thing, even when an officer questioned her on it. She was in charge of a summer training detail, and one of the officers working with the cadets died unexpectedly of a heart attack. A member of her cadet staff suggested they do a nighttime vigil on the Plain to show their respect for this officer who had been very close to many of the cadets. When a cadet passed away, which did not happen all that often, the Corps of Cadets would usually hold a nighttime vigil on the Plain to show their respect at losing one of their own. Such a vigil usually comprised gathering cadets on the Plain, playing Taps, and having a moment of silence. Cate said:

One of the chaplains [and an Army officer] came up to me and said, "You can't force people to do it, it's the wrong thing." I said, "Sir, we'll explain it to everybody, but it's the Corps. It's the right thing to do." I just felt standing up [for this idea was right]. It wasn't my idea, but when [a member of my staff] told it to me, I said, "That's the right thing to do." And standing up to the chaplain and doing it in a way that was still respectful. And eventually, when we did that, the

[Superintendent and his wife] were out there with the family, and I knew I'd done the right thing.

Cate was describing how she used her position as a cadet leader to respond to the unexpected death of an officer in a way that brought the cadets together to share in their grief and show respect to the deceased officer in an organized way. Even though she had been discouraged by an officer/chaplain from doing this, she persisted and did what she thought was right.

**“Choosing the harder right instead of the easier wrong.”** This line from the West Point Cadet Prayer (Suddarth, 1981, p. 29) was one that many of the women used in their interviews when talking about character and making difficult decisions. In fact, Ann chose this as one of her guiding leadership quotations. Not only did the women talk about trying to do the right thing, they also talked about what it meant to make difficult moral decisions.

As cadets the women learned about leaders in military history who had to make difficult decisions and “choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong.” In the long run, in these stories, choosing that harder right ended up being the better course of action and saving the lives of soldiers. During Honor training sessions, cadets talked about morally ambiguous situations that might arise in real life and how best to handle them. Often these scenarios were based on actual Honor cases and dealt not only with cadet or military issues, but also social issues cadets might encounter when away from West Point, like using fake ID cards to buy alcoholic drinks. The women were taught that character was doing the right thing, even when no one else was looking.

Women talked about this concept in a variety of ways. At times they recited the words verbatim, at other times they referenced the concept behind choosing the harder right through examples.

### **Selfless Service**

West Point cadets are trained to become Army officers who provide service to their country in the military. The mission statement for USMA has changed several times over the years to reflect the current state of the military and society (Garner, 1992), but it has always included “service” as a primary element. When the Class of 1985 attended West Point, the mission of the Academy, which all cadets had to memorize, was:

To educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate shall have the character, leadership, intellectual foundation, and other attributes essential to progressive and continuing development throughout a career of exemplary service to the Nation as an Officer of the Regular Army. (Suddarth, 1981, p. 4)

Many of the women talked about how West Point taught them – or reinforced in them – the concept not only of service but also selfless service, or service to something beyond themselves. While many of the women volunteered and were involved in service projects during high school, service became an important theme in the women’s stories from West Point onward. Kim talked about how her West Point class ring was a symbol of service. Class rings bound West Pointers to their own class and then to the Long Gray Line, first in service to their nation as Army officers and then in service to others wherever that might be. In Kim’s eyes, a West Pointer is bound to a lifetime of service, both within and without the military. Service to others was an important part of the leader



identities of all the women participants, and they credited West Point with either instilling or reinforcing within them this desire to serve others.

### **Role of Physical Fitness / Athletics**

All the women talked about how West Point's emphasis on athletics and physical fitness informed their leader identities at West Point and in the Army. General Douglas MacArthur coined the phrase "every cadet an athlete" when he was Superintendent of USMA immediately after WWI (Betros, 2012, p. 147). There was a belief not only that physical fitness was important to Army officers in general but also that playing sports helped improve one's leadership abilities (Betros, 2012).

Another of MacArthur's famous quotes for West Point cadets was: "Upon the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that upon other days and other fields will bear the fruits of victory" (Suddarth, 1981, p. 102). All West Point cadets were expected to play organized sports; if they did not play on a varsity or club squad team, then they had to play company intramurals. The women who played on sports teams while at West Point talked about how that experience informed their leader identity development.

**Emphasis on physical fitness and running ability.** West Point puts a lot of emphasis on physical fitness and running ability. Cadets, especially men cadets, tended to see one's running ability as an indicator of leadership. Or at least, conversely, that the inability to run fast indicated that one was not a good leader (Rice et al., 1984; Yoder et al., 1979). Generally speaking, on average, most women run more slowly than most men, and many women cadets have struggled with running – or running fast enough – while at

West Point. Beth said, “The dumbest guy that can keep up will get more credibility than the smartest girl who can’t keep up physically.”

The women in the study who could run fast as cadets all said this ability helped give them more credibility with men cadets. Five of the eight women talked specifically about how being fast runners helped them as women cadets. Beth, who was an excellent all-around athlete, talked about how this helped her:

Oh, yeah. I did great athletically. And I think that that's one of the things that helped me because if you're a good athlete, if you can make the ... I was fast. I could outrun some of the guys. I was strong enough to bear my own weight.

Physically, especially during Beast, people were very impressed.

Beth and the other women cadets learned almost immediately in Cadet Basic Training the value of being able to run fast and carry heavy loads, like weapons and rucksacks.

Helen described how being able to run fast gave her “street cred” with the men cadets, both upperclassmen and classmates, in her plebe company:

I was a very strong runner, and it definitely was a way that men judged you and gave out respect points. When I was a plebe, I was on the company [intramural] cross country team and got my only acknowledgement that I was worthy of the air I breathed when I won for [my company].

She went on to describe how her running ability saved her from continued harassment from a more senior male cadet in her upperclass company:

There was a guy in my upperclass company who always gave me a hard time.

One day he happened to pass me on Thayer Road [a popular running route for

cadets], so I caught up to him and ran alongside him. Every time he picked up the pace, so did I. We went all the way to Thayer Gate [an entrance to the West Point post that is about a mile from the Cadet barracks area] and back, and I kept cranking it up. And he was sucking. He threw up near Grant Hall and never gave me crap again.

Running was an important criterion for how cadets were perceived as strong, especially by men. Poor abilities related to running were seen as failures, and these failures made cadets who were not able to run seem less capable as leaders

Two of the women, both varsity athletes, said they struggled with the two-mile run that was part of both the Cadet Physical Fitness Test (CPFT) and the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). Although running was a part of their respective sports, running two miles for time was a different kind of running. One woman said:

I would always do better than okay on the [CPFT], but I stressed out about it every single day I was at West Point, every single day I was in the Army, knowing that I had to run the two miles. The running part is the part that I was challenged with.... We have [women] classmates that could just go out, and that was easy for them. I do think that they were accepted more as an equal than those who struggled with it or did not show their capabilities in that way.

This woman's experience showed how even top women athletes felt performance pressure around running fast. Because the ability to run fast was linked so closely with leader abilities in men cadets' eyes, the women who did not naturally run fast felt a lot of pressure and self-doubt.

Jane described herself becoming a better athlete and runner while at West Point and how that positively affected her leader identity. She said:

As I got better, I mean I wasn't a stud athlete, but I don't remember falling out of runs. I remember going to Airborne School and I could keep up. And that gave me a lot of street cred [with male cadets, soldiers, and NCOs].

As cadets, women often accepted without question the assertion of the men cadets that if one could not run fast, one must not be a good leader. The women were also well aware of the fact that if a woman had a reputation for falling out of formation runs or not running fast on a PT test, that cast a bad light on women cadets in general. Molly explained how running and many of the other physical fitness activities cadets engaged in were so "visible" and how that put added pressure on women (or anyone who was not a fast runner/good athlete):

Even though I did not struggle with the physical fitness portion, I felt the pressure that I had to do well or I would not be accepted or gain the respect from our male cadets. Physical fitness tests and activities were graded, timed, scored, etc. But this grading was so different in a "visibility" way than the academic grading. For example, when you take a test or write a paper, you get your grades privately. If you fail or get a bad grade, no one sees your score unless you tell them.... When you take any of the physical fitness tests [or engage in any of the physical activities] including the indoor and outdoor obstacle course, road marches, company runs, physical education classes, etc., you are out there for everyone to see. If you fall out of a run, fall behind in a road march, or can't complete the

obstacle course – even the “fun” mandatory fun during Beast Barracks, everyone sees how you perform.

Thus, those women who were fast runners had an advantage over women who were not fast runners when it came to being accepted by their male peers. Women realized that being able to run fast helped them gain acceptance or respect from men. Conversely, those women who were not naturally fast runners were very self-conscious about this disadvantage and worked hard to improve their running times. They also felt a lot of pressure to perform well in running so their male peers would be more likely to see them as good leaders. Being a good runner and athlete helped women be perceived as better leaders by men cadets, soldiers, and officers. The women knew this, and several incorporated being a good runner into their leader identities.

**Impact of playing on a varsity or competitive club sport team.** The participants who played on an intercollegiate athletic team, whether at the varsity or club team level, described the positive impact this had on their leader identity development. Playing on an athletic team, whether it was a women’s or mixed gender team, provided a space for hard work, discipline, teamwork, and team building. Several participants talked about how being on a women’s sports team allowed them to perform and lead in an environment where they did not have to worry about men or what the men cadets would think. They also experienced a level of camaraderie and support they often did not find as women in their other male-dominated domains, and this increased their confidence and sense of belonging.

Sarah, who played on a women’s club team all four years at the Academy, said:

... we did provide support for one another. It wasn't a place where you went too much and asked for advice for "How do I deal with this upperclassman in my plebe company?" or "How do I do this academically?" But at least there were listening ears if we needed them, and there was camaraderie among other women who were also trying to become leaders themselves.

**Role of leadership on sports teams.** Three of the women in this study were athletic team captains, two on women's varsity teams and one on a women's club sport team. They all discussed how being a team captain helped them develop as leaders.

Beth talked about the impact of being a varsity sports team captain on her concept of leadership. In high school her concept of athletic leadership was that the team captain was the best athlete on the team. She brought that concept with her to West Point, and when a team captain stepped down from her role partway through the season, Beth anticipated the coaches would choose her as replacement captain. Even though she was only a sophomore, she was ranked as the top athlete on the team, so she believed she would become the captain. When she was not selected and a more senior cadet was, she was startled. However, in observing more closely all that the team captain did, she realized there was a lot more to team captain than being the best athlete on the team. Furthermore, in working with and mentoring more junior women on the team, she found that even when she was not the team captain, she was still a leader. This taught her "how to lead without having a formal title."

During her senior year, Beth was selected as team captain, and she found it to be an invaluable leadership experience. She enjoyed the responsibility she had for the team

as captain, especially when they traveled to away sporting events and had to stay overnight in hotels. In day-to-day interactions with the team, she learned to be more attentive to the needs of the group. During one practice, the coach had to leave early and put her in charge. She suggested a change to the final part of practice, and the team members balked because they saw the change as selfish and benefiting only her. That was not Beth's intent, and she quickly adjusted her plan. She was shocked, however, by "how upset they were with [her] and how quickly they really kind of turned on [her]." She said:

That leadership lesson taught me, you've got to really be careful about what you're thinking is going to be good for the group, because it's not about you and it's not about what you want. You have to look at the people that you're leading and understand what they need.

### **Feeling Like a Leader**

All the women gave examples of times where they really "felt like a leader" while at West Point. Their examples included being sports team captains, commanders in the cadet chain of command, and as cadet cadre during Drill Cadet. Several women talked about how meaningful it was to train plebes, whether as assistant squad leaders when they were sophomores, squad leaders when they were juniors, or Beast squad leaders when they were rising seniors.

Molly said she really felt like a leader when she was a First Detail Beast squad leader. That meant she took charge of her cadets on R-Day and led them through the first three weeks of Cadet Basic Training. She said:

I loved it, and I wanted that [detail] because it was the first time the cadets had exposure to West Point. I felt I had a big impact on their initial impression, so I felt a big responsibility in molding them, in building this little team. It was a lot of work, but I enjoyed that.

Sometimes the women's stories involved having to make a difficult decision and stand up for something they believed in; other times it involved having more responsibility or freedom to make a meaningful decision than cadets were often given.

Even though Ann held top-level cadet leadership positions as a senior, she said she really felt like a leader when she advocated for women to be able to purchase miniature-sized class rings. Class rings are an important tradition at West Point. In fact, West Point was the first institution of higher education to institute class rings, dating back to 1835 (Suddarth, 1981, p. 250, p. 263). All senior West Point cadets must purchase a class ring.

West Point class rings are large, and even though women's rings are smaller than men's, they are still quite large. They can be cumbersome and ill-fitting, especially for women with small ring sizes. Ann, who had very slim fingers, was worried she would not end up wearing her class ring because it would not fit well. She saw a simple solution: West Point had offered significantly smaller-sized class rings for women for years. These were called "miniatures," and men cadets or alumni often gave them to their girlfriends or spouses. While all West Point cadets must purchase a class ring, they may choose a stone, the type of gold, and other decorative features. Ann asked if women cadets could also have the option of buying miniature-sized rings. She was told no. She said:



That kind of didn't sit well with me because I really felt strongly that if you were going to West Point and you were going to graduate, you should be able to get... whatever ring you wanted. So, I had to do a presentation to the Commandant and to the Superintendent on why this should be allowed, because it had never been requested before. I know people feel very strongly about the women's ring versus the miniature. But I also knew ...I wouldn't wear a big ring. I wanted a ring from my college that I was graduating from, a West Point ring. So, they did approve it, and it was the first year that women were allowed to get either [ring].

To this day, women cadets may purchase either a women's class ring or a miniature class ring. Ann, who wears her West Point class ring every day, felt she was advocating not just for herself, but for other women in our class with small hands and fingers – and for future West Point women as well.

### **How West Point Informed Women's Leader Identities in the Army**

Women reported that after they left West Point and were serving in the Army as officers, their West Point experience continued to inform their leadership and leader identities in significant ways. In particular, the women talked about how they applied what they had learned about integrity, doing the right thing, and taking care of their soldiers.

#### **Integrity**

Integrity continued to be a significant theme in most of the women's stories. Kim in particular talked about integrity throughout her interview. She gave multiple examples of how integrity was a key part of her leader identity throughout her life. When talking

about integrity in the Army, she said, “Just, don't hold back. Don't lie about something. Don't fudge something. It's only going to bite you in the butt.”

Cate also said that integrity continued to inform her leader identity in the Army. “I never would have considered lying about anything. [I understood] doing the right thing and recognizing that I wouldn't always get my way.” This was a sentiment echoed in many of the women's stories.

### **Doing the Right Thing**

Several women talked about West Point's influence on them as junior leaders in the Army when it came to “making the right decision” or “doing the right thing.” In addition to getting people to follow her as the leader, Cate said leadership in the Army involved

having the vision, doing the right thing, making the tough choices, and saying no to things. And there were a number of times where sometimes my “no” had to be saying “No, I don't think that's the right thing.” And moving forward.

Sarah said, “...there were multiple times when I needed to stand up for and with my soldiers.” She went on to explain how her West Point training helped her be able to do this effectively.

In the Army, I also had several occasions when I needed to stand up to senior leadership in order to protect my soldiers or to protect my mission. I was able to be effective in this leadership function using both logic and rational thinking and a sense of humor when needed. My ability to “speak the truth” even when it was unpopular was truly honed at West Point. My ability to use a sense of humor

coupled with logic was also honed there. And these traits have served me well in the Army, as well as in my civilian profession and in life in general.

Sarah had not only learned the importance of “doing the right thing” at West Point, she had also learned, or “honed,” skills that helped her be able to do the right thing to support her soldiers and the mission.

### **“Choosing the Harder Right”**

As mentioned before, there is a line from the West Point Cadet Prayer that many of the women used or talked about: “Choosing the harder right instead of the easier wrong” (Suddarth, 1981, p. 29). While sharing their stories, several of the women talked about how they drew on this lesson from West Point when leading their soldiers or making the decision to separate from the Army.

Beth talked about making the decision as an Army company commander to volunteer her unit to remain stateside during Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Her battalion commander announced that of the three companies eligible to deploy only two would be going. He told the three company commanders to talk among themselves and decide which company would remain behind. Beth personally wanted to deploy for Operation Desert Shield; this was what she had trained for her entire career. However, in the end, she decided to be the company commander to volunteer to stay back. She said, “You can’t volunteer to take your company to war. *You* can volunteer to go, but to take 150 and say, ‘Yeah, we’re gonna go,’ when you can keep them back safe [is just not right].”

Beth said this was one of the most difficult decisions she ever had to make, and after the meeting with her battalion commander and the other company commanders, she went to the unit chaplain's office and “cried uncontrollably.” She then had to tell her soldiers about her decision and why she had made it. Beth became emotional while telling this part of her story:

I went back to my company, and I told them. And I told them why. And... a lot of them were really upset. They were *really* upset. I was upset, too, but I said, “Look, this is the right thing, guys. This is what we're gonna do.”

This story exemplified “choosing the harder right” and Beth’s ability to do that as a leader, even when it was unpopular with her soldiers. As it turned out, in a change of plans at a higher level, Beth’s company ended up deploying to Saudi Arabia after all.

**Deciding to get out of the Army after having children.** Although these decisions fall more under the category of “choosing a hard right” with there being no “easier wrong,” the women who decided to leave the Army after having children talked about what a difficult decision it was for them to make. Sarah said:

Leaving the Army after five years of service was a very difficult decision for me. I *loved* my Army work and was highly successful there. The challenge was our children. By the time I left the military, we had one special needs son and another almost here. My husband had more time in the military than I did, so he was not going to leave before retirement. I’m not sure if it has improved any since the early 1990s, but being dual military with children was not our best hope for our

family.... If dual military life had appeared easier, I would not have been able to choose the harder right, which was me leaving the Army

All the women who were married to other service members talked about the challenges at that time of being a dual military couple and parents of young children. The women described the challenges they faced as mothers, especially if they wanted to nurse their children. The Army of the late 1980s and early 1990s was not prepared for or very understanding of women officers who were pregnant or had young children. Up until 1974, pregnancy had been a basis for discharge for women officers (Morden, 1990, p. 305). Although the Army had policies and regulations around pregnant soldiers and maternity leave, they did not seem to be consistently understood or applied in the mid- to late-1980s, according to the stories the women told.

One woman was sent on a three-week field exercise when she was 10 weeks pregnant. The male commander of her unit ordered women up to seven months pregnant to go to the field, unless they had an additional medical reason not to. She said:

[The commander] had a tent set up so [the pregnant women soldiers] could all be there and then do their work. If they were on lower hours, then they went back to the tent.... You would never see that today, ever. I don't think.

She also talked about her unit repeatedly calling her at home when she was on maternity leave with a newborn, wanting her to come in and sign paperwork, etc. She felt they were not taking her maternity leave or the fact she had just given birth to a baby very seriously.

Many Army units also seemed unprepared for what to do if a woman officer wanted to pump breastmilk for her nursing child. One woman described there being only

one bathroom in the battalion headquarters where she worked, and she was the only woman. There was a sign on the door she would have to flip to “woman” whenever she used the bathroom. That solo bathroom was also the only place provided for her to pump breast milk. This caused tension when she tried to use the bathroom to pump and men would come to use the bathroom. It certainly was not an environment conducive to pumping.

In addition, Army hours are long, and if both parents are active duty officers, that can create issues with child care. One woman talked about how difficult it was to spend time with her first child. She said:

I literally would leave [my son] at [the home of a woman who took care of him] at 4:30 in the morning, and I wouldn't see him again until maybe 8:00 at night. And that was pretty much six days a week. And Sundays you were kind of expected that you would make a show [somewhere at work] .... And [my husband] was also serving. So, his hours were a little bit better, but still Army hours, right.... Like every picture that we have of me and [my son] in his first year is I'm asleep, and he's in my arms. I wasn't the mother that I wanted to be.

The women said they made their decisions with their husbands to separate from the Army. In three of the cases, the women were in dual military couples, and the husbands decided to stay in, either to have a military career or complete a military career. In the fourth case, the woman was in a dual military couple where both partners decided to get out of the military. In each of these cases, the women were choosing between staying in the Army and continuing their military careers or getting out of the Army and

leaving their military careers. They were also choosing between non-traditional and traditional roles for women in our society.

The women in this study saw their decisions to leave the Army once they had children as “choosing a hard right.” These women emphasized or implied that they did not question other women’s decisions to stay in the Army after having children. In each case, the women said they made the decision to get out because it was in the best interests of their child/children or their family as a unit. They emphasized that these were personal decisions/choices that depended on their own unique situations. Of note, this study included women who did not make the Army a career. There were women in the Class of 1985 who decided to remain in the Army after they had children and have a military career. It would be interesting to hear these women’s stories, too, and learn more about why they decided to stay in the Army and how that worked for them and their families.

Some women felt they had made the right decision for their families both at that time and in the long run, while a few looked back and wondered what it would have been like if the Army had been different and more supportive of women with young children. One woman said:

I made a decision to get out of the military because I wanted to be a mom.... That was probably the most difficult decision I made [while in the Army]. At the time, it didn’t seem difficult at all, but looking back on it, I wonder if I would have been able to do both.

At the time women from the Class of 1985 were junior officers in the Army, pregnant officers and women officers with young children were still relatively new phenomena in

the Army. There were still many units where the chain of command was unprepared for or ignorant about pregnant officers or women officers with young children. The Army was used to men officers and soldiers whose civilian wives stayed home with their young children.

### **Developing and Taking Care of Soldiers**

Many of the women talked about their soldiers, the well-being of their soldiers, and how important it was to them that their soldiers had opportunities to develop for promotion. The women often tied this back to their West Point training or experiences as a cadet. They had been responsible for others' well-being over the course of four years, whether in a team-building exercise during CBT, supervising plebes as a sophomore assistant squad leader, training new cadets as cadre during CBT, or commanding cadet units as seniors. The women had also been on the receiving end of leadership and knew what it was like to experience military life with leaders who genuinely cared for their charges and leaders who did not.

Beth said:

I took care of [my soldiers]. I thought about them as individuals. I would have realistic conversations with them and ask them about themselves: "Are you going to reenlist?" "Why didn't you reenlist?" I just wanted to make sure that they knew what they were really going to do next. So, as a leader, I really tried to take care of the people... PT, we would have great big games of soccer or tackle football or basketball, I was always trying to bring some fun into our environment.



Beth said her leadership style in the Army was much different than it had been at West Point. She used a much more relational, positive, and, when possible, fun-loving approach. She said: “I wasn’t as strict there. I wanted to get the work done. I wanted to do it smartly, I wouldn’t ask them to do stupid stuff.” Beth took what she learned at West Point that resonated with her and developed a much more authentic leadership style in the Army.

While the women talked about applying what they had learned at West Point to their leadership in the Army, sometimes it was a negative experience at West Point that informed women’s leader identities in the Army. Helen said:

I think my experience in [a plebe company with a culture of toxic masculinity] and seeing many negative examples of leadership taught me how important it was to value each soldier both for what they brought to the team and as an individual. I didn’t judge people on their outward appearance, but rather for their heart and what they brought to the team.

The women knew both what it was like to take care of subordinate cadets at West Point and what it was like to have senior ranking cadets who did not express care and concern for them. Taking care of soldiers and ensuring they had opportunities for training, professional development, and promotion were important to many of the women.

### **Adapting Leadership Styles Seen at West Point**

Most of the women favored a more collaborative style of leadership and knew that the transactional style of leadership sometimes favored at West Point, especially as part of the Fourth Class System, would not be effective in the Army. Still, they

sometimes found a more authoritative approach was necessary in their roles as Army officer.

Ann stated that although she felt she had a lot of leadership opportunities at West Point, she found herself somewhat ill-prepared as a new woman second lieutenant in a platoon of all men soldiers. Further, it was a unit where the enlisted soldiers and NCOs did not necessarily do things out of a sense of cooperation and teamwork as cadets had at West Point. Although she considered her natural leadership style to be a “participatory” one, she said she had to learn how to be more authoritative at times, especially with her platoon sergeant. She said:

So, [my platoon sergeant] made my life very challenging, and I think that’s where I was like, “Excuse me, no. I am the officer here, you’re the NCO. I hear what you’re saying. I don’t care if you’ve always done it this way, this is how we’re going to do it.”

I mean, it wasn’t like every decision was a disagreement, but I knew that sometimes just because I made a decision that he was not going to agree with it...

I think it was a little more adversarial than I’d ever experienced before.

While Ann had not used an authoritative style at West Point, she had observed many individuals who had and was able to adopt that style when needed.

Many of the women talked about favoring a more collaborative leadership style, but realizing that at times a more authoritative style was required. Even though they did not care for a more authoritative style in general, the women knew how to use one because of their West Point experiences.

## **The Role of Physical Fitness and Running Ability**

The women found that the emphasis on physical fitness and running ability as indicators of leadership ability continued in the Army. More specifically, they found that being able to run fast or complete difficult physical challenges or Army courses significantly increased their credibility as women leaders. Conversely, Beth noted she witnessed firsthand women who were excellent officers but struggled with running and how that adversely affected their careers. Almost all the women talked about how important it was for them as women junior officers to be seen as competent in physical activities.

Several women stated that their ability to run fast helped give them credibility in front of their soldiers and even with other more senior officers. Sarah said:

I know for a fact that my ability to run allowed cadets and my soldiers to actually “see me” as a leader and not just some other female. I could out-run almost every male in my active duty experiences and while it was not ever spoken aloud, I know it gave me immediate credibility in front of my soldiers and my commanders. It truly just opened their eyes so that they could see all of me instead of just female me.

Women also stated that West Point’s physical fitness standards were substantially higher than those in the Army. As a result, even those who had not been perceived as fast runners at West Point often were perceived as fast runners in the Army. These women were able to incorporate being a good runner into their officer leader identities to their benefit.

## **Common Challenges for New Second Lieutenants**

Most new Army second lieutenants are recent college graduates between the ages of 22 and 23. As such, they have both limited experience with the Army and limited life experiences. They enter their new units naïve and inexperienced, but with more rank than the soldiers and more experienced NCOs in their units. This presents challenges for both the second lieutenants and the soldiers serving under them.

Most of the women felt West Point prepared them well to be second lieutenants and platoon leaders, but they were still inexperienced and naïve in many ways. Many of the women talked about being naïve and trusting as second lieutenants in an environment where some soldiers tested their limits or had family members with real world problems. Several of the women talked about facing situations they felt unprepared to address at the age of 22 or 23. Jane had a young woman enlisted soldier who was cutting herself; Ann had a soldier who came up positive on a drug test and lied to her about it; and Sarah had a soldier severely injured in a training accident.

Jane felt unprepared for dealing with a soldier with mental health issues. She said: I was a platoon leader, and this was a very young soldier.... This was back when cutting was common. She had to go to the hospital, and I had no clue as to how to deal with her, what to do with her, what to be done with her, no idea. Hopefully, through the hospital system, that was taken care of, but I remember feeling very out of my depth there.

While West Point had provided a lot of training around tactics and leadership, there had been virtually no training around how best to help soldiers with personal or medical challenges.

Ann felt she had been naïve and taken advantage of by the soldier who lied to her about his drug use. He insisted that he didn't use drugs, and she said she believed him and would stand up for him. He was later found guilty of a different type of offense and separated from the Army. Before leaving the unit, he came to her office and told her that he had, in fact, been guilty of the drug use. She said, "He just got over on me. He convinced me to fight for him for something that he had done." Ann felt her experiences at West Point, especially around integrity and the Honor Code, had, in part, led her to be too trusting. She said that incident helped her realize the Army could be a totally different environment than West Point and that soldiers might have different motivations than cadets.

That was, "Okay, sharpen up here, Lieutenant. You're in a different ballgame here. These guys are going to try to... they're grasping for straws for their career, so you need to be a little more discerning."

Sarah described a freak training accident where a young soldier was injured and her acting platoon sergeant simultaneously suffered a PTSD episode. She had to react and deal with the situation herself. Afterwards, she was complimented for her calm during a crisis. She attributed this sense of calm – or apparent calm – to her West Point training. She said:

At the time, I did not truly feel like I did anymore than what was clearly obvious; however, in retrospect, I wonder how I was able to lead so many scared (and some hurt) soldiers through the crisis without ever thinking of falling apart myself. I credit my West Point training for instilling in me those traits necessary for crisis leadership.

Sometimes the women faced additional challenges as junior officers because they were women serving in units with no or few women or working with male platoon sergeants who had never worked with or for women before. However, the women also faced the same and similar challenges as their men counterparts when it came to being naïve and inexperienced new officers.

### **How West Point Informed Women's Leader Identities**

#### **After the Army**

The women in this study separated from the Army after between five and nine years of service. They then went on to have a variety of careers in business, education, healthcare, and non-profit organizations. Seven of the women also had children and raised families, and five talked about being caregivers for aging parents and/or other extended family members. All the women discussed the role of volunteer work in their lives with a variety of service in their children's schools, communities, scouting, other civilian organizations, and/or the Army. The women continued to serve as leaders, both formally and informally, wherever they worked, and their West Point experience continued to inform their leader identities.

For those women who left the Army to raise their children, the transition from the military to civilian life was difficult at first, at least identity-wise, especially for those whose husbands remained in the Army. Jane said, “I went through a little crisis, the identity crisis, because, of course, going from the green ID card to the dependent one and just feeling like ‘What the hell do I do now?’” Going from a captain in the Army to a “military dependent” (what the military calls civilian spouses and children of service members) was difficult and accentuated by still living on a military post and/or still being so closely connected with the Army. Ann and her husband, on the other hand, both got out of the Army and moved to a civilian community, and this seemed to make the transition a bit easier.

While the women with children loved being mothers and raising their kids, it often took them a while to create new identities for themselves. Although busy with their children, the women tended to focus additional energy on volunteering, whether creating a mom’s club, helping at their children’s schools or tutoring, or volunteering with scouts, sports teams, Sunday school, or other extracurricular activities. Three of the women became full-time stay-at-home mothers as soon as they left the Army. Sarah tried working as an engineering consultant after she first left the Army, using her engineering major from West Point, but soon found the job demanded too much travel and time away from her two children.

For the women who pursued civilian careers once their children got older, there were often periods of confusion and self-doubt. The women were not necessarily sure what they wanted to do. Some women tried different jobs or careers until they found ones

they liked and that fit in well with their children's schedules. Some women worked part time before going back to work full time. Although briefly working in real estate, Ann found that teaching at the primary and secondary school levels allowed her to pursue work she enjoyed. It also aligned well with her children's school schedules. Jane, likewise, found work as a health care professional that complemented her children's school schedules.

Sarah homeschooled her children for many years because their health issues caused them to miss a lot of school, but she found herself leading extracurricular activities for the homeschooling community. When her children became involved with swimming, she became an aquatics instructor and swim coach. Once her children were older, she found herself working in a public library, going back to school to get a master's degree in library science, and becoming a librarian.

As an Army wife who moved multiple times for her husband's military career, Molly got involved in her children's schools and activities, as well as the local Army communities and her church wherever she and her family were stationed. She became very involved with the family readiness groups (FRGs) for her husband's units, especially as the operations tempo increased with repeated deployments overseas following 9/11. Now that her children are grown, Molly continues to focus her time and energy into volunteering and community outreach.

For those women who transitioned to careers in business after they got out of the Army, there seemed to be less of an identity crisis. Three of the four women who went into business prepared themselves for a new career field by obtaining a graduate degree



in business or management. Prior Army experience also helped the women. Helen and Kim both talked about how their manager roles in business seemed very much like their leader roles in the Army. The women were also able to bring with them a toughness that came from their time leading soldiers and making difficult decisions in the Army. For example, Kim talked about how her time in the Army helped her when it came to the difficult task of having to fire employees for cause. At the same time, those in business also found that a more collaborative leadership style often worked well for them.

Overall, the women felt that their West Point experiences continued to inform their leader identities in whatever they were doing. Integrity continued to be a key trait that the women brought with them as civilian leaders. Kim said:

...in terms of the honesty and integrity piece, that's stuck with me and served me well. Even though it's not always popular or happy or making friends, but people do respect your decisions and they respect your [integrity]... And I'd like to think that's some of my legacy in people that I led [in business], but I think I developed a lot of young leaders and really tried to emphasize the integrity piece.

Many of the women saw themselves as the same type of leader after the Army, but one who adapted to new and different environments and situations. Sarah talked about leadership in education as a librarian and teacher. She said it required more "gentleness," "finesse," and "relationship-building." She found that while working with teachers in a school setting, the lines of leadership were not quite as clear as they had been in the military. She said, "There's a bit more finesse that's required in leadership in

‘real life,’ because you can’t rely on that very definitive chain of command that backs you up when you say, ‘I’m in charge here.’”

Another major difference between being a leader in the Army and after the Army was the decreased importance of fast running ability. Sarah described herself as a leader after the Army:

Probably the same, except I didn’t have that overwhelming need to prove myself physically, except when I was the swim coach and what not, do you know? Most of my other roles haven’t necessitated that I can “outrun all you classroom teachers,” right?

Many of the women talked about maintaining physical fitness, participating in athletics, and/or teaching, coaching, or refereeing sports after their time in the Army. However, they were doing these activities as a way of maintaining physical well-being and/or contributing their services in athletics. While their West Point experience may have influenced their desire to stay physically active or engage in athletic activities, they no longer felt pressure to run fast or perform well athletically in order to be seen as effective leaders.

### **The Women’s Leader Identities Today**

In talking about their leader identities today, the women touched on the continued influence of their West Point experiences, the role of their experiences in the Army and afterwards, and life experience in general. All the women described themselves as leaders, regardless of what type of leadership roles they held or work/activities they

pursued. There was, however, some variety in their individual concepts of themselves as leaders and in how they defined a leader.

### **How West Point Informs Women's Leader Identities Today**

All the women said their West Point experiences continued to inform their leader identities today. Most saw their West Point experience as “foundational.” Sarah said:

[West Point] is where leadership was defined for me. It's where leadership was demonstrated and taught for me. Initially, under the definition of what leadership means, and [then] it's kind of the foundation or the bedrock of who I am.

Many of the women also tended to see their West Point experience as “integral” to their leader identities and interwoven among all they have learned about leadership in the Army and in subsequent careers and life experiences.

Ann described a quilt one of her West Point women classmates had made. Her friend took her old cadet uniforms and had them made into a woven quilt. To Ann, this quilt “exemplifie[d] what West Point did to our leadership”:

That you have all of these threads woven together until they're the fibers of our body. You can't break it apart. It's like we've absorbed it and you're not going to disassemble that wall hanging.... I think it's like one of those immersion blenders, [West Point]'s just part of who we are. It's in our blood.

Sarah said, “My adult life is an example of how West Point shaped me into a leader. The leadership precepts taught there have stayed with me and guided both my personal and professional life.” She added, “[West Point] really is what I go back to if I have a leadership challenge that I can't solve.”

Beth talked specifically about how West Point has informed her leader identity.

She said:

I think it does impact on my identity just because I had so many opportunities to learn the leadership lessons again and again and again. And I think that helps, that just really helps me. [West Point] did really, really help me, and it helped structure me and build my identity, the strength of my identity.

Cate also talked about the impact of leadership opportunities at West Point and the ability to learn from one's mistakes while there. But she also said that while West Point has informed her leader identity, it has not defined it.

I learned a tremendous amount at West Point about leadership – and by doing it and practicing it over and over again. And making mistakes and learning, too, that when I make mistakes I just have to pick myself back up and keep going. So, it's there. All of what I have learned at West Point is there. It's kind of infused in the toolkit of leadership I have, but I don't think it defines me. Or I don't define myself by it.

Most of the women specifically referenced words and sayings learned and memorized at West Point that have become ingrained in them and that have influenced their leader identities throughout their lives. These included the West Point motto, the Honor Code, the Cadet Prayer, Schofield's Definition of Discipline, and General Douglas MacArthur's words about "Duty, Honor, Country," among many others. When telling their stories, the women often referenced key words, phrases, or passages memorized over 35 years ago and how these helped guide them as leaders still today.

## **Role of the West Point Motto: “Duty, Honor, Country”**

“Duty, Honor, Country” is the West Point motto. Although the motto was not formally adopted until 1898 as part of the West Point coat of arms, all three words figured prominently in the writings of earlier superintendents, faculty, and alumni (“The U.S. Military Academy,” n.d.). Cadets learned more about the motto from General Douglas MacArthur’s speech to the Corps of Cadets in 1962 upon his acceptance of the Sylvanus Thayer Award, an award given annually by West Point to a citizen who exemplifies the “Duty, Honor, Country” motto.

MacArthur graduated from West Point in 1903. He had excelled in both academics and athletics while there, serving as First Captain his senior year and graduating first in his class. Following service in WWI, where he attained the rank of Brigadier General, MacArthur returned to West Point as its Superintendent in 1919. While there, he implemented substantial reforms that helped bring the military academy into the 20<sup>st</sup> Century (Betros, 2012). MacArthur went on to serve as a famous general in both WWII and the Korean War. A statue of MacArthur stands on the Plain at West Point, in tribute to this famous USMA graduate and military hero. All new cadets are required to memorize the Duty, Honor, Country excerpt of MacArthur’s famous speech:

Duty, Honor, Country: Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying points: to build courage when courage seems to fail; to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith; to create hope when hope becomes forlorn. (MacArthur, 1962)

Because the West Point motto is emphasized so strongly at USMA, I asked the participants of this study to explain what the words “Duty, Honor, Country” meant to them, first in writing and then in our interview (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2

*Participant Explanations of the West Point Motto*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>What does the West Point motto “Duty, Honor, Country” Mean to You?</b>
Ann	“Duty means doing the right thing when external and internal influences nudge you in a different direction. Honor is integrity in beliefs and actions. Country embodies to me not just the country I live in but the values that made our country – which propels one to a higher cause than ‘self.’”
Beth	“For me, the motto itself really boils down to an ideal of selfless service. Taking care of those that you lead and being prepared to sacrifice your well-being for the benefit of others.”
Cate	“It is a reminder to focus on something more than self-interest alone.”
Helen	“It stands for West Point and for what is expected of us as USMA grads whether in or out of uniform. It implies an expectation of selfless service – of placing all these items ahead of everything – including one’s own life.”
Jane	“The motto speaks to me of working for something bigger than one’s self. To dedicate yourself to an ideal of service to one’s community (big or small). As MacArthur so famously said, they are our ‘rallying points.’ These words are also so strongly enmeshed in my development through my cadet years.”
Kim	“Doing the right thing as I serve others; being loyal to the USA and my family/community.”
Molly	“Duty is responsibility. Honor is respect and reputation. Country is patriotism or love of country. These three words were in the foundation to me as a cadet at West Point and as a soldier in the

Participant	What does the West Point motto “Duty, Honor, Country” Mean to You?
	Army. As a civilian, spouse, and mother, these words are still a part of my life.”
Sarah	“Everything... Like the speech says, they are what I ought to be, what I can be, what I will be. They remind me to keep my courage, my faith, and my hope, even when those things seem far from my grasp. They remind me that a life of honorable service, no matter where that service is rendered, is a life that matters, a life of value.”

Selfless service and service to something bigger than oneself were the predominant themes that ran through the women’s interpretations of the West Point motto. Some looked at each component of the motto individually, while others looked at it holistically. All the women stated or implied that the motto was something that motivated or guided them in their everyday lives, and several of them used language from General MacArthur’s speech when discussing their leader identities and concepts of leadership. The West Point motto has played and continues to play a significant role in the leader identities of all eight of these women.

### **The Role of Life Experiences in Leader Identity**

All the women described themselves as having more mature or evolved leader identities and leadership styles due to their many life experiences. This, of course, included not just their experiences at West Point and in the Army, but also their experiences in any subsequent careers and volunteer service and as mothers and/or caregivers for other family members. Molly said:

I think I’m a better leader because of experiences. Because you learn – every year you learn. I learned a lot from West Point. I learned a lot in the Army. But I really

believe [I was] learning through the kids as they grew up. I've learned more and developed more every couple of years. Things that I'm involved in, experiences. A lot of it's life experiences, you know?

Sarah talked about the fact that her many life experiences help her be a better leader because she has so many she can draw from when making decision. They deepen and extend her "leadership toolkit":

The call to be a leader shows itself in many different aspects of life and all kinds of different scenarios. And a leader is flexible and versatile and knows what skill and what technique to use at the right time. That's probably the biggest gift of all the experiences I've had, is that I have a lot [of experiences] and if I can remember to pull the right one out, I can be helpful in a situation.

The women viewed their life experiences as leadership tools, just as they viewed skills and values they had acquired at West Point.

### **Identification as Leaders Today**

All the women self-identified as leaders. While they went on to become leaders in a wide range of fields and careers (and in family life/for their families), many also felt they did not necessarily have to be in a leadership position to be a leader.

Molly described herself as "proactive," "less judgmental," and less reactive. "I used to jump in and react and instead now I will sit back and assess." She is a leader or mentor/advisor in many of her volunteering and community outreach roles. She described herself as a "team builder in everything" and how important it was to "understand the



group that you're with." In talking about her community outreach, she said, "I'm also passionate about families and communication with families."

Cate described herself as a leader today:

I would say that I am a passionate leader. When I want to get involved, it usually is something I care about, so I think there's a passion. I do believe that there is inherently still this truth, this listening.... I'm not only an effective leader, I think I'm a good leader that people like working with and for.... Part of what I look at with leadership now too is, you know, I want to teach what I know. A lot of it is teaching.

Helen said, "I'm a more relaxed, trusting leader, because I've failed and survived, or almost failed and survived, and I've got that body of confidence and knowledge behind me to do that." Kim brought her West Point, Army, business, and parenting experiences all into play in describing herself:

As a leader today, I am a flexible, compassionate leader. Now, I am more mellow, more balanced, more human I guess, having been a mom and having worked in the business world and having my Army background. I have more flexible leadership styles; I can utilize them in various situations. Beneath it all is a toughness and a strength I got from the Army.... So, I think I'm a better leader now than certainly when I was 25, even 30. I can be more effective in a range of situations.

Beth saw herself as a more mature leader, having learned from her many experiences in the Army and in business, and that having a child made a profound difference in her as a leader. She said:

I've been the same kind of leader really since Desert Storm. The biggest difference is maturity and fine tuning everything.... I've just kind of deepened and matured as a leader. Having a child completely changes my leadership.... Having a child didn't change my leadership style, it just made me a better, more perceptive, capable leader.

Jane described her leadership identity today as "hopefully more compassionate. Understanding and... able to get stuff done that needs to be done." She saw herself as a "peaceful warrior" and that "there is a lot of work that needs to be done" in the world. She has given up the idea that there is only one right way to do something, a trait she felt was instilled at West Point:

One of my favorite quotes is... "in the expert's eye, there's only one solution. In the beginner's mind, there's many." We were trying to be experts coming out of West Point, so we were [telling ourselves] "OK, platoon leader. This is how we have to do it right." Now I'm like, wow, there are many ways. I don't have all the answers. So, I think there's more freedom to not know and still be OK. And you can still be a leader.

While the women shared how they viewed themselves as leaders today and there was some variation in these views, they also had their own definitions of what a leader is.

## How the Women Defined “Leader”

At the end of each initial interview and after they had described their current leader identities, I asked the women how they defined the term *leader*. Each woman provided a definition that revealed not only her West Point and military background but also her own personality (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3

### *The Women’s Definitions of the Term Leader*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Definition of Leader</b>
Ann	“I define a leader as somebody who is able to communicate a common goal to anybody around them... and influence them and allow them to participate and be heard. To move toward a common decision, goal, value. Probably communicating and mentoring.”
Beth	“I think a leader is somebody who... really has an impact on how the organization gets something – or a person gets something – done. A leader has impact.... Everybody is a leader. Everybody has influence. And that’s so critical.”
Cate	“Someone who can inspire and direct and guide you to an end goal, and I think inspiration is important. I don’t want a leader to tell me what to do every step of the way, but I do want to know that there are guide posts so that if I’m about to step off the edge, they can push me back.... A good leader, too, has a tolerance for failure.”
Helen	“Somebody you want to follow, somebody who helps you accomplish tasks that are in front of you. Somebody who cares about the quality of your day-to-day experience.”
Jane	“A leader sees what has to be done and goes about and does it. Not for the accolades, not for the plaques on the wall.”
Kim	“Someone who leads others to make things happen, accomplish a goal. Leadership is often about bringing a new direction and change to the organization. There can be a whole discussion of leader versus

Participant	Definition of Leader
	manager.... So, I think a leader can act more creatively and set direction on how things get done in an organization.
Molly	“Leadership and teambuilding go hand in hand. A leader can’t be a leader of themselves. You have to have some kind of team, whether it’s one or a couple thousand.... You have to have communication and feedback.... A leader has to understand group dynamics. They have to understand their people. They have to understand the environment that they’re in.... And they have to respect others.... Leaders aren’t born, I think they’re made.... Leaders should be continuing to better themselves. They should still be reading.”
Sarah	“A leader is the person who is willing to step into a life situation and make a difference for the better in whatever situation that is.... A leader is one who is willing to say, ‘I’ll help you with that. I can do that. We can do that together as a team.’”

The definitions of a leader that the eight women provided revealed an emphasis on accomplishing a mission, task, or goal. This was very much in alignment with the Army’s definition of a leader and what West Point teaches cadets. The women included communicating well, influencing others, inspiring others, having vision, and teambuilding in their definitions. Some women focused on one aspect, while others included multiple aspects. All the participants seemed to envision a leader as creating an environment or climate where others can get things done or work together to get things done.

In my pilot study, I asked women how they defined the term *leadership*. While many women talked similarly about accomplishing a mission, task, or goal in their definitions, many women in the pilot study also talked about the importance of developing one’s subordinates and taking care of one’s subordinates as part of their

definitions. The women in this study talked a lot about developing and taking care of others in their stories about being a leader at West Point, in the Army, and afterwards, but chose not to include these elements in their final definitions of a leader.

### **Making Sense of Gender, Military, and Leader Identities**

One of my subordinate research questions was: How do women at West Point make sense of their gender, military, and leader identities? As mentioned earlier, West Point was designed by men for men and was all men for the first 174 years of its existence. “Cadet” and “officer” were traditionally seen as male roles, and the profession of arms was traditionally seen as a profession for men. In most cadets’ minds – to include many women’s minds, the model cadet was a man. Jane said:

I think at West Point while we were there, I still saw... the men as leaders. You know, like... [the First Captain our plebe year] was... like a god! We didn’t have a woman equivalent then. So, my sense of leadership was still “the men” because women were still so few and far between, and the women officers we had... had different experiences getting there.... So, part of me, I guess unconsciously, would think “Oh, well, I’m not a guy, so I could never be there.” And whether – and I always thought of myself as a feminist – I guess when that’s your environment, when you’re a fish, you don’t see the water. That’s what you know, right?

The model cadet in the 1980s was definitely a male cadet. All women saw this, but some struggled with it more than others. Jane doubted herself and her ability to be a leader at West Point where the model cadet was a man. It made her hesitate and question herself as

a potential leader. Other women also saw the model cadet as being a man, and while they wrestled with this image, still felt strongly that both women and men could be good leaders. And that *they* could be good leaders at West Point. They did not view leadership as male only and they did not view the cadet role or the officer role as male only.

All cadets who enter West Point are faced with developing a new military identity and a new leader identity. They are also young adults who are still developing their gender identities. For men cadets, they are developing their gender, military, and leader identities where the model cadet has historically and traditionally been a man. Women cadets, on the other hand, are developing military and leader identities where the model is male while also still developing their gender identities as women. Consequently, there can be a lot of tension in making sense of these different identities for women.

Jane offered:

Our imprint of West Point was the men and, you know, all the men statues that were out there. The White, old men. That was never going to be us.... So, I always felt like ...well, I'm just not going to live up. You know, I just, I don't know, I just maybe felt like... I'm not the "norm." Or not the... the prototypical West Pointer, you know.... I just felt like, well, what am I supposed to be? I don't know how to.... I just felt lost... for a lot of the time.

Jane was expressing self-doubt as a woman in a male-dominated environment, as well as imposter syndrome. She was also a first-generation college student, so that could have been coming into play as well.

West Point was both a gendered institution and a gendering one (Barrett, 1996), and the women struggled with this. Many of the women in this study saw the all-male history and hypermasculine environment, but they also saw themselves as leaders and felt that both women and men could make good cadets, good officers, and good leaders.

As token women in a hypermasculine environment, the women experienced significant sexism and misogyny. This discrimination added another layer of challenge to the participants trying to navigate their roles as young adult women, in addition to being good cadets and aspiring leaders.

Because the roles of cadet, officer, and leader were traditionally seen as male roles, the women had to figure out how they could assume leadership positions effectively and be taken seriously by their more plentiful men counterparts. They focused on performing well, which meant in academics, athletics (especially running), military training, and cadet leadership positions. They also often tried to blend in with the men cadets as much as possible. Although women could wear a skirt option with their uniforms to class or certain social functions, the women in this study said they rarely if ever took advantage of this. They did not want to stick out or attract undue attention as women. They wanted to be accepted as a cadet, as “one of the guys,” not as a woman cadet. Kim described how she approached her men classmates and male officer peers:

“Don’t treat me like your sister, don’t treat me like your girlfriend or your mother or your cousin. I’m none of those things. I’m here to be an officer. I’m your friend, I’m your compadre, I’m your colleague. So, if we can get to an agreement, whether as a cadet or a junior officer....” Those are the types of relationships that

I found supportive. The guys that were willing to trust me and work with me and know that, yeah, I'm only 115 pounds, so I'm not going to drag you across the battlefield, but I can jump out of an airplane and drag myself across, you know? And shoot at people.

The women wanted to be taken seriously as cadets, soldiers, officers, and leaders, and they wanted the men to know that they were there for the same reasons the men were.

They also tended to align themselves with men cadets and distance themselves from women cadets who attracted negative attention because of their weight, physical appearance, or failure to perform up to a particular standard. Several of the women said they regretted having done this to other women. Still, they felt that fitting in with the men and distancing themselves from sub-performing women was a necessary part of their survival. Ann said, "Instead of bonding together, we kind of aligned ourselves with males in a way, so that way we could kind of distance ourselves from maybe even weaker females that we thought were going to drag us down."

Several of the women talked about how as women cadets in the 1980s they often did not realize how poorly they were treated as women, or how wrong it was, because they were all going through it and were like "fish in water." Jane said, "When you're fish in the water, you can't describe the water because it's all around you." As plebes, it was at times difficult to differentiate between upperclass "hazing" where a plebe was corrected for doing something incorrectly or not knowing her or his required Fourth Class knowledge and being hazed simply for being a woman. Because most women experienced sexism, misogyny, and other discrimination based on their gender alone,



women cadets were often blind or oblivious to the mistreatment. Ann said, "...ignorance is bliss and if everybody else is kind of going through that, you don't really feel like you're that different."

Ann gave an example of how women cadets misconstrued certain comments from men cadets as compliments. She remembered going to Eisenhower Hall for "Civvy Night" and receiving compliments from men cadets. Eisenhower Hall was a gathering space where upperclass cadets could socialize, dance, and drink alcohol on Saturday nights. Normally cadets would have to be in uniform, although often they could wear the blazer uniform, which looked more like civilian clothes than the traditional gray cadet uniforms. "Civvy Night" provided the rare opportunity for cadets to wear civilian clothes for the evening instead of cadet uniforms. Because men cadets had such short haircuts, one could still easily identify them as cadets. It could be more difficult, however, to identify women as cadets when they were in civilian clothes. In addition, West Point often bussed in civilian college women for Saturday night dances, so the men cadets would have enough dance partners. That also made it more difficult to identify a woman as a cadet or a civilian.

Ann remembered Civvy Nights where men cadets thought she was a civilian woman and asked her what college she went to. When she said West Point, they would say, "Ohhh, you don't seem like a female cadet." This was supposed to be a compliment from the men, she said, and women cadets at the time often took it that way. But Ann added, "It kind of angers me a little bit that we didn't stand firm and steady and proud in those [cadet] shoes back then. We were more trying to show how we weren't... female

cadet stereotypes.” And “female cadet stereotypes” included negative characteristics like being overweight, too mannish, or unattractive. Ann said the term “female cadet” should not have a negative connotation. “You can be both” – a cadet *and* an attractive woman, and the men cadets should not have been surprised by that.

### **Additional Themes That Emerged from the Women’s Stories**

Several themes that were not directly about leader identity development but still related to leader identities emerged from the women’s stories. These themes included women as “firsts,” the importance of bonds with other women, mentoring and role models, and sexual misconduct.

#### **Women as “Firsts”**

Many of the women described being the “first woman” for a position or accomplishment. Many also described situations where being a woman in a position or situation was “out of the ordinary” for women in that setting/context at that time. The women gave examples of being “first” or “out of the ordinary” primarily from West Point and in the Army. Some indicated that they were the first woman (or even first student) from their high schools to go to West Point or even a service academy, and one reported being the first in her family to go to college.

Women in this study provided several significant leadership “firsts” at West Point. The Class of 1985 was only the sixth West Point class where women had the opportunity to hold senior-level cadet leadership positions, and many of the higher command and staff positions in the Corps of Cadets had not yet been held by women.

The women in this study included the first woman to hold command positions above the battalion level and the first to hold an elected class office.

One of these high-ranking women described what it was like to be a “first” woman in a top cadet leadership position. She said:

Getting through [the training period] and having [the Commandant (a male Brigadier General)] say, “You did a great job. Blew everyone away.” Getting that feedback, surprisingly, it meant a lot to me because I was the first woman and I was very nervous, and I’d never [done anything like that before] .... I’d done all the things that I thought were right and then to get positive reinforcement, that helped me there.

This “first” woman had faced a lot of pressure to perform well and attracted a lot of attention, simply because she was a woman, and it meant a lot to her to receive positive feedback from the Commandant of Cadets. She said she really felt like a leader in that instant.

Several of the women also held cadet leadership positions still unusual at the time for women, including company and battalion command. One of the participants was the only woman company commander during Cadet Basic Training (CBT). There are two three-week details during CBT and different leadership for each detail. There were eight companies in the CBT regiment; thus, out of the 16 CBT company commanders, only one was a woman.

Another participant was the only woman company commander during the academic year. Most cadet academic-year leadership positions last for one semester, so

with 36 companies, there were 72 company commanders over the course of the academic year. In the Class of 1985, only one of them was a woman. There were four women battalion commanders during the academic year in the Class of 1985, two during the fall semester and two during the spring semester. One of those women was a participant in this study.

When describing their experiences in the Army, some of the women talked about being the first woman platoon leader or first woman officer in a particular type of unit. Molly said, “I was the first female to be put in [my] platoon because it was generally men. So, a lot of pressure, too, because you didn’t want to fail because that would ruin it for everybody....” Just like at West Point, women were a very small minority in a traditionally all-male organization, and they experienced performance pressure and other negative effects of tokenism.

Helen described herself as the first woman company commander of a tactical line company in her combat support branch. She said, “The slot I filled was coded male only, but I was the most qualified officer, so I got the spot.” Many said they were the only woman officer – or sometimes only woman – in their platoon, company, or even battalion. Several said they never really thought about this much and sometimes didn’t even realize it until someone pointed it out to them.

Others said it made for a very lonely time as a woman officer with no other women to talk to or turn to for support or encouragement. Beth described what it was like to be the single higher-ranking woman officer as a company commander: “I was very lonely because this was 24/7, and we were typically remote. So, I was typically the only

[woman captain]. When you're a top-ranking female, there's nobody to socialize with. So, you have to deal with that aspect."

Being a "first" woman to do or be something – or for it to be unusual for a woman to do or be something – at West Point and/or in the Army impacted the women's leader identities. The women talked about their "firsts" matter-of-factly or tended to downplay them. They said they were proud to hold these positions but did not like special attention to be placed on the fact they were women in these roles. They saw themselves as soldiers and officers who were doing their duty: trying to accomplish a mission and take care of their soldiers.

Being a "first" woman or being in a position that was still unusual for women tended to bring a lot of attention to the women, and often this was negative attention. Several of the women who were "firsts" in prominent leadership roles at West Point said there was a lot of pressure to do well – more pressure than their male counterparts probably encountered. On the other hand, several of the women who were "firsts" in the Army said that when they did well as a first woman in a position or were the first woman to accomplish something, especially a physical fitness or physically demanding task, this commanded a lot of respect from others, especially men soldiers and officers. In this case, the added attention was beneficial and helped them as women leaders in the Army.

### **Importance of Bonds with Other Women at West Point**

Women in the Class of 1985 went through West Point as 10% of their class at a time when the entire 4,400 Corps of Cadets was about 90% men. There were just over 100 women in the Class of 1985, among 900 men classmates. While the women talked

about how important their friendships with male classmates, especially company mates, were to them as cadets and even now, they said their friendships with other women cadets really helped them make it through West Point as a woman.

**Bonds with individual women cadets.** Most of the women talked about how important roommates were to them over the course of their four years at West Point. Molly said, “I had great roommates that helped each other.” She gave an example from plebe year when she was rooming with three other women.

Simply getting from their barracks room to a women’s bathroom could be a challenge for women plebes. Because there were so few women, women’s bathrooms were few and far between. Most men plebes merely had to go across the hall or down the hall from their rooms to use the bathroom. In many of the cadet barracks, however, a women’s bathroom was often far down the hall, on another floor, or even in another wing of the barracks entirely. As one of the women stated earlier, there were no women’s bathrooms at all in her barracks.

For most plebe women, going to the bathroom often involved having to go through or into another company’s area of the barracks. Every time a plebe woman ventured out into the hallway, she made herself an instant target for upperclassmen, and venturing into a different company’s hallways was even more daunting. Going alone to the bathroom as a new plebe, especially as a woman, was often like running a gauntlet. At the beginning of plebe year, Molly and her roommates decided they would all go to take showers at the same time. Molly said, “So, we’d all go together. It was where ‘I’ve got your back, you’ve got mine.’” This way, as four plebe women venturing down the

hall together, they made less of a target for upperclassmen than one solo woman plebe.

There was strength in numbers.

Cate summed up the importance of having close roommates as a woman at West Point: “I think the roommates that you have can have a big impact on your having a space where you can just relax and be who you are. I think that the friendships that you form there are profoundly important.” And this included friends beyond roommates.

Several women talked about forming bonds with other women classmates in their companies who were not roommates or with women classmates in other companies. Kim described the relationship she had with women classmates in her upperclass company and battalion: “We were cohesive, all five of us ladies got along. We supported each other. The ladies in our whole battalion [three companies] were very cohesive, and we had support from each other....” Sarah said: “I smile every time I review the *Howitzer* [the West Point yearbook] and look at my closest of friends from the Academy....I am reminded of how silly we could be but also how much we believed in and stood with one another....”

Not many women talked about forming friendships with women who were in classes ahead of or behind them, unless it was on a sports team. Beth said: “The camaraderie really was with the [women classmates] in my company and the people that I kind of linked up with and formed a bond with [outside of the company].” Beth was talking about women who were classmates. She added: “Then when you start doing cross class stuff, it’s really hard to do anything cross class.”

During the early 1980s, there was not much cross-class interaction between women cadets (Yoder & Adams, 1985). Because of the Fourth Class System and the rule against upperclassmen fraternizing with plebes, upperclass women could not associate with the plebe women (or any plebes) in their company except on official business. Molly said, “All the upperclass women in my company just did their own thing. They never reached out or checked on us. There was little or no interaction.” In addition, upperclass women from different classes in the same company also often did not interact very much together. Most cross-class interaction between women happened on women’s sports teams, or in mixed gender sports teams, clubs, or religious groups.

**Women’s sports teams.** Women’s sports teams provided a way for women cadets to gather as a group of women that was sanctioned. Women’s sports teams also provided one of the few venues where women cadets could gather in an otherwise male-dominated environment without attracting negative attention. Six of the women in this study participated on a women’s sports team at least part of their time at West Point. Jane participated on two co-ed club sports teams. Although she enjoyed that, she said, “I realize now that maybe I should have done something just all women and felt that safe space, but I think, in our era, those safe spaces were not looked upon kindly [by the men].” Helen, who did not participate on an athletic team outside of intramurals, stated, “My greatest regret was not being on a girls’ sports team.”

The women who played on a women’s sports team said the experience helped them make it through West Point as women. For some, it gave them a chance to get away from the stress and regimen of West Point and play a sport they enjoyed. Beth said: “I



think it was a great help to me, but it wasn't from a camaraderie perspective. My camaraderie was with people I didn't compete with, play with." For others their teams provided support and encouragement from other women, something that was usually at most provided by one's roommate or the few other women in one's class in one's company.

Cate said: "I look back at some of the support I got from women. I definitely got it from the women's [sports] team, and I value it tremendously. And they lifted me up at times when I tremendously needed it." She continued: "I mean, the laughter, the memories were great, and I enjoyed it as much as I did because I also had interactions outside of it with individuals with different experiences." While Cate got significant support from the other women on her varsity sports team, she also had important friendships and got support from women outside her team. Having close relationships with both women on her sports team and women friends from outside her sport helped Cate succeed.

From what the women said, being on a women's sports team and getting support from other women helped them the most when they were plebes. Cate said, "I think it was tremendous for me, in the first year, in particular the comfort of getting away and having identities separate from all these other [stressful] components." Several women noted that as plebes they did not necessarily connect with all the upperclass women on their team; there were some they felt close to and others they did not. Part of this could have been because of personality differences or ramifications of the Fourth Class System,

although cadets on varsity and club sports teams could interact and call each other by first name. Sarah said:

Being on the [women's club] team allowed me an acceptable place to gather with other women. Especially plebe year, it allowed me a place to gather insight and counsel from women who were upperclass and to join hands with and garner strength from other plebes. [The women's club team] was essential to my success at West Point.

Aside from the support women received from other women cadets, whether as roommates, classmates, or sports teammates, the women also talked about mentors and role models and the lack of women role models at West Point.

### **Mentoring and Role Models**

All the women talked about the importance of mentoring and role models. They talked about it from the perspective of having had (or having wanted) mentorship or role models while at West Point and/or in the Army. They also discussed how important they felt it was for women to have women mentors and role models and how they themselves have mentored and continue to mentor women (and men) in their own lives.

When talking about their own mentors, the women described a mix of men and women mentors, both at West Point and in the Army. The women valued mentors and the role they played in their lives, regardless of whether they were men or women. Many of the women, however, noted the lack of women officers at West Point when they were there who could serve as either mentors or role models.

**Mentoring and role models at West Point.** While the women talked about a lack of women officer mentors and role models at West Point, many said they had men officer mentors who significantly helped them. None of the women mentioned a woman officer mentor, but a few talked about more senior women cadets who served as mentors.

*Lack of women officer mentors/role models at West Point.* When the Class of 1985 attended West Point, there were few women officers working there. There were almost no women officer faculty members or tactical officers; most women officers served in administrative roles which women cadets might not see or be exposed to (Betros, 2012). The women officers that were at West Point also tended to be junior officers. Most faculty at USMA were Army officers, and of the visiting civilian professors, very few were women. The Department of Physical Education (DPE) probably had the most women instructors, and most of them were civilians. Helen said:

My role models and mentors were always male officers. I felt like we hardly saw a female officer at West Point, although I did admire the DPE instructors and [a female coach] tremendously.

Jane said she took a seminar class Women in the Military, which involved a few women officers. She described interacting briefly with a woman officer who had entered the Army via Officer Candidate School. When Jane confided to her that she did not really feel ready to be an officer, the woman responded, “Oh, my god, you’re so much more ready than we were!” And that was the extent of their conversation. Jane said:

I wish I could have gone a bit further. But... you didn't want to show vulnerability or admit to being how clueless you were. That was like the little bit that I could say, "I don't know what the hell I'm going to do."

West Point had a formal sponsorship program, and most cadets were assigned officer or senior NCO sponsors who would mentor cadets and invite them over to their homes/military quarters for a meal or to watch TV, do laundry, or just hang out on weekends. Most sponsors were married male Army officers, and women sometimes found their sponsor's wife to be someone to turn to for support or advice as another woman. Thus, for many women cadets, being assigned one formal sponsor meant getting two de facto sponsors, a male officer and his wife. Occasionally, the sponsor's wife would be an Army officer as well, but not very often at that time.

Molly reflected on the fact that women cadets during the 1980s had very few women mentors or role models. She said:

It is too bad that we did not have some type of mentoring or even some sort of informal quarterly workshop or discussion groups for women while we were at West Point. These could have been at the regimental level as well as at the entire Corps [level].

She was expressing the fact that many women felt the void of women mentors and role models during the early- to mid-1980s at West Point.

***Male officer mentors at West Point.*** Several of the women talked about male officer mentors at West Point who really made a difference in their lives. Helen said: "I felt very nurtured by the [men] professors of the [academic department]. They

appreciated our intelligence, and many of them were very funny, which I think is an important leadership tool.”

Three women described mentors who were male Army officer professors within their major departments. Ann said:

[My mentor] always made me feel that I could retain who I was as a woman and still push myself academically... and to really put myself out of my comfort zone.

This continued even after we graduated.

All three of the women said they still have relationships with these mentors over 30 years later, as both mentors and friends. Kim said, “Over the years, [my sponsor and his wife] came to our wedding... We exchange Christmas letters still. So, that was a nice friendship/mentorship.” These men officers who supported women at a time when women were new to the Academy had a significant impact on them not only as developing leaders at West Point but also afterwards.

*Cadet mentors at West Point.* A few women described male cadet mentors or role models. Molly referenced her male squad leader during CBT and how she modeled her own leadership as a Beast squad leader three years later largely on his example. Several other women mentioned their male Beast squad leaders as role models as well.

A few of the women found women mentors/role models on their sports teams. While the Fourth Class System precluded plebes and upperclassmen from interacting outside of official business, this did not hold true for sports teams. Upperclass and plebe women who were on a sports team could call each other by their first names, and friendships often developed. (This was true for men’s sports teams as well.) Thus, some

of the women who participated in women's sports teams talked about having upperclass women mentors when they were plebes.

Ann described an upperclass woman on her sports team who mentored her as a plebe. She said, "If I had not been on a sports team, I would not have had that opportunity." Her upperclass mentor told her years later that she had reached out to Ann intentionally. She had realized that she herself had not had many upperclass women to emulate and she wanted Ann's experience to be different. Ann said, "It's a person like her that really has made a difference in my life."

**Mentoring and role models in the Army.** Women described positive mentors and role models that they had in the Army. These ranged from company commanders or other supervising officers to peers or near peers. Most of the mentors the women mentioned were men. Some women said they were fortunate to have men commanders who really valued them as officers, supported them, and provided them with leadership opportunities. Molly described her first company commander:

He was an amazing commander. He was a great mentor, he had high standards. He taught us. I mean, he taught the lieutenants. He led from the front, he encouraged work amongst the lieutenants as team building, and he stressed proficiency and performance. But he also taught.

Beth had a similar experience with her first company commander. "I was only with him briefly. He was a really good guy. He was a good leader. He was a good supporter to have as a second lieutenant."

Unfortunately, Beth's second company commander was neither a mentor nor a role model. She described him as "sexist" and "always on my case." It was not until they took a PT test together and she beat him in running the two miles that he began to treat her with more respect. She said, "And his attitude completely changed after I did that." She said he went on to make her his Executive Officer (XO), or second in command. Several years later, he attended her promotion-to-captain ceremony and said, "[Beth] is really tough. I could never make her cry." In his eyes, that was a compliment.

The women considered themselves lucky if they had a woman mentor or role model in the Army, as often they found themselves the only – or one of few – women in their units. Jane said she really could have used a woman mentor when she was a new second lieutenant and platoon leader. She said:

I still felt like I could have used a lot of mentoring. I didn't have a female role model to talk to. You didn't want to admit you didn't know stuff. So, I just kind of puttered along.

While most of the women described there being other women lieutenants or young captains in their units, they said they encountered very few women field grade officers (majors or above). Kim said, "There weren't many women. And I was thinking, as far as Desert Storm, there were no women above us for role models. None. I don't remember any [senior] women [officers]." Women were still a small percentage in the active duty Army and not enough time had gone by for there to be a significant number of higher-ranking women officers. Thus, most of the women said they did not have

women role models while in the Army. A few found a role model in a more senior junior grade officer, however.

There was only one other woman in Ann's first unit in the Army. She happened to be a West Point woman from a more senior class, and Ann had not known her at West Point. As a more experienced woman officer, this woman became a mentor to Ann, and in the process, they also became lifelong friends. Sarah had a similar experience encountering another more senior West Point woman officer in her first unit. Sarah said:

[This West Point woman platoon leader] was fairly instrumental in helping me to kind of hone some of the things necessary to have credibility with your soldiers, and with your platoon sergeant, and kind of some of the more real Army stuff as opposed to the West Point-type things. She had been in the unit for about a year already, and left, I don't know, not too long after I was there. Maybe four months or so.... She really, really helped me develop who I would be.

These women felt lucky to have encountered other West Point women officers in their units as new second lieutenants and really valued the guidance and support these more senior women provided them. This was also guidance and support the women had not often found from more senior women cadets at West Point.

These women were very lucky to find more senior West Point women officers in their units. While West Point was 10% women, the percentage of women in many Army units was far less, and in some cases, the women in this study found themselves the only women or one of a very few. Thus, connecting with other women officers and West Point women officers provided great support.



While many of the women said it was rare to see women officers above the rank of captain during the 1980s, Molly talked about working for a woman major who provided an excellent role model:

After the two platoons I had, they moved me to work under [the woman major] in the S3 shop. She was originally from the WAC Corps. It was amazing to have her, because there weren't women; it was so many men. She was an amazing mentor and role model to work under and watch. You know, to see her and watch her because she was completely professional. She had the fine line of being feminine *and* professional.

Helen said all her mentors and role models in the Army were men. She appreciated what they did for her but wondered how things might have been different if she had had women mentors or role models.:

I've never had a situation where I had a strong female leader. I think that is interesting to talk about. I never had a strong female leader to pattern myself after. My leaders were always men. I've always kind of developed a leadership style where I follow the successful leadership styles of the men I've seen. It would be interesting [to know]: Would I be a different leader if I had had a woman who was one of my role models along the way?

Because there were so few women officers in the Army during the 1980s, especially at ranks above the level of captain, the women in the Class of 1985 often did not have the opportunity for more senior women role models. Partly because of this, in later life,

outside of the Army, these women found it important to serve as mentors and role models for other women.

**Wanting to be mentors and role models for other women.** The women described a desire to mentor others, especially women, and how they have made that a priority in their lives. The women talked about mentoring others, especially more junior women, in their roles in the Army and then later in business, education, and volunteer positions. Some said that they went out of their way to mentor or enjoyed mentoring other women because they had felt a lack of women mentors in their own lives.

Jane talked about mentoring younger women when she was a tactical officer in an ROTC program and then when she volunteered with the Girl Scouts. She added:

Even as a [health care professional in a school], I kind of enjoyed mentoring some of the kids that would end up being my more frequent visitors. So, I... maybe that's where I realized I didn't have that [myself] and I kind of want[ed] to give that back.

Ann felt a lot of her leadership as a teacher was reflected in how she mentored both more junior teachers and her students. Sarah echoed the importance of mentoring more junior librarians and teachers. Molly said how important it was to her to mentor more junior Army wives as her husband progressed through his military career and she interacted with them as a commander's spouse and more senior Army wife.

Cate talked about the importance of mentoring in business and wanting to mentor both women and men:

I want to be a mentor to more women, and I have to do better about seeking out those opportunities to mentor. And I also want men to start to be mentored by women, too, because in business so many opportunities and so much of what unfolds is tied to who you know and having people that are willing to mentor you and work with you and guide you along those paths. And so, a lot of times I just think it would be wonderful if we could see easier ways for mentorship to take place.

Helen talked about mentoring others, especially women, over the course of her life after West Point. As an Army company commander, she mentored the lieutenants who worked for her, and that has carried over to her mentoring more junior women in business and the young women she volunteers with in the Army. She said the closer she gets to retirement, the more involved she has become with mentoring younger women to become leaders. She said:

Really, your ultimate job as a leader is to grow other leaders. I'm very much in that place now in my journey. It's like, I still have to accomplish my missions over here, but what I'm really doing, I'm in the last 5, 10 years of growing other leaders.

The women identified mentoring as part of being a leader and described how mentoring others, especially women, was a way they could help others develop as leaders in whatever field they happened to be working. Most of the women also saw mentoring as a way to share their own experiences and lessons learned and “give back.”

**Connecting with other West Point women today.** All the women talked about the importance of connecting with other West Point women today, whether former roommates, women classmates, or women from other classes. Several women described linking up with women classmates at class reunions at West Point or, more recently, at women's reunions for the Class of 1985.

All the women in this study had participated in at least one of the Class of 1985 women's reunions. Since 2013, there have been four reunions specifically for women in the Class of 1985 and a fifth one planned for the spring of 2019. These weekend get-togethers are held in different cities around the country and hosted/organized by women who live in that area. All women who were in the Class of 1985 are welcome, whether they graduated or not. These get-togethers are a time for women classmates to reconnect, tell stories, and talk about their lives. Some women connected with women they did not really know well at West Point, while others found this a time of reconnection. The women have found these women's reunions to be both a bonding and a healing experience. Molly said, "We didn't know what we were missing, did we?"

*West Point Women* is a non-profit organization and "global network providing mentorship, education, and support to women graduates and cadets of the United States Military Academy" ("About West Point Women," 2019). The West Point Women Facebook group has also proved to be a unifying and supportive resource for many of the women. With over 3,400 members, this closed group includes alumnae from all classes since 1980, as well as current cadets. Many members see this as a "safe space" to discuss issues, a support group, a networking site, and a place where women who share the bond

of West Point can encourage each other. In many ways, West Point Women provides the mentoring and role models from other West Point women that many did not experience while at West Point. In 2016, USMA and West Point Women sponsored a conference to celebrate 40 years of women at West Point. Hundreds of West Point women from across all four decades of classes with women attended, including five of the women in this study.

Several of the women in this study talked about encountering other West Point women from a wide range of classes through work, at social events, etc., and how there is almost an instant bond. Molly explained it: “Being few women, and I mean, you think about it, it’s just physically, mentally challenging.”

Molly described meeting a West Point woman at a social event. The woman who introduced them knew both had attended West Point. Molly said the other woman was from a much later class, but they had both been in the same branch and even shared the same first name. As soon as they started talking, they felt an “instant bond.” Molly said, “She just talked my ear off because it had been a long time since she had met another [West Point] woman.” West Point women from all classes share the experience of going through West Point in a marginalized group surrounded by men, and often women who shared that West Point experience, regardless of when they attended the Academy, connect with each other because of this shared experience as women.

### **Sexual Misconduct**

Even though I did not ask women specifically about sexual misconduct at West Point or in the Army, many of the women talked about it. The concept of sexual

misconduct included descriptions of sexual harassment and sexual assault, as well as inappropriate behavior related to sexism and misogyny. Often the topic of sexual misconduct came up when I asked the women to tell me what it was like being a woman at West Point in the 1980s or a woman officer in the Army in the mid- to late-1980s and early 1990s. Every participant gave multiple examples of sexism and misogyny, and several talked about sexual harassment and assault. Cadet stories about sexual misconduct ranged from waking up in the middle of the night to find a male cadet standing over one's bed to having a male cadet expose himself to outright sexual assault.

Women also talked about how sexual misconduct could come into play in the Army for women in the 1980s. One woman said:

You'd get called a dyke or a cunt. That was just part of it, part of the job. Having soldiers say, "Hey, will you go out with me?" You have soldiers asking to have sex with you, both male and female, by the way. That's just part of being a female in the Army. How do you handle someone asking for sex? Whether it's your company commander or [someone else]. I had a second lieutenant try to stick his hand up my crotch. All the #MeToo stuff you want to talk about, that's just part of being a woman in the military. Not a good one. I mean, I don't think it has to be that way.

This study took place after the emergence of the "#MeToo" movement. Two of the women referenced the "#MeToo" movement by name and talked about how they felt the recent increased public awareness of sexual harassment and sexual assault in general could also benefit women in the military. Even if women in the study had not

experienced sexual assault, they all knew of women who had and in most of their experiences, West Point and the Army often did nothing to address the issue when they were cadets or officers.

In this study, one of the women talked specifically about how her own personal experience with sexual misconduct as a cadet had long lasting effects not only on her well-being but also on her leader identity. During Cadet Troop Leadership Training (CTLT) the summer before junior year, the company commander (a male captain in the US Army) of the unit to which she was assigned assaulted her on her first day in her unit. He then sent her to the field for her entire six weeks of CTLT. She found out later she had mistakenly been assigned to an all-male unit, something which the company commander did nothing to correct, so there were no other women around she could talk to, and she never saw any other officers in the field besides the one who had assaulted her. While she did not report the misconduct herself, she believes that the NCOs in her unit knew something was wrong and reported it when they returned from the field. Because they did take action, the Army investigated and brought charges against the offender.

When she returned to West Point, she did not share what had happened with others. Her friends and company mates, however, knew something was wrong and were very supportive of her during a very difficult time where she thought of leaving West Point. She said, "I ended up not leaving because in the long run, I just couldn't be a quitter. I couldn't let that defeat me."

She added that she also learned a valuable leadership lesson from her experience:

I learned that just because you meet one bad guy, it doesn't mean that there aren't people around who care and who are protecting you. And I think I learned we have a responsibility to one another whether we outrank them or not. And so, your responsibility as a leader is to always check on your people and know what's going on with them.

Here, she was referring to the NCOs who "knew something wrong was happening but couldn't quite put it all together." When they returned from the field, these NCOs made a higher-ranking authority, someone who outranked their company commander, know that something inappropriate had occurred. They did not ignore their misgivings; rather, they stepped forward and reported them.

The focus of this study was on leader identity development not sexual misconduct. I included this story of sexual misconduct as a cadet because the participant brought it up and told me how the experience informed her identity as a leader. Additional research on sexual misconduct and its impact on women who attended West Point is certainly warranted. How sexual assault affects women's leader identity development would be of particular relevance.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided findings around my research questions, as well as other themes that emerged from the women's responses. The women talked about their leader identities in high school, at West Point, in the Army, in their lives after the Army, and today. They also described what it was like to be a woman at West Point in the early- to mid-1980s and a woman officer in the Army in the mid-1980s to early-1990s. The



women discussed some of the challenges they faced being in a token group both at an institution of higher education and in an organization that were historically all-male and hypermasculine. The women's challenges around their gender stemmed from the effects of tokenism, sexism, misogyny, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. The women had to navigate these challenges in addition to surmounting the challenges of being a cadet and Army officer that everyone faces, regardless of gender.

The women pursued a wide range of careers after the Army, some engaging in multiple careers and seven of eight raising children. The women continued to serve as leaders in both formal and informal ways in business, education, healthcare, non-profit organizations, parenting, and volunteering. Although the women's leader identities matured and developed over the courses of their lives, West Point and their experiences there continued to inform their leader identities in significant ways.

In the next chapter, I discuss how my findings relate to the literature on leader identity development; gender, military, and leader identities; and the other major themes that emerged from the women's stories.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### DISCUSSION

This chapter includes discussion of the findings and themes that emerged from the women's stories and how those stories related to existing literature about leader identity and women in the US military services or service academies/ROTC programs. The connections among the participants' stories and the current state of the literature offer implications for both research and practice.

This study helps fill a gap in the literature about what West Point was like for women after the graduation of the first class including women. This study provided only an initial approach to filling that gap, as there is still a need to research what the West Point experience was like for women who attended the Academy in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. During the pilot survey, testing the willingness of West Point women to share their narratives, the responses crossed all four decades. These responses both spurred the inquiry for this study and confirmed findings as presented in Chapter Six. For this chapter, I compare my findings with those in the published literature.

The research questions for this study were:

How do women's experiences at West Point inform their leader identity development?

- (a) How do women at West Point make sense of their gender, military, and leader identities?
- (b) How do women's experiences at West Point inform their leader identities in the Army and in any subsequent careers?

In particular, I will draw connections from the literature to my findings in the following areas:

- West Point women's leader identity development;
- Making sense of gender, military, and leader identities as West Point women;
- Being a woman at West Point; and
- Additional themes that emerged from the women's stories, including: women as "firsts," bonds with other women, mentoring and role models, and sexual misconduct.

### **West Point Women's Leader Identity Development**

There is scant published research on West Point women after the initial years of integration, which makes a case for the importance of this study. I can compare some of the findings of this study with the results of studies on women in the Class of 1980, the first class with women, and the classes with women that attended West Point while the Class of 1980 was there (Classes of 1981, 1982, and 1983). While these studies did not focus on the leadership identity development of women cadets, they do connect to my work.

The early integration research included the longitudinal Athena Project, as well as studies published in scholarly journals between 1977 and 1984. These studies focused on multiple aspects of the integration of women. Although some of the journal articles were published while the Class of 1985 was attending West Point, the research they were based on pre-dated the Class of 1985. Also important for comparison purposes is Janda's (2002) book on the integration of women at West Point. He included extensive interviews

with women and men from the Class of 1980, as well as West Point staff and faculty involved with the integration of women, as part of his data. Like the Athena Project, Janda's (2002) book was a holistic examination of the integration of women at West Point, focused primarily on the first class with women.

In this study I examined how women who attended West Point with the Class of 1985 perceived the influence of their West Point experiences on their leader identity development at West Point, in the Army, and afterwards. How did their experiences at West Point, during a very formative period of their lives, inform their leader identity development throughout the courses of their lives? The contributions of this scholarship are essential not only to West Point or to this particular population of women, but they also serve to inform scholarship related to leader identity development and gender in other areas as well.

### **Leader Identities Before West Point**

I asked women about their leader identities before West Point in order to parallel the approach taken by Le Ber et al. (2017) where the women examined their leader identities at different stages of their lives from childhood through adolescence into adulthood. Although I was primarily interested in how the West Point experience informed my participants' leader identity development over the courses of their lives, I also wanted to know what their leader identities were like before West Point. While I did not ask the women about their childhood experiences, I did ask them about their experiences in adolescence and high school. The participants' leadership experiences in high school paralleled those of the women in the Le Ber et al. (2017) study. In my study,

seven of the women held multiple leadership positions in high school and felt confident in those roles, and only one did not. While this woman was not active in her high school, she did participate in an organization outside her school. Le Ber et al. (2017) found divergence of leader identities in adolescence, with some young women “becoming more confident as leaders and finding social support in those roles” (p. 233) and others “rejecting leadership roles and labels in order to be more socially accepted” (p. 233) or “withdrawing” to find themselves (p. 233).

Le Ber et al. (2017) began their study of women’s leader identity development in childhood. A few women talked about experiences in childhood (e.g., Beth described her experience in getting to play Little League baseball), but I did not ask participants specifically about their childhoods. Although starting in childhood was not within the scope of this study, future research on the leader identity development of women at West Point may include childhood histories to give a more complete picture of the women who attend and graduate from West Point.

Although most of the women in this study held multiple leadership positions in high school and thought of themselves as leaders, they all said their concepts of leadership and what being a leader meant were nascent or immature at that time in their lives. A leader was someone who held a leadership position. And often one was chosen as a leader if a) one was known for getting things done or b) one was the best – or at least a highly skilled – athlete on the team. There was little thought about what being a leader meant other than being the one in charge or being a team captain. Most of the women in this study exhibited confidence and competence as leaders in high school and saw going

to West Point as a challenging yet reasonable opportunity. They knew they were breaking with tradition as women attending a service academy, but they also could picture both women and men as cadets and as leaders in the military. And they could picture themselves as cadets and leaders.

Research has shown that while the men who attend service academies tend to hold more traditional views of gender roles in society, the women who attend service academies, not surprisingly, given what they are doing, tend to have more non-traditional views (Boyce & Herd, 2003; Vitters & Kinzer, 1977). These women can see themselves as cadets, officers, and leaders. The views of the women in this study aligned with this set of prior research findings.

### **Leader Identities at West Point**

All the women said they became more aware of themselves as leaders at West Point. They experienced a dramatic change in their awareness of leadership and what being a leader meant because they lived and breathed leadership every single day they were at the Academy. These expressed views certainly align with the goals of West Point and its 47-month leadership development program. Beginning in CBT, the women learned to work together with classmates as a team. While being a plebe was mostly about followership, the women also had multiple opportunities that first year to be a leader: a) in their academic classes as section leaders; b) organizing classmates to accomplish plebe duties as head minute caller or head laundry carrier; and/or c) during Plebe Parent weekend when they took over cadet leadership positions while the upper three classes were on spring break. Most talked about increasing positions of leadership

and responsibility as they progressed from sophomore to junior to senior years. For many, these leadership positions were in the cadet chain of command, but some also talked about being leaders such as an athletic team captain or class officer and/or having leadership opportunities during summer training away from West Point.

While most of the women in this study felt they had many leadership opportunities at West Point and felt well-prepared to become second lieutenants and platoon leaders, not all did. Under the conditions of participants' rights and preferences for disclosure and associated research ethics (Wolcott, 2010), it was beyond the scope of this study to pursue discrepant cases (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Yet, the exposure of negative case also arose during analysis in my pilot study, which included women from all four decades of West Point classes with women (Lewis, 2017). Future studies should pursue these atypical views of West Point's leadership opportunities to examine how the institution assigns or excludes some cadets, particularly women, to get a more complete picture of its practices of leadership development (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

The women shared experiences and narratives about trying out different leadership styles, being able to fail and learn from mistakes, and observing others, who exhibited both good and bad examples of leadership. This aligned with the theme of "observing interactions and human behavior" which emerged as a key factor in the leader development of women Army National Guard officers (Manke, 2015, p. 104). This behavior also aligned with Le Ber et al. (2017) and comments about the importance of "experiential learning" in the leader identity development of young women.

The women in this study all discussed the impact of the Cadet Honor Code and the Academy's emphasis on integrity and "doing the right thing." Such discussion points reviewing the impact of the holistic West Point leadership development experience echoed goals of the program outlined in key West Point documents of the time (Betros, 2012).

The women also developed their leader identities in a very male-dominated environment where they often faced misogyny, sexism, sexual harassment, and other challenges just because they were women. They talked about a common projection of the model cadet leader imaged as a man and how they had to figure out how to lead mostly men as women. This set of observations supported Egan et al.'s (2017) discussion of the androcentric nature of leadership theories and leadership development programs and the concept of leader being a masculine role. Similarly, Rhode (2017) wrote that identity around being a leader has more traditionally been aligned with men than women. As in those studies, I found that leadership was considered a masculine gender role for women in leadership positions at West Point.

Just as Egan et al. (2017) asserted that it was difficult for women to develop leader identities in this context, the participants in my study shared that they experienced gender expectations as a limitation. Participants talked about trying to fit in with and be accepted by the men cadets, while also maintaining their identities as women. Being a good athlete or a fast runner helped considerably, as did proving that one was competent militarily. This challenge of balancing their gender, military, and leader identities to accommodate masculine norms and be accepted by men cadets, along with the benefit of



strong athletic ability, paralleled the experiences of women in the early integration of West Point (Janda, 2002), as well as those of more recent women ROTC cadets (Mahoney, 2012). This indicates that women in the military, at least in officer training environments, are still facing these same types of challenges as they were in the 1980s.

The women's leader identities while at West Point were informed by not only the leadership development program and the holistic "West Point experience," but also by the fact that they were a small group of women in this traditionally all-male and only recently integrated military institution. The women took from that environment, context, and era those moments and messages which resonated positively with them and tried to incorporate such into their leader identities. Just as they had in high school, the women felt that both women and men could make good cadets and good leaders.

Even with a positive position, the women also recognized that not all men could, or would, accept women as leaders, and that recognition meant these women felt constant pressure to prove themselves. This constant need to prove oneself reflected reports from the early integration of women in the military literature, as well as more recent women ROTC cadets who discussed having to "work twice as hard" to be taken seriously by men cadets (Mahoney, 2012). These repeated results indicate that performance pressure continues to affect women in officer training programs in male-dominated military environments.

The women in this study also had to figure out how to adapt their leader identities and leadership styles to be effective in this male-dominated, hypermasculine military environment. They quickly learned that leading in a very masculine, assertive,

transactional way was not going to be effective for them as women and that they would need to embrace more collaborative and participatory approaches. Leading with integrity and leading by example became key, as did listening, developing others, and motivating subordinates with positive leadership. Although some of the women talked about experimenting with the negative leadership styles embraced by the Fourth Class System, in the end, they all gravitated towards more positive leadership styles. Of note, the leadership traits that resonated the most with the women in his study strongly aligned with the ones Manke (2015) found in women Army National Guard officers:

The women identified with leadership qualities of character, integrity, communication skills, development of subordinates, empathy, humility, and those who are guided by a moral compass as important skills for leaders to possess....  
(p. 109)

The stories of women in this study echoed experiences and lessons learned of women in the earlier classes with women at West Point (Barkalow, 1990; Janda, 2002). While these Class of 1985 graduates did not report extreme levels of sexism, misogyny, and mistreatment as had women in the Class of 1980, tokenism, sexism, and misogyny still formed their experiences while at West Point from 1981 through their graduation. Women were still relatively new at the Academy, and women still made up a relatively small percentage (10%) of the Corps of Cadets. The women in this study tried to gain acceptance in one of two ways: by excelling and “proving” their worth and abilities or by trying to blend in and not gain undue attention, either negative or positive. They also learned additional ways of coping with the negative attention they received as women,

e.g., trying to ignore slurs, sexist jokes, and other microaggressions. However, they still experienced insecurities and stress as women, both effects of tokenism (Yoder, 1985, 1989).

Resilience was a strong theme in the women's stories about succeeding at West Point. That these women reported resilience in their stories supported the findings from Le Ber et al. (2017), which showed that resilience was a key theme in the leader identity development of women. In studying aspects of resilience that women exhibited in developing their leader identities, Le Ber et al. (2017) found five key factors: "accepting self," "ignoring negative feedback," "redirecting rejection," "persistence," and "courage" (p. 237). The experiences and stories of the women in this study reflect a similar pattern as Le Ber et al.'s (2017) five factors of resilience.

### **Leader Identities in the Army**

As junior officers in the Army, the women learned how to apply their leadership skills among soldiers in real training or deployment situations and with real world problems. While leading peers at West Point could at times be challenging, the women found most cadets onboard with the West Point mission and accepting of the mantra "cooperate and graduate." That was not always the case in the Regular Army, however. Sometimes soldiers were not as motivated as cadets. Sometimes soldiers needed someone in authority to tell them to do something. Several women talked about challenges and resistance in all-male units where a woman officer was a novelty and taking orders from a woman was not always welcome.

The women said they at times felt unprepared for some of the problems or situations they encountered as new lieutenants, that they were naïve and lacked real world experience as 22- or 23-year old women. However, many of these challenges were ones faced by all new, young officers and had more to do with youth and lack of experience than gender. The women's stories of facing resistance, accompanied by times of self-doubt, connected with Lemler's (2013) conceptualization of "leader identity stagnation" (p. 19) and "leader identity destruction" (p. 20). For some women, the move from an environment where they were more established (and the culture was even slightly more accepting of women as leaders) to one where that was less the case proved to be a significant challenge that caused pauses for reflection and doubt.

Most of the women talked about figuring out what would work well with their different NCOs and junior enlisted soldiers. Sometimes it meant being more authoritative or transactional, other times it meant knowing how to appeal to or motivate certain individuals. Several talked about personal challenges with certain officers, NCOs, or soldiers, especially as women.

Some found there to be more sexism and misogyny in the Army than at West Point, while others felt they typically encountered fewer obstacles because of their gender. Sometimes the participants found a genuine level of ignorance about women out in the Army, especially around women who were pregnant or nursing/pumping. All the women said that being a good runner, scoring well on physical fitness tests, and/or doing well in a challenging physical task gave them more credibility with their soldiers and other officers.

The women clearly cared deeply about those for whom they commanded and used possessive pronouns to refer to *their* soldiers. Primarily, these military women leaders expressed interest in seeing that their soldiers got the training and professional development needed to excel and do well in the Army. These women also cared about their soldiers and NCOs as individual persons, many with spouses and children. Many of the women quickly learned that soldiers and families can have complicated lives and challenges which demanded skills and knowledge they were still developing. The literature on women leaders' care and ownership of subordinates' welfare beyond job performance replicates findings from earlier research on women's approaches to leading (Acker, 2012; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly et al., 1995; Noddings, 2001). Furthermore, this sense of care for soldiers and their families aligned with Gregory's (2017) study on what made women effective leaders in police and US Army roles. In both this study and Gregory's (2017), the women served as care-givers. In the case of my study, care-giver was not only a role of the women as military leaders but also within their own family contexts – whether caring for their children or aging parents or other family members.

The women talked about having to change some of what they had learned at West Point to be effective in the Army, but integrity and doing the right thing always guided them as officers. Although they preferred a more collaborative, participatory leadership style, they learned that at times, they had to assume a more authoritative style. Several also talked about grace under pressure or maintaining a sense of calm during a crisis, something they attributed to their West Point training. Overall, the women talked about

developing their own leader identities within the Army's prescriptions while using the foundations they had learned at West Point.

Some of what the women in this study discussed about their experiences as junior officers in the Army aligned with the findings of Yoder and Adams (1984), who examined the experiences of women from the West Point Class of 1980 as junior officers. Just like the women from the Class of 1980, women from the Class of 1985 were entering non-traditional roles as officers in the US Army during the Cold War. They, too, faced the effects of role conflict and tokenism (Yoder & Adams, 1984). One major difference for the women in this study was that they found more women junior officers they could turn to as resources, mentors, and role models. In particular, several of the women in this study talked about how West Point women who were one to three years senior helped them immensely as junior officers adapting to the Army. That was clearly a resource the women from the Class of 1980 did not have.

There were also significant similarities between the women's stories and the experiences and perceptions of women officers in the Minnesota Army National Guard in the current decade (Manke, 2015). The women National Guard officers said that much of their leadership development as Army officers stemmed from their "operational experiences and assignments," "the value of deployment," "challenging experiences and positions," and "key leadership roles for leader development: platoon leader and commander" (p. 110). The women in this study talked about how their experiences as junior officers helped inform their leader development and thus, their leader identity development. They described how much they learned from challenging assignments and

experiences, as well as deployments like Operations Deserts Shield and Storm. All the women talked about how important their time as platoon leaders were, and the women who held roles as detachment or company commanders discussed these command positions as being highlights of their Army careers.

There were also similarities between the experiences of the women in this study and those of the women senior leaders in the police and the Army in Gregory's (2017) study. The women in this study described leadership approaches that would fall within transformational leadership, which was a leadership style also associated with the women in Gregory's (2017) study. The senior women leaders in the police and the Army also talked about the lack of access to mentors throughout much of their careers and the importance of resilience in overcoming the challenges of a male-dominated environment (Gregory, 2017). These themes resonated with the stories of the women in this study.

### **Leader Identities after the Army**

The women used what they had learned at West Point and in the Army and adapted it for their different civilian occupations and/or raising their children. Those who worked in business said they often found similarities between being a commander or leader in the Army and being a leader in business. Those in education described how working with students was similar to training soldiers and that they enjoyed mentoring younger or more junior teachers/educators, as well as individual students. Parenting demanded some similar, but other quite different, skills. Leadership in volunteer organizations often required the women to focus more on team building and building personal relationships.

In general, the women found themselves developing even more collaborative and participatory leadership styles than they had used in the military (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly et al., 1995; Noddings, 2001; 2002). They could not rely on the chain-of-command authority they had experienced as platoon leaders and company commanders in the Army; they had to develop peer-based relationships. Nevertheless, some of the women reported an occasional need for an authoritative approach in their leadership roles, and their West Point/Army training came in handy in that respect. Overall, the women described themselves as developing more authentic leader identities and approaches that aligned with their personalities. This observation was similar to the experiences of the women in Le Ber et al.'s (2017) study, which reported that "key to the development of our leader identity was finding one's own authentic self, owning and embracing one's identity" (p. 233).

Although many of the women in this study continued to participate in athletics or stay physically fit, their athletic abilities typically had absolutely no bearing whatsoever on their roles as leaders in business, education, healthcare, non-profits, or volunteering (unless those roles involved playing, teaching, or coaching athletics). In their lives and leadership roles after the Army, the women drew on all their experiences from West Point, the Army, and subsequent civilian careers. So, life experience became increasingly important.

### **Leader Identities Today**

Not surprisingly, the women described themselves as having more mature concepts of leadership today with more wisdom and perspective gained from years of life



experience. The impact of their life experiences was cumulative in informing their leader identities. Wisdom from lived experience was a theme in the women's leader identities today, as was a desire to share that wisdom with others, especially women, through mentoring. One of the women talked about leadership today as figuring out which tool to pull out of her leadership tool kit and apply to whatever situation she happened to be facing. Others talked about the increased importance of sharing their knowledge and experience with others, mentoring, and developing future leaders.

Although some general literature describes the impact of life experiences on leader development of leadership skills over time (Kempster, 2006; Mumford, Marks, Connelly, & Zaccaro, 2000), scant literature addresses the role of life experiences in leader identity development.

For all the women, West Point provided a very formative experience that established or reinforced their initial formal concepts of leadership and continued to inform their leader identities throughout their lives. West Point as a formative experience was far more than a "momentous event" (Olivares, 2011). Rather, it was an intense, holistic four-year leadership development experience designed to transform the women from young adult civilians into Army officers. The women felt West Point provided a key foundation for them as leaders. In observing other leaders, both good and bad, and practicing and learning leadership at West Point, they had drawn on those qualities they most admired and respected and then applied them. The characteristics or traits that resonated most with the women in this study revolved around character, integrity, doing the right thing, developing others, taking care of others, and being mission-driven. Given

the degree to which the women described these traits with terms and phrases from West Point's leadership program, it was clear you might take the woman out of West Point, but you can't take West Point out of the woman.

The West Point experience also differed from a typical four-year civilian college experience because of its military nature and intense, demanding, multi-faceted design. In addition, the women, like all cadets, were very aware of West Point's mission and knew they were supposed to be developing as leaders. They lived and breathed leadership for four years. According to Olivares (2011) awareness and developmental readiness need to accompany a formative experience for leaders to make the most of it. As cadets, the women were consciously processing their experiences at West Point, trying out different leadership styles and approaches with formal and informal feedback, and developing leader identities. They all felt that what they learned at West Point continued to inform their leader identities throughout the courses of their lives.

At the same time, West Point also provided an experience where the women were a marginalized minority in a male-dominated, hypermasculine environment. This environment added a layer of challenge and stress to the women's formative West Point experience, making it an even more powerful and long-lasting formative experience as the women continued to develop their leader identities over the courses of their lives. These women's reflections about such an immersive experience linked to the work by other scholars studying women in male-dominated and hyper-masculine spaces (Brownson, 2014; Franke, 1999; Gibson, 2009; Hoyt & Johnson, 2011; Yoder, 1989, 1991).

The women's leader identities today were informed by both the formative experience of West Point and the cumulative impact of their life experiences, which included their time in the Army, subsequent civilian careers, and family life. This ongoing development of leader identity aligned with elements of both Lemler's (2013) and Egan et al.'s (2017) studies. In the case of Lemler (2013), participants shared how their development was not always progressing and that there were times they had to step back and regroup. The women in this study talked about periods in their lives where they had to do just that. Egan et al. (2017) wrote that an individual's leader identity "changes with a lifetime of experiences and in particular environments" (p. 125). The women in this study talked at length about how their experiences before, during, and after West Point informed their leader identity development.

### **Making Sense of Gender, Military, and Leader Identities**

Women who attend West Point, a traditionally male-dominated, hypermasculine military institution, are faced with making sense of their gender, military, and leadership identities as they transition from young civilian women to more mature junior Army officers and leaders. In my study, I asked eight women from the West Point Class of 1985 to share their stories around being a woman cadet at West Point in the early- to mid-1980s, when women had been at the Academy for less than a decade.

Although the effects of tokenism were not reported as strongly among the women in this study as they had been when the first class with women went through West Point, tokenism was still very relevant for the women who attended West Point between 1981 and 1985. At that point, women were in all four cadet classes, and all cadets experienced

West Point as a coeducational institution. Thus, women overall were more accepted. However, the institution was still 90% men and very masculine, and the culture very conservative and traditional. Tokenism had not disappeared, and its effects were still very strong. The women also narrated instances of sexism and misogyny and varying degrees of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. These added layers of challenge led to issues around confidence and self-esteem, and many of the women said they suffered from various insecurities as cadets. The women had to develop a tougher skin to operate in the male-dominated, hypermasculine military environment.

West Point's ethos in the early 1980s still cast images of the model cadet and model officer as a man with accompanying masculine traits, and the women found it challenging to align their gender, military, and leader identities in an environment where cadet, officer, and leader were still all seen as male roles. They focused on what traits or characteristics worked well for them as women leading mostly men, while striving to be as authentic as possible to themselves as women.

My findings around gender and military identities reaffirmed Herbert's (1998) findings on women and gender in the military. Many of the women in this study talked about instances where they tried to minimize their femininity or accentuate their masculinity in order to fit in better and be accepted by their male peers and superiors both at West Point and in the Army.

My findings for the women's descriptions of when they were cadets also confirmed more recent findings by Mahoney (2012) who examined how women ROTC cadets made sense of their gender, military and leader identities in a male-dominated

ROTC program. This was especially true about assuming more masculine identities while in uniform to fit in and be accepted by their male peers (Mahoney, 2012). Women continue to be a minority in a predominantly male, masculinized military environment, whether as soldiers, cadets, or officers. This study and Mahoney's (2012) show that women in military roles continue to struggle with making sense of their gender in an environment where soldier, cadet, officer, and leader are still seen as male roles by many within the military.

The women in this study at times described identity conflict among their different identities as women, leaders, and military personnel. Identity conflict occurs if women perceive incongruity between/among different identities, and this can have a negative effect on self-esteem and overall well-being (Karelaia & Guillen, 2012). The women in this study expressed experiencing identity conflict during their time at West Point and additionally, reported feeling performance pressure, stress, insecurities, and self-esteem issues because of this conflict.

Karelaia and Guillen (2012) explored identity conflict as it pertains to women and leadership and found that "identity conflict negatively affects women leaders' psychological well-being and reduces the extent to which they find the leadership role attractive" (p. 6). Furthermore, they found that "identity conflict is not only associated with more stress and lower life satisfaction, but also causes women to construe leading as a duty as opposed to a goal which they are motivated to attain" (Karelaia & Guillen, 2012, p. 29). Given that Karelaia and Guillen's (2012) research only examined the identities of gender and leader, it would be worthwhile to do future research on West

Point women related to identity conflict among all three of their major identities: woman, leader, and military cadet/future officer and how West Point might help alleviate such conflicts.

### **Being a Woman at West Point**

In this study, I focused on the oral histories of eight women who graduated from West Point with the Class of 1985. Although often not as extreme, my participants' stories paralleled the descriptions Janda (2002) presented in his book on the integration of women at West Point and the first class with women graduating in 1980. This group of participants' stories from the class graduating half a decade later also echoed the findings of West Point's research on the integration of women at USMA in the Athena Project (Adams, 1979, 1989; Vitters, 1978; Vitters & Kinzer, 1977).

Although the women in the Class of 1985 did not experience the same degree of misogyny, sexism, and hate reported in the multiple studies about the Class of 1980, they did experience these factors in significant ways throughout their time at West Point. Their worst experiences as women tended to be as plebes and came from interactions with upperclass men cadets, and many women said that, in their view, the attitude towards women improved while they were at the Academy. They also saw women in the junior classes following their cohort as being more accepted and filling more leadership roles.

All the women talked about West Point's and the Army's emphasis on physical fitness, especially running ability. Men cadets harshly judged women cadets who could not run fast or fell out of formation runs. Those women who could run fast said it helped them immensely with their credibility among men cadets at West Point and with soldiers

and other officers in the Army. This extreme emphasis on physical fitness, especially running ability, coupled with men cadets' perceptions of physical prowess and fast running ability as indicators of leadership, showed up in the early integration literature (Janda, 2002; Rice et al., 1984; Yoder et al., 1979). Women ROTC cadets in the current decade talked about how being good athletes helped them be more accepted as leaders by the men cadets in their ROTC program (Mahoney, 2012).

Women in the Class of 1985 also experienced a lot of the effects of tokenism that Yoder (1989, 1991) wrote about for women in the early classes at West Point. Participants talked about having to be better than good in order to be accepted and how a poor performance by any woman reflected badly on all of them. They also talked about wanting to fit in as "one of the guys" and how this sometimes led them to avoid or not support women who seemed "weak." Again, these were all findings in the literature on the early integration of women at West Point.

### **Additional Themes That Emerged from the Women's Stories**

In this study, the women of West Point's Class of 1985 provided common narratives about several aspects of their experiences. These common descriptions match themes in the literature about experiences as "the first woman to..."; developing bonds with other women; role models and mentoring experiences; and experiences concerning sexual misconduct.

#### **Women as "Firsts"**

Many of the women in this study were "firsts" – or their presence as women was unusual – both at West Point and in the Army. Women had only been at West Point for

five years when the Class of 1985 entered the Academy, so many of the women were the first women in their high schools to attend West Point. The women in the Class of 1985 filled many cadet leadership positions that had not yet been held by women or were still unusual to be held by women. There is scant literature that addresses how being a “first” affects one’s leader identity development at West Point or in the military. You can read about some West Point women’s personal experiences as “firsts” in their memoirs (Barkalow, 1990; O’Dwyer, 2009; Peterson, 1990), but the phenomenon in relation to leader identity development has not been studied at West Point by researchers.

Women officers were still somewhat rare in the active duty Army of the 1980s, especially in roles directly supporting combat units. The women in this study often said they were the only woman in their units, from platoon to battalion levels, and while they might find women peers as lieutenants or junior captains, they very rarely saw women field grade officers (at the rank of major or above). How being the sole woman – or one of few – affected the leader identity development of women officers has not been examined by researchers.

Being a first or unusual woman is not an outdated topic. Women still find themselves as firsts both at West Point and in the Army. This is especially true since the end of the combat exclusion rule in 2013, which provided the opening of all combat roles to women. In the Army, West Point women are also still finding themselves as firsts as they proceed through the ranks and become the first West Point women eligible for promotion to general. The highest-ranking West Point woman is currently a lieutenant general from the Class of 1982; there has yet to be a West Point woman four-star general.



While it is only a matter of time before a West Point woman becomes a four-star general, it would be helpful to other women to hear about the experiences of the first West Point women generals and how or whether their gender came into play over the courses of their careers.

### **Bonds with Other Women**

The women in this study talked about the importance of their bonds with other women both at West Point and in the Army. At a time when only one in 10 cadets at West Point was a woman, friendships with women roommates, classmates, and/or teammates were key forms of support. There was a perception among some participants that West Point discouraged women cadets from gathering together in large groups, and there was often the sense that, the Fourth Class System aside, more senior women cadets did not go out of their way to befriend or support more junior women. This phenomenon of more senior West Point women not helping or supporting more junior women was a finding in the early integration literature (Yoder, 1989; Yoder & Adams, 1985). Further examination revealed that women at West Point at this time were often in “survival mode” themselves. They often did not have the time, energy, or wherewithal to help more junior women or did not want to attract attention upon themselves as women helping women (Yoder, 1989; Yoder & Adams, 1985). It would be interesting to see if this phenomenon still exists for women at West Point today or if more senior women cadets are more willing to help or support more junior women.

Sometimes the women’s stories included feelings of isolation or loneliness because there were not many – or any – other women in their Army units. While some

literature discussed the impact of being one or few women in the military (Yoder & Adams, 1984), no studies have looked at the impact this has had on women's leader identity development.

### **Mentoring and Role Models**

Multiple authors have discussed the importance of mentoring in leadership development in general (Day, 2000). According to Adams (1997), "mentoring has historically been a successful ingredient in the careers of military professionals, minorities and women included" (p. 7). However, women and minorities in the military, as in other career areas, have historically had more difficulty finding mentors, especially mentors who looked like them (Adams, 1997). Doll (2007), in her study of women US Army generals, wrote about the women generals' views on the importance of "acquiring a caring mentor or mentors" for women officers (p. 60). And Yoder and Adams (1985), who studied women in the earliest West Point classes, wrote about the importance of women mentoring other women to help counter the negative effects of tokenism.

Although the women in this study talked about having mentors and role models both at West Point and in the Army, often these were male mentors and role models, especially at West Point. While mentors and role models do not necessarily need to be of the same gender, the women said it would have helped if there had been more women role models at West Point. While there were very few women officers in the faculty or as tactical officers when the women in this study attended West Point, women now make up about 13% of the officer faculty and 18% of the total faculty (Institutional Research, 2015). In addition, about 15% of tactical officers are women today (K. Pegues, personal

communication, February 7, 2019). While the percentages of women faculty and tactical officers are higher than they were in the 1980s, these percentages do not mirror the percentage of women cadets, which is approaching 25%. Still, it would be helpful to see how having more women officers – and potential women officer role models – affects the leader identity development of women cadets today.

The women in this study talked about how important it was for them to be mentors to others, especially other women. Some said their desire to mentor other women stemmed from their lack of women mentors and role models as cadets and junior officers. It would be interesting to see how more current generations of West Point women feel about mentoring and role models, especially as they have had more women role models available to them. It would also be helpful to examine how being a mentor is part of women's leader identities, not just at West Point and in the Army, but everywhere.

One of the recommendations for helping to diminish the effects of tokenism in the literature on tokenism at West Point was increased networking and mentoring (Yoder, 1985, 1989; Yoder & Adams, 1985). Thus, it is significant that all the women in this study, who experienced the effects of tokenism, talked about wishing they had women officer role models and more mentoring from other women at West Point. In addition, more recently, Muir (2014) discussed the important role that mentoring can play in leader identity development within a leadership development program. In Muir's (2014) case study, "the participants believed that their formal mentoring experience was pivotal to the discovery and development of their leader identity" (p. 349). Increasing mentoring

opportunities for both women cadets and junior Army officers could potentially assist with leader identity development.

### **Sexual Misconduct**

Literature has reported the high rates of sexual misconduct in the military. We know that West Point has had a high rate of sexual harassment and misconduct, as have the other service academies (Francke, 1997; Office of the Inspector General (OIG), 2005; Office of People Analytics (OPA), 2017). We also know that West Point and the Army have been making a concerted effort in recent years to address this serious problem. Little research, however, has been done on the impact of sexual assault on women cadets or women service members, especially as it relates to their identity as leaders.

Much has changed at West Point since the Class of 1985 attended. The leader development program has moved away from an attritional model to a more developmental one focused on more positive leadership. There is more focus on developing “leaders of character.” Cadets receive education and training on respect for others, and the Corps of Cadets is more diverse than it has ever been. There is administrative emphasis on reducing sexual misconduct at the Academy (Caslen, Jebb, Gade, & Landsem, 2015). West Point implements a version of the Army’s Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) program, and cadets have created their own initiative, Cadets Against Sexual Harassment/Assault (CASH) (Caslen et al., 2015; USMA Public Affairs, 2013).

All of this is now occurring in the climate of the #MeToo movement. Cadets of today are more aware of sexual misconduct issues and more likely to report incidents.

The administration is also far more likely to address incidents of sexual misconduct than to ignore them or allow male cadets to enact retribution on women who report incidents (Caslen et al., 2015).

The Pentagon conducts an anonymous survey at the three DoD service academies every two years, and in the most recent survey, reports of “unwanted sexual contact” had increased by 50% (Myre, 2019). This has caught the attention of service academy leadership, and the current USMA Superintendent, Lieutenant General Darryl Williams, has called for renewed efforts to address this problem more effectively (Myre, 2019). It would be interesting to see how these changes and current conditions have affected the experiences of women cadets who are developing their identities as future Army leaders.

### **Implications for Research and Practice**

In this study, I focused on selected women from the West Point Class of 1985, the sixth class to include women. This is the first research study that has focused in depth on the leader identity development of West Point women, and it is the first to look at how the West Point experience informs leader identity development. Given that this study opened a line of research not only in the ongoing integration of women in the military in general but also about women as leaders in the military, there are many opportunities for future research and practice.

### **Implications for Research**

The development of leader identity is understudied. The existing studies of women at West Point still focus at the beginning of the, now, four decades of women’s enrollment. That fact suggests a clear need to examine the leader identity development

experiences of women across all four decades that women have attended West Point and to see how women's experiences have changed or stayed the same over time. This study focused on West Point women who served fewer than 20 years in the Army; thus, future research should include those women who did make the Army a career. Because many of the women in this study left the military for family reasons or because they had children, it is important to know why other women stayed in the Army after having children. How did the West Point experience inform the leader identity development of women who stayed in the Army for at least 20 years?

While two of the eight women in this study identified as women of color, the focus of this study was on gender, not race or ethnic identities. There is a need to look more closely at the experiences of women of color at West Point, as their experiences could differ significantly from those of White women. There is scant literature on women of color at the service academies (Lewis, 2018). Future research should examine the experiences and leader identity development of West Point women of color.

Most leadership research at West Point has been quantitative. It would be beneficial to add more qualitative studies that enable researchers to look more deeply at the experiences of *all* cadets, especially with respect to leadership development and leader identity development. For an institution that describes itself as the “preeminent leader development institution” on the homepage of its website (<https://www.usma.edu/>), one would expect to see more research, both quantitative and qualitative, to support such a claim. A few quantitative researchers, like Morgan (2004), have called for qualitative research to supplement the existing quantitative research, but more in-depth qualitative

studies in general would add a level of depth and robustness to West Point's leadership research.

While there has been considerable research on sexual misconduct at West Point and in the military, more research needs to be done on the effects of misogyny, sexism, sexual harassment, and sexual assault on women's leadership development and leader identity development. Additionally, research on how trauma informs leadership values and behavior would be helpful, as would research on how experiencing sexual misconduct affects persistence and attrition both at West Point and in the military.

There is little research on women and leader identity development in general, especially in male-dominated institutions/environments. Within the realm of higher education, there is room for more research with women at the other service academies, at senior military colleges, and in ROTC programs. There is also a need for more research on women and leader identity development in traditionally male-dominated disciplines like STEM. According to Smith and Gayles (2018), women students in engineering face bias because of their gender in both the academic and workplace environments. Research on how these biases affect the leader identity development of women in all areas of STEM, who could potentially become leaders in their fields, is crucial.

Similarly, research on the impact of sexism, misogyny, and sexual misconduct upon women's persistence and leader identity development could be replicated not only at other service academies, senior military colleges, and ROTC programs, but also in all mixed-gender institutions of higher education where women developing as leaders encounter these gender-based challenges.

## **Implications for Practice**

The mission of West Point is to “educate, train, and inspire” cadets to become officers (and “leaders of character”) in the United States Army. Women now make up almost 25% of the Corps of Cadets and thus, almost a quarter of the officers West Point provides to the Army each year. Women may now serve in all branches of the Army, to include Infantry and Armor, so their presence is increasing not only in total numbers but throughout the Army. As such, a better understanding of how women have experienced (and experience) West Point (and other officer preparation institutions and programs) as a marginalized group in a male-dominated institution is important to the operation of the Army and the US military in general.

Understanding better how these formative institutional experiences, especially as they differ from men’s experiences because of the added layers of misogyny, sexism, and sexual misconduct, have informed (and inform) women’s leader identity development is crucial. Better understanding can foster more effective practice in the leadership training and development of not only women cadets, but all cadets. Creating environments and cultures where all cadets/students can be challenged and still thrive with dignity and respect will help us produce more effective leaders for tomorrow’s Army and society.

While the military will always have a mission that involves the management of violence to help accomplish national security goals – and may always be male-dominated, the environment need not be oppressive to women. The different branches of the military are becoming increasingly diverse, reflecting the increasing diversity of American society. Fostering respect for all and an environment where not just women,



but *all* service members, can fully use their skills and potential will help make a better, more effective military in the long run.

How women develop their leadership skills, leadership styles, and leader identities in all male-dominated environments is important for all current leaders to know. We see women increasing in numbers in business, politics, and STEM and potentially developing as future leaders in these fields. It is to everyone's benefit for these women to be able to fully use their skills and leadership potential to better their organizations and institutions and consequently, society as a whole.

### **Contributions of This Study**

This study is important because it adds to the historical record on women at West Point. Other than coverage of the initial years of integration at West Point, there is little published scholarly literature on women at West Point, especially around leadership. This is the first study that has focused on the leader identity development of West Point women.

The story and experiences of women in the first integrated class, the Class of 1980, are crucial, but also unique. Those in the first few classes with women experienced situations somewhat similar, but none faced the challenges of being the very first women. By the time the Class of 1985 entered West Point, women were in all four classes and no cadets had experienced a West Point without women.

This study helps fill a gap in the literature on what West Point was like for women in the early- to mid-1980s, for a class that was not one of the first classes with women but attended early in the coeducation of the institution. This study also gives us insight into

what it was like for these women to develop their leader identities at West Point, in the Army as junior officers, and in subsequent civilian careers. It is the first study to look at West Point women's leader identity development longitudinally.

Future studies with West Point women in other classes over the four decades that women have attended the Academy will give us a better understanding of what the experience was like for women at West Point over time. We will also be able to see how changes in the Army and the world situation have affected West Point women. When the Class of 1985 attended West Point, the traditional Fourth Class System was still the leadership development program. Since then, the Academy has moved to a more positive approach to leadership development that focuses on all four classes with first, the Cadet Leadership Development System beginning in 1990 and then, the more recent West Point Leadership Development System. Comparing what West Point was like for women who developed their leader identities under these different systems could be very insightful.

When the Class of 1985 attended West Point, only 10% of the Corps of Cadets was women. The percentage of women at West Point has increased over time, with women currently comprising almost 25% of the Corps. Looking at how West Point has changed for women as their presence has more than doubled could help us better understand the culture and climate in a military environment with increasingly more women.

The Army and the world situation have changed dramatically from when the Class of 1985 entered West Point. In the early 1980s, the Army was still recovering from the effects of the Vietnam War and the shift from the draft to an all-volunteer force. The

Class of 1985 was commissioned as second lieutenants during the end of the Cold War, when war and deployments were unlikely except for brief, minor incursions like Grenada and Panama. Only two of the women in this study participated in the First Gulf War; five had already completed their initial five-year commitment and separated from active service.

The Army and the world situation after September 11, 2001 are radically different than those faced by women in the Class of 1985. Women commissioned in the mid-1980s were very limited in what branches they could serve and what roles they could assume within the Army. Almost all women had to be assigned to combat support or combat service support branches, and women faced restrictions on the types of units with which they could serve. These restrictions limited the experiences and promotion paths for the women in the Class of 1985. Today, women may serve in any branch of the Army, to include Infantry and Armor, and may serve in any unit or role for which they qualify, to include combat units/roles. Today, graduates of West Point are very likely to deploy to Iraq, Afghanistan, or other dangerous locations as part of the Global War on Terror. The leader identity development of women at West Point today could be quite different from that of women in the Cold War era.

### **Conclusions**

In this study, eight women graduates of the West Point Class of 1985, the sixth class to include women, told their stories about their experiences as women and leaders at West Point, in the Army, and afterwards. They told their own stories in their own voices

and shared their insights and wisdom of lessons learned, especially around leadership and leader identity.

While it is important to understand better how women navigate male-dominated environments like West Point and the Army, it is also imperative to capture women's stories and experiences before they are lost to history. Women often go unheard in the documenting of history; no one asks them for their stories. As such, our histories have large gaping holes. This is certainly true in both higher education and the military. This study was one attempt to start filling the gap in knowledge and understanding of women and leadership at West Point. Women have been at West Point for over 42 years now. There are almost 5,000 West Point women with stories to tell and voices that want to be heard. Isn't it about time we heard them?

## APPENDICES

Appendix A

Questions for the Demographic/Informational Survey

1. Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Race/ethnicity (Select all that apply)
  - American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Asian
  - Black or African American
  - Hispanic or Latino
  - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Mixed Race
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - Prefer not to respond
  
3. What types of leadership positions did you have in high school? (Select all that apply)
  - Athletic team captain/co-captain
  - Club/activity officer
  - Employment position with leadership responsibilities
  - School government
  - Volunteer position with leadership responsibilities
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - None

4. What types of leadership positions did you have at West Point? (Select all that apply)
- Athletic team captain/co-captain
  - Cadet chain of command
  - Club/activity officer
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
5. What year did you leave Active Duty? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What career fields / responsibilities did you engage in after the Army? (Select all that apply)
- Army Reserve (other than IRR) or National Guard
  - Business and Financial
  - Education, Training, and Library
  - Engineering, Sciences, and Technology
  - Entertainment and Sports
  - Government and Politics
  - Healthcare
  - Legal
  - Non-profit
  - Public Safety
  - Religious
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - Volunteer

- Parenting
  - Taking care of aging parents or other extended family members
7. Briefly, what does the West Point motto “Duty, Honor, Country” mean to you?
8. Please provide a favorite quote that relates to leadership, being a leader, or leading others:

*NOTE: Please bring to your interview session an artifact from your time at West Point that you believe relates to your leadership experience there.*



## Appendix B

### Interview Guidelines

#### **Pre-Interview**

I will thank the participant for agreeing to be a part of the study, review the consent forms, discuss confidentiality, and explain the interview format. I will inform the participant that telling stories about West Point might be emotional, and we will discuss what steps she wants to take if that happens. I will also ask the participant if she has a pseudonym that she would like to use for the study.

#### **Data Collection**

I will begin each interview session by prompting the participant to talk about the artifact she brought. Hopefully this will elicit memories and stories about the participant's experiences at West Point. I will then ask clarifying and probing questions as necessary and will refer to the list of topics and potential probe questions to assist me during the interview.

**Initial Prompt:** Tell me about the artifact that you brought with you today.

#### **TOPIC A: Leader Identity Before West Point**

1. Can you talk about your concept of leadership or being a leader before West Point?

#### **TOPIC B: Military Identity at West Point**

2. Tell me what it was like to transition to West Point and the military.
3. Describe yourself as a cadet.

#### **TOPIC C: Leader Identity Development While at West Point**

4. Tell me about a key leadership experience at West Point.
5. How did your concept of a leader change – or how was it reinforced? – while at West Point?
6. How do you feel West Point impacted your identity as a leader?

#### **TOPIC D: Gender Identity at a Military Institution (i.e., West Point) / in the military (i.e., Army)**

7. Tell me what it was like to be a woman at West Point in the early- to mid-1980s.

8. Tell me what it was like to be a woman officer in the Army in the mid- to late-1980s.

**TOPIC E: Leader Identity in the Army**

9. Describe yourself as a leader while in the Army.

**TOPIC F: Leader Identity in Any Subsequent Careers**

10. What was your life like after you got out of the Army?
11. Describe the type of leader you were in your life after the Army.

**TOPIC G: Leader Identity Today**

12. How would you describe yourself as a leader today?
13. What impact does your West Point experience have on your leader identity today?
14. How do you define a “leader”?

## Appendix C

### Interview Prompt/Question Matrix

<b>Potential Prompt/Question</b>	<b>Concept/Topic</b>	<b>Source</b>
<u>Initial Prompt:</u> Tell me about the artifact that you brought with you today.	Artifact Elicitation in Oral History Interview	Leavy (2011) Wall (2012)
1. Can you talk about your concept of leadership or being a leader before West Point?	Leader Identity Before West Point	Le Ber et al. (2017) Lewis (2017)
2. Tell me what it was like to transition to West Point and the military. 3. Describe yourself as a cadet.	Military Identity at West Point	Franke (1999) Lewis (2017)
4. Tell me about a key leadership experience at West Point. 5. How did your concept of a leader change – or how was it reinforced? – while at West Point? 6. How do you feel West Point impacted your identity as a leader?	Leader Identity Development While at West Point	Day et al. (2009) Hoy & Johnson (2011) Le Ber et al. (2017) Lewis (2017)
7. Tell me what it was like to be a woman at West Point in the early- to mid-1980s. 8. Tell me what it was like to be a woman officer in the Army in the mid- to late-1980s.	Gender Identity at a Military Institution/in the Military	Herbert (1998) Lewis (2017)
9. Describe yourself as a leader while in the Army.	Leader Identity in the Army	Day et al. (2009) Department of the Army (1983) Hoyt & Johnson (2011) Lewis (2017)
10. What was your life like after you got out of the Army? 11. Describe the type of leader you were in your life after the Army.	Leader Identity in Subsequent Career(s)	Day et al. (2009) Hoyt & Johnson (2011) Lewis (2017)

---

<b>Potential Prompt/Question</b>	<b>Concept/Topic</b>	<b>Source</b>
12. How would you describe yourself as a leader today?	Leader Identity Today	Hoyt & Johnson (2011) Lewis (2017)
13. What impact does your West Point experience have on your leader identity today?		
14. How do you define a “leader”?		

---

## Appendix D

### Follow-On Questions

#### **Follow-On Questions (Based on Emerging Findings and Themes):**

Please review and answer any of the following questions that resonate with you. I am looking for additional examples/stories and evidence that these are indeed findings/themes for this study. You may type your responses and email them back to me, or if it would be easier for you to tell them to me, I am happy to set up a phone call and record your responses. I want you to be able to choose whichever option works best for you. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. Thank you for taking the time to assist with this stage of my dissertation; I greatly appreciate it!

Your Name (Pseudonym):

**1. Participants said: “When X happened, I really felt like a leader.”**

If you did not already share this, did this happen to you? Can you give an example?  
And if you did share about this already, do you have other examples to share?

**2. Similarly, participants had moments when they felt their role as a leader was undermined simply because of being a woman at West Point.**

If you did not already share about this, did this happen to you? Can you give an example?  
And if you did share about this already, do you have other examples to share?

**3. Participants talked about the role of physical fitness (especially running ability) in being accepted as a leader and as a woman leader at West Point and in the Army.**

If you did not already share about this, did you experience or witness this? Can you give an example?  
And if you did share about this already, do you have other examples to share?

**4. Participants said that how one was treated as a woman at West Point depended on which company one was in.**

If you did not already share this, do you feel this way? Can you give an example?  
And if you did share about this already, do you have other examples to share?

**5. Multiple participants said that being on a women’s sports team provided a way for women to gather as a group of women (in a sanctioned way). They said being on a women’s sports team provided support, encouragement, camaraderie, a “safe space,” and/or a venue where women could gather as a minority group in a male-dominated environment.**

If you were on a women’s sports team, could you share an example/experience?  
Whether you were on a women’s sports team or not, what are your memories of the men’s attitudes about women gathering together as a group?

**6. Many participants shared stories of making a difficult decision and how it changed the courses of their lives. (This could be at West Point, in the Army, or afterwards.)**

If you did not already share about this, did you experience having to make a difficult life decision? Can you give an example?

And if you did share about this already, do you have other examples to share?

**7. Participants talked about being “firsts” – a first woman to do or be something (or that it was unusual/out of the ordinary for a woman to do or be something) in high school, at West Point, and in the Army.**

If you did not already share a first or out of the ordinary accomplishment as a woman, do you have any examples to share?

And if you did share about this already, do you have other examples to share?

All of the examples participants shared dealt with high school, West Point, or the Army, so if you have an example of a first woman (or unusual for a woman) accomplishment from after your life in the Army, please feel free to share it!

**8. Participants talked about the importance of mentoring and role models (especially for women).**

**They shared important mentors in their lives (both male and female) and discussed the lack of female mentors/role models when we were at West Point/in the Army.**

If you did not already share about mentoring or role models, do you have an example that you would like to share about a mentor or role model (male or female) at West Point, in the Army, or afterwards?

If you did not already share about mentoring or role models, what are your thoughts about the lack of female mentors/role models at West Point or in the Army?

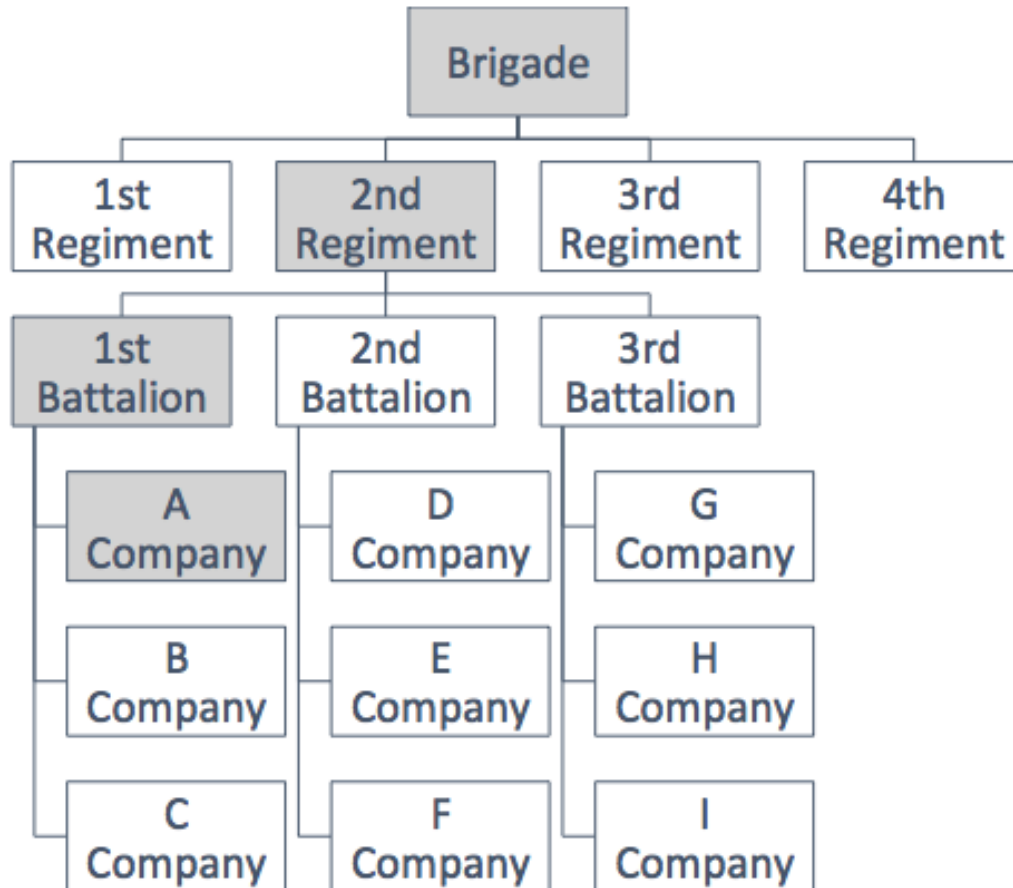
And if you did share about this already, do you have other thoughts or examples to share?

**9. Participants talked about how West Point informed their leader identities at West Point and after the Army, but few talked about how West Point informed their leader identities while in the Army.**

Do you have any examples of how West Point informed your leader identity while in the Army? If so, could you please share?

Appendix E

Organization of the United States Corps of Cadets (USCC)



1. The approximately 4,400 cadets at USMA constitute the United States Corps of Cadets (USCC). The Corps of Cadets is organized as a brigade.
2. The brigade has four regiments.
3. Each regiment has three battalions. (This figure shows the three battalions within 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment.)
4. Each battalion has three companies, so there are nine companies in each regiment designated A through I. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in a regiment has Companies A through C; the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion has Companies D through F; and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion has Companies G through I. (This figure highlights the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, with Companies A-C.)
5. There are 36 companies total in the brigade. The letter of the company, plus the number of its regiment identifies a company. For example, the shaded company is Company A-2. It is the A Company in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment. There are also Companies A-1, A-3, and A-4.

Appendix F

Matrix of Participant Quotes

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Quoted in Chapter Four: Context</b>	<b>Quoted in Chapter Five: Profiles</b>	<b>Quoted in Chapter Six: Findings</b>
Ann		X	X
Beth		X	X
Cate		X	X
Helen	X	X	X
Jane		X	X
Kim		X	X
Molly		X	X
Sarah		X	X



## References

- About us. (2019). Retrieved from the Dining for Women website:  
<https://diningforwomen.org/about-us/>
- About West Point Women. (2019). Retrieved from the West Point Women website:  
<https://www.westpointwomen.org/about>
- Abramson, L. (2013, October 22). West Point women: A natural pattern or a camouflage ceiling? Retrieved from NPR website:  
<https://www.npr.org/2013/10/22/239260015/west-point-women-a-natural-pattern-or-a-camouflage-ceiling>
- Acker, J. (1992). From sex roles to gendered institutions. *Contemporary Sociology*, 21(5), 565-569.
- Acker, S. (2012). Chairing and caring: Gendered dimensions of leadership in academe. *Gender and Education*, 24 (4), 411-428. doi:10.1080/09540253.2011.628927
- Adams, D. E. (1997). Mentoring women and minority officers in the US military. Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air Command and Staff College. Retrieved from <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a397892.pdf>
- Adams, J. (1979). *Report of the admission of women to the United States Military Academy (Project Athena III)*. West Point, NY: Department of Behavioral Science and Leadership. Retrieved from the USMA Library/Digital Collections website: <http://digital-library.usma.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16919coll15/id/2828/rec/1>

- Adams, J. (1980). *Report of the admission of women to the United States Military Academy (Project Athena IV)*. West Point, NY: Department of Behavioral Science and Leadership. Retrieved from the USMA Library/Digital Collections website: <http://digital-library.usma.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16919coll15/id/2826/rec/17>
- Adams, J. (1984). Women at West Point: A three-year perspective. *Sex Roles, 11*(5/6), 525-541.
- Adams, J., Rice, R. W., Intone, D., & Prince, H. T. (1980). *The 1979 summer leadership study: Procedures and descriptive analyses for the basic questionnaire* (Technical Report 80-1). Arlington, VA: Army Research Institute for Social and Behavioral Sciences.
- Adams, J., & Yoder, J. D. (1985). *Effective leadership for women and men*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Anderson, J. L. (1979). Women's sports and fitness programs at the US Military Academy. *The Physician and Sports Medicine, 7*(4), 72-78.
- Anderson, K., Armitage, S., Jack, D., & Wittner, J. (1987). Beginning where we are: Feminist methodology in oral history. *The Oral History Review, 15*(1), 103-127.
- Anderson, K., & Jack, D. C. (1991). Learning to listen: Interview techniques and analyses. In S. B. Gluck & D. Patai (Eds.), *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history* (pp. 11-26). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Army G-1. (2016, March 16). Army Gender Integration Implementation Plan. *Stand-To!: The Official Focus of the U.S. Army*. Retrieved from the U.S. Army website:  
[https://www.army.mil/standto/archive\\_2016-03-10/](https://www.army.mil/standto/archive_2016-03-10/)
- Army War College faculty meet new dean: Dr. Lance Betros. (2012, July 30). Retrieved from the US Army War College Archives website:  
<https://www.armywarcollege.edu/news/Archives/11929.pdf>
- Arnhart, L., Jessee, M., Kerekanich, P., Crosswhite, B., Johnson, D., McGrath, A., . . . Williams, B. (2015, April 21). *Gender integration study* (TRAC-F-TR-15-016). Fort Leavenworth, KS: TRADOC Analysis Center. Retrieved from  
<https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/wisr-studies/Army%20-%20Gender%20Integration%20Study3.pdf>
- Associated Press. (2018, July 2). West Point welcomes more than 1,200 for Class of 2022. *Army Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2018/07/02/west-point-welcomes-more-than-1200-for-class-of-2022/>
- Baldor, L. C. (2018, February 7). Sexual assault reports doubled at West Point. *Army Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.armytimes.com>
- Barkalow, C. (1990). *In the men's house: An inside account of life in the Army by one of West Point's first female graduates*. New York, NY: Poseidon Press.
- Barrett, E. A. (2017, Winter). The four pillars of The West Point Leader Development System: Academic, military, physical & character. *West Point*, 14-15.
- Barrett, F. J. (1996). The organizational construction of hegemonic masculinity: The case of the US Navy. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 3(3), 129-142.

- Barrick, M. R., & Mount, M. K. (1991). The Big Five personality dimensions and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, *44*(1), 1-26.
- Bartone, P. (2003). Military leadership. In J. Callaghan & F. Kernic (Eds.), *Armed forces and international security: Global trends and issues* (pp. 267-285). Piscataway, NJ: Transaction.
- Bartone, P. T., & Snook, S. A. (2000, June). Gender differences in predictors of leader performance over time. In *American Psychological Society, 12th Annual Convention* (Vol. 8, pp. 1-3).
- Bartone, P. T., Eid, J., Helge Johnsen, B., Christian Laberg, J., & Snook, S. A. (2009). Big five personality factors, hardiness, and social judgment as predictors of leader performance. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *30*(6), 498-521.
- Bartone, P. T., Snook, S. A., Forsythe, G. B., Lewis, P., & Bullis, R. C. (2007). Psychosocial development and leader performance of military officer cadets. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *18*(5), 490-504.
- Bartone, P. T., Snook, S. A., & Tremble Jr, T. R. (2002). Cognitive and personality predictors of leader performance in West Point cadets. *Military Psychology*, *14*(4), 321.
- Becraft, C. (1992). Women in the military: 1980 – 1990. *Women & Criminal Justice*, *4*(1), 137-154.

- Beekley, M. D., Byrne, R., Yavorek, T., Kidd, K., Wolff, J., & Johnson, M. (2009). Incidence, prevalence, and risk of eating disorder behavior in military academy cadets. *Military Medicine*, *174*(6), 637-641. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7205/MILMED-D-02-1008>
- Betros, L. (2012). *Carved from granite: West Point since 1902*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press.
- Borland, K. (1991). "That's not what I said": Interpretive conflict in oral narrative research. In S. B. Gluck & D. Patai (Eds.), *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history* (pp. 63-75). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Boyce, L. A., & Herd, A. M. (2003). The relationship between gender role stereotypes and requisite military leadership characteristics. *Sex Roles*, *49*(7-8), 365-378.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). The bioecological model of human development. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology* (6<sup>th</sup> ed., Vol. 1, pp. 793-828). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Brooks, A. (2007). Feminist standpoint epistemology: Building knowledge and empowerment through women's lived experiences. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. L. Leavy (Eds.), *Feminist research practice* (1st ed., pp. 53-82). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Brownson, C. (2014). The battle for equivalency: Female US marines discuss sexuality, physical fitness, and military leadership. *Armed Forces & Society, 40*(4), 765-788.
- Brubacher, J. S., & Rudy, W. (2004). *Higher education in transition: A history of American colleges and universities* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Brubaker, S. J. (2009). Sexual assault prevalence, reporting and policies: Comparing college and university campuses and military service academies. *Security Journal, 22*(1), 56-72. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/sj.2008.10>
- Busch, A. E. (1997). Ronald Reagan and the defeat of the Soviet empire. *Presidential Studies Quarterly, 27*, 451-466.
- Callina, K. S., Ryan, D., Murray, E. D., Colby, A., Damon, W., Matthews, M., & Lerner, R. M. (2017). Developing leaders of character at the United States Military Academy: A relational developmental systems analysis. *Journal of College and Character, 18*(1), 9-27.
- Carreiras, H. (2006). *Gender and the military: Women in the armed forces of western democracies*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Caslen, R. L., Jr., Jebb, C. R., Gade, D., & Landsem, H. C. (2015, January). *Getting to the left of sharp: Lessons learned from West Point's efforts to combat sexual harassment and assault*. Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute. Retrieved from <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a616054.pdf>
- Chaitin, J. (2008). Oral history. In *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (pp. 583-585). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Chenail, R. J. (2011). Interviewing the investigator: Strategies for addressing instrumentation and researcher bias concerns in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 16*(1), 255-262.
- Cook, P. J., Jones, A. M., Lipari, R. N., & Lancaster, A. R. (2005, December). *Service academy 2005 sexual harassment and sexual assault survey* (DMDC Report No. 2005-018). Arlington, VA: Defense Manpower Data Center. Retrieved from <http://www.sapr.mil/public/docs/research/DMDC-Academy-2005-Survey.pdf>
- Corbin Forum. (n.d.). History of women in the military. Retrieved from United States Military Academy at West Point website: <https://www.usma.edu/corbin/SitePages/History%20of%20Women%20in%20the%20Military.aspx>
- Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and power*. Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & society, 19*(6), 829-859.
- Cosman, F., Ruffing, J., Zion, M., Uhorchak, J., Ralston, S., Tendy, S., . . . Nieves, J. (2013). Determinants of stress fracture risk in United States Military Academy cadets. *Bone, 55*(2), 359-366. doi:10.1016/j.bone.2013.04.11
- D'Amico, F. (1990). Women at arms: The combat controversy. *Minerva, 8*(2), 1-20.
- Davis, B. O., Jr. (1991). *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.: American – An autobiography*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Day, D. V. (2000). Leadership development: A review in context. *The Leadership Quarterly, 11*(4), 581-613.

- Day, D. V. (2013). Training and developing leaders: Theory and research. In M. G. Rumsey (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of leadership* (pp. 76-93). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Day, D. V., Harrison, M. M., & Halpin, St. M. (2009). *An integrative approach to leader development: Connecting adult development, identity, and expertise*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Department of Defense (DoD). (n.d.) Active duty retirement. Retrieved from US DoD Military Compensation website:  
<https://militarypay.defense.gov/Pay/Retirement/ActiveDuty.aspx>
- Department of Defense (DoD), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy. (2015). *2015 demographics: Profile of the military community*. Washington, DC: Department of Defense. Retrieved from <http://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2015-Demographics-Report.pdf>
- Department of the Army. (1983, October 31). *FM 22-100: Military leadership*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Department of the Army. (1999, August 31). *FM 22-100: Army leadership – Be, know, do*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Department of the Army. (2006, October 12). *FM 6-22: Army leadership – Competent, confident, and agile*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Department of the Army. (2012, August 1). *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22: Army leadership*. Washington, DC: Author.



Department of the Army. (2013). *ALDS - Army Leadership Development Strategy 2013*.

Retrieved from

<http://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/documents/cal/ALDS5June%202013Record.pdf>

Doll, Y. (2007). *US Army Women General Officers: A phenomenological study of their career ascension and leadership* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 304731986)

Drake, M. J. (2006). Ambivalence at the academies: Attitudes toward women in the military at the federal service academies. *Social Thought & Research*, 27, 43-68.

Dunivin, K. O. (1988). There's men, there's women, and there's me: The role and status of military women. *Minerva*, 6(2), 43-68.

Eagly, A. H. (2007). Female leadership advantage and disadvantage: Resolving the contradictions. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 31(1), 1-12.

Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2003). The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14(6), 807-834.

Eagly, A. H., & Johnson, B. T. (1990). Gender and leadership style: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 233-256.

Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (1991). Gender and the emergence of leaders: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 685-710.

Eagly, A. H., Karau, S. J., & Makhijani, M. G. (1995). Gender and the effectiveness of leaders: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 125-145.

- Eberhart, M. (2017, October 19). Relationships 101 symposium: “Unlocking the Mystery of Relationships.” *Pointer View*. Retrieved from <http://www.pointerview.com>
- Egan, C., Shollen, S. L., Campbell, C., Longman, K. A., Fisher, K., Fox-Kirk, W., & Neilson, B. G. (2017). Capacious model of leadership identities construction. In J. Storberg-Walker & P. Haber-Curran (Eds.), *Theorizing women and leadership: New insights and contributions from multiple perspectives* (pp. 121-140). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Febbraro, A. R. (2003). *Women, leadership and gender integration in the Canadian combat arms: A qualitative study*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Defence R&D. Retrieved from <http://cradpdf.drdc.gc.ca/PDFS/unc31/p521088.pdf>
- Fisher, K., & Fox-Kirk, W. F. (2015). A bioecological approach to leadership identity construction. *Academy of Management Proceedings, 2015* (1), 11969.
- Francke, L. B. (1997). *Ground zero: The gender wars in the military*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Franke, V. (1999). *Preparing for peace: Military identity, value orientations, and professional military education*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Freedman, L. (1982). The war of the Falkland Islands, 1982. *Foreign Affairs, 61*(1), 196-210.
- Freeman, M., deMarrais, K., Preissle, J., Roulston, K., & St. Pierre, E.A. (2007). Standards of evidence in qualitative research: An incitement to discourse. *Educational Researcher, 36*(1), 25-32. doi:10.3102/0013189X06298009

- Garfunkel, G. (1976, May 29 – June 12). West Point's best-kept secret: N.O.W. *Majority Report: The Women's Newspaper*, pp. 1, 4, 6, 10.
- Garner, M. D. (1992, December 3). Evolution of West Point's mission statement: A necessary condition for survival. Retrieved from <http://digital-library.usma.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p16919coll1/id/60>
- Geiger, S. (1990). What's so feminist about women's oral history? *Journal of Women's History*, 2(1), 169-182.
- Gibson, J. S. (2009). *Bridging the Charles: The first women graduates of the Harvard Business School, 1960–1965* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database.
- Goodnight, G. T. (1986). Ronald Reagan's re-formulation of the rhetoric of war: Analysis of the "Zero Option," "Evil Empire," and "Start Wars" addresses. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 72, 390-414.
- Grant, J. Lynch, J. M., & Bailey, R. H. (2002). *West Point: The first 200 years*. Guilford, CT: The Globe Pequot Press.
- Graves, T. R., Pleban, R. J., Mundell, Z., & Perdomo, B. (2013). *Far transfer of leadership training: Concepts, experiences, and applications* (No. ARI-TR-1327). Fort Belvoir, VA: Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. Retrieved from <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA578564>
- Gregory, J. C. (2017). *Recognizing her characteristics as a leader: An examination of the self-assessment of women leaders as shaped by social identity theory and the*

- concept of double consciousness* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu>
- Griffin, G. (2017a). Misogyny. In *A dictionary of gender studies* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com>
- Griffin, G. (2017b). Sexism. In *A dictionary of gender studies* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com>
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1990). Can there be a human science? *Person-Centered Review*, 5(3), 130-154.
- Haberman, C. (1981, January 26). Newburgh, N.Y. Former hostages home from Iran, Families join them at West Point; President leads nation in thanks. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com>
- Hannah, S. T., & Sowden, W. J. (2013). Leadership in the profession of arms. In M. G. Rumsey (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of leadership* (pp. 291-310). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Hartsock, N. C. M. (2003). The feminist standpoint: Toward a specifically feminist historical materialism. In C. R. McCann & S. K. Kim (Eds.), *Feminist theory reader: Local and global perspectives* (pp. 292-307). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Headquarters, United States Corps of Cadets (HQ, USCC). (1981). *The Fourth Class System* (USCC Circular 351-1). West Point, NY: United States Military Academy.

- Herbert, M. S. (1998). *Camouflage isn't only for combat: Gender, sexuality, and women in the military*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2007). The practice of feminist in-depth interviewing. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. L. Leavy (Eds.), *Feminist research practice* (1st ed., pp. 111-148). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Higate, P., & Hopton, J. (2005). War, militarism, and masculinities. In M. S. Kimmel, J. Hearn, & R. W. Connell (Eds.), *Handbook of studies on men and masculinities* (pp. 432-447). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hinojosa, R. (2010). Doing hegemony: Military, men, and constructing a hegemonic masculinity. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 18(2), 179-194.
- History of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps* [PowerPoint slides]. (2016). Retrieved from U.S. Army Medical Department, Office of Medical History website: <https://history.amedd.army.mil/ANCWebsite/anchome.html>
- Hof, F. C. (1985). The Beirut bombing of October 1983: An act of terrorism? *Parameters*, 15(2), 69-74.
- Hollander, E. P., & Yoder, J. (1980). Some issues in comparing women and men as leaders. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 1(3), 267-280.
- Hoyt, C., & Johnson, S. K. (2011). Gender and leadership development: A case of female leaders. In S. E. Murphy & R. J. Reichard (Eds.), *Early development and leadership: Building the next generation of leadership* (pp. 205-228). New York, NY: Routledge.

Hughes, G. (2008). The Soviet-Afghan War, 1978-1989: An overview. *Defence Studies*, 8(3), 326-350.

Iconic West Point history poster receives updates. (2017, November 22). *First call*.

Retrieved from West Point Association of Graduates website:

<https://www.westpointaog.org/firstcallNov222017>

Institutional Research. (2015). 2015 faculty profile. Retrieved from United States

Military Academy at West Point website: <https://www.usma.edu/about/west-point-staff/g5/institutional-research/faculty-profile>

Irwin, V. (1980, May 27). Women at West Point: The pioneer class graduates. *The*

*Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved from <https://www.csmonitor.com>

Janda, L. (2002). *Stronger than custom: West Point and the admission of women*.

Westport, CT: Praeger.

Jencks, C., & Riesman, D. (1968). *The academic revolution*. Garden City, NY:

Doubleday.

Johnson, M. D., Carter, W. E., Caslen, R. L., Helis, J. A., & Stosz, S. L. (2015, May 7).

Lessons to share. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from

<https://www.insidehighered.com>

Kaestle, C. F. (1983). *Pillars of the republic: Common schools and American society,*

*1780-1860*. New York, NY: Hill & Wang

- Kamarck, K. N. (2016, December 13). *Women in combat: Issues for Congress*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from Defense Technical Information Center website:  
<http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1007840.pdf>
- Kanter, R. M. (1977). Some effects of proportions on group life: Skewed sex ratios and responses to token women. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(5), 965-990.
- Katzman, K. (2005, August 17). *Al Qaeda: Profile and threat assessment* (Congressional Research Service Report). Retrieved from  
<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL33038.pdf>
- Karelaia, N., & Guillen, L. (2012). *Me, a woman and a leader: Antecedents and consequences of the identity conflict of women leaders* (Faculty and research working paper). Retrieved from the INSEAD website:  
[https://flora.insead.edu/fichiersti\\_wp/inseadwp2012/2012-117.pdf](https://flora.insead.edu/fichiersti_wp/inseadwp2012/2012-117.pdf)
- Karelaia, N., & Guillén, L. (2014). Me, a woman and a leader: Positive social identity and identity conflict. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 125(2), 204-219.
- Keith, B. (2010). The transformation of West Point as a liberal arts college. *Liberal Education*, 96(2), 6-13.
- Kempster, S. (2006). Leadership learning through lived experience: A process of apprenticeship? *Journal of Management & Organization*, 12(1), 4-22.

- Kingseed, C. C. (2012). [Review of the book *Carved from Granite: West Point since 1902* by L. Betros]. *Parameters: The US Army War College Quarterly*, 42(2), 148-150.
- Kirby, S. N., Thie, H. J., Naftel, S., & Adelson, M. (2010). *Diversity of service academy entrants and graduates*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND. Retrieved from <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG917.html>
- Klenke, K. (2016). *Qualitative research in the study of leadership* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald.
- Komives, S. R., Owen, J. E., Longerbeam, S. D., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. (2005). Developing a leadership identity: A grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(6), 593-611.
- Komives, S. R., Longerbeam, S. D., Owen, J. E., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. (2006). A leadership identity development model: Applications from a grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(4), 401-418.
- Kuhn, T.S. (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lather, P. (1992). Critical frames in educational research: Feminist and post-structural perspectives. *Theory into practice*, 31(2), 87-99.
- Laws, J. (1975). The psychology of tokenism. *Sex Roles*, 1, 51-67.
- Leavy, P. L. (2007). The practice of feminist oral history and focus group interviews. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. L. Leavy (Eds.), *Feminist research practice* (1st ed., pp. 149-186). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



- Leavy, P. (2011). *Oral history*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Le Ber, M. J., LaValley, J. B., Devnew, L. E., Berghoout Austin, A. M., Elbert, C. D., Sulpizio, L. L., & Tremaine, M. (2017). Tracing the developmental precursors of leadership during childhood and adolescence: A collaborative autoethnographic study of women's leader identity development. In J. Storberg-Walker & P. Haber-Curran (Eds.), *Theorizing women and leadership: New insights and contributions from multiple perspectives* (pp. 225-247). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Leipold, J. D. (2016, February 18). Army Surgeon General, West Point grad receives third star. *Pointer View*. Retrieved from <http://www.pointerview.com>
- Lemke, D. (1997). The continuation of history: Power transition theory and the end of the Cold War. *Journal of Peace Research*, 34(1), 23-36.
- Lemler, R. P. (2013). *Rethinking organizational leader identity development: A social network and ethnographic approach* (Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University). Retrieved from <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/27297660.pdf>
- Lemmon, G. T. (2015). *Ashley's war: The untold story of a team of women soldiers on the special ops battlefield*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Lesinski, G., Pinter, J., Kucik, P., & Lamm, G. (2011, July). *Officer accessions flow model* (ORCEN Technical Report No. DSE-TR-1103). West Point, NY: Operations Research Center of Excellence. Retrieved from [https://www.usma.edu/orcen/SiteAssets/SitePages/Tech%20Reports/Final%20Tech%20report%20Officer%20Flow%20Model%20\(16%20Aug%2011\).pdf](https://www.usma.edu/orcen/SiteAssets/SitePages/Tech%20Reports/Final%20Tech%20report%20Officer%20Flow%20Model%20(16%20Aug%2011).pdf)

- Lewis, L. A. (2017). *West Point women's views on leadership: Perceptions from first women graduates through current cadets*. Unpublished manuscript, Clemson University, Clemson, SC.
- Lewis, L. A. (2018). The raised fists photo incident at West Point: A case study examination of systemic and color-blind racism. *Trends in Diversity, 1*(1), Article 3. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.kent.edu/td/>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1986). But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation, 30*, 73-84.
- Lipscomb, M. (2010). Participant overexposure and the role of researcher judgement. *Nurse Researcher, 17*(4), 49-59.
- Longino, H. (1999). Feminist epistemology. In J. Grecco & E. Sosa (Eds.), *The Blackwell guide to epistemology* (pp. 327-353). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Lorber, J. (2010). Night to his day. In S. Ferguson (Ed.), *Mapping the social landscape: Readings in sociology* (6<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 96-108). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Lui, A. (2000). Looking back at Tiananmen Square. *Peace Review, 12*(1), 139-145.
- MacArthur, D. (1962, May 12). Sylvanus Thayer Award acceptance address. Retrieved from American Rhetoric: Top 100 Speeches website: <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/douglasmacarthurthayeraward.html>
- Mahoney, D. J. (2012). *Gender and leadership: Female ROTC cadets' perceptions of gender and military leadership* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://scholarworks.gsu.edu>

- Manke, A. (2015). *Exploring female leader development: Women and leadership in the Minnesota Army National Guard* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://conservancy.umn.edu>
- Marley, D. J. (2000). Phyllis Schlafly's battle against the ERA and women in the military. *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military*, 18(2), 16-37.
- Marshall, M. N. (1996). Sampling for qualitative research. *Family Practice*, 13(6), 522-526.
- Maslin, J. (1979, February 27). Movie tells story of West Point women. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com>
- Mason, D. S. (1988). Glasnost, perestroika and Eastern Europe. *International Affairs*, 64(3), 431-448.
- Matthews, M. D., Eid, J., Kelly, D., Bailey, J. K., & Peterson, C. (2006). Character strengths and virtues of developing military leaders: An international comparison. *Military Psychology*, 18(S), S57-S68.
- McAlear, D. M. (2010). *Porcelain on steel: Women of West Point's Long Gray Line*. Jacksonville, FL: Fortis.
- McCracken, P. (2003). The amenorrhea of war. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(2), 625-643.
- McCrae, R. R. (1992). Editor's introduction to Tupes and Christal. *Journal of Personality*, 60(2), 217-219.

- McDonald, D. J. (2015, June 25). *The West Point admissions officer on building the Long Gray Line* [online video]. Retrieved from the West Point Center for Oral History website: <http://westpointcoh.org/interviews/the-west-point-admissions-officer-on-building-the-long-gray-line>
- McNally, J. A., Gerras, S. J., & Bullis, R. C. (1996). Teaching leadership at the US Military Academy at West Point. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 32(2), 175-188.
- Meehan, A. (1984, March 4). West Point hears debate on ERA. *The Times Herald Record* [Middletown, NY], p. 8.
- Milan, L. M., Bourne Jr, D. R., Zazanis, M. M., & Bartone, P. T. (2002). *Measures collected on the USMA class of 1998 as part of the Baseline Officer Longitudinal Dataset (BOLDS)* (No. ARI-TR-1127). Alexandria, VA: Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mills, R. L. (2009). *The laugh makers: A behind-the-scenes tribute to Bob Hope's incredible gag writers*. Albany, GA: Bear Manor Media.
- Minister, K. (1991). A feminist frame for the oral history interview. In S. B. Gluck & D. Patei (Eds.), *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history* (pp. 27-41). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Morden, B. J. (1990). *The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978*. Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army. Retrieved from <https://history.army.mil/html/books/030/30-14-1/index.html>
- Morgan, M. J. (2004). Women in a man's world: Gender differences in leadership at the Military Academy. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 34*(12), 2482-2502.
- Mosher, D. L., & Sirkin, M. (1984). Measuring a macho personality constellation. *Journal of Research in Personality, 18*(2), 150-163.
- Muir, D. (2014). Mentoring and leader identity development: A case study. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 25*(3), 349-379.
- Mumford, M. D., Marks, M. A., Connelly, M. S., Zaccaro, S. J., & Reiter-Palmon, R. (2000). Development of leadership skills: Experience and timing. *The Leadership Quarterly, 11*(1), 87-114.
- Mundy, L. (2017). *Code girls: The untold story of the American women code breakers of World War II*. New York, NY: Hachette.
- Myre, G. (2019, February 14). Despite prevention programs, sexual assaults rise at military academies. Retrieved from National Public Radio website: <https://www.npr.org/2019/02/14/694597943/despite-prevention-programs-sexual-assaults-rise-at-military-academies>
- Nakrosis, S. (2017, October 28). At West Point, all cadets must learn to take a punch. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from [https://: www.wsj.com](https://www.wsj.com)

- Nelson, B. J., Uhorchak, J. M., LeBoeuf, M. K., & Taylor, D. C. (1999). Physical training and injury in female cadets at the United States Military Academy. *Connecticut Medicine*, 63(11), 653-655.
- Nielsen, S. C. (2010, September). *An army transformed: The U.S. Army's post-Vietnam recovery and the dynamics of change in military organizations* (The Letort Papers). Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College.  
Retrieved from <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1020>
- Noddings, N. (2001). The care tradition: Beyond "Add women and stir." *Theory into Practice*, 40(1), 29-34. doi:10.1207/s15430421tip4001\_5
- Noddings, N. (2002). *Starting at home: Caring and social policy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press
- O'Dwyer, G. O. (2009). *Tough as nails: One woman's journey through West Point*. Ashland, OR: Hellgate Press.
- Office of People Analytics, US Department of Defense. (2017, February). *2016 service academies gender relations survey: Overview report* (OPA Report No. 2016-043). Alexandria, VA: Author. Retrieved from <https://apps.dtic.mil/docs/citations/AD1029209>
- Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense. (2000, November). *Population representation in the military services: Fiscal year 1999*. Retrieved from <https://www.cna.org/pop-rep/1999/index.html>
- Office of the Commandant, United States Corps of Cadets. (1981). *New cadet guide: Cadet Basic Training 1981*. West Point, NY: United States Military Academy.

- Office of the Director of Institutional Research. (1981a, September). *Characteristics of the Class of 1985* (Report No. 81-014). West Point, NY: United States Military Academy. Retrieved from <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a107100.pdf>
- Office of the Director of Institutional Research. (1981b, December). *Trends in admission variables through the Class of 1985* (Report No. 81-015). West Point, NY: United States Military Academy. Retrieved from <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a109457.pdf>
- Office of the Director of Institutional Research. (1982, April). *New cadets and other college freshmen: Class of 1985* (Report No. 82-004). West Point, NY: United States Military Academy. Retrieved from <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a114847.pdf>
- Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense. (2005, March 4). *Report on the Service Academy Sexual Assault and Leadership Survey*. Arlington, VA: Author. Retrieved from <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA596317>
- Olivares, O. J. (2011). The formative capacity of momentous events and leadership development. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 32(8), 837-853.
- O'Neill, W. L. (1998). Sex scandals in the gender-integrated military. *Gender Issues*, 16(1-2), 64-85.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Leech, N. L. (2007). Validity and qualitative research: An oxymoron? *Quality & Quantity*, 41(2), 233-249. doi:10.1007/s11135-006-9000-3

- Ortega, O. D., Øvergård, K. I., & Henden, V. (2015). Women are better leaders than they think: Gender differences in the self-assessment of leadership skills in the maritime industry. In M. Kitada, E. Williams, & L. L. Froholt (Eds.), *Maritime women: Global leadership* (pp. 201-216). Berlin, Germany: Springer-Verlag.
- Pershing, J. L. (2003). Why women don't report sexual harassment: A case study of an elite military institution. *Gender Issues, 21*(4), 3-30.
- Peterson, D. (1990). *Dress gray: A woman at West Point*. Austin, TX: Eakin Press.
- Pillemer, D. B. (2001). Momentous events and the life story. *Review of General Psychology, 5*(2), 123-134.
- Priest, R. F., Prince, H. T., & Vitters, A. G. (1978). The first coed class at West Point: Performance and attitudes. *Youth and Society, 10*(2), 205-224.
- Priest, R. F., Vitters, A. G., & Prince, H. T. (1978). Coeducation at West Point. *Armed Forces & Society, 4*(4), 589-606.
- Public Law No. 94-106, § 803, 89 Stat. 537-8 (1975).
- Purvis, J. K. (2011). *Four decades and five manuals: U.S. Army strategic leadership doctrine, 1983-2011*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.
- Raines, H. (1981, May 28). Reagan vows U.S. will press effort to build defenses. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com>
- Rhode, D. L. (2017). *Women and leadership*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.



- Rice, R. W., Instone, D., & Adams, J. (1984). Leader sex, leader success, and leadership process: Two field studies. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 69*(1), 12-31.
- Rice, R. W., Yoder, J. D., Adams, J., Priest, R. F., & Prince, H. T. (1984). Leadership ratings for male and female military cadets. *Sex Roles, 10*(11-12), 885-901.
- Riessman, C. K. (1987). When gender is not enough: Women interviewing women. *Gender & Society, 1*(2), 172-207.
- Ropers-Huilman, R. & Winters, K.T. (2011). Feminist research in higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education, 82*(6), 667-690.
- Rosa, E. M., & Tudge, J. (2013). Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development: Its evolution from ecology to bioecology. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 5*(4), 243-258. doi:1111/jftr.12022
- Rough, J. A., & Armor, D. J. (2017). Sexual assault in the U.S. military: Trends and responses. *World Medical & Health Policy, 9*(2), 206-224.
- Ryan, K. M. (2009). "I didn't do anything important": A pragmatist analysis of the oral history interview. *The Oral History Review, 36*(1), 25-44.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Schein, V. E. (1973). The relationship between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 57*, 95–100.
- Schein, V. E. (1975). The relationship between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics among female managers. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 60*, 340–344.

- Schneider, M. B., Fisher, M., Friedman, S. B., Bijur, P. E., & Toffler, A. P. (1999). Menstrual and premenstrual issues in female military cadets: A unique population with significant concerns. *Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology*, *12*(4), 195-201.
- Segal, D. R., Lynch, B. A., & Blair, J. D. (1979). The changing American soldier: Work-related attitudes of U.S. Army personnel in World War II and the 1970s. *American Journal of Sociology*, *85*(1), 95-108.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information*, *22*(2), 63-75.
- Shepherd, R. S., & Horner, D. H. (2010). Indicators of leadership development in undergraduate military education. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, *4*(2), 18-29.
- Sims, S., & Van Loon, B. (2009). *Introducing critical theory: A graphic guide*. London, United Kingdom: Icon Books.
- Siry, D. (2017, November 16). Poster launch on West Point graduate WWII heroes. *Pointer View*. Retrieved from <http://www.pointerview.com>
- Smith, K., & Gayles, J. (2018). "Girl power": Gendered academic and workplace experiences of college women in engineering. *Social Sciences*, *7*(1), Article 11.
- Snook, S. A. (2006). Developing educational leaders of character: Lessons from West Point. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *87*(7), 515-516.
- Stearns, P. N. (2014). Obedience and emotion: A challenge in the emotional history of childhood. *Journal of Social History*, *47*(3), 593-611. doi:10.1093/jsh/sht110

- Stoelker, T. (2016, Summer). 1976-2016: Commemorating 40 years of women at West Point. *West Point*. 8-14.
- Stoelker, T. (2017, Fall). West Point dedicates newest cadet barracks: Legacy of General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. '36 in granite and action. *West Point*. 6-11.
- Suddarth, J. (Ed.). (1981). *Bugle notes*. West Point, NY: USMA.
- Takeh, R. (2010). The Iran-Iraq War: A reassessment. *The Middle East Journal*, 64(3), 365-383.
- Tan, M. (2015, October 6). 3<sup>rd</sup> woman, and 1<sup>st</sup> female Reservist, dons Ranger tab. *Army Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.armytimes.com>
- Tenni, C., Smith, A., & Boucher, C. (2003). The researcher as autobiographer: Analysing data written about oneself. *The Qualitative Report*, 8(1).
- The U.S. Military Academy coat of arms and motto. (n.d.). Retrieved from the US Military Academy website:  
  
<https://www.usma.edu/news/sitepages/coat%20of%20arms%20and%20motto.asp>  
  
x
- Tupes, E. C. & Christal, R. E. (1961/1992). Recurrent personality factors based on trait ratings [ASD Technical Report]. Armstrong Laboratory, Human Resources Directorate, Brooks Air Force Base, Texas. *Journal of Personality*, 60(2), 225-251.
- U. S. Army. (n.d.). History. Retrieved from the Women in the Army website:  
  
<https://www.army.mil/women/history/>

United States Census Bureau. (2018, July 1). QuickFacts – United States. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045217>

United States Military Academy, Office of Institutional Research/Dean (USMA [OIR/Dean]). (2015, July 7). Class of 2019. Retrieved from USMA website: <http://www.usma.edu/oir/Class%20profiles/Class%20of%202019.pdf>

United States Military Academy, Office of Institutional Research/Dean (USMA [OIR/Dean]). (2016, July 8). Class of 2020. Retrieved from USMA website: <http://www.usma.edu/oir/Class%20profiles/Class%20of%202020.pdf>

United States Military Academy, Office of Institutional Research/Dean (USMA [OIR/Dean]). (2017, July 10). Class of 2021. Retrieved from USMA website: <http://www.usma.edu/oir/Class%20profiles/Class%20of%202021.pdf>

United States Military Academy (USMA) Public Affairs. (2013, December 12). SecArmy lauds cadet SHARP program at West Point. Retrieved from United States Army website: [https://www.army.mil/article/116814/SecArmy\\_lauds\\_Cadet\\_SHARP\\_program\\_at\\_West\\_Point/](https://www.army.mil/article/116814/SecArmy_lauds_Cadet_SHARP_program_at_West_Point/)

Vecchio, R. P., & Brazil, D. M. (2007). Leadership and sex-similarity: A comparison in a military setting. *Personnel Psychology*, *60*(2), 303-335.

- Vitters, A. G. (1978). *Report of the admission of women to the United States Military Academy (Project Athena II)*. West Point, NY: Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership. Retrieved from the USMA Library/Digital Collections website: <http://digital-library.usma.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16919coll15/id/2827/rec/20>
- Vitters, A. G., & Kinzer, N. S. (1977). *Report of the admission of women to the United States Military Academy (Project Athena)*. West Point, NY: Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership. Retrieved from the USMA Library/Digital Collections website: <http://digital-library.usma.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/p16919coll15/id/2825/rec/27>
- Wagner, J. (1993). Ignorance in educational research: Or, how can you “not” know that? *Educational Researcher*, 22 (5), 15-23. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1176947>
- Wall, C. (2012). Something to show for it: The place of mementoes in women’s oral histories of work. In *Sage biographical research* (Vol. 4, pp. 255-272). Available in Sage Research Methods database.
- Watkins, G. L. & Bourg, M. C. (1997). The effects of gender on cadet selection for leadership positions at the United States Military Academy. *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military*, 15(3/4), 63-81.
- Welcome to the United States Military Academy Preparatory School. (n.d.). Retrieved from the United States Military Academy at West Point website: <https://www.usma.edu/USMAPS/SitePages/Home.aspx>

- West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender and Society*, 1(2), 125-151.
- West Point Leader Development System handbook*. (2015, May). West Point, NY: USMA. Retrieved from [https://www.usma.edu/strategic/SiteAssets/SitePages/Home/WPLDS%202015%20Handbook%20\(FINAL\).pdf](https://www.usma.edu/strategic/SiteAssets/SitePages/Home/WPLDS%202015%20Handbook%20(FINAL).pdf)
- Westley. (2016). *War virgin: My journey of repression, temptation and liberation*. Dunedin, FL: War Virgin, Inc.
- Whitehouse, F. (1985, May 23) Graduate cadets include refugees. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com>
- Wolcott, H. F. (2010). *Ethnography lessons: A primer*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Wong, L., Bliese, P., & McGurk, D. (2003). Military leadership: A context specific review. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14(6), 657-692.
- Yoder, J. D. (1985). An academic woman as a token: A case study. *Journal of Social Issues*, 41(4), 61-72.
- Yoder, J. D. (1989). Women at West Point: Lessons for token women in male-dominated occupations. In J. Freeman (Ed.), *Women: A feminist perspective* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 523-537). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.
- Yoder, J. D. (1991). Rethinking tokenism: Looking beyond numbers. *Gender & Society*, 5(2), 178-192.

- Yoder, J. D. (2001). Making leadership work more effectively for women. *Journal of Social issues*, 57(4), 815-828.
- Yoder, J. D., & Adams, J. (1984). Women entering nontraditional roles: When work demands and sex-roles conflict: The case of West Point. *International Journal of Women's Studies*, 7(3), 260-272.
- Yoder, J., Rice, R. W., Adams, J., Prince II, H. T., & Priest, R. F. (1979). *Predicting institutional ratings of leadership ability for male and female cadets* (No. RN-79-17). Alexandria, VA: US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.